

POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY AMONG SCHEDULED CASTE AND TRIBES

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Abstract

Food security is the foundation of our economic security and economic security leads to national security and other forms of social security. A large proportion 26% or about 260 million (193 million in rural areas and 67 million in urban areas) of Indians are still below the poverty line, according to India's First Social Development Report. Poverty is associated with the financial condition of an individual. The Circumstances leading to poverty are many and hunger and poverty are interesting. The present study aims to assess poverty, socio-economic status and to find out food security through selected families. The area selected for the study was Dharmapuri District. 60 SC/ST families were selected. A scheduled method was used to collect data regarding poverty, socio-status, and livelihood status and food consumption pattern of the families. This study analysed most of the families were medium sized family coolie workers, lowest income and economically weaker section. Food security is the foundation of our economic security which leads to national security and other forms of social security; India has stepped into the new millennium with a quite different social and economic profile. It will be our efforts to bring structural changes in the rural economy through empowerment to women in our development efforts so that the curse of poverty and hunger is banished in the new paradigm of growth and prosperity. A large proportion 26% or about 260 million (193 million in rural areas and 67 million in urban areas) of Indians are still below the poverty line, according to India's first social development Report. Available information on various tribes in India indicates that the majority are nutritionally deficient. The Tribal regions however present a dismal picture, with the balance between life and death being precariously maintained through low paying agricultural wages or distress migration.

Keywords : Poverty, Socio-Economic status, livelihood status, and food security.

Introduction

The World Food Conference convened by FAO in 1974 drew the attention of the world community, for the first time, the urgent need for finding ways and means for assuring food security to the hungry millions of the world. The conference not only recognised food security as the responsibility of the World Community, but also gave the call that no child, women and man should be stunted by malnutrition (Acharya 1983). Food security means not only sufficient availability of food for direct consumption, but also people's purchasing power to buy them for the consumption. It may be added here that even the ability to buy food will not guarantee food security when there is an effective delivery. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government

to devise ways and means by which food is available within the country and people have the means to buy it. This, in turn, would imply for the country to generate employment. The concept of food security also implies implementing policies for supplementing food and nutritional requirements for some vulnerable groups like old and infirm people, expectant mothers and young children. Food, such as not enough, requires nutritional value, which is really needed for keeping the body in proper health. Foods like milk, fruits, vegetables and processed and fortified foods etc. provide nutrition to the health of the people, which has an important place in the philosophy of food security. Further, the efficient and right type of distribution is an integral part of any food security system. Availability of food stocks with the government will be of little use if they cannot be supplied to the people who need them at the right time. As the distribution system takes care of a very large part of the food security concept, it manages the scarcity and shortages which is the central feature of the food security system of a country. Finally, Food Security depends on a stable and secure production base. In its wider context, it would include all avenues allied to agriculture, such as, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, fishery, etc. Nature has given enough resources to sustain food production necessary for a community. Land and water, proper cropping systems, scientific packages of inputs and practices- a;; are at the command of humanity to secure its food. (Ibid). Among the developing nations, India's achievements in reducing poverty and hunger are impressive, but there is more to be done to see a hunger-free India. Recent studies indicate that the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups, despite the implementation of several special programmes for their welfare, remain the poorest among the social groups. Among these groups, people belonging to agricultural labour households and casual labour households are the worst sufferers. While at the all India level, agricultural labour households accounted for 48% of the rural poor, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households in this category accounted for more than a quarter of the total population in rural India 1999-2000. Odisha, a tribal populated state, has been focused on the problem of effectiveness of the food security of tribes.

There has been a debate about the correspondence between economic status/class and caste status (Béteille 1974; Desai 1984; Deshpande 1996; Mukherjee 2000; Sharma 2001). Recent empirical studies also show the low economic status of SCS compared to other social groups like Other Backward Classes and forward castes (Bhagat 2011b). STs on the other hand, constitute a number of tribes who are endogamous but having no traditional social hierarchy similar to caste. Also, their isolation from mainstream communities is well known as they mostly lived in hilly and forested tracts. Out of the 246.6 million households listed in Census 2011, 44.2 million (17.9%) were SC and 23.3 million (9.4%) were ST households. STs have been at the lower end in all indicators of living conditions and household assets. Only one-tenth of ST households have houses with concrete roofs, one-fourth have tap water and half of them have electricity as compared to one-fifth of households with concrete roofs, two-fifths with tap water, and three-fifths with electricity among SC households in 2011. Similar disparities are found with respect to other indicators like access to drainage, toilet and bathroom facilities. The percentage of households using LPG/PNG was just 9% among STs compared to 17% among SCs and 29% among all

households in 2011. Due to lack of access to clean fuel like LPG/ PNG, SCs and STs are heavily dependent on woods, crop residue and cow dung for cooking fuels in both rural and urban areas.

