



Session

Tribal women and development



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Tribal Women in India



Status of Tribal Women in India



The Images of Tribal Women in India

- The popular image and perception of the tribal women is that of being better off than their non-tribal counterparts.
- There is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood. She enjoys the right to decide about her marriage, etc. Instead of dowry there is bride price indicