

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 AMONG TRIBES IN BANKURA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**Satabdi Mondal**Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University
satabdimondal08@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Tribes are the aboriginals of society and India unlike the other sections of the society has always kept the Adivasis on one side of the society. They are the marginalized who are struggling for existence. Marginalized are deprived from any sort of society's goodness and privileges. We the best creation of the Almighty as quoted has always kept them aloof from the mainstream society. Their run their livelihood through a pathetic situation suffering from extreme poverty, illiteracy, poor health status, accessibility of goods etc. At this heavy point of time, the marginalized are hit back with a drastic social weapon that is Covid-19. Besides them, we are also affected by it in various angles of our life like food, education, political, economic, and mostly health. Thousands like us have lost their lives or their peer's life. At this situation, the marginalized are also not out of the box; even they have and even suffering from all angles of life due to this pandemic. Economy being the base of a social structure has been ruined and shattered that has affected the downstream and mainstream sections of the society. In this paper, we will discuss about how the pandemic has affected the fiscal institution among the tribes in Bankura.

Key words: *Aboriginals, Privileges, Illiteracy, Poverty, Marginalized.*

INTRODUCTION

Adivasis are the inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and they relate that to people and their environment; there are more than 476 million Adivasis in the world stretching from the Arctic to the tropical forests, they comprise of six percent of the global population. They live in extreme poverty nearly three times as compared to non-indigenous counterparts. Irrespective of their region and residence, they account for 19 percent of extreme poor condition and even across international borders. They are the resource house of traditional knowledge and practices, languages and cultures; along with poverty and underlying health status adivasis live in isolated or remote communities with limited health care services or at times nothing. The elderly people of their community plays a significant role in keeping and transmitting indigenous traditional knowledge and culture practices that contribute to health, well-being and recovery of their own and wider and communities. Their social, cultural, economic and political characteristics are distinct from those of dominant societies where they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous people share common problems relating to the protection of their rights as distinct people. Adivasis sought recognition of their identities, way of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources. Throughout history, their rights has been violated; indigenous people were among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of people in the world. Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by epidemics and other crisis. Thus, the international community recognized some special measures that are need for the protection of their rights and to maintain their distinct cultures and way of life.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 AMONG THE TRIBAL COMMUNITY

The tribal's in the inaccessible areas are worst affected by the lockdown if the local administration does not take proactive measures to reach out to them with food grains and other essential supplies. The tribal's already face hunger and suffer from malnutrition but the lockdown, which resulted in restrictions of movement, lack of livelihood sources, and returning of migrant workers, have aggravated the hunger crisis. The lockdown is affecting the traditional livelihood of the tribals as this is the peak season for selling of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP),

also called Minor Forest Produce (MFP) which according to the Forest Rights Act, 2006 include “all non-timber forest produce of plant origin including bamboo, brush wood, stumps, cane, tussar, cocoons, honey, wax, lac, tendu or kendu leaves, medicinal plants and herbs, roots, tubers and the like”. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, MFP is a major source of livelihood for tribals living in forest areas and around 100 million forest dwellers depend on MFPs for food, shelter, medicines and cash income. It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless.

Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays annually in the country. Starvation as since previously they remained excluded from benefits of any of socio-economic schemes such as National Food Security Act, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, rations under the Antodaya Scheme, Prime Minister's flagship health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat, among others. There are more than 476 million indigenous people in the world, found in all regions of the world, from the Arctic to the tropical forests. Indigenous people are more than 6 per cent of the global population. Indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women and girls are often disproportionately affected by epidemics and other crises. Indigenous people are nearly three times as likely to be living in extreme poverty as their non-indigenous counterparts. They account for almost 19 per cent of the extreme poor, irrespective of the region and residence in rural or urban areas and even across international borders. They are custodians of a wealth of traditional knowledge and practices, languages and culture, which includes time tested responses to crises.

In addition to poverty and underlying health status, many indigenous people live in isolated or remote communities, where health-care services are difficult to reach and have limited capacity, or do not exist. The role of elders in indigenous communities is particularly significant as they play a key role in keeping and transmitting indigenous traditional knowledge and culture and practices that can contribute to the health, well-being and recovery of their own and wider communities.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON VARIOUS PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SECTOR OF A SOCIETY

The lockdown measures have had a drastic effect on a large population of poor and marginalized communities as it has caused loss of livelihoods, physical hardships, lack of food and shelter and economic distress. Lack of information on COVID, access to health facilities, and testing kits; lack of information and awareness among the tribals and forest dwellers on the pandemic and required protective measures is a major issue in tribal areas. Tribal settlements are remotely located making it particularly difficult for information to reach these areas. The reverse migration from cities and urban areas also raises concern about spreading of the virus in tribal areas.

a. **Education-** With regard to education Covid-19 has affected in all levels of education from primary to secondary and higher secondary levels. Countries have introduced various policies, UNESCO estimated that close to 900 million learners have been affected by the closure of educational institutions. This has affected in undergraduate education and the significant effect on the post-graduate research community with research into many non-COVID related topics.

b. **Finance industry-** COVID-19 has affected communities, business and organizations globally affecting the financial markets and the global economy. The decline in global stock market festering a volatile environment with critical liquidity levels and to combat these effects Central banks have intervened to ensure liquidity in maintaining and mitigating the economic shock.

c. **Healthcare and Pharmaceutical industry-** The pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for health care systems in India and worldwide. Majority of the health care workers are unable to work remotely. Strategies like deployment of viral testing for asymptomatic or frontline workers is imperative. Increase in healthcare costs, shortages of protective equipment like face masks, ICU members and ventilators, sanitizers have exposed weakness toward patient care. Changes in the dynamics of health care are to ensure leading to massive investment in disease prevention, infrastructure and the accelerated digital transformation of healthcare delivery.

d. **Food security-** The distribution and retailing of food is under strain as people are buying and stockpiling raw materials leading to shortage of food products as milk, pasta, rice, tinned vegetables, animal protein etc. Supermarkets have a huge demand of food products, thus restaurants and cafes were forced to shut down leading to unemployment of the workers and huge loss of the owners. Some who did not stockpile the food materials they died out of starvation.

e. **Social Impact-** During lockdown, social distancing was very prevalent and has heightened fears of increasing levels of domestic violence, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The concentrated time spent in lockdown means that vulnerable people are exposed to abuse and difficult to seek help. There was no interaction between people thus leading to isolation and breakdown of social integration.

Issues of migrant workers among the tribals

Tribal migrant workers were being stuck in cities with either no ration or eating merely one meal a day. Various organizations and individuals in Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh have reported about this. Tribal migrant workers stuck in cities due to the sudden lockdown are more vulnerable than those who are in their own villages. In the villages, some support system exists in the form of community being together, surrounding ecosystems including forests and agricultural products helping them cope better. On the other hand, tribals settling around cities were living without any support system, shelter, food, or water and facing acute hunger and almost a famine-like situation. In addition, they have to often face police atrocities and criminalization, causing mental and psychological distress.

Loss of livelihoods from Minor-forest produce

The lockdown has affected collection, use and sale of minor forest produce (MFP) or Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) by tribals and forest dwellers. Approximately, 100 million forest dwellers depend on MFP for food, shelter, medicines and cash income. The NTFP collection season is from April to June that provides major income support to tribals but unfortunately, it coincides exactly with the lockdown. Since it is forest-dwelling women who are most actively engaged in collection and sale of NTFPs, the adverse impact on women forest dwellers if this season is missed, will be severe, and will have ripple effects on the general health and resilience of the entire family for the coming year. States like Odisha, Maharashtra have come up with guidelines allowing collection of NTFPs.

Issues faced by Pastoral and nomadic communities

Due to the pandemic, migration and seasonal access of pastoralists have been restricted during the lockdown. Many pastoral communities are reported to be stuck in other states/districts without access to rations and fodder for the livestock. Pastoralists are being affected as the milk economy faces severe crisis as procurement and sale has been disrupted during the lockdown.

CONCLUSION

The effects of COVID-19 will continue to constrain India's rural economy from the short to medium term, with labor force participation, wages and consumption in September 2020 persisting below pre-lockdown levels earlier.

in that year. In this context, the near-universal provision of relief points to the critical role played by Government of India in mitigating the effects of the pandemic, while facilitating a gradual economic recovery. The agriculture sector has shown resilience despite the many challenges of the pandemic, including supply chain disruptions and mobility restrictions that impacted labour and input availability. With schemes like PM KISAN poised to spur growth in investment and expenditure in agriculture, the government has the opportunity and platform to introduce similar policy instruments to effectively target relief and accelerate growth in rural communities. There is also need for interventions that support climate-resilient and resource efficient food systems. The pandemic has also demonstrated the strength of India's growing Self-Help Group network (supported by MoRD under DAY-NRLM) in providing its members better access to relief and government welfare programmes. As India continues to deal with the fallout of the pandemic and a contracting economy, this network is likely to be leveraged in the future to improve the efficiency and service delivery of government programmes. The importance of these safety nets is especially pertinent in light of the persistent distress faced by India's reverse migrants, who are struggling to find work in their villages and do not have access to the same level of social protection as other rural residents. In such an employment environment, migrant-specific programmes like the Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyaan, have the potential to substantially address the unmet needs of this population. Non-farm rural development is also a critical complementary agenda with the potential to generate alternate livelihoods and overcome labour market pressures in rural economies.

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