There has been a huge expansion of banking facilities among SC and ST households during 2008 to 2018. The access to banking services is found to have more than doubled - an increase from 19% to 45% among STs and from 25% to 51% among SC communities. This shows that the financial inclusion of SC and ST communities has been rapid as a result of several government programmes implemented through banking channels. The expansion of mobile phones is another significant development during the last decade which also benefited the SC and ST communities. About 48% households reported having mobile phones compared to 31% among STs and 53% among all households in 2018.

Objectives

- To assess socio-economic status of the selected household
- To find out poverty, living condition of scheduled caste and tribes
- To provide food and nutritional security to poor people
- To ensure that people below poverty line, live a dignified life
- To ensure maternity and child benefits reach the needy.

Review of Literature

Cook and Frank, 2008 are of the opinion that adequate food is required for the optimal, physical, cognitive and emotional development and function in humans throughout their lifespan. Tarasuk and Vogt, 2009 considered that food insecurity is not only confined to the poorest members of the population but also the people on moderate incomes who have higher than average costs because of mortgage or loan repayments or people experiencing sudden illness and unemployment.

Burns, 2004 views that extreme food insecurity like hunger is associated with under-weight. Engler-Stringer and Berenabum, 2007 puts that the main reason for going to a food bank is not enough money available for food and other expenses.

In developed countries people face obesity problems. The risk of obesity is 20-40% higher in people experiencing food insecurity when compared with the rest of the population. This obesity is related to chronic diseases like diabetes , cardiovascular diseases and overall health status.

Methodology

The area selected for the study was Vadugachery village in Nagapattinam District because many scheduled caste and tribes families were residing in this area and they live below the poverty line. According to this village randomly selected sixty families. A scheduled method was used to collect information regarding general information, socio-economic and livelihood status.

Food security issue

The food security issues could be analyzed under three major headings

1. Cause
2. Drivers and
3. Symptoms

Causes

The food security problem includes

- a. Globalization
- b. Conflict
- c. Poverty and
- d. Climate change

Drivers

- a) Food shortages
- b) Feed price increases
- c) Food hoarding
- d) Food contamination

Symptoms of food insecurity

- a) Deterioration of health
- b) Deterioration of nutrition
- c) Hunger
- d) Loss of life
- e) Civil unrest
- f) Economic instability
- g) Political instability
- h) Social instability

Steps taken by the government of India to attain Food Security

- a) Green Revolution
- b) Buffer Stock
- c) Rationing and Public Distribution System (PDS)
- d) Food For Work (FFD)
- e) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
- f) Mid-Day Meal
- g) White Revolution

Green Revolution

The Green Revolution was started with an aim to achieve food security in India. Since the launch of the Green Revolution in the 1970s, there has not been a single case of famine in spite of adverse weather conditions in several years. Food grain production increased from about 70 million tonnes in 1990-91 to about 200 million tonnes in 2003-04.

In this revolution, various new cropping techniques with effective machinery, HYV (High Yielding Variety) seeds and chemical fertilizers were introduced to increase productivity. Also, farmers are provided with financial and technical support in many forms by the government under this programme.

The highest rate of growth was achieved in Punjab and Haryana, where food grain production jumped from 7.23 million tonnes in 1964-65 to reach an all-time high of 30.33 million tonnes in 1995-96.

Production in the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Northeastern states continued to stagger.

Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, recorded significant increases in rice yield. Another version of the Green Revolution named The GR 2 has been recently launched by the Indian Government to boost agricultural production in the North-Eastern states of the country.

Buffer Stock

The stock of food grains (wheat and rice) procured by the government through FCI (Food Corporation of India) makes the buffer stock.

The FCI purchases wheat and rice from farmers in those states which have surplus production. The government fixes an MSP (Minimum Support Price) to buy the food grains. MSP is revised from time to time.

A part of this buffer stock is utilised to supply food grains to poor people at subsidized rates. This is done through the PDS (Public Distribution System). The rest of the stock is maintained to meet any eventuality in any part of the country.

In the 1970s, three important food intervention programmes were introduced to tackle the shortage of food:

Public Distribution System (PDS) This system was made to ensure smooth supply of subsidized food items to the poor.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) These services were introduced to provide proper nutrition to poor children.

