

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF HEALTH AND NUTRITION AMONG TRIBALS

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Abstract: Health is the foundation for human life. Life is meaningless without health. Equality is only if this health is available to all. Equality preached by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is not only socio-economic-political equality but also health equality. Society is healthy only if every individual is healthy. If the society is healthy, the nation is also healthy. However, it is a tragedy that the tribal community in our country is suffering from sickness without proper direction. Illness and malnutrition are the scourges of the tribal people. Poverty, illiteracy and lack of political will are the reasons for this malaise of the tribal community. As it is important to get social, cultural, economic and educational representation for every person of the society, is equally important to get health services. Honest implementation of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's thoughts is the real solution to get rid of this inequality.

Keywords: Health, Tribal, Tribes, Nutrition

INTRODUCTION

Health and nutrition are the keys to any child's happiness. Health is happiness. Health is peace. Health is the secret of man's success in life. It is the right of every child to be healthy and happy. However, today it is a tragedy that the children of the tribal community are suffering from malnutrition. Dr. BR Ambedkar preached equality. But, what he said was not only socio-economic-political equality, but also health equality. Exploited class and tribal communities should not be deprived of health facilities. There are 705 tribal groups across India. According to the 2011 census, the population of tribal people in India is 104 million. That is, 8.6 percent of the country's population belongs to tribal communities. According to recent data, 4.7 million tribal children in India suffer from chronic malnutrition. In this, 40 percentage are under 5 years children. Especially 16 percent of children are suffering from severe malnutrition. 80% of the children belong to eight states namely Karnataka, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha. This type of malnutrition adversely affects children's growth, education and personality development. On the one hand, there is malnutrition, on the other there are health problems. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, viral fevers, diarrhea, hereditary diseases...so many types of diseases plagued the tribal community. It is said

that 90% of the tribal communities in India are settled in rural areas, and some are still settled in forests. Many of them are illiterate. They have less knowledge about health. They do not have proper healthcare facilities. They are isolated and neglected. For this reason, they are more exposed to diseases. Meanwhile, these health problems and malnutrition have robbed the tribal community from their comfortable life. It is regrettable that even after 70 years of independence, their condition has not been improved.

What is Health?

According to the World Health Organization, health is not only freedom from disease, but also physical, mental and social well-being. The health status of any individual depends on the health awareness of that individual, the region he lives in, his socio-cultural, economic, educational and political factors.

Major Health Problems of Tribal Community:

- **Malnutrition:** Malnutrition is the lack of nutrients, excessive or unbalanced consumption of nutrients. The food we eat should contain adequate amounts of carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, vitamins, minerals and fiber. Deficiency of any of these is considered malnutrition. The consequences are;
 - low birth weight
 - low body mass index
 - anemia
 - Iron and vitamin A and B deficiency
- **High infant mortality rate:** As per 2011 census, the infant mortality rate among non-tribals is 62 compared to 74 among tribals.
- Communicable diseases like Malaria, Filaria, Skin diseases, Tetanus, Jaundice, Typhoid, Cholera, Diarrhea, Leprosy, Viral fevers etc.
- Alcohol and tobacco addictions, especially in the North-Eastern part of the country
- Hereditary diseases like sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, thalassemia
- Accidents and injuries due to burns, falls, animal bites, snake bites, violence due to conflicts, vehicle accidents etc.
- Psychological problems like exploitation, abuse, neglect, coercive depression, irritability, depression, stress, anxiety, frustrations.
- Sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, Hepatitis-B, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea etc.
- Non-communicable diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, stroke etc.

The reasons for the major health problems of the tribal community are;

Poverty: 20.5% of non-tribals are below the poverty line, while 40.6 percent of tribal community people are below poverty line. These people don't go to hospital because they don't have money. For example, 27% of tribal women give birth at home instead of going to hospital for delivery.

Illiteracy: 31% percent of the non-tribal people are illiterate, while 41 percent of the tribal people are illiterate. Because of this illiteracy these people have very minimal knowledge about health.

Lack of health facilities: Tribal people mostly live in rural areas and lack proper basic health facilities.

Lack of pure drinking water: Due to lack of clean drinking water these people succumb to many diseases.

Traditional Health Care System: Tribal people do not have much faith in modern medical system. They follow traditional healing practices. Herbs, plants, roots, stems, leaves are their medicines. They have more faith in divinity and supernatural forces than in science.

Ignorance of the causes of diseases: How do people spread diseases? What are their effects? How to prevent them? Neglect of these issues is also a major cause of their health problems.

Marriage within Consanguinity: Due to lack of scientific knowledge these people have been marrying within consanguinity from generation to generation which has led to many hereditary diseases.

Poor hygiene practices: Poor sanitation and hygiene practices among these people is also a major cause of health problems.

Political Neglect: Lack of political will for the development of these communities has also led to these people facing many problems.

Failure of government policies and plans: 70 years after India's independence, the failure to improve the standard of living of the tribal people is one of the reasons for their problems.

These are the main factors that cause many health problems in tribal people. To overcome these problems, we need to think about the following methods.

- To have a strong will to overcome the problems of tribal people like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.
- To undertake effective programs to create mass awareness about health among tribal people.
- Establish hi-tech hospitals in tribal areas, appoint qualified and skilled doctors, thereby providing them honest healthcare.
- Conducting regular medical check-up camps for these people, thereby detecting their diseases and providing free treatment for those diseases.
- Providing social and economic incentives to tribal people.
- To carry out food security related programs for these people, thereby providing them with nutritious food, developing healthy eating habits among them and eliminating malnutrition among them.
- Providing clean drinking water to the areas where those people live.
- To inculcate cleanliness habits among them. Making plans regarding the cleanliness of the environment they live in.

- Explain the disadvantages of marrying into consanguineous relationships, preventing potential genetic abnormalities.
- Taking special care for the health of pregnant mothers and babies.
- Guiding the youth so that they do not fall prey to any vices and channelize their energy into constructive activities.
- Appointing specialist counselors to address mental illnesses among tribal people.
- In order to effectively implement the projects related to their health improvement, involving the local tribal people in the formulation and implementation of those projects.

If these initiatives are effectively pursued, the health conditions of the tribal people can be improved to a great extent.

Report of the Expert Committee on Tribal Health in India

In 2013, the Government of India in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, a 12-member expert committee was formed to study “Tribal Health in India” under the chairmanship of Dr. Abhay Bong. The committee aimed to study the health gap between the tribal people and the general population and future directions to bridge this gap. After studying accordingly, this committee submitted its report to the central government in 2014. This report is the first report on Tribal Health in India. The Committee has made the recommendations for improving the health of the tribal community.

Conclusion

Thus, although many efforts have been made to improve the health of the tribal community, improvements are not taking place in the desired way. About this. Extensive discussions are to be had. Special consideration should be given to the health of the people of the tribal community. Whatever the causes of their illness and malnutrition, solutions should be our goal. Sincere implementation of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's thoughts is the real solution to overcome this ill of this society.

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