

## Rubber tapping : A challenging work for tribal women in Tripura

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### ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to assess the challenges before the tribal women tappers in Tripura. The result indicated that tribal women tappers are facing various challenges in tapping work, like early morning work, loneliness of the working place, bearing latex, producing latex etc. It is evident from the study that rubber plantation is expanding very rapidly. There are many agencies of government, like Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation Ltd. (TRPC Ltd.), Rubber Board, Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Ltd. (TFDPC Ltd.), Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) etc. There is a large scope for tribal women for involving in rubber plantation because hilly areas are more suitable for rubber plantation basically where tribals live. Thus, the paper suggests that although there are more challenges before the women tappers but there are large opportunities for them for employing in rubber plantation.

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Rubber plantation is an important commercial crop in Tripura. *Hevea brasiliensis* is the most important commercial source of natural rubber. Rubber tapping is the process through which tappers *i.e.* workers collect latex from the rubber trees. Rubber tappers are only found in mature garden. Rubber trees are generally mature after six years. Rubber cultivation occurs in hilly areas where there is no chance of water logging. In Tripura rubber tappers are involved in various duties *i.e.* collecting latex from the tree, carrying those in house/rubber centre and producing rubber sheets (Sathees, 2009).

In Tripura nearly 50 per cent tribals are female and they are involved in all type of household activities. Women in tribal family believed in hard labour. Large number of tribal women are unemployed. Education levels among the tribal women are very less and therefore empowerment of them is a real challenge before the government. Rubber plantation has become a much-talked phenomenon in the State of Tripura. Rubber plantation was raised for the first time in Tripura in 1963 by the State Forest Department as a soil conservation initiative. Recently, a Rubber Mission has been set up by Government of Tripura for better co-ordination of all the agencies involved in talking up plantation and marketing

of rubber (Economic Review of Tripura, 2008-09).

The main objectives of this paper are to discuss opportunity of tribal women in rubber tapping work and to identify various challenges before tribal women in rubber tapping job.

### METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Kanchanpur sub-division of Tripura. The Kanchanpur sub-division was selected purposely since Rubber plantation is grown by a large number of tribal people women there. Kanchanpur is a sub-division of North Tripura district. In Kanchanpur sub-division there are two rural developments Block *i.e.* Dasda and Damchara. The ten villages were then selected from each Block by using stratified random sampling. In all, twenty villages were taken for the present study. From each village, five tribal women were selected through random sampling. Thus, the total sample consisted 100 respondents and in this sub-division government is running rubber plantation programme for rehabilitation of tribal women. Data were collected by the investigator with the help of a well prepared, structured interview schedule employing personal contract. Thereafter, data were analyzed, tabulated and interpreted in the light of the objective of the study.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads:

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