



SOCIO- ECONOMIC FEATURES OF BUYERS AND SELLERS IN TRIBAL MARKETING IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

In the graded socio-economic inequal structure of Indian society, the tribals are at the lowest rung and being poor, lead a substandard and subsistence living. The traders, money lenders, contractors, etc., sordidly exploit the tribals as the latter are innocent and illiterate. The tribals constitute 8.61 per cent of total population of India. Though they are called by different names in different parts of the country, they have in common, many socio-economic and cultural characteristic features. To ensure social, economical and political justice to this suppressed segment of the Indian society, the Constitution of India envisaged that the State shall protect the tribals from all forms of exploitation and take steps to promote their educational and economic interests.

Key Words: Tribal, Economy, Buyers, Sellers.

Introduction

The tribal people of India are often referred to as Vanajati, Vanavasim Pahari, Adimjati and Anusuchit Janjati. All these different names signifying them as castes of forests, inhabitants of forests, hill dwellers, aboriginal communities, forest settlers, folk people, primitive people or scheduled tribes respectively. The tribals put a brave front to all the calamities and in hospitability of man and nature and tried to retain unique identity and simplicity born and brought up in the lap of nature, they never lost contact with their roots. They were an encapsulated society living in the hills and forests for centuries. Being early settlers of India, they have tried to retain many traits of primitivism. Recently, however, the traces of civilization have started surfacing here and there. A process of social change seems to have set in many tribes. Shandy is a market place where the buyers and sellers of the surrounding villages gather once in a week. These shandies offer a variety of goods at competitive rates by private and public agencies. Thus the present study of shandies in Srikakulam District has been chosen as they constitute the centre of business activity and are the pulse beet of the tribal economy.

Review of the Literature

Speaking on economic location of periodic markets, Stine¹ stated that “periodic marketing will result whenever the firm’s limit exceeds the range of goods produced, or whenever minimum number of customers required to support the firm is less than the number of potential customers living within the distance, a customer will travel to purchase the goods”. The model points out that periodic markets for frequently consumed goods will be replaced by permanent shops or daily markets where there is a high demand. Most of the periodic markets are primarily rural in nature and perform the function of collection centres for local produce moving towards urban places. Mangal Singh² observed that rural periodic markets frequently operate along with urban daily markets. The coexistence of rural periodic and urban daily markets indicates a potential transition towards permanent commercial activities in modernizing urban areas. The logical end to this transition is the birth of a large daily market with permanent shops with retail and wholesale market areas. In India, even in the present day it is not uncommon to come across periodic markets in towns and some of the cities which have got daily markets. It is interesting to learn that Bromley³ brought to light the continuation of periodic markets as weekly peaks of activity at daily market sites or as separate weekly markets which continue to exist in urban places are used by part-time and mobile traders. The mobile traders have circular routes within the urban area, visiting different markets on each day of the week. According to Charles Good⁴ the periodic market systems are significantly influenced by the development of infrastructural facilities like, laying of new roads, communication facilities, etc., in the area in which the shandies are located. He further observed that modernization of agriculture through scientific methods of cultivation, using of chemical fertilizers and pesticides would increase the productivity which in turn would enhance marketing activity and make the marketing system more effective, measures to promote economic development to ensure a substantial rise in the incomes of the people is found to be highly essential. In consequence of the interaction of the above factors, the frequency with which the markets meet increases, and a wider range of goods with trader specialization is offered for sale. The impact of the various developmental activities in the tribal economy is that the consumer’s demand for a variety of urban goods increases. The traders visiting the shandies would thus prefer to establish locationally fixed shops, rather than be mobile by moving from one shandy to another.

