

# Situating Tribal Women in Gender Discourse: A Study of the Socio-economic Roots of Gender Violence in Odisha

Indian Journal of Public  
Administration  
64(1) 87–102  
© 2018 IIPA  
SAGE Publications  
sagepub.in/home.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/0019556117735459  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ipa>



**Sangita Dhal<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

Violence against the vulnerable sections of the society arising due to multitude factors in the era of globalisation is a serious matter of social and academic discourse. The growing incidence of violence perpetrated against women in contemporary times is a testimony to the fast-eroding idea of human security in a globalised world, which originates from the patriarchal power structure existing in the society.

Women at large are proving to be the most vulnerable section of the society, who bear the brunt of the ongoing process of social and economic transformations in the 21st century. Globalisation has presented new challenges for the realisation of the goal of women's equality and justice, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. Benefits of the growing global economy are unevenly distributed leading to wide economic disparities, the feminisation of poverty, increased gender inequality through deteriorating working conditions and an unsafe working environment, especially in the rural areas. Violence against tribal women as a legitimate human rights issue is examined within four broad parameters of globalisation, development, displacement and migration.

## **Keywords**

Globalisation, tribal women, patriarchy, gender violence, alienation, migration, development

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Kalindi College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

---

## **Corresponding author:**

Sangita Dhal, 35 I, SFS Flats, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi 110009, India.  
E-mail: [sangitadhal@hotmail.com](mailto:sangitadhal@hotmail.com)

Within each community, nationality and class, the burden of hardship falls disproportionately on women.

—Amartya Sen (2001)

## **Introduction**

Women as a gender category have encountered systemic disabilities woven around socio-political structures of dominance, deprivation and discrimination in the past (Wharton, 2006). Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in last few decades, social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in the various parts of the country. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to the social and economic structure, which is based on the informal and formal norms, and practices. In a rapidly changing social and economic scenario, women are unfavourably placed at the receiving end of the development process and its socio-political consequences in every country. Globalisation has presented new challenges for the realisation of the goal of women's equality and justice, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully (Kimmel & Aronson, 2011).

Benefits of the growing global economy are unevenly distributed leading to wide economic disparities, the feminisation of poverty, increased gender inequality through deteriorating working conditions and an unsafe working environment, especially in the rural areas (Gupta, 2009). The growing incidence of violence perpetrated against women in contemporary times is a testimony to the fast-eroding idea of human security in a globalised world, which originates from the patriarchal power structure existing in the society (Aggarwal, 2012; Jaggar, 1983). This article has been an outcome of my overall engagement in terms of research with grassroots economic and democratic processes in the rural and tribal regions of Odisha, which is today fast transforming into an industrial hub with unprecedented economic activities undertaken mostly in the tribal regions. The present study is an attempt to delve into the real issues of tribal women in Odisha, who are now being exposed to a whole new world of both opportunities and challenges due to the changing nature of the economy, which has brought about several socio-economic constraints for them. These constraints often translate into real-life hardships and even violence due to their exposure to a new work environment where they are constantly fighting for their dignity and rights.

## **Contextual Framework**

Industrialisation and globalisation form the backdrop of the ongoing process of transformation which has impacted the tribal societies in the name of development, progress and modernity. The developmental projects which are mostly located in the tribal districts—rich in natural resources—have caused large-scale

displacement of the indigenous population. Only a small number of affected and displaced people are absorbed in the established projects, while the other thousands displaced migrate in search of better livelihood. This has not only led to substantial environmental cost in the form of deforestation, air and water pollution, climatic change, etc. but also affected the socio-cultural lives of millions of tribal people, especially women leading to dangerous impact on their livelihood, indigenous culture and human security at large (Menon, 1999; Rangaranjan, 2012).

We need to address and understand the structural linkages in which the conditions of women are critically linked to the path of the development policies adopted by the state.

Violence against women is a universal problem, which we live in constant lack of notice or denial. Even if the girl child manages to survive in the womb and takes birth, she is then exposed to various forms of discrimination and deprivation in a family where she is often treated as unwanted. Discrimination against the girl child is a common practice which gets its legitimacy from the well-entrenched tradition of patriarchy (Walby, 1997). Coupled with economic constraints, this social evil gets aggravated when the family needs a male child not only as a natural heir but also to be an additional bread-earner for the family (Kumar, 1998).

