

Deforestation and Vulnerability of Adivasi Women in Jharkhand

Kalpana Singh

Research Scholar, Department of Economics,
Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University.
Email – kalpnasingh89.singh89@gmail.com

Abstract: *Women experience a host of negative consequences during and after Deforestation. A variety of feminist theories have been used to explore this phenomenon. It is important to posit the need for an ecofeminist perspective on analyzing women's vulnerabilities due to deforestation. An ecofeminist analysis of Jharkhand women's vulnerability in the wake of the deforestation induced natural disaster is main focus. Implications of using ecofeminism in natural disaster research will be discussed. Indigenous peoples are arguably among the most vulnerable populations for a complexity of reasons. Most notable is their substantial dependence on natural resources, making them vulnerable to changes in the quality and quantity of natural resources. The indigenous women of Jharkhand face additional challenges as they are often discriminated against and live in excluded communities in India in general and Jharkhand in particular. They are frequently absent from decision-making processes, and the ecological systems upon which they depend are increasingly controlled by non-indigenous peoples and corporations. This study aims to decipher the gendered impact of climate change in adivasi/indigenous societies of Jharkhand and increase understanding of how these socio-economic systems resulting from their colonial history, more recent efforts at privatization, and gendered roles within the adivasi communities.*

Key Words: *Deforestation, Indigenous people, Tribal women, Vulnerability, Ecofeminism, Jharkhand.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

According to the 2011 Census there are 24, 94, 54,252 households of which 2, 14, 67,179 households belongs to ST population. Total population of the country is 1,21,05,69,573, out of these 10, 42, 81,034 are classified as ST with 5, 24, 09,823 males and 5, 18, 71,211 females. The decadal growth rate of the tribal population during 2001-2011 is 23.7% which is higher than India's total decadal growth (17.6%). The tribal population of India constitutes 8.6% of total population of the country and majority of them reside in the rural areas (90%). (censusindia.gov.in/Tables Published/SCST/dh_st_jharkhand.pdf)

Scheduled Tribes according to Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. This Article says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes. Article 342 provides for specification of tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which are deemed to be for the purposes of the Constitution the Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory. In pursuance of these provisions, the list of Scheduled Tribes are notified for each State or Union Territory and are valid only within the jurisdiction of that State or Union Territory and not outside. The list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State. The inclusion of a community as a Scheduled Tribe is an on-going process. The essential characteristics, first laid down by the Lokur Committee, for a community to be identified as Scheduled Tribes are –

- a) Indications of primitive traits;
- b) Distinctive culture;
- c) Shyness of contact with the community at large;
- d) Geographical isolation; and
- e) Backwardness.

In this paper try to assess the level of vulnerability of adivasi women in remote areas of Jharkhand as tribal communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes, 75 in number known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), who are characterised by:-

- a) Pre-agriculture level of technology;
- b) Stagnant or declining population;

- c) Extremely low literacy; and
d) Subsistence level of economy. censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_jharkhand.pdf

In Jharkhand number of tribals more than 50% of total tribal are resides in the area as Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, Paschimi Singbhum and Lohardaga. While data for 25% to 50% are live in Latehar, Dumka, Pakur, Ranchi Saraikela, Kharsawan, Jamtera, Purbi Singbhum and Sahibganj.

The area of Jharkhand is densely populated with the certain tribal population named as Ho, Khond, Munda, Oraon, Santhal and Gond. In Jharkhand tribal people are vulnerable due to lack of authority and identity crisis while tribal women and girls are most vulnerable population in these areas due to lack of resource utilization. When we focus on the role of women and girls the environmental results are regal. As we know their participation in conservation of nature is primitive. Therefore, the resultant damage and its burden from environmental crisis is also more for them. These increases the problems of their daily life and keep slow their pace of growth and development in that perspective.

Mindless deforestation in the name of development is nothing but a way towards environmental crisis. But our public choice mechanisms and technocratic methods are inherently biased against environmental preservation and conflict prevention. Therefore, the gradual attrition, degradation, and biological impoverishment of the natural environment are inevitable under the existing system, according to Greta Gaard. Ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. (Greta Gaard, 1).

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To analyse the vulnerability reasons for tribal women and girls.
- To assess the causes of environmental degradation.
- If the role of tribal feminine population is firm for conservation.
- Assessment of positive approach for success of Ecofeminism.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this analysis process the 1980's theory of ecofeminism is the breakthrough and different valuable experience of tribal women has been countable. It is exploratory and descriptive research analyses of certain group through new lenses. Ecofeminism theory has itself some assumptions and way to evaluate the role of women and their primitive experiences, does work as data for this paper. This study completed mainly on basis of Content Analysis, where secondary data were the predominant source of information. Data were drawn from relevant books journal, articles, archival records, formal studies and reports, public documents, newspapers, internet websites etc. The vision of women and girls and the lenses of ecofeminism click the new still of development impact on their life.



An image of a distress woman in tribal area due to migration.

4. DISCUSSION:

It is very important to assess the causes of vulnerability of women and girls of Jharkhand tribal population for clear still. Despite social pressure to suppress women, their control over forest-based activities gives them a tool with which they can resist the establishment of a pure patriarchal society. Ecofeminist theory describes that there are live interconnection between women and nature. What are these live interconnections, for the tribal women of Gunduribadi

village, in India's Odisha state, an early morning patrol is essential to conserve their forest, but what they are protecting goes far beyond food security or even their livelihoods. Literally meaning the 'knot of protection', the Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan epitomises the love between brothers and sisters, where a sister ties a rakhi (holy thread) on the wrist of her brother to ward off evil and in turn, he vows to protect her until death.