Statement of the Problem

Srikakulam District has been chosen for the present study due to several reasons. Firstly, this is the district in the State having the highest density of tribal population in the agency areas, Secondly, this is the only district in the State where the programs of Integrated Tribal Development Agency have been initially implemented. Thirdly, Seethampeta is a tribal block where several tribal development programs were implemented. Fourthly this is also the district in the State which has gone through a historic and violent revolt, namely, Naxalite Movement⁷ by the tribal population as a reaction against various forms of injustice done to them by the money-lenders and the private traders from the plains and lastly the researchers native place i.e., Srikakulam town is more accessible to these six shandies. This study is aimed to throw light on the ways in which the development of a reasonably scientific marketing system helps the tribals to mitigate their miseries and injustice done to them by certain sections of the society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic profile of buyers and sellers in the secret tribal area.
2. To suggest the steps to be taken for improvement of socio-economic lot of the tribals.

Methodology of the Study

The study is based on the primary as well as secondary data. The secondary data were collected from Books, Journals, periodicals, websites and bank manuals, files and records. The study depends mainly on the primary data collected through well-framed and pre-tested structured schedules to elicit the well-considered opinions of the respondents. The main tools adopted for the investigation were two printed schedules –one for the sellers and the other for the buyers visiting the shandies.

Discussions And Results

Social Profile of Buyers

Age

Age reflects maturity of mind in a persona. An elderly buyer can buy more wisely than his younger counterpart. Table 1.1 presents age-wise distribution of the buyers visiting the shandies under study. It can be observed from the table that majority of the people (82.65 per cent) attending the shandies to purchase various goods and services come under age group of 20 to 49 years. Among the tribal buyers around 33.33 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 30 to 39 years followed by around 27.05 per cent and 23.67 per cent who are in the age groups of 20 to 29 years and 40 to 49 years respectively. However in contrast to the tribal buyers, a majority, that is around 79.56 per cent of non-tribal buyers were in the age group of 20 and 49 years. A glaring feature was that among the tribal groups only around two per cent were in the age group of 15-19 years while among the non-tribal only around three per cent are in the same age group. It was further noticed that among the tribal groups around 14 per cent were in the age group above 50 years while it was around as much as 17 per cent amount the non- tribals.

Table 1.1 : Age Composition of the Buyers

Age (Years)	Tribal		Non - Tribal		Total	
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage
15-19	4	1.93	3	3.22	7	2.33
20-29	56	27.05	27	29.03	83	27.66
30-39	69	33.33	25	26.88	94	31.33
40-49	49	23.67	22	23.65	71	23.66
50-59	24	11.59	10	10.75	34	11.34
60 above	5	2.43	6	6.47	11	3.68
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100.00

The causes for the low arrival of buyers in the first age group namely 15-19 years among both the groups were that they were still in the youth stage and to a great extent depended upon their parents for their subsistence. As such the parents made the purchases on their behalf. The second reason was that the people in this age group engaged themselves in education. They may not like to visit shandies for purchases, on the other hand they prefer to make purchases in local established shops rather than from weekly shandies.

Gender

It is found that 80 per cent of tribal people were males and the rest were females³. Among the non-tribal buyers, 85 per cent were males and the rest females. In the case of these people, because of the long distance it was mostly the males alone that came to the shandies and made the purchases. The notable feature among Savara tribals is that they visit the shandies with their family members unlike their counterpart tribes viz, Jatapus and Gadabas.

Family Consumption

The members in the family were divided into adults and children (below the age of 10 years). The average size of the family in both the tribal and non-tribal groups was around three persons, consisting of one child and two adults. The family composition of the buyers is brought to light in Table 1-2. Around 48 per cent of the family respondents had one to two adults and around 48 per cent them had two children. It is surprising to note that the number of families with a large number of children is very low accounting for 13 per cent similarly there are around 13 per cent of the families where there does not exist children at all. There are three reasons for the existence of large number of families with no children and also with less two than children. Firstly, a large majority of the respondents in the sample are middle aged persons and their children would have crossed 10 years of age. Secondly, as majority of the sample households are middle-age persons, it is natural that their sons or daughters will leave them soon after they get married. Thirdly, the vigorous influence of the family welfare programmes. The other possible reason could be the high mortality rate among the children due to malnutrition disease and scanty medical facilities.

