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## Marital relations and family life of tribal women in Kalaburagi district

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### Abstract

Tribes or scheduled tribes were living in forests and as such, they are not civilized to modern society. Female population is more among few of the tribes, but still there is gender inequality as females have possessed subjugated position in family and society. It is highlighted that to a greater extent, females are also engaged in tribe based occupations and are assisting male family members in their tribal occupations. To assess the marital relations and family life of the tribal women, the present study is made in Kalaburagi district. A sample survey of 250 tribal women living in rural areas was made and it was found that the tribal females are illiterates or low-educated. As such, their family status is lower and majority of them are not participating in decision making in their families.

**Keywords:** Marital relations, tribal women, Kalaburagi district

### 1. Introduction

The Scheduled Tribes (ST) or tribals, the most neglected sections of the Indian society have been subjected to economic exploitation and social discrimination for ages. The age old exploitation and repression of the tribal have cut them from the mainstream of the socio-economic and educational development. This state has been largely responsible for their abject poverty, illiteracy and overall backwardness. Due to geographical isolation they have been alienated from the rest of the community as a result of which they have been forced to lead a life of economic and social subjugation.

A tribe is a group comprising families, alone or generations, having its own customs, occupying a specific geographical territory and being independent of, or having little contact with, the dominant national society of the country in which they live (Goodland, *et al.*, 1982) [3]. Scheduled Tribe communities especially those residing in interior and inaccessible areas have had a very raw deal. As Sujatha (2002) points out, interior habitations are small in size, scattered, and sparsely populated. Most of the predominantly ST habitations are bereft of basic infrastructural facilities like transport and communication.

The tribals are also called as 'Adivasis' are living in forests and their main occupation was collection and selling of forest products, agriculture, etc. The tribal were used to cultivate their lands near forests. Tribals were inexorably drawn into the vortex of colonial capitalism, by way of their employment, often forced, hi plantations, mines, and industries, or wherever British capital wanted to draft them into its service. There also developed an adjunct agricultural and economic sector dealing with cash crops and forest-produce dominated by the non-tribal Indian, landowners, forest-contractors, traders and moneylenders, often combined in the same persons and concerns, turning tribals, very often whole families, into bonded and attached labour. This fierce economic thrust resulted into more and more encroachment on tribal lands and increasing economic exploitation and cultural impoverishment (Kamat, 1981) [4].

The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women's status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. They constitute about half the total population but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depends on them. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal

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economy, women continued to play a significant role. Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite exploitation by contractors and managers, tribals are more sincere and honest than non tribals (Awais, *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Tribal societies have been by and large characterized as egalitarian societies especially in relation to the hierarchical character of caste society. However, it cannot be said of women status. Status of women varies in different societies. All societies offer its children the presence of two genders and related roles, according to kinship, sexuality, work, marriage and age. It also supplies the broad guidelines for undertaking these roles through a body of attitudes, specifications, metaphors and myths (Bhasin, 2007) <sup>[2]</sup>.

The family system is also different among the tribes as almost all the tribes are living in joint families. As such, they have bigger families. But, it is highlighted that though female population is more among tribes, still the status of women is subjugated and under the domination of males. Like men, most of tribal women are participating in outside employment equally. Hence, the present survey is made in Kalaburagi district to look into the family life of tribal women.

**2. Objectives of the Study**

The present study is made:

- ❖ To look into marital status of tribal women in Kalaburagi district; and
- ❖ To study the marital relations and family of tribal women.

**3. Methodology**

The present study was begun with secondary literature search and the family life of tribal women was studied. Based on general family life of tribes, a survey of total 250 tribal women was made using interview schedule in Kalaburagi district. Kalaburagi district is located in North Karnataka and is back ward district in Karnataka. The collected primary data from tribal women is analyzed and discussed as under.

**4. Analysis and Discussion**

The primary data collected on age of the tribal women surveyed is presented in the following table.

**Table 1:** Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 Years	04	1.6
18 to 25 Years	29	11.6
26 to 35 Years	65	26.0
36 to 45 Years	84	33.6
46 to 60 years	52	20.8
More than 60 Years	16	6.4
Total	250	100

When primary data collected from tribal women is analyzed, 84 (20.8%) of the respondents are of age between 36 to 45 years followed by, 65 (26.0%) are between 26 to 35 years, 52 (20.8%) are between 46 to 60 years, 29 (11.6%) are between 18 to 25 years, 16 (6.4%) are of more than 60 years and the remaining 04 (1.6%) of the housewives are of less than 18 years age respectively.

Marital status is essential to assess the social life, as it determines the status and respect got due to their husband's

families. Further, marriage gives women social status and there is lower status for widows or divorcees. In this regard, the collected primary data from the respondents is tabulated as under.

**Table 2:** Marital Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried/ Single	05	2.0
Married	236	94.4
Divorcee/ Separated	02	0.8
Widow	07	2.8
Total	250	100

The marital status of the tribal women covered under the present study revealed that, only 05 (2.0%) are unmarried or single, 236 (94.4%) are married, 02 (0.8%) are divorcees and separated from their husbands and 07 (2.8%) are widows.

It is noted that the tribals are backward and poor. As such, it is observed that many of the tribal women are with poor conditions. Consequently, tribal women especially living in rural and remote areas are highly backward as they are living in temporary settlements. In this regard, the residence or nature of building or shelter in which the respondents are living is shown as under.