As shown in Figure 1, women by birth are subjected to various forms of atrocities manifested through gender violence at different levels of their existence. This starts at the family level even before they are born when they



**Figure 1.** Composite Model of the Causes of Violence against Women

**Source:** Ellsberg and Heise (2005).

are discriminated in the womb. Female foeticide which is rampant in our society is a sad reflection of this reality. The next stage of gender violence takes the form of female infanticide where the girl child is abandoned or killed after birth. The aforementioned forms of deprivation and discrimination of the girl child start at a very early stage of life like lack of basic nutrients in the food intake which is important for healthy growth of the girl child.

The next level of discrimination and deprivation is structured around the gendered perception of the girl child at the community and societal level. This includes entitlements, privileges and opportunities such as access to education and healthcare which are heavily skewed against her. The dominant patriarchal position with respect to women is based on the notion of subordination and dominance. The community and the society have traditionally defined the roles and duties of women which are mostly restricted to the confines of their domestic sphere. This automatically prevents women from entering into the public sphere to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed freedom. Thus, democratic rights are restricted by social and cultural norms, and thereby this creates an adverse condition/situation for them. This whole unjust structural design that is carefully perpetuated over a period of time manifests in various forms of gender violence in the society (True, 2012).

### **Tribal and Non-tribal Stratification: Sources of Inequality and Violence**

Juxtaposing tribal and non-tribal societies and their social structures, one finds that tribal societies are supposedly gender equal with public and private spheres embedded together as compared to non-tribal societies (Ghurye, 1959). The issue of gender violence can be of a different nature/kind in both these societies. In a non-tribal society, nature of gender inequality and gender violence can be of extreme kind due to different socio-cultural factors of which domestic violence is an important manifestation that is often tolerated in a 'culture of silence'. Gender violence is a common aspect of non-tribal societies and is seen to be an intrinsic part of patriarchy. But in the age of neo-liberal market economy and intrusion of alien cultural impacts on tribal societies, one finds increasing violence of different nature perpetrated on tribal societies, in general, and tribal women, in particular.

Today tribal societies in many areas are exposed to the harsh realities of modern life, where they have to negotiate with the changing environment that is fast posing a threat to their existence. This process of transition brings external influences and induces internal challenges that are sometimes detrimental to the socio-cultural fabric of tribal societies. The emphasis on infrastructural projects such as mining, construction and industries has led to forced eviction of people from their roots, thereby depriving them of their livelihood and homeland. This problem of displacement and migration has increased the vulnerability of tribal women and has resulted in violence and atrocities against them. For example, forced migration due to economic reasons (push and pull factors) is a classic example of how tribals are now being forced out of their natural habitats and are

migrating outside to look for livelihood opportunities. Tribal women are seen as different from others due to their inability to imbibe and adjust to dominant cultural attributes, which puts them at a disadvantageous position in non-tribal areas.

Situating tribal women against the backdrop of a fast-changing economy and an insensitive state apparatus reveals the untold misery of this vulnerable section of the society. Growing instances of atrocities and violence against tribal women have characterised the growth trajectory of the neo-liberal regime and exposed the loopholes of the inclusive development model. This sudden spate of violence against tribal women has been accentuated by the economic policies of the neo-liberal state, which has embarked upon rapid expansion of the industrial economy that has made inroads in the hinterlands and tribal regions of the country. Their efforts to preserve the *jal* (water), *jameen* (land) and *jungle* today have turned into a struggle for survival against the onslaught of globalisation. These challenges have an adverse impact on their personal security and have also made severe dent on their indigenous cultural and social life which is a matter of serious concern Rangarajan (2012).

An insensitive state apparatus in collaboration with corporate, contractors and middlemen has done precious little to address the predicaments of the tribal women. In the absence of proper compensatory mechanism and lack of resettlement and rehabilitation policy, tribal women are made to suffer worst forms of deprivation and violence at the hands of officials, contractors, traders and even politicians. Apart from being denied gender justice at the political and economic spheres of their activities, the tribal women are also caught in the crossfire between the state and the Maoist insurgents, who have raised a banner of revolt against the state. Hundreds of tribal men and women have remained imprisoned in several jails in the country as undertrials waiting for justice. The failure to deliver quick justice to them has made irreparable loss to our human rights record at the national and international level. Women in these conflict zones are most susceptible to violence meted out by both the state and the Naxalites (Shah & Sisodia, 2004).