Table 1.2 : Family Composition of the Buyers

No. of Adults	Tribal		Non - Tribal		Total	
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage
1-2	107	51.69	37	39.78	144	48.00
3-4	78	37.68	45	48.38	123	41.00
5&Above	22	10.63	11	11.84	33	11.00
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100.00
No. of children						
Nil	20	9.66	18	19.36	38	12.67
up to2	108	52.18	37	39.78	145	48.33
3-4	51	24.64	27	29.03	78	26.00
5&Above	28	13.52	11	11.83	39	13.00
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100.00

Literacy

The high rate of illiteracy among the tribals highlight the absence of adequate schooling facilities in the tribal areas which actually means lack of communications. Low level of literacy has far reaching implications on the tribals hand to mouth existence and on the success of the various development programmers. The literacy standards of buyers attending the shandies is brought out in Table 1.3 About 39 per cent of the buyers were illiterates and only 37 per cent of them had primary education. A deplorably low figure of 24 per cent of them claimed to have had secondary education.

Table 1.3 : Literacy Standards of the Buyers

Literacy Standard	Tribal		Non - Tribal		Overall	
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage
Secondary	57	27.54	15	16.13	72	24
Primary	66	31.84	45	48.39	111	37
Informal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Illiterate	84	40.62	33	35.48	117	39
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100

Thus the problem of illiteracy is widespread and rampant in the tribal areas. The literacy level of the tribals in the District was 51.68 per cent as per the 2011 census and it was at the lower rung of the ladder and far from satisfactory when compared to the State literacy level, which stood at 72 per cent. Due to the low rate of literacy, the innocent tribals were unable to appreciate and realize the benefits of the various development schemes being implemented by the Government from time to time.

Education programmes have made their way into the tribal pockets by the opening of a number of primary, Ashram and secondary schools. However, the response from the tribal in the beginning was very poor and far from satisfactory. A research study conducted in the tribal areas of Adilabad district of former Andhra Pradesh had thrown light on some interesting facts. The study exposed⁵ that 59.8 per cent of the school-going age children were not attending schools. During the field study it was observed that the Ashram Schools were playing a vital role in the process of imparting education to the tribal children, even though the number was at a surprisingly low level.

The causes for the tribal children keeping themselves away from schools were largely economic and social. Absence of social awareness of the parents towards education and their preponderance on economic pursuits were considered to be a reason for them not to insist on their children going to school. Many of the tribal children of the school-going age were engaged in household work, minor agricultural work, grazing cattle and collection of minor forest produce. Dhebar Commission had rightly said that, “for a tribal family to send its grown up boys or girls to school is not an economic proposition as it entails dislocation in the traditional pattern of division of labour. Girls help their mothers in the work at home, while the tribal boys extend a helping hand to their parents during the agricultural season. During the rest of the season the children are busy collecting minor forest produce and fire wood, grazing cattle, watching the crops, hunting and fishing. The tribal parents whose income was meager just could not afford to send their children to school by forgoing the above activities”⁶. Thus it was perceived that poverty was the root cause for the tribal parents to undermine the significant role of education. The general notion of the parents was that they would be deprived of the income by sending their children to school.

Economic Profile of Buyers

The occupational pattern of buyers in the shandies shows an uneven distribution. Occupations other than cultivation are more or less supplementary and subsidiary to agriculture. As the income earned from the main occupation, namely, agriculture, is grossly inadequate to sustain the tribal family throughout the year, they engage themselves in other allied occupations like collection of minor forest produce, or engage in agricultural or other manual labour. Table 1.4 shows the major occupational pattern of the buyers attending the shandies. Agricultural was the main occupation of the tribal buyers consisting of 24.15 per cent. This is closely followed by 23.67 per cent of them being engaged in the collection of minor forest produce. Since, the difference between these two occupations is only marginal, both these can be termed to be the major occupations of the tribal people. Collection of minor forest produce like tamarind, myrobalams, nuxvomica, mohwa flower and seed, soapnuts, etc., which have a high commercial value are rather a way of life to the tribals, than an occupation.