**Table 3:** Nature of Residence

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Own Concrete Building	23	9.2
Own Mud House	95	38.0
Rented House	50	20.0
Temporary Settlements/ Hut	73	29.2
Tents/ Wandering Shelter	09	3.6
Total	250	100

The nature of residences in which the tribal women are living revealed that, only 23 (9.2%) are living in their own building, 95 (38.0%) are living in their own mud house, 50 (20.0%) are living in rented house, 73 (29.2%) are living in temporary settlements or huts and 09 (3.6%) are living in tents and wandering shelters. It is surprising to note that only few of the respondents are living in their own concrete buildings and considerable portion of the respondents are living in own mud houses. It shows that majority of the respondents have poor status with regard to their residences.

To assess the social status, it is essential to know about the type of the families of the respondents and in this regard the collected primary data is shown as under.

**Table 4:** Type of Family

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Joint	156	62.4
Nuclear	94	37.6
Total	250	100

It is noted from the above table that majority that is, 156 (62.4%) of the housewives surveyed are living in joint families, whereas only 94 (37.6%) are living in nuclear or single families. It is noted that due to modernization, there is increase in nuclear families, but majority of tribes are living in joint families with all their relatives together.

As majority of the respondents are living in joint families, the family management is difficult in terms of decision making. In this regard, following persons or family members of the respondents are managing the families in terms of decision making in families.

**Table 5:** Management of Family and Decision Making

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Parents/ Parents-in-law	121	48.4
Husband Alone	98	39.2
Husband & Self	15	6.0
Brothers/ Sisters	--	--
Self Only	09	3.6
Any Other	07	2.8
Total	250	100

On the management of family and decision making, among the tribal women, 121 (48.4%) have expressed that their parents or parents-in-law, 98 (39.2%) have stated that their husbands are making the decisions on their own, only 15 (6.0%) have remarked that they are making decisions and managing family along with husband, 09 (3.6%) have agreed that they are managing family and making the decisions on their own and 07 (2.8%) have mentioned that the other persons like their children are making the family decisions. In terms of decision making and managing family, only a few of the tribal women have such authority and status and a great majority of the tribal are deprived from decision making the managing family activities.

The tribal women don't have any authority to make the decisions in their families, but the elderly persons like their parents and parents-in-law have such authority. It is also noted that in many of the families, husbands of tribal women are making decisions; it shows that there is male domination in many of the tribal families. As such, it was asked to the respondents to define their status compared to the male members in family and the collected primary data is as under.

**Table 6:** Status of Tribal Women Compared to Male Family Members

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Higher	--	--
Equal	21	8.4
Lower	229	91.6
Total	250	100

It is surprising to note that, only 21 (8.4%) of the housewives have equal status in their families compared to male members, whereas almost all that is, 229 (91.6%) have lower status in their families. It is surprising to note that a great majority of the tribal women don't have equal status compared to male members in their families. It may be due to their social culture, the tribal women are deprived from equal social status.

Almost all the respondents are married and majority of them are living with their husbands. As such, information was gathered from the respondents on the marital relations with their husbands and presented in the following table.

**Table 7:** Marital Relations with Husband

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Best/ Cordial	92	36.8
Very Good/ Friendly	65	26.0
Satisfactory	79	31.6
Not Satisfactory	--	--
Not Applicable	14	5.6
Total	250	100

Marital relations with husbands as stated by the housewives shows that, 92 (36.8%) have stated that they have best or cordial relationship with their husbands, 65 (26.0%) have expressed that they have very good and friendly relations with their husbands, 79 (31.6%) have remarked that they have satisfactory relationship with their husbands and it is not applicable to 14 (5.6%) of the respondents as they include widows, divorcees, separated and unmarried respondents. It is highlighted that marital relations are very good or best among tribal women.

As there are good marital relations with their husbands as stated by the tribal women, it was asked to the respondents on the types of treatment, while making the decisions and family matters. The collected primary data is presented in the following table.

**Table 8:** Treatment of Husbands in Family Matters

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Violent, Abuse & Neglect	10	4.0
Dominant & Suppress	96	38.4
Co-operate & Equally Treat	73	29.2
Always Give Importance	57	22.8
Not Applicable	14	5.6
Total	250	100

On the nature of treatment given by the husbands of the tribal women in family matters, 10 (4.0%) have stated that their husbands are violence, abuse and neglect them in family matters, 96 (38.4%) have agreed that their husbands are dominant and suppress them in family matters, 73 (29.2%) have felt that their husbands are cooperate and treat them equally in family matters, 57 (22.8%) have mentioned that their husbands always give importance to them in family matters and it is not applicable to 14 (5.6%) of the respondents as they include separated, divorcees, widows and unmarried respondents.

**5. Concluding Remarks**

The study covered more middle aged married women and majority of tribal women are living in rural areas. It is noted that a few women are also living in hilly and remote areas of the district. It is revealed that majority of tribal women are poor as they are living in own mud house or temporary settlements or huts in slum areas. In majority of the families of tribal women, decisions are made by elder males that are parents or parents-in-law and in few families husband of women respondents are making family decisions, it shows that there is no or lesser status for women in family. Only a few of tribal women have decision making authority in their families. It is suggested to tribal society to give equal status and respect to tribal women in family and society.

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