While the ritual has been practised in the Indian subcontinent since time immemorial, it is quite rare to find a tree being part of it. Yet, the women of Muturkham, a tiny village in Purbi Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, have been tying rakhis on the trees of the nearby Sal forest with a dedicated mission of protecting them for a lifetime. Lead by Jamuna Tudu, close to 60 women has dedicated their lives to protecting the trees from the plundering clutches of forest mafia and poachers. Seeing the women fighting for the forest with such courage and passion, even the men slowly started following the suit. Her relentless pursuit of conserving nature managed to send ripples throughout the country.

In collaboration with various forest committees, she organises awareness campaigns across villages in Kolhan Division.

Undaunted Initiative by tribal women for forest preservation in Muturkham, Jharkhand Muturkham forest saved from deforestation and exploitation under Timber mafia due to collective efforts of tribal women. <https://www.newsgram.com/tribal-women-saved-muturkham-forest>).

Residents of Hesatu village have raised a thriving forest over 365 acres of wasteland without intervention from the state or civil society organisations.



Villager Agni Devi at a papaya garden that is a part of the Hesatu forest.

Their income development pattern allots 30% each for land development, the community, and to feed people who work hard in the forests, the remaining 10% is utilised on welfare.

Jharkhand tribal women tie rakhi to trees, take pledge to protect them on Raksha Bandhan Tribal women of Chakulia village, around 50 kilometers from Jharkhand's steel city Jamshedpur, tied rakhi to Sal trees in a nearby forest and took pledge not to allow anyone cut down forest trees on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan.



Jharkhand Tribal women tie rakhi to trees on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan.

Suryamani Bhagat is an activist with 'Save the forests of Jharkhand movement'; she is the founder of 'Torang' a tribal rights and cultural centre in Kotari Village, Ranchi district in Jharkhand. Suryamani works to save the forest where she lives and preserve her tribal culture. The "Girl Stars" project includes this series of films documenting the stories of girls from the most disadvantaged communities across five northern states of India who, through attaining education, have managed to break the shackles of socio-economic constraints and make successful, self-sufficient lives for themselves. These young women have become role models in their communities and beyond, inspiring girls to go to school and continue their education.

Chami Devi Murmu, 42, is fondly called the 'Lady Tarzan of Jharkhand', not because she has befriended tigers or can talk to monkeys and elephants in the Muturkham Chaura and Kadel Pahar jungles of Saraikela-Kharsawan district.

She is on a mission to protect the local wildlife by saving the forests that have been fast vanishing due to the havoc caused by the timber mafia and Naxal insurgency in the area.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS:

These are some live interconnection exemplary still from Jharkhand, showing authenticity of ecofeminist theory and proof of women nature interconnections (conservation).

The level of vulnerability has been increased due to this process of development. Jharkhand is one of the richest states for natural resources and mining and logging is the industries of basic economy of this state. But the resource depletion and level of deforestation is deteriorating the life of tribal women and girls. They are easily engulfed by the community mafia. And this channel they are going to be harassed mentally, physically, economically etc. Their throughout socioeconomic life converted into zero, nothing remain in their hand.

Deforestation and different kind of resource depletion enforce them to be a beggar, bonded labour victim of human trafficking etc.. Their sustainability became vanish and has been forced to do what they had tamed for. As migration of men for labour work make life complex for their women and girls. Therefore situation is worsening for women and girls.

6. CONCLUSION:

Beyond all these problems they are positively thriving for their life and livelihood and doing far better to be independent.

"In focus group discussions, men and women said that women are especially dependent on the forest, in part because they tend not to migrate for jobs and in part because their traditional tasks include many that rely on forest products. In Jharkhand, women use the forest both for collecting NTFPs and for fuel wood, while men use the forest primarily for tools and building houses. Because women often depend on forest resources like NTFPs (Non Timber Forest Produces) for their family's livelihood, they have become more economically, socially, and politically marginalized as their traditional rights to the forest have diminished. Non Timber Forest Produces (NTFPs) collection and selling is an important source of income as well as it contribute to food security of the tribal communities and forest dwelling communities. With multiple interviews with tribal women who mostly depend upon forest explained that forest produces are collected throughout the year. It not only provides their daily needs but ensures their food security and helps them in lean season of agriculture. It is generally believed that in tribal communities men are farmer and huntsman whereas women are gathers of forest produce. But according to current study it has been explored that tribal are involved with multiple occupations. Apart from agriculture and NTFPs collection they are earning cash income from doing wage labour work in construction sites, mining sites, doing service even through migrating to other places for livelihood search. I found during exploration of rural traditional haat (market) of Manoharpur and Chiria that tribal women from remote villages of Saranda forest area sell seasonal forest products such as mahu, chironji, dori, tamrind, lac, mushroom, kusum, sal and siyali leaf etc. for small cash income which is used for buying oil, spices, salt and cloth. In addition women from less remote areas sell handmade products (Broom, bamboo basket, sabai grass rope and sal plate and bowl etc.) Most of the villages have very low mobility and therefore they are unable to get fair prices for their produce" (sunitha purty.pdf).

Trainings and sensitization for government officials has been important to the issuance of individual rights and was identified as the reason officials are hopeful community rights documents. Kind of project support is vital to ensuring that laws are implemented swiftly and well.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promote deep involvement in target communities. Whenever possible, projects that aim to improve gender dynamics should leverage organizations which already have sustained and deep engagement with the community.
- Advocate for women's inclusion in trainings and governance.

- Weigh benefits of individual versus communal titling carefully before recommending one or the other. • Hold frequent meetings of women's groups to help empower women.
- Use local staff as much as possible.
- Ensure gender is considered in staffing, including at the highest levels, both as a commitment to diversity and to ensure that a variety of perspectives are heard.
- Work closely to build capacity of and provide incentives to implementing partners.
- Support government agencies when possible.

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