Table 1.4 : Major Occupation of the Buyers visiting the Shandies

Occupation	Tribal		Non-Tribal		Total	
	No.	percent	No.	percent	No.	percent
Agriculture	50	24.15	16	17.20	66	22.00
Collection of minor forest produce	49	23.67	0	0	49	16.34
Agricultural labour	39	18.84	10	10.75	49	16.34
Other manual labour	43	20.77	28	30.11	71	23.67
Business	8	3.87	22	23.66	30	10.00
Government employment	12	5.80	10	10.75	22	7.39
Others	6	2.90	7	7.53	13	4.32
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100.00

Among the non-tribal buyers, the predominant occupation was the manual labour with around 30 per cent of the task force engaged in the activity. This was followed by around 23.66 per cent of the people engaged in business. This is a significant

feature, as it draws our attention to the fact that the business activity in the tribal areas was dominated by the non-tribals. These people had their taste of profits in the tribal areas and preferred to settle in those areas and establish their business. The business people mainly catered to the domestic requirements of the tribals. However, it was not rare for them to purchase the minor forest products from the tribals and in turn sell them at the shandies for a higher price. For the non-tribal people in the tribal belts, business seemed to be a flourishing occupation. Around 17 per cent of the non-tribal buyers had agriculture as their occupation, but their average land holding was considered to be at a very low level. It may be noted here that among the non-tribal buyers, agriculture was not the main occupation due to the legislations enacted by the State and Central Governments with respect to the land alienation in the tribal belts.

Monthly Income of the Family

It was not a surprise that the monthly income of the family in the study area was at its lowest level. Various factors contributed to the low level of income earned by the family. Traditional form of podu cultivation⁷, poor fertility of the soils in the tribal areas, mixed type of cropping pattern, poor, quality of seeds, lack of application of scientific fertilizers, inadequate irrigation facilities were some of the important causes. Table 1.5 depicts the monthly income of the family in the study area. It was a painful fact to learn that 36 per cent of the respondents had to survive on a meager income of 2000-4000 rupees per month in the present days of rising prices.

Table 1.5 : Classification of Buyers on The Basis of Monthly Income

Monthly income of family (in Rs)	Tribal		Non-Tribal		Total	
	Number	Percentage	number	percentage	number.	percentage
2000-4000	96	46.38	12	12.90	108	36.00
4001-6000	66	31.89	18	19.35	84	28.00
6001-8000	45	21.73	30	32.25	75	25.00
8001-10000	0	0	18	19.36	18	6.00
10000 above	0	0	15	16.13	15	5.00
Total	207	100.00	93	100.00	300	100.00

It was deplorable to learn that only 11 per cent of the respondents were earning an income exceeding 8000 rupees per month. The people mainly in that income bracket level were either people who had business or a job drawing a regular salary. Table 1.6 brings to light the shandy-wise monthly income of the buyers varied between Rs. 4800 (Hiramandalem) and Rs.8500 (Seethampeta) the monthly income earned by the buyers was almost the same in all the shandy village with minor variations the exceptions were Seethampeta with 70 per cent, Balada with 56.66 per cent where the buyers monthly income was above 8000 rupees. These are the big places in tribal belt, where a number of Government offices with a large number of salaried and business people are found. The branch offices of the Girijan Cooperative Corporation are also located in Seethampeta and Balada villages. All these had contributed to a slightly higher monthly income. In the case of Kusimi, the income was relatively high due to its locational advantage of nearness to Polakonda town and a greater number of people are engaged in agriculture raising crops and vegetables which had high commercial value. The average monthly income of the family was the highest in Seetampeta with around 8500 rupees because of the farmers growing commercial crops like plantains and turmeric. The other reason was that a large number of people were engaged in the coffee plantations near Donubai thus having stable and regular earnings. This was followed by Balada with 6,500 rupees.