## The Tribes of Odisha

Located on the eastern coast, the state of Odisha is a perfect case study of how a predominantly tribal region of the country with abundant natural resources has turned into a potential minefield of political discord, environmental hazard and economic malpractices resulting due to mining scam, forestland misuse, etc. Tribals or Adivasis constitute 22.01 per cent of Odisha's total population of 43.73 million and 9.7 per cent of the nation's total tribal population. The state has a total of 62 indigenous tribes, out of which 13 tribes are known as 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups' (PVTGs; Mohapatra, 2011).

The state of Odisha occupies an important place in the country having a high concentration of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) population. As per the latest 2011 Census, it is ranked third (numerically) in terms of ST population, whereas its position is eleventh (numerically) in terms of SC population in the country. STs and SCs together constitute nearly 40 per cent of the state's total population (STs 22.85% and SCs 17.13%; see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Population of STs and SCs in Odisha

Total Population of Odisha	419,74,218
Scheduled Tribes Population	9,590,756 (22.85%)
Scheduled Castes Population	7,188,463 (17.13%)
Number of ST Communities	62
Number of SC Communities	93

**Source:** See <http://www.stscodisha.gov.in/> (accessed on 21 February 2017).

The total ST population in Odisha is 22.8 per cent as per Census 2011 and has increased marginally from 22.1 per cent in 2001. As per the 2011 census data, 22.3 per cent are male and 23.4 per cent female (Office of the Registrar General Orissa, 2011). Though it is generally assumed that tribal women do not face patriarchal pressures like other women in Odisha, the Gender Development Index (GDI) shows that of the seven districts with majority tribal population, only Sundergarh and Mayurbhanj have high ranking index in sex ratio and gender equality (Government of Odisha, 2011–2012, p. 262). The tribal population sex ratio has risen from 1,003 in 2001 to 1,029 in 2011 which indicates a positive trend for the growth and development of the girl child (Office of the Registrar General Orissa, 2001, 2011).

## Profile of Tribes in Odisha

- Odisha occupies a unique position in the ethnographic map of India for having the largest variety of tribal communities.
- Although they are found in all the districts of the state, yet more than half of their total strength is found in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Naurangpur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Kandhamal, Baudh, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj.
- These tribes have their distinct cultural identity, belief in supernatural forces, festivities, entertainment, handloom, handicrafts and tribal cultural activities.
- The tribal people express their cultural identity and distinctiveness in their social organisation, language, rituals and festivals. They manage the internal affairs of the village mainly through village council and youth dormitory (Mandaghar in Juang society).

The following data show the various tribes present in Odisha and the areas of their residence (Table 2).

After reorganisation of districts in the state, seven districts fully and six districts partially are covered under the Scheduled Areas of the state. To look after the welfare of Backward Classes, a small unit named Backward Classes Welfare Section was formed in the erstwhile Planning and Reconstruction Department in the year 1946–1947. In order to efficiently address the problems of STs, SCs and OBCs, the Backward Classes Welfare Department was formed in 1948 which was subsequently bifurcated into Scheduled Castes Welfare and Tribal Welfare Department.

**Table 2.** Major Odiya Tribes and Their Areas

Name of the Tribes	Location
Kondh	Keonjhar, Kondhamal, Sambalpur, Bolangir, Koraput, Ganjam and Sundergarh
Santal	Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Keonjhar
Gond	Sambalpur, Bolangir, Koraput, Kalahandi and Sundergarh
Paraja	Koraput, Kalahandi and Sundergarh
Gadaba	Koraput, Nowrangpur and Malkangiri
Koya	Koraput and Malkangiri
Oraon	Sambalpur, Sundergarh, Gunupur and Bonai
Bhuiji	Mayurbhanj, Sundergarh, Keonjhar, Balasore and Pallahara
Juang	Keonjhar and Dhenkanal
Saura	Koraput, Ganjam and Bolangir
Bonda	Koraput and Malkangiri

**Source:** See <http://www.scstrti.in/publication.html> (accessed on 21 February 2017).

Despite the fact that the Fifth Schedule Areas are dominated by tribal communities, the provisions of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996, for transfer of land have been grossly violated by the state agencies.

