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“Empowerment of Golla Tribal Women”



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ABSTRACT

Women have as important a role as men to play in the development of mankind. But it has been a policy on our male-centric society to deny women every possible right she is entitled to make her own. The plight of Kadugolla women is no different from this and added to this she is facing problems related to the age old and evil customs of her community. This article wishes to highlight the problems faced by the Kadugolla women in particular and to suggest ways of uplifting these women and to empower them so that they form a part of the mainstream of society.

KEYWORDS :Empowerment, male-centric, customs, identity, ignorance, self-sufficiency, exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

India is a land of villages, but a lot of tribal communities dwell throughout the length and breadth of the country. Tribal settlements can be found at several places in Karnataka. Majority of the tribes settle down in huts. A collection of such huts is called a `Hadi`. Tribal people comprise more than fifty percent of the population of the country and are found below the poverty line. They have their own customs and traditions and are away from the civilized world. Thus they are denied of the basic amenities of all kind. Even though the tribal culture is rich in tradition the people are facing various problems like poverty, illiteracy, habitat, communication, exploitation, evil traditions etc.” This is nothing but ignorance at its height.

The Kadugolla community which has a special place in Kannada cultural world is a tribal

community. They have an identity of their own. Their customs with regard to birth-death, giving birth, attaining puberty and those at the time of a death have been at the centre of discussions and controversies.

Caste, creed and color are the artificial creations of our man-made society. But women are discriminated with respect to men and this is more intense than the discrimination found in the social hierarchy. The discrimination of women needs to be discussed in the biological context rather than the social context. Women have been kept out of the social productive zone as well as the main stream of the social, political and the cultural world.

Vijaya Dabbe, renowned Kannada Writer classifies all women of Karnataka as a single unit keeping in view only the biological aspect of women. Incidental studies on women belonging to lower classes and tribes and systematic studies on women belonging to lower classes and tribes in the Indian hierarchical setup do not throw light on the fundamental problems faced by women and their exploitation. The tribes stay away from the civilized society but they are not totally disconnected with the same. Many tribes have become a part of civilized society. How are the tribes treating their women, How does the society perceive the tribal women, How are these factors affecting the lives of tribal women? These are the questions in front of us. In spite of modernization certain customs of Kadugollas are discriminative and the plights of women are too miserable.

At the time of childbirth the Kadugolla women have to spend three months outside their house. Separate huts are built for this purpose. When girls attain puberty they are made to sit outside their huts. Every creation is through nature. Hence all sorts of impure situations are addressed in the lap of nature. During the monthly menstrual cycle the kadugolla women have to stay outside their hut. Isolating women in this manner amounts to imposing evil customs on women and is a crime against women.

The kadugolla women who are a part of the civilized society contest the village panchayat elections under reservation. The women folk contest and win the elections, but after victory the powers will be transferred either to the husband or to the brothers. Thus women are denied a chance to show their abilities. They are rendered puppets in the hands of men due to the selfish motives of men. Men prevent elected women representatives to realize their ideals. Thus women lose their rights of assertion as well. Women who are of agricultural background are thus forced to accept all the evils that are framed against her. But women are changing and thus have started expressing themselves. Being subservient has changed the conscience of women.

Kadugolla women who were after self sufficiency used to obtain their needs by being close to nature. But more and more villages are losing the forest cover they earlier had and thus women are finding it difficult to find firewood to cook and are forced to resort to kerosene. Women work on equal terms with men but are given half the wages as that of men. In spite of the Common Wages Act of 1976 women are not getting equal wages. Thus the kadugolla communities which live under the poverty line is leading a degraded life being deprived of economical and social status. Kadugolla women are made to work for more time and are paid less and are also exploited sexually. Government has implemented several projects to uplift the lives of such people. But the benefits of such projects are not reaching the targeted group but are enjoyed by the influential class. The Kadugolla women are not aware of any non-agricultural means of life and are thus dependent on agriculture alone. Government has to promote cottage industries and help these women in overcoming this limit. It should also provide training and arrange for the purchase of the products manufactured by these women. Financial help is also of prime importance.

Studies have to take place on the gender related pattern of the tribes. Women empowerment is not possible by keeping as criteria those values which seem to be pro-women on the outside. Such studies do not reflect the true picture. The social status of the Kadugolla women does not present a rosy picture when compared with that of the Upper and the Middle class women.

The tribal women complete all the work that is needed for the purpose of maintenance of the family under the directions of men. In the Kannada folk poem ‘Junjappana Kavya’, Sinnamma who is devastated on account of poverty has to resort to working to earn livelihood. Here it is seen that Junjappa, an eight year old boy is directing his mother in her work. The mother who is looking after the family should have been the head of the family but Golla community is male-centric. Thus instance depicts the subservience and helplessness of the Golla women. Golla women who work till sunset is subservient in terms of social, economical and familial aspects. Thus she cannot be called independent and empowered. She is always directed by her community. Thus the mobile life of a Golla woman is directed by the men of the community.

Modern feminists consider tribes to be the fossils of ancient cultures. But they consider instances depicting the prowess of women and leave out the rest. Seen through the lens of male domination the hardship faced by women is never seen, but devoid of the lens her exploitation is crystal-clear.

Now a day’s Kadugollas are also changing to a new way of life and the number is increasing by the day. In spite of the waves of modernity these people are finding it difficult to uplift themselves academically, economically and politically. Even though they are strong socially and culturally they are economically backward. Only a handful of women are marching ahead with self-esteem.

The huge advancements in the field of science and technology and its influence on our life, the phenomenon of globalization and its effects have made it inevitable for us to change our outlook. External influences have to be encountered in an assimilative manner. Cultural identity has assumed importance these days. Therefore the educated should take the lead to bring women in tune with the social, cultural, political and religious transformations. Development means improvement in the social and economic status of the people and eradication of poverty in a phased manner. If we consider the schemes of the government it is clear that women, especially tribal women have been neglected. The condition of women has to improve if any country has to progress. The contribution of women in the process of nation building is immense and manifold. Hence they are to be incorporated in the process of development as well. Thus not only women but the entire nation progresses.

CONCLUSION

Today many national, international organizations concentrate and indulge in male-centric developmental theories. On the contrary it is the need of the hour to extend the benefit of the schemes of the government to the women who are living in inhuman conditions and to immediately uplift the social, cultural, political and academic lives of these women.

SCHEMES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF KADUGOLLA WOMEN:

- Girl students belonging to this community should be given scholarships and textbooks from primary level to higher education.
- Mobile schools should be opened at places where these communities stay. Thus they are not denied the rights of education.

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- The Kadugolla girl students should be protected from the harassment and exploitation by the staff of educational institutions.
- Nourishing food should be given to mother and child of this community right from the time of childbirth upto the completion of one year.
- Mobile hospitals should be provided.
- A special cell should be created through the National Women Commission for the protection of the rights and safety of women belonging to this community.
- Creating Action Plan for women empowerment.
- Transforming the minds of these women through counseling to bring them out of the age old meaningless and evil traditions.

Voluntary organizations, private organizations, pro-women organizations have to join hands to realize the above goals along with the schemes of the government. Thus the initiative lies not just with one or two organizations and the entire society has to pro-actively fight the cause of Kadugolla women.

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