



## EMPOWERMENT AS AN INDICATOR OF DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA

### Social Science

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### ABSTRACT

The empowerment of the tribal population has been a major concern. The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. Tribal are the original dwellers living in the subcontinents from unrecorded time. Women play a crucial role in these societies yet their conditions are pitiable. Empowerment for these women is about self-awareness, consciousness and confidence within. Tribal women empowerment can be viewed as creation of an environment in which one can make choice and decision for social transformation and also feminist idea will led to the tremendous improvement in conditions of tribal women, as they are always away from the mainstream of national life. The hours need is to ponder on the issues such as, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance related to health and nutrition and ecosystem destruction with special reference to India.

### KEYWORDS

Tribal, Women Empowerment and Socio-Economic Development.

### INTRODUCTION:

Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they are still lagging far behind in the different walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. Though they are industrious, they have limited control over resources and economic activities. Therefore, there is a need for economic empowerment of tribal women in order to overcome inequality, discrimination and exploitation and to achieve their all-round development in the society.

### TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA:

According to the 2011 Census there are 24, 94, 54,252 households of which 2, 14, 67,179 households belongs to ST population. Total population of the country is 1,21,05,69,573, out of these 10, 42, 81,034 are classified as ST with 5, 24, 09,823 males and 5, 18, 71,211 females. The decadal growth rate of the tribal population during 2001-2011 is 23.7% which is higher than India's total decadal growth (17.6%). The tribal population of India constitute 8.6% of total population of the country and majority of them reside in the rural areas (90%) State wise percent distribution of tribal population that the highest proportion of tribal population resides in north eastern states namely; Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.5%), Meghalaya (86.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (68.8%), Manipur (35.1%), Sikkim (33.8%), and Tripura (31.8%) Apart from north eastern states tribal population in Lakshadweep islands comprises of 94.8%. Numerically, the highest tribal concentration is in Madhya Pradesh, which is 14.7% of the total tribal population of India. Maharashtra (10.1%) and Odessa (9.2%) together add an additional 19.3% tribal population to the country. In contrast, lowest tribal concentration is in UT of Daman and Diu (0.01%). No ST population is recorded in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi & Pondicherry states/UTs.

### OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse the factors influencing the empowerment of tribal women.
2. To identify the constraints of empowerment of tribal women.
3. To suggest the suitable measures to achieve the goal of empowerment of tribal women.

### METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive research design has been adopted for this study. The purpose of this research design is to describe the Empowerment as an Indicator of Development of Tribal Women in India and elicit new information about the elderly tribal women through the present study based on secondary source of data; the nature of research is exploratory and collected from the data Census of India 2011.

### EMPOWERMENT:

The word 'empowerment' is used in different contexts by different people. There is a variety of meaning of the term due to its widespread

usage. Although the term is used frequently for the development related work, yet it is yet to be defined. However, broadly it refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. For the poor people, this freedom is severely curtailed by their poor contribution to representation particularly in the state and markets. Thus, empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to negotiate influence and control the accountable institutions that affect their lives.

### EMPOWERMENT INDICES OF TRIBAL WOMEN:

Past three decades have witnessed an increasing awareness regarding the need to empower women through increasing the social, economic and political equity, and broadening the access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. These proxy indices among tribal women have been described in the paper.

### ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION:

Tribal women in India contribute positively to the local economy and participate with men in subsistence activities. In reality, women perform more work than men as they participate in all agricultural activities as well as other indigenous cottage industries. In addition, they manage household chores. Child rearing is also their responsibility. In India, over 80% of the tribals work in the primary sector against 53% of the general population. About 45% tribals are cultivators against 32.5% of the general population. Tribal women work hard for the livelihood of their family but maintain a poor life in spite of their contributions. Their whole income spent over their basic requirements i.e., food and other needs. The status of women usually depends on the economic roles they play. Due to lack of skills and regular income generating activities, they are below the poverty line. Economic environment of women affects the social development. Thus, there is a need to undertake income generating activities among the poor women for their economic empowerment.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

Education is a universally recognized powerful instrument of social, cultural and health development. It is crucial to women empowerment. Hence, primary education has been a goal in many developing countries for several years. With the articulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there has been an increased focus on meeting this challenge. The proportion of tribal women who have never attended school was highest and there is a gender difference at different levels of education. The reasons associated with not imparting education to girl child are financial constraints, early marriages, submissiveness, motherhood and parents' narrowed perceptions about women education. Educating a girl child is deliberately denied that affects the future opportunity for her total development.

### KNOWLEDGE EMPOWERMENT:

The mass media plays a significant role in shaping the health beliefs and behaviors. The NFHS reported that among the tribal women, 57%

were not regularly exposed to any media, whereas only a small proportion of tribal women were exposed to television (30%), radio (21%) and newspaper (10%). Media is the most powerful tool of communication and provides exposure to the mass audience about what is correct or incorrect. It helps to inform people about the realities of social issues including poverty, violence, corruption and bribery, suppression of human rights, discrimination and crime. There is an association between the development of mass media and social changes. Besides exposing tribals to new ideas and expanding their world view, the media is instrumental in bringing about changes in their attributes and has led them through the path of modernization. Thus, communication plays a vital role in their all-around development.

#### **POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:**

Across the world, political mobilization by women has contributed to huge improvements in health and quality of life. It has led to the expansion of family planning services that have given women greater freedom regarding their choice over fertility and better protection against sexually transmitted diseases. Decline in fertility has given countries a 'demographic dividend' whereby smaller numbers of young dependents have allowed working adults to invest more time and resources in economic activity with large benefits to economy. Legalization of abortion in many countries has significantly reduced the abortion related mortality and morbidity.

#### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT:**

Regarding violence against women in the socioeconomic and political contexts of power relations, tribal women are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, discrimination, unequal economic and social status and lack of secure/suitable atmosphere etc. It often becomes a tool to socialize family members according to prescribed norms of behavior with an overall perspective of patriarchal social structure. Due to complexity of the social and cultural issues combined with the stigma and fear of disclosure, only a small proportion of the crimes of sexual assault, child abuse and physical assaults have been reported. However; due to their, the violence in the form of female foeticide and infanticide seems too strict be absent among tribals.

#### **WEALTH EMPOWERMENT:**

The links between wealth and health are well established. Financial resources enable individuals to protect themselves against health threats by consuming better food, drinking pure water, living in safe environment, accessing sanitation facilities and having health related awareness. In case of illness, wealthier people are able to afford effective health care and strong social support.

#### **SUGGESTIONS:**

Empowerment of tribal women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved.

- Utmost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grass root problem. Proper care should be taken for development of women education in remote areas and also encouragement should be given to girls of tribal communities to get enrolled in school.
- Women of these societies should be trained in different vocational courses like handloom and textile, poultry farm, dairy farm, food and nutrition etc.
- Steps should be taken to improve the health status of tribal women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the India which does not have good medical facilities. Health awareness camps should be organized not only for tribal women but also for general people of village community.
- Large number of adult school should be opened with facilities of sewing, handicrafts etc and basic knowledge of health care and food habits.
- Tribal Women face high risk of malnutrition hence focused attention would have to be given to meet the nutritional needs of women at all stages of their life cycle.
- Promote the diversification of agriculture and non-farm sectors to create job opportunities for these women.
- Impart practical knowledge and training in modern technique to all tribal women regularly so that their work becomes easier and crop production increases.
- Undertake research and extension to improve current practices, increase output and income and eliminate adverse ecological effects.
- Women's decisions making, planning and managing related to

environmental management should be increased as they play significant role in environmental protection.

- Political participation of tribal women should be increased at block level.

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