### **Alienation among the Tribal Masses**

Paradoxically, Odisha, which is a land of natural abundance, is gripped by abject poverty due to several factors such as slow rate of growth of the economy, low literacy rate, overwhelming dependence on agricultural production, continuously higher growth in population, skewed distribution of development benefits, uneven distribution of assets, lack of improved skills and methods of production, large concentration of scheduled population and intra-regional disparity. As per socio-economic status of the state, it can be divided into two broad regions, that is, the coastal region and inland districts. The former is fertile with high yielding capacity of agriculture comprising high proportion upper-caste population. On the other hand, the inland districts are hilly and barren land with vast tracts of forest cover dominated by SC and ST population with primitive stage of economic development. It is needless to mention that socio-economic backwardness of a region is the root cause of mass poverty. As such the incidence of rural poverty in Odisha is found to be highest in India. Further, the prevalence of two different types of administration in the coastal areas whose internal administration was managed by the British and the inland areas who were ruled by the feudal lords, contributed to the uneven development in the state (Mishra, 1984).

The coastal areas with the privilege of having vast areas of fertile soil, irrigation facilities, sound infrastructure base, health and educational facilities, the people residing in these areas have a higher standard of living and therefore enjoy a better quality of life. In sharp contrast, the tribal populations who reside in the hilly districts of western Odisha are cut off from the mainstream and live in a state of abject poverty with very poor basic facilities available to them. As a result of

which there are glaring inequalities in human development indicators between the coastal and inland regions at the level of districts, communities, SC, ST, OBC and gender. However, with the passage of time with the introduction of central and state-sponsored welfare schemes, the inland and hilly areas too have witnessed a thrust on broad-based and inclusive socio-economic growth (Government of India, 2011).

Odisha is not only experiencing regional disparity in distribution of land, assets and productivity, but it is vulnerable to repeated natural calamities such as droughts, floods and cyclones. The recurrent occurrence of natural calamities further exacerbates distress of the people, particularly small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. A disproportionately large proportion of STs and SCs population in western and southern Odisha live rather precariously with very poor economic base. The poverty reduction level is not satisfactory, even after implementing several social welfare measures taken to alleviate the poverty level, the situation has marginally improved, under the impact of globalisation, women and children are generally the worst victims in these regions (Mahapatra, 2012).

### **Globalisation: Political Economic Perspective**

Globalisation has brought unprecedented expansion of economic activities in the unexplored regions of the world which are rich in mineral and natural resources. As a result of this development, the tribal belts across the country have now turned into new hubs of intensive economic activities which include mining, urbanisation and industrialisation. This has led to environmental degradation, deforestation, air and water pollution, climatic change, etc. It has also affected the socio-cultural lives of millions of tribal people, leading to dangerous impact on their livelihoods, indigenous culture and human security at large. For many of them the loss of land is similar to the loss of livelihood/identity. With reference to Odisha, globalisation is creating new opportunities today for economic empowerment and gender equality but at the same time it is posing new challenges to the safety and security of marginalised sections of the society as well.

In the public sphere, the biggest obstacle to participation in socio-economic and political life has been the issue of exclusion and exploitation, perpetuated by a host of historical, social and cultural factors. Besides this, there have been political impediments, leading to systematic alienation of people and their eventual deprivation, which perpetuates not only economic backwardness for many but also creates fissures in the democratic social fabric of the nation. Nation-states in pursuit of the objective of nation-building and economic development have experimented with many strategies in the past to counter the effects of the deep malaise, our social and political systems are suffering from since long. But, no strategy could deliver the much-desired result in terms of bringing about an inclusive, equitable and just society, with economic and social empowerment for all to compliment and supplement the aforesaid twin objectives of the nation-state.

Governance being the pivot, around which everything else revolves, holds the key to the solutions of the problems that remained elusive for long. So, the real challenge was to plug the holes and rectify *governance deficit* through proactive



and innovative ways and strategies. The biggest change that happened in the entire discourse on governance in the last couple of decades is the conscious attempt to refurbish and reorient the sum and substance of bureaucracy and administration by infusing new ideas, methods and strategies.