Average per capita Monthly Income

Table 1.7 shows the average size of the family and the average per capita monthly income of the buyers. The average per capita monthly income was the highest in Seethampeta village with Rs. 4250 because the average size of the family was relatively small with two persons and it was also due to the presence of greater number of business and salaried employees. Hiramandalam had the lowest average per capita monthly income because of the poor quality of the soils and indiscriminate cutting of trees thus, leading to a low yield of minor forest produce which is considered to be a significant source of income to the people living in the area.

Table 1.7: Shandy-Wise Average Per Capita Monthly Income of the Buyers

Name of the Shandy	Average Size of the family (No. of members)	Average Per capital Monthly Income (In Rs.)
Seethampeta	2	4,250
Balada	3	2,166
Bagha	3	1,933
Kusumi	3	1,866
Parlakhemundi	3	1,633
Hiramandalam	2	2,400

Table 1.8 reveals some facts of very interest. The table highlights the difference in the average monthly and average per capita monthly income of the tribal and non-tribal and non-tribal buyers in the study area. The average size of the tribal is four while it was two in non-tribal monthly income of the non-tribal was around 8,500 rupees and it was higher than the average monthly income of the tribal which stood at 6,350 rupees and still higher than the overall income which was 2950 rupees. Similarly the average per capita monthly income of the non-tribal was also higher than that of the per capita income of the tribal by around 1050 rupees and also higher than the overall average per capita monthly income by around 850 rupees.

Table 1.8 : Classifications of Buyers According to Average Monthly Income and per Capita Monthly Income

	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Total
Average Monthly income (In Rs)	6,350	8,500	7,230
Average size of the Family	3	2	3
Per Capita Monthly Income (In Rs)	2150	3,800	2,950

Table 1.6: Shandy-Wise Monthly Income of the Buyers

Name of the shandy	Income (In Rs)											Average Monthly Income	
	2000-4000		4001-6000		6001-8000		8001-10000		10000 & Above		Total		
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Seethampeta	45	41.67	27	32.14	21	28.00	9	50.00	3	20.33	105	35.00	8,500
Balada	15	13.89	12	14.28	15	20.00	3	16.66	6	40.33	51	17.00	6,500

Bagha	12	11.11	15	17.86	12	16.00	3	16.66	3	20.00	45	15.00	5,800
Kusumi	12	11.11	12	14.28	9	12.00	3	16.66	3	20.00	39	13.00	5,600
Parlakhemundi	15	13.89	9	10.72	12	16.00	0	0	0	0	36	12.00	4,900
Hiramandalam	9	8.33	9	10.72	6	8.00	0	0	0	0	24	8.00	4,800
Total	108	100.00	84	100.00	75	100.00	18	100.00	15	100.00	300	100.00	

This reveals the fact as to how the non-tribal people in the tribal areas, either by virtue of carrying on business or in the capacity of salaried employees are able to prevail upon the tribal by earning more. These were some of the factors that favourably prompted the Government to start the Girijan Cooperative Corporation in order to mitigate some of the miseries that the innocent tribals were suffering under the gruesome acts of the non-tribals in the area.

The above analysis reveals the socio-economic characteristics of the buyers. It was clear that a majority of the respondents had agriculture as the basic occupation. Agriculture in the tribal areas was of a subsistence nature and the yields were very low due to the poor quality of the soils; Podu cultivation and various other reasons already mentioned above collection of minor forest produce was the next occupation which many of the people adopted. This was also not an economical occupation as the yields depended on the vagaries of the weather and the price offered for the produce by the Girijan Corporation was not uniform. As the two occupational profiles of the tribals yield very low incomes, it was logical that their monthly and average monthly per capita income were of the lowest order. Due to these socio-economic characteristics of the buyers it can be said that shandies were the only economic entities in the tribal area. Shandies were preferable than the fullfledged regulated markets because, the tribals had no sufficient resources at their disposal to feed permanent sellers. Shandies were economically feasible because the demand for the various products could be accumulated over a week and the tribals, could avail of the market facilities once a week.