Food for Work (FFW) This programme was introduced to help the poor to earn food in lieu of some work. The National Food for Work Programme was launched on 15 November 2004 in 150 of the most backward districts of India with the objective of generating supplementary wage employment. The programme is open to all rural poor who are prepared to do manual, unskilled labour. It is implemented as a centrally-sponsored scheme. Food grains are provided to the States free of cost. The collector is the primary officer at the district level and has overall responsibility for planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and supervision. For 2004-2005, Rs. 2020 crore had been allocated for the programme in addition to 18 million tonnes of food grains. Now that the NREGA is in force, the FFW is subsumed within this programme.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is an Indian government welfare programme which provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.

These services are provided from Anganwadi centres established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers.

In addition to fighting malnutrition and ill health, the programme is also intended to combat gender inequality by providing girls the same resources as boys.

The Mid Day Meal Scheme

The Mid Day Meal Scheme is a school meal programme of the Government of India designed to improve the nutritional status of school-age children nationwide. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in Primary and Upper Primary Classes in Government, Government Aided, Local Body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and Alternate Innovative Education Centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas; supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the Ministry of Labour. Serving 120,000,000 children in over 1,265,000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, it is the largest such programme in the world.

White Revolution

White Revolution also known as Operation Flood, launched in 1970 is a project of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), which was the world's biggest dairy development program, that made India, a milk-sufficient nation, the largest milk producer in the world. India hence surpassed the USA in 1998, with about 17% of global output in 2010–11, which in 30 years doubled the milk available per person. It made dairy farming India's largest self-sustainable rural employment generator. It was launched to help farmers direct their own development, placing control of the resources they create in their own hands. All this was achieved not merely by mass production, but by production by the masses.

Life style Diseases and Food insecurity

The lifestyle issues affect the health of the persons and it is one of the reasons of food insecurity also. This needs social support and social benefits of the community kitchen concepts could be useful in addressing the food problems.

Empowering People, Particularly the Women and the Children

The people have to be empowered for the betterment of the society and the nation at large. Women and children suffer a lot due to malnutrition. Women in India do not consume enough food and minerals rich in diet. This leads to various vitamin deficiency diseases and the anemic problem.

Community Garden

Community garden concept has been successful for food security issues. People get adequate food and cereals. People could get vegetables at cheaper rate which in turn would be beneficial for the lower income people to have access to the quality food products,

Public Distribution System

Public distribution system is good for the people who are in want of food. That's why the central government is adopting the Antodya Anna Yojana. PDS or ration shops are famous in India. It is effectively functioning in Tamil Nadu.

Noon Meal Scheme of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu government is implementing the noon meal scheme in a systematic manner. It helps the poor students to get food and attracts them to schools. In a way, a very good human capital is created in this area.

Result and Discussion

The Result of the Socio-economic status revealed that 60% of the families belonged to nuclear families and 40% of the families, joint Families. It was found that 12 out of 60 respondents (20%) were degree holders who had up to higher secondary education (23%), 24 respondents with secondary level education (40), seven (11.7) with only primary education. However , 14 out of 60 were illiterates implying a contract within these poor, middle class families. In other words the illiteracy rate among the women belonging to middle and below middle class families comes to 23 percent. Most of the sample respondents found living in tile houses 27(45%) followed by terraced houses 2 (3.3). Twelve persons live in thatched houses: two in tiled and thatched and that is they had one or two rooms tiled and another portion thatched and five in terraced and thatched. Fifty four respondents (90%) hold temporary joins and only the remaining sixty (10%) respondent work as permanent workers. Majority of the household belong to coolie workers category 29 out of the 60 (48.3%). Ten households each belonged to the category of workers in small enterprises and doing petty business. The number of government employees was six and this included those working as teachers in schools and balwadis. The remaining five were found working in small

textile units and congested areas. The income wise classification of the selected households reveals that the majority of households fell under the category of income below Rs. 3000 per month, that is 33 out of 60 households earning in below Rs. 30000 as their annual income. This group was followed by the income group Rs. 3001-where in 20 households earned this amount as monthly income. Food expenditure is the key indication of the existing economic condition of a community. All the selected families were non-vegetarians. Rice was the staple food of all the families and wheat was consumed occasionally. Pulses were consumed weekly once or twice, only vegetables were consumed weekly one or bi-monthly.

Conclusion

The present nuclear family system has paved the way for the malnutrition problem. If the people are poor and the effect of the nuclear family is more pronounced on the food pattern of the people. Rice is the staple food of all the families in Eachampadi village. They have to be encouraged to consume more nutritious foods. The present study concluded that the majority of the families were medium size families and most of the family members had moderate work and temporary basic income was less than 3000 rupees. They had spent 25% to 30% of their income on living expenses.

“Innovations that are guided by smallholder farmers, adapted to local circumstances, and sustainable for the economy and environment will be necessary to ensure food security in the future”.

- Bill Gates

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