In accordance with the principles of globalisation, nation-states adopted the neo-liberal development framework (memorandum of understanding, foreign direct investments) to reinvent the process of governance and create new institutional mechanisms that rest more on delivery of efficient and effective services and less on bureaucratic control and administrative indifference. This agenda of neo-liberalism with its thrust of industrialisation and modernisation brought about several far-reaching changes in the remote and rural areas of Odisha. Development-induced displacement, rehabilitation, resettlement and its consequences lead to serious grievances, grave gender and social injustices on tribal population which threatened to erode the tribal culture. As a serious repercussion of the aforementioned changes in the society, a sizeable part of the tribal population of Odisha has moved to the mining, construction and industrial belts of the state, notably the tribes of Santals, Munda, Oran and Ho and in the process many tribal villages have been abandoned.

Adivasis's struggle to preserve their access to *jal*, *jungle* and *jameen* creates conflict between the state and the forest people and often leads to instances of human rights violation by the state. Kelkar, Nathan and Walter (2004) rightly highlight gender relations as a crucial factor in the management of land and forests, and maintains that the continuing invisibility of women in these areas leads to poverty, shortages and increases the workload on women dependent on minor forest produce. Though horizons of women have widened in terms of empowerment and livelihood opportunities today, yet we live in a society that is excessively violent in form and patriarchal in character. Lyla Mehta (2009) draws attention to the injustices perpetuated through development-induced displacement and resettlement processes, which are pertinent issues in the 21st century. There is an urgent need to rethink the development process, which causes marginalisation and displacement and impoverishment of vulnerable social groups.

## **Impact of Globalisation in Tribal Areas**

Embedded in the model of uneven development under the influence of globalisation, neo-liberal policies have increased and deepened tribal exploitation. Exploitation of tribals through human trafficking and bonded labour is blatantly practised in the tribal areas today, leading to tribal land alienation. In this scenario, the migrant women and young girls are often prone to multiple risks and exploited by the money lenders, traders, truck drivers, officials and politicians. The tribal women are often faced with the problem of child care, hostile host community and difficult working environment in the new place of work. In many cases women migrate several times to several destinations with no social security. Mostly the tribes of Ganda, Majhi, Sabara, Bhatara and Juang migrate from Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi (KBK) areas to the states of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh for better livelihood opportunities. A sizeable part of the tribal population

of Odisha has moved to the mining, construction and industrial belts of the state, notably the Santals, Munda, Oran and Ho and in the process many tribal villages have been abandoned (Hans, 2014).

### **Issues Affecting Women Due to Migration and Trafficking**

Due to increasing urbanisation in the last three decades under the impact of the neo-liberal economic agenda of the state, there has been a consistent demand for unskilled labour in the urban areas. Tribal girls are being exported to the cities and towns to work as domestic help by organised groups of traffickers. They act as middlemen who earn large amount of commission by both employing and selling these girls to agencies in such regions. In the absence of strong law to prevent human trafficking, coupled with weak implementation of the existing ones, tribal girls are often subjected to numerous hardships. Due to their ignorance, they are deprived of their basic rights and entitlements, such as right to equal pay for equal work as they are paid less compared to their male counterparts in terms of wages. Sometimes they are made to work under inhuman work conditions with no health care benefits. To make matters worse, they are often sexually exploited and physically assaulted.

Tribal women are generally considered to be vulnerable to the external conditions being created due to the changing socio-economic environment in which they are situated. Under the prevailing circumstances they are exposed to the various challenges and confront several issues in their day-to-day lives. This results in various forms of discrimination, deprivation amounting to violence both structural and personal. Tribal women are hardworking and honest and therefore are exploited due their economic condition where they are often hired to do menial work at a lower wage. Women who migrate often do not have valid identity papers and are sometimes forced to work under pathetic conditions which deprive them of their basic human rights. Few case studies have highlighted the incidents of gender violence in tribal Odisha due to the cyclical processes of development–displacement–migration thereby resulting in exploitation. Under the impact of globalisation, the problems of tribal land alienation, child labour, human trafficking of especially young girls and boys as maids and domestic helpers, working in brick kilns or as factory workers, mines and construction labour have aggravated under the present model of development and uncontrolled market demands (Hans, 2014).

### **Challenges for Inclusive Development**

The biggest issue today in the development discourse is not only about strategies and approaches but addressing the human factor that emanate from the socio-cultural milieu. So the real challenge of development is to address such socio-cultural impediments reflected in terms of alienation, subjugation, deprivation and discrimination of marginalised communities. Here the focus is how to

identify these categories of people and bring them to the mainstream developmental framework. The three important segments of the society such as women, Dalits and tribes form the most underprivileged sections of the society and need greater attention for inclusive development. Women bear the greatest burden of unpaid care work which includes looking after children, elderly or sick family members, cooking and cleaning. The government must take bold steps to recognise the missed opportunities and take corrective action required to address gender inequality. The emphasis must be on strengthening the key institutions, adequate investment for schemes that address gender concerns and the effective implementation of those schemes. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to point out that new opportunities for women's economic empowerment and gender equality today also result in creating new challenges to their safety and security.