During the field study, it was observed that the per capita income of the people in the study area had improved since the implementation of the integrated Tribal Development Project. Under the project the tribal beneficiaries have been supplied with qualitative seeds, fertilizers, plough bullocks and milch cattle. However, during the study it was felt that the per capita income of the tribals would further increase when they were assured of better marketing facilities, so that the output derived by the farmer by using qualitative seeds⁸, fertilizers, plough bullocks and milch cattle. However, during the study it was felt that the per capita income of the tribals would further increase when they were assured of better marketing facilities⁹, so that the output derived by the farmer by using qualitative seeds and fertilizers could be assured of a fair price at the markets. This would go a long way in increasing the purchasing power of the tribals. The increased purchasing power would enable

the tribals to consume food in proper proportion to do away with the maladies of malnutrition and thus increase the standard of living of these people, which is the ultimate objective of the Government.

Social Profile of Sellers

Age

Table 1.9 shows the age-wise distribution of sellers attending the shandy. It was observed that a large number of sellers accounting for around 44 per cent were in the age group of 40 to 59 years. About 30.67 per cent were in the age group of or 30 to 39 years. Tribals above 60 years are also account for only seven per cent of the sample. On the other hand tribals below 19 years constitute around five per cent Among the non-tribal sellers, around 52 per cent were between 40 to 59 years of age. The tribal sellers were either local people from the shandy village itself or those coming from the neighbouring tribal hamlets. It was the non-tribal sellers that mainly dominated the tribal shandies. It was further observed that among the non-tribal sellers generally more people of 40 to 59 years of age group took up this activity. This was mainly due to the business experience gained by them in carrying business in such remote areas with such a rough and tough and uncivilized people.

Table 1.9: Classification of Sellers According to Age

Age (Years)	Tribal		Non-Tribal		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number.	Percentage
0-19	9	5.26	6	4.65	15	5.00
20-29	29	16.96	15	11.63	44	14.66
30-39	56	32.75	36	27.90	92	30.67
40-49	40	23.39	45	34.88	85	28.33
50-59	25	14.61	22	17.05	47	15.67
60 and above	12	7.02	5	3.89	17	5.67
Total	171	100.00	129	100.00	300	100.00

Due to absence of proper and adequate communications with the tribal villages, the youth were prepared to take the trouble of cycling to a greater distance and carry out their business in the tribal shandies rather than people between 50 and 60 years of age. The above reason substantiates as to why the youth and middle aged non-tribal sellers mostly visited the weekly markets in the tribal belt.

Gender

The selling activity was predominantly carried out by the males 85.02 per cent among tribals and 90.08 per cent among non-tribals. This was obvious because of the troubles inherent in business in the tribal shandies. Long distance travel, undulated terrain, lack of proper roads and adequate transport facilities usually kept the female sellers away from carrying on business in the tribal areas. However, 17.35 per cent among tribals and 9.80 per cent among non-tribals were females engaged in the selling activity. The small percentage of the female sellers were mainly found to exist in the tribal shandies that were either nearer to the towns or those villages that had some means of transport facility like buses or private vans. The low turnout of female sellers at the shandies was in the population itself and not due to distribution in the sample.

Economic Profile of Sellers

Business Experience

Table 1.10 shows the business experience of sellers. A majority of the people that was around 40 per cent had zero to five years of experience followed by 35 per cent who claimed to have 6-15 years of experience. Sellers with zero to five years of experience were those that mainly depended upon the shandies for their business. Sellers with six years and more of business experience were those that already had some sort of business at their native place and visiting the shandies was their part time profession. There are however only an insignificant number of sellers who have above 30 years of business experience.

