



A Comprehensive Review Of The Transition Process Among The Beda Indigenous Tribal Community In India

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Abstract

The tribal identity has seen many changes and difficulties throughout history. Most of the tribes are still facing several challenges and hardships in different dimensions due to the forces of globalization that penetrated their ancestral environment with the help of the dynamic state. Tribal areas are considered underdeveloped in our nation, and their financial circumstances have not changed despite several decades of planned development. Development in the tribal areas should include holistic and balancing the preservation of traditional identity, culture, and attributes with the expansion and assurance of their access to mainstream education, health care, and employment and from the socio-economic challenges such as limited access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The concerned nodal agency should make significant efforts to improve their socioeconomic status through various government welfare schemes. It is found from the previous studies that Beda and its associated communities are considered one of the most ancient and backward communities in India. The development of the tribal communities and their geographical areas should follow sustainable development approaches. Despite facing numerous challenges, the Bedar community has long advocated for inclusion in the Scheduled Caste category while continuing to preserve their unique way of life and contribute to the state's diversity. The study aims to know about the transition among the Indian tribal communities and also to know about the nature of the transition among the Beda and its associated communities in the state of Karnataka.

Keywords: Beda, Transition, Socio-economic, political, Aboriginal, Scheduled Tribes.

Introduction

India, with its sacred land and rich diversity, is a cradle for numerous cultural groups. The land of India is home to many Indigenous tribal groups. It is an ancient nation with a variety of cultures, expressed through different tribes, communities, castes, and ethnic groups (Patil., Prabhakar, & Karthik, 2023; Patil., Prabhakar., & Mali, 2024; Prabhakar., & Patil, 2023; Patil., Prabhakar, 2023). Scheduled Tribes (ST) are defined under Article 342 of the Constitution of India, which makes special provisions for tribal communities. In India, the tribal population makes up 8.6% of the total national population, with the 2011 Census recording approximately 104.3 million.

Methodology

This research paper is based entirely on secondary sources. The secondary data were gathered from available literature in academic databases such as ResearchGate and ShodhGanga, as well as from newspaper articles and other relevant publications. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used in the study.

The paper is structured as follows: The first part provides detailed information about the transitions among different Indian tribal communities in various aspects. The second part elaborates on the nature of the transition among the Beda and its associated tribal communities in India. The final part of the paper concludes with an analysis of the tribal issues and the efforts for their overall upliftment.

Beda: *An Indigenous Community of Karnataka*

Karnataka is home to a rich diversity of tribal groups, primarily living in the state's hilly and forested regions. These ethnic groups are known for their distinct ways of life and practices. As per the Tribal Department of Karnataka, there are 50 officially recognized tribal communities in the state, such as Beda, Hakki-Pikki, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Soliga, Siddis, Yerava, and other notified tribes. The Beda communities are one of the oldest tribal groups in India. They are divided into six social groups and known by various names across the country, such as Beda Berad, Boya, Valmiki, and Bendar, Berar, Burar, Ramoshi, Talwar, Byadar, Balmiki, and Nayaka. They were found in several districts of Karnataka, including Raichur, Ballari, Vijayanagara, Chitradurga, Kolar, and Koppal.

The term "Bedar" is derived from the word "Bed" or "Bedaru," which literally means "hunter." It originated from "Byaderus," a corruption of "Vyadherus" (from the Sanskrit term "byadha," meaning 'hunter'). According to the community's historical records, the ancestors of the Bedar tribes were the Pindaris and Tirole Kunbis. Historically, these groups were known for their role in protecting villages and safeguarding territories from outsiders. The community has traditionally engaged in various occupations, including agriculture, wage labor,

factory work, business, and education. Other roles included farming laborers, security guards, stonecutters, drovers, servants, traders, messengers, police, and soldiers.

A Glimpse into the Transition of Tribal Communities: Findings from Various Studies

Many researchers from varied disciplines have conducted studies around the world on the subject of transition among the different tribal communities in India. Globalization continues to pose challenges to tribes, leading to underdevelopment, poor land records, poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation, despite decades of planned development.

The survey method sheds light on the social transition and status of women within the Khasi tribal community of Meghalaya. It explores the evolving dynamics of the matrilineal system amidst increasing patriarchal influences. Despite traditional female inheritance rights and societal freedoms, rising male economic participation, the growth of nuclear families, and expanded access to education are shifting family leadership toward men. Female-headed households often experience lower incomes and a higher prevalence of domestic violence compared to male-headed households. Although Khasi women manage family welfare and emphasize health and education, they continue to face poverty and limited bargaining power. The study advocates for equal inheritance rights and the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies, asserting that only through active participation can Khasi women achieve equitable social status and empowerment (Gitika Das and Abhijit KR Bezbaruah, 2011).