### **Contextualising Violence in the Socio-economic Perspective**

The article examines how the tribals, in general, and their women folks, in particular, have been targeted by both the state and the new economic forces operating in these regions. Gender violence among the vulnerable tribal women takes place as they often find themselves at the receiving end of the socio-economic transformation induced by the process of development. Though egalitarian laws are made at the highest levels, they are unmade at the grassroots level. Cases of violation of laws are common such as Minimum Wages Act, 1948, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 and Child Labour, Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986. Oppressive feudal practices like bonded labour are practiced in many parts of the tribal areas today. The growing incidence of violence perpetrated against women in contemporary times is a testimony to the fast-eroding idea of human security in a globalised world. Women at large are proving to be the most vulnerable section of the society. Violence against women stems from the structural nature of the society's entrenched hierarchical structure. Situating tribal women in the overall socio-political milieu against the backdrop of a fast-changing economy reveals their untold misery. Growing instances of atrocities and violence against tribal women can be witnessed in the barbaric systems of hunting/witchcraft/tantric practices which exploit the superstitious beliefs of the vulnerable tribal community.

### **Migration Induced by Globalisation**

Migration leading to trafficking of women and children which is a pertinent issue in the state requires urgent and concerted responses. The process of migration has a negative impact on women—whether they are left behind in the village in case their husbands migrate or in case they too migrate along with the males. Poverty heightens women's vulnerability to violence. Mohapatra (2005) observes that in the name of development, tribal societies, in general, and tribal women, in particular, are at the receiving end as a result of which some tribes have displayed

withdrawal syndrome like the tribes of Paharia, Paraja in the districts of Kalahandi and Bolangir, whereas others have assimilated with the mainstream tribes like Juang, Kondha found in the district of Keonjhar and Phulbani. In contrast, the Bonda and Dongaria tribes of district Koraput, Niyamgiri and Kashipur are the most primitive tribes who are yet to come under the impact of mainstream practices, display primitive production/consumption pattern. Migration leading to trafficking of women and children is a pertinent issue in the state which requires urgent and concerted responses. The process of migration has a negative impact on women in case they are left behind in the village when their husbands migrate or when they migrate along with their husbands. Poverty heightens women's vulnerability to violence which has its roots in the society's entrenched hierarchical structure.

Around seven to eight million people in Odisha have been displaced since 1980 on account of various development projects of which more than 50 per cent are tribals. Existing environmental laws and Forest Acts have been flouted by industrialists leading to pollution and environmental degradation. Tribals consider this as the death of their culture and are against devastation of their ecosystem which forms an integral part of the lives and livelihood. Poor implementation of government policies raises doubts on its commitment for human rights and social security. This situation has been exploited by Naxalites to win over the local tribals especially in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada and Malkangiri. Left wing extremism has emerged a serious challenge affecting the overall internal security environment. The pertinent issue of poor implementation of resettlement and rehabilitation policy for tribal communities displaced by development projects has also led to tribal protests in these regions (Sharma, 2010). There have been many instances where the state has been forced to adopt tough measures against its own people, as in the case of tribal struggles in Kashipur and Kalinganagar. This exclusivist and anti-people model of development has evoked strong responses in the form of contemporary revolts of tribals to re-establish control over common property resources: *jal*, *jameen* and *jungle*. It is this alienation and underdevelopment that have provided a fertile ground to Naxalite groups to set up their base in these districts.

## Addressing Gender Inequality

Gender issues have found consistent mention in government's programmes and policies in order to demonstrate its commitment to gender inequality, which poses a significant challenge in Odisha. The four major areas which reflect gender disparity are

1. economic participation and equal opportunity,
2. education,
3. political empowerment and
4. health and survival.

Equal attention must be paid to better implementation of laws and special measures for the most marginalised women. It is also important to ensure increased

spending on all social sectors, such as health, education and sanitation, given their critical impact on women. All-round development of women constitutes an important component of human resource development. Unfortunately, women have lagged behind and enjoyed a lesser social and economic status as compared to men. The low socio-economic status of women in society called for specific emphasis on programmes for women in various schemes implemented for their overall development. In order to promote an inclusive development process, they have been accorded special treatment under the rural development programmes sponsored both by the state and the central government.

### **Promoting Inclusive Framework for Tribal Development**

With a view to making development more effective through tribal participation, there needs to be concerted efforts to understand and address the issues of tribal people through sustainable measures of empowerment such as

- political representation,
- educational opportunity,
- economic security,
- social justice and
- legal equality.

Odisha's long-pending demand for Special Category State status should be expeditiously considered. The Raghuram Rajan Committee, set up in September 2012–2013, has made a strong case of 'special status' for Odisha which, if implemented, would enable more allocation of central funds and assistance for the state. There is an urgent need for a national framework for larger resource flow to less developed states like Odisha, which have weak infrastructure base coupled with special development needs and high concentration of STs and SCs population. The government has given maximum importance to agriculture, irrigation, infrastructure, education, health services, food security programmes, poverty alleviation, economic development of STs and SCs and human resource development. Official sources said a higher plan size was proposed keeping in view the higher demand from different departments and to achieve the higher growth target (Mohapatra, 2011). The state government is presently using e-governance projects to promote inclusive development and facilitate governance for providing efficient services to the citizens in the spheres of agriculture, health, medicines and education, etc.

The government has also taken steps to strengthen panchayats and enable the tribes to pursue sustainable livelihoods by empowerment through capacity-building and skill development and engaging them with the various stakeholders. For the effective integration of women into development process, women engage themselves in income-generating activities and integrate into market economy with the help of government officials and non-governmental organisations. Consequently, more tribal women have moved beyond the primary sector to secondary and tertiary sectors of employment due to the impact of industrialisation, construction activities, mining, education, impact of Christianity and rural connectivity.

## **Role of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Majority of the poor are not able to derive adequate benefits from the general growth of the economy, which needs to enforce special measures to

- provide employment opportunities;
- improve the economic level of the poor families and
- improve the nutritional status of the poor.

Such measures would lead to increase in the standards of living of the tribal population. As a large proportion of India's tribal population lives in the remote areas, the government of India has encouraged civil society participation for tribal community mobilisation and tribal development programmes through various agencies such as cooperatives, NGOs and CSOs. There are many areas in which the non-governmental organisations and corporate sectors are adopting CSR strategy as a part of their social commitment towards tribal development in the areas of health, education, sports and community development. Community farming has provided livelihood for tribal women and made them confident and self-reliant in the various farming practices.

Over the years, the NGOs have been playing a meaningful role in the development of health and education sectors in terms of service delivery, decentralised community participation, address the issues of malnutrition, raising the level of awareness, thereby empowering the communities. For instance, *Ekjut* is an NGO working on nutritional issues for mother and children in the tribal areas of Jharkhand and Odisha through a collaborative effort based on participatory learning and action (PLA) models. This involves home visits by the NGO workers, health check-up, counselling to pregnant mothers and advice on hygienic practices (Tripathy, 2016).

## **Inclusive Framework for Women's Development**

Efforts are made to empower women in tribal society by engaging various stakeholders and grassroots institutions. By strengthening panchayats, in order to enable them to pursue sustainable livelihoods, the state has responded to various civil society and women's movements by resorting to devolution of power where women's inclusion in local management is increasingly becoming a policy norm (Rao, 2005). Efforts have been undertaken to redefine tribal women's roles and popularise tribal products among urban citizens. In the various towns and cities of Odisha and in India, Adivasi fairs/*melas* are organised at regular intervals to showcase the rich collection of tribal crafts by the tribal groups such as Bhatudis, Juang, Saura, Dongaria, Kondh, Oraons and Majhis tribes. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) and Khadi Board and Village Industries (KBVIC) have been providing opportunities to tribal women, men and youth for economic empowerment.

## Concluding Observations

The socio-economic status of the tribal people is independent of caste, creed and religion, hence, it needs to be contextualised in the larger framework of socio-cultural systems that perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment. Paradoxically, what we call development often proves to be a double-edged sword for the tribals. This one finds true of men, especially their women folk who are often easy targets of violence emanating from the very process that promises better life for them. A lot remains to be done with respect to the social inclusion process, preserving dignity and respect of tribal women. There needs to be concerted efforts to understand/analyse/interpret and address the issues of tribal women. Feminist/women's movements must engage with tribal women instead of putting all women in one blanket category. To ensure that every woman will be empowered, she must get the chance of

- political representation,
- educational opportunity,
- economic security,
- social justice and
- legal equality.

Though horizons for many women have widened in terms of livelihood earnings and social opportunities, yet we live in a society that is terribly violent in form and persistently patriarchal in character. Lot remains to be done with respect to preserving dignity and respect of women in the society. Powerful synergies can be achieved from meaningful partnerships between activists, non-governmental organisations, private sector and the government to achieve the desired social change we are aspiring today. Last but not the least, constant pressure exerted on the patriarchal system of dominance through social movements and constitutional means is going to be the game changer in the 21st century for tribal women.

## References

- Aggarwal, B. (2012). The gender and the environment debate: Lessons from India. In M. Rangarajan (Ed.), *Environmental issues in India: A reader* (pp. 316–362). Delhi: Pearson Publishers.
- Ellsberg, M., & Heise, L. (2005). *Researching violence against women: A practical guide for researchers and activists*. Washington, DC: World Health Organization and PATH.
- Ghurye, G. S. (1959). *The aborigines 'so-called' and their future*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot.
- Government of India. (2011). *Provisional population totals, Census of India: Odisha*. Retrieved from 22 May 2017, from [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data\\_files/orissa/Data%20Sheet-%20Orissa-Provisional.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/orissa/Data%20Sheet-%20Orissa-Provisional.pdf)
- Government of Odisha. (2011–2012). *Odisha economic survey* (p. 262). Bhubaneswar, Odisha: Department of Planning and Coordination.
- Gupta, K. R. (Ed.). (2009). *Gender: Problems and policies*. Chennai: Atlantic Publishers.

- Hans, A. (2014). Scheduled tribe women of Odisha. In A. Hans (Ed.), *Odisha review* (pp. 26–39). Bhubaneswar: Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Odisha.
- Jaggar, A. (1983). *Feminist politics and human nature*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Kelkar, G., Nathan, D., & Walter, P. (2004). *Gender relations in forest societies in Asia: Patriarchy at odds*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Kimmel, M. S., & Aronson, A. (2011). *The gendered society reader*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Kumar, R. (1998). *The history of doing*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Mahapatra, H. (2012). *Know your state Odisha*. Delhi: Arihant Publishers.
- Mohapatra, L. K. (2005). *People and cultural traditions of Odisha, civilization, society, and worldview*. Cuttack: New Age Publication.
- Mohapatra, T. (2011). Tribes of Odisha: Issues of social inclusion, exclusion and cultural assimilation. *Bodhi: An Inter Disciplinary Journal*, 5, 15–33.
- Mishra, R. N. (1984). *Regionalism and state politics in India*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishers.
- Mehta, L. (2009). *Displaced by development: Confronting marginalisation and gender injustice*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Menon, N. (Ed.). (1999). *Gender and politics*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Office of the Registrar General Orissa. (2001). *Data highlights: The scheduled tribes, Census of India*. Retrieved 21 May 2017, from [http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables\\_Published/SCST/dh\\_st\\_orissa.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_orissa.pdf)
- . (2011). *Orissa data highlights: The scheduled tribes, Census of India*. Retrieved 21 February 2017, from [http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables\\_Published/SCST/dh\\_st\\_orissa.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_orissa.pdf)
- Rangarajan, M. (Ed.). (2012). *Environmental issues in India: A reader*. New Delhi: Pearson Publishers.
- Rao, M. K. (2005). *Empowerment of women in India*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.
- Shah, D. C., & Sisodia, Y. S. (Eds) (2004). *Tribal issues in India*. New Delhi: Rawat Publishers.
- Sen, A. (2001). Many faces of gender inequality. (2001). *Frontline*, 18(22).
- Sharma, B. D. (2010). *Unbroken history of broken promises—Indian state and the tribal people*. New Delhi: Freedom Press and Sahyog Pustak Kuteer.
- Tripathy, P. (2016, May). Role of NGOs. *Seminar: Nourishing Tribals* (pp. 40–43). New Delhi.
- True, J. (2012). *The political economy of violence against women*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walby, S. (1997). *Theorising patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wharton, A. S. (2006). *The sociology of gender*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.