Table 1.10: Business Experience of Sellers

Years	Tribal		Non-Tribal		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number.	Percentage
0-5	30	37.50	51	42.50	81	40.50
6-15	27	33.75	43	35.83	70	35.00
16-30	21	26.25	18	15.00	39	19.50
30 and above	2	2.50	8	6.67	10	5.00
Total	80	100.00	120	100.00	200	100.00

Business at Native Place

The disparity between those people that had (49.35 per cent) and those that did not (53.85 per cent) have business at their native place was only marginal, say around four per cent. However, a significant percentage of 45.11 tribal sellers expressed that they had business at native place.

Majority of the non-tribal sellers consisting of 65.38 per cent who hailed from towns denied of having regular business at their native place. Some of the reasons for not having business at native place were, the business in the towns was highly competitive, saturated and capital intensive. Some sellers were of the opinion that they had to pay a large sum of money by way of goodwill for procuring proper premises for establishing business. Many non-tribal sellers preferred to carry on business in the tribal shandies although it involved considerable trouble by way of long distance travel. Their expenditure in the form of goodwill was nil, competition was considerably less and the profit margin was relatively high. Moreover some of their domestic requirements like tamarind, soapnuts, turmeric, hill brooms, adda leaf, etc., could be bought at a cheaper price from the tribals.

While studying the socio-economic features of the buyers it was observed that although a majority of the buyers visiting the shandy were mature adults between the age of 20 to 49 years, there was less rationale in their purchasing habits. This could mainly be due to their very low level of literacy. Although the Domestic Requirement Depots of the Girijan Corporation maintained stocks of certain essential commodities, the tribals preferred to purchase these from the private merchants due to their long association with them. In the process, the private merchants did not hesitate to cheat the tribals by using false weights and measures. It was also observed that due to the meager monthly income and the low per capita income of the tribal buyers, it was mainly the necessities that were being purchased. According to the culture of the tribals they preferred bright colour of clothing and in the purchase of textiles it was the female that dominated the purchase decisions.

Findings

The socio-economic profile of the buyers and sellers were studied as they have both a direct and indirect impact on their buying and selling behavioural patterns.

Among the buyers attending the shandies to purchase various goods and services, majority of the people accounting for 82.65 per cent were in the age group of 20 to 49 years, one – third of the sample buyers were in the age group of 30 to 39 years followed by 27.05 per cent and 23.67 per cent who are in the age group of 20 to 29 years and 40 to 49 years respectively. However in contrast to the tribal buyers, a majority that is around 79.56 per cent of the non-tribal buyers were in the age group of 20 to 29 years. A glaring feature was that among the tribals groups only around two per cent were in the age group of 15 – 19 years while the corresponding figure among non-tribals is around three per cent. Similarly, tribals above 50 years constitute around 17 per cent, while non-tribals of same age account for 17 per cent.

Two reasons can be attributed for low presence of youth (15 -19 years) in the shandies. First they were still in the youth stage and to a great extent depended upon their parents for their subsistence, who made the purchases on their behalf. The second reason was the people in this age group prefer to buy in local established shops rather than in weekly shandies.

The high rate of illiteracy is one of the major reasons for making several developmental programmes of the government as they are unable to understand the malpractices of private merchants and money-lenders. The study revealed that about 39 per cent of the buyers were illiterates and only 37 per cent had primary education. Only 24 per cent of them claimed to have



had secondary education. Of late, educational programmes have made their way into the tribal pockets by the opening of a number of primary, ashram and missionary schools. As a result, there is some awareness among tribal families to send their children to these schools. The mid-day meal programme of the Government has also responsible for this change. Teachers from the urban areas were being posted to the Government schools and they were not interested to work in an environment surrounded by forests and hills which is far away from their residential places. To mitigate this problem, it is suggested that the Government may take steps to identify teachers from the tribal community and if possible from the same village or mandal and post them to these schools so that they could fit in well into the environment and also have a greater commitment to educate the children belonging to their own community. The Government may also consider the possibility of taking up adult education programmes to enlighten the tribal parents regarding the utility of educating their children.

The occupational pattern of the buyers visiting the six shandies under study was uneven. Agriculture and collection of minor forest produce were the main occupations to the tribals, while manual labour and business are the main activities of the non-tribal buyers. The income of the tribals in the study area was at its lowest level. Traditional form of podu cultivation, poor fertility of the soils in the tribal areas, mixed type of cropping pattern, poor quality of seeds, lack of applications of scientific fertilizers, inadequate irrigation facilities were the reasons for their pathetic plight. Due to these socio-economic characteristics of the buyers it can be said that shandies were the only economic entities in the tribal area. Shandies were economically feasible because the demand for the various products could be accumulated over a week and the tribals, could avail of the market facilities once a week.

While studying the socio-economic features of the buyers it was observed that although a majority of the buyers visiting the shandy were mature adults between the age of 20 to 49 years, there was less rationale in their purchasing habits. This could mainly be due to their very low level of literacy. Although the Domestic Requirement Depots of the Girijan Corporation maintained stocks of certain essential commodities, the tribals preferred to purchase these from the private merchants due to their long acquaintance. In the process, the private merchants did not hesitate to cheat the tribals by using false weights and measures. It was also observed that due to the meager monthly income and the low per capita income of the tribal buyers, it was mainly the necessities that were being purchased. According to the culture of the tribals they preferred bright colour of clothing and in the purchase of textiles it was the female that dominated the purchase decisions.

The selling activity in all the six shandies under study was mainly dominated by the males. Only 17.35 per cent among tribals and 9.80 per cent among non-tribals were females engaged in the selling activity. The disparity between those sellers that had (49.35 per cent) and those that did not (53.85 per cent) have business at their native place was only marginal say around four per cent. A significant percentage of 45.11 tribal sellers however expressed that they had business at native place.

The items which were predominantly purchased by the females were edible oils, kirana, dry fish and pots. In some cases, both the tribal males and females were making the purchases. This was mostly in the case of purchase of textiles and high priced items like the aluminium utensils, etc. It was observed that there was lot of consultation between the male and female, while selecting the textiles and aluminum utensils because these involved a commitment of a significant amount of their resources.

About 51 per cent of the buyers said that women were better bargainers and this was the main reason to allow them to make the purchases. As it was the women that looked after the domestic affairs they had a better idea of the domestic requirements. About 43.13 per cent of the respondents cited the above reasons because the housewife was in a better position to know what to buy and what not to buy.

A large number of buyers consisting of 92.67 per cent made the purchases for their domestic consumption. Only a small number of buyers constituting about five per cent made the purchase for resale at their native place. Among the buyers who purchased the items for resale, it was more of the non-tribals, that resorted to the business at native place.

A major deficiency according to the majority of the buyers constituting nearly 60 per cent was absence of proper shelters. This was followed by 19.67 per cent of the buyers who observed that communication facilities to the shandies were inadequate. A few buyers (20-33 per cent) said that the market areas was insufficient.

Suggestions

The socio-economic profile of the buyers and sellers were studied as they have both a direct and indirect impact on their buying and selling behavioural patterns.



There is some awareness among tribal families to send their children to these schools. The mid-day meal programme of the Government has also responsible for this change. Teachers from the urban areas were being posted to the Government schools and they were not interested to work in an environment surrounded by forests and hills which is far away from their residential places. To mitigate this problem, it is suggested that the Government may take steps to identify teachers from the tribal community and if possible from the same village or mandal and post them to these schools so that they could fit in well into the environment and also have a greater commitment to educate the children belonging to their own community. The Government may also consider the possibility of taking up adult education programmes to enlighten the tribal parents regarding the utility of educating their children.

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