A study on
Life style of Soliga Tribes at Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary - A Social Work perspective

ABSTRACT

**Background:** The population of Scheduled Tribes in the country is 8.43 crore, which is 8.2 per cent of the country total population. The tribals are living in plains, forest hills, and inaccessible areas. The facilities implemented by the Government have not reached most of the tribal areas, and even today they are living in harsh conditions without basic facilities. In the name of forest policies and development projects like dams and hydro projects, as also conservation, tribal areas are declared as Tiger Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuary, and National Parks. Due to this tribals are displaced from the forest and provided inadequate rehabilitation facilities by the Government. Even today they are facing displacement problems and are in danger of losing their culture. Constitution provisions are available for the development of tribals from various schemes and programmes, but they are still facing a lot of difficulties.

The Soligas in the BRT Wildlife Sanctuary of Chamarajanagar district have been facing different problems over the years. The Government of Karnataka identified these problems and had conducted a Mini Cabinet meeting on 11.1.2002 at B.R.Hills, Chamarajanagar district under the leadership of Sri. S.M. Krishna, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka for further discussions. The Soligas were dependent on the collection and sale of NTFPs for their livelihood, but in 2004 the Government banned it citing Section 29 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and did not provide any alternative employment for them. Due to this they faced livelihood insecurity. The study analyses the profile of the respondents, their literacy, occupation, social structure and functions related to their tribal council, social justices system and disputes faced by the Soligas, awareness of the younger generation towards the tribal council, sources of income from the forest, livestock, labour, agriculture, landholding, agricultural cultivation, consumption patterns and expenditure, migration problems, the status of the cultural practices and adopting outside culture, health problems, developmental programmes implemented by the Government and NGOs, and the different socio-economic and cultural factors affecting the life style of the Soligas.
**Methods:** Systematic methodology procedure has been adopted for the study which includes aim of the study, objectives of the study, research design, place of study, universe and sampling, sources of data, tools and techniques of data collection, pre-testing, main study, data processing, limitations of the study, and random sampling of disproportionate weightage methods adopted to collect the primary data. The total size of the sample is 370 families chosen from the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary area. Lottery methods were used for the selection of 36 Podus and 370 families as respondents. Disproportionate weightage was used and importance was given to the Podus with lesser families. Household heads of the family/responsible person of the family were selected for the data collection in order to satisfy the objectives of the study. A explorative research design was adopted for the study intended to find out the life style of the Soliga tribes.

**Results:** The Soligas of BRT Wildlife Sanctuary have a number of basic problems, the ban on the collection and sale of NTFPs being the first among them. For their development but it has not reached the grassroots level and hence they continue to live in poor conditions. The life style of the Soliga tribe in the study highlights that although the literacy level is increasing among their children, the social structure and social function of the Soligas are still traditional. Another fact observed is that they have started approaching the new legal system of police station and court for settling their disputes. The Soligas were earning their income from various sources like forest, livestock, agriculture, and labour work. The forest income gradually decreased as a result of the ban on the collection and sale of NTFPs ban. Soligas started migrating in search of employment which in turn affected their children education and culture. Soligas are following their traditional culture, but over a course of time they have started adopting the Hindu cultural festivals also. They lack proper health services, housing, drinking water, road, and electricity due to the forest policy. They have received very little benefits from the Government over the years and are still facing different problems.

**Conclusion:** The Soligas have received minimum benefits from the Government, while majority of the benefits have failed to reach them and the some of the benefits were unequally distributed. Somehow the Government has managed to provide the public distribution system, housing, land, road, drinking water, and
electricity for few of the families and has also started educational intuitions in tribal areas. But still the Soligas are facing difficulties in reaching getting facilities like drinking water, housing, electricity, road, education, and health services. Under the Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan (SCA to TSP) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution, the Government can implement schemes more effectively at the grass-root level. To some extent the NGOs have helped the Soligas in their upliftment and have motivated them to get benefits from the Government and sustain themselves. The changes that have been taken place in the forest policy from 1974 to 2011 in the BRT Wildlife Sanctuary under the wildlife Protection Act, 1972 has affected the livelihood of the Soligas. In answer to which the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act,2006 has given constitutional provisions and opportunities to the Soligas to obtain individual, community, and basic rights in the Wildlife Sanctuaries, National parks, Tiger reserves and other protected areas. So if the Government could implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006 effectively in the tribal areas most of the forest based problems of the Soligas could be solved. The social work methods of case work, community organisation, group work, social action and social research knowledge, techniques, and skills can be used to help the Soligas community to improve their life style and help sustain them.