Political participation and socio-economic status of tribal women in Panchayat Raj institutions, with a focus on Tumkur district. This study highlights the importance of political participation as a means of empowering women, enhancing their decision-making authority, and enabling them to influence societal issues. It emphasizes that empowerment begins with understanding gender dynamics and the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that shape women's lives. This paper stresses that tribal women require greater exposure to political and social issues, as well as better educational and training opportunities, to play an active role in politics and contribute to regional development. It also underscores the need for a shift in attitudes and perspectives toward tribal women's empowerment through political representation without undermining the importance of reservation policies for their advancement (Nagaraja S, 2020).

Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women in Karnataka: A Case Study in Mysore and Chamarajanagara Districts. They emphasize the significant yet underutilized role of tribal women in their communities, and despite being considered economic assets, tribal women face substantial barriers such as lack of education, poor health, high infant mortality, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate leadership skills. These factors hinder their economic empowerment. They suggest that economic independence and education are critical for the self-reliance of tribal women and that long-term strategies focusing on awareness, education, and societal

support are essential. Empowerment programs can help integrate tribal women into India's broader development goals, reducing poverty and unemployment in these communities (Heggade, Puttaraja and O. D. Heggade, 2012).

Challenges faced by tribal communities in India, particularly in the areas of education and economic development. While progress has been made, tribal societies remain largely excluded from the benefits of modern development, largely due to geographic isolation and a lack of access to educational technologies. Despite these challenges, tribal people have preserved their cultural and religious practices. The conclusion emphasizes the need for targeted educational policies, including better funding, hostel facilities, and skill development programs such as IT training, to improve their socio-economic position. The importance of awareness campaigns and collaboration with NGO's has to promote literacy and job opportunities highlighted in the study. Overall, this article advocates for comprehensive, well-timed strategies to bridge the gap between tribal communities and mainstream society (Arnab Chowdhury., Sushanta Kumar Roul, and Jayanta Kumar Mete, 2022).

Role of tribal women in the Panchayat Raj system in Chitradurga district in the state of Karnataka, focusing on their participation in local governance. It highlights the election of tribal women to the Gonur Gram Panchayat and their representation in the political sphere. This paper challenges the concept of a unified 'tribal identity,' suggesting that while protective measures exist, tribal leaders often prioritize their own elite interests rather than advocating for the broader tribal community. This study emphasizes the complexity of tribal identity and the manipulation of ethnic symbols for political gain (Nagarajappa and R. G. Chidananda, 2019).

The role of tribal women in the transition through SHGs: A study in Sidhi district emphasizes economic opportunity, social equality, and personal rights. Despite deeply ingrained cultural and patriarchal constraints, particularly in rural areas, SHGs promote independence and awareness among women who have traditionally been confined to low-paying, household-centric roles. The research highlights the efforts of NGOs in empowering women to assert their rights, access government programs, and challenge caste-based power dynamics. SHGs are shown to boost women's confidence, providing pathways for them to actively engage in societal roles, enhancing both household influence and community standing (Arif Rasheed and Abdul Matin, 2014).

Current status of migrant tribal women in urban unorganized sectors, examining their livelihood patterns, occupational mobility, cultural practices, and working conditions. It assesses their security and prospects for sustainable, dignified livelihoods within informal economies, where wage reliability and work conditions are often subpar. Findings underscore the need for targeted government policies that enhance security and dignity. This paper suggests that effective intervention can significantly uplift tribal women at the lowest economic levels, accelerating social development outcomes (Sucheta Priyabadini and Santosh Kumar Pradhan, 2015).

Multifaceted nature of empowerment among tribal women in central India, assessing their roles and status across social, economic, religious, and political spheres. While tribal women contribute significantly to livelihoods and household responsibilities, they remain disadvantaged despite broader socio-political advancements. This paper examines their levels of education, personal freedom, authority, and rights, providing insights into their empowerment and the challenges they face in achieving comprehensive development (Amit Soni, 2019).

Underappreciated role of tribal women, particularly in Kashmir, where they face significant socio-economic challenges. Despite their hard work in supporting family capital and executing household tasks, these women endure food insecurity, malnutrition, and lack of access to essential services like healthcare and education. This study reveals that Kashmiri tribal women lag behind in terms of socio-cultural status, educational attainment, and health, largely due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. The research employs a standardized "Socio-Economic Scale" to assess the women's status across various categories and concludes that their socio-economic position remains low, necessitating further research and targeted interventions (Saveela Salam and Muzamil Jan, 2022),

New Economic Reforms and Livelihood Transition of Tribal Women: A Case Study of Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting the shifts in tribal economies due to market integration since the 1990s. The transition from subsistence agriculture and forest-based resources to market-driven economic activities has drastically altered tribal society. The decline in agriculture's profitability and mechanization has displaced agricultural labor, with male members moving to non-farm jobs in urban areas. Women from smaller landholding families have diversified into small-scale animal husbandry and handicrafts to sustain their livelihoods. This study underscores that despite some women accessing higher education and government jobs, neoliberal policies have deepened gendered inequalities, with women remaining at a disadvantage in the distribution of resources and opportunities (ShasanaYomso, 2020).

Contrasting views on the status of tribal women in India highlight the tension between perceptions of empowerment due to developmental interventions and the critiques pointing to ongoing destitution. Misra argues against simplifying tribal gender relations into rigid categories of superiority or inferiority. Instead, he proposes a nuanced approach, recognizing the complexities and contradictions in tribal women's lives, where economic independence coexists with structural dependence and both resistance and submission mark power dynamics (Kamal K. Misra's, 2019).

Shifting role of women's work within the context of ecological transitions among tribal populations in Orissa, India. Traditionally, tribal women were integral to activities like food procurement, childrearing, and maintaining community health through herbal remedies, all closely tied to the natural environment, particularly forests. This paper examines how industrialization and deforestation, driven by commercialization, have disrupted this relationship, severely affecting tribal livelihoods and socio-cultural structures. Women, as

primary actors in the traditional economy, face significant challenges as their roles in forest-dependent economies diminish. Despite these changes, women continue to cling to aspects of their traditional work due to the lack of viable alternatives. This paper highlights the gendered strains resulting from these ecological and socio-economic transformations (Geeta Menon's, 1992).

Status of Bedar Women: *At a Glance*

From the numerous research studies and reports, it is noticed that the status of Bedar tribal women is very low. Community women's are engaged in various occupations based on their skills, knowledge, and education. This includes agriculture, farming laborers, wage labor, factory work, business, education, housekeeping, stonecutters, drovers, servants, etc. In ancient times, women of the Bedar community were living morally and used to think independently regarding morality.

Most Bedar women currently face socio-economic challenges like limited access to education, social security, freedom, and healthcare. In some unfavorable situations, community women used to become servants of gods in the name of village goddesses. Slowly, such women's were exploited by other people, and as a result, there was subordination of women in the community (Bevinakatti, 2009). It is also revealed that apart from her family duties such as cooking and looking after children, the Bedar women were also engaged in animal husbandry, knitting of skin products, hunting for the sake of livelihood, etc.

In that respect, the Bedar women were also trained and learned the use of many weapons. Later, this tribal community depended on agriculture for their livelihood. During those days, the women also cooperated with their husbands in the agricultural processes. The historical records reveal that the majority of the community women are experts in cultivating, harvesting, etc. processes of agriculture.

Under the National Literacy Mission flagship program, the community women living in rural and forest areas are also becoming literate. Further, the community women used to emphasize the education of their children. It is found that at present, there is an increase in the number of Stree Shakti Groups (SHGs), and the community women's are voluntarily participating in the self-help group activities. Thereby, Bedar women are also developing their livelihood and socio-economic life for their upliftment in society like other community members.

The community women's self-help group members are participating and engaged in the income-generating activities like stitching, embroidery, matt weaving, preparing home products, etc. Even though there is gradual improvement in the overall status of women due to education and employment, still there are cultural roots, which are celebrated by the Bedars, especially community women, at different occasions as per their rite to

passage of the community (cultural rites) (Sunanda Naik, 2009; Bevinakatti, Manjunath, 2009; Chinna A, 2014).

Conclusion

Ethnic communities form a significant segment of India's demographic structure, and most of them still live in hilly, thickly forested, and hard-to-reach areas across the country. Many of the Bedar tribal women in the community face socio-economic challenges such as limited access to education, and healthcare. Despite these hardships, they continue to maintain their cultural traditions, languages, and unique practices. The tribal communities of Karnataka are an integral part of the state's cultural and social fabric. Despite this diversity, many tribal groups across the country experience economic underdevelopment, often living in isolated regions, which have led to gradual and sometimes traumatic changes in their way of life. The state has made significant efforts to improve their socio-economic status through various government welfare schemes. These scheduled tribes are deprived of civilization, and due to the rules of forest conservation, they have lost their shelter in forests. Further, they are not educated and civilized, as their stay was in the hard-to-reach areas of the deep forests or hilly terrains. From the previous research studies, it is found that Beda and its associated communities are considered one of the most ancient and backward communities in India. Despite facing numerous challenges, the Bedar community has long advocated for inclusion in the Scheduled Caste category while continuing to preserve their unique way of life and contribute to the state's diversity. The development of the tribal communities and their geographical areas should follow sustainable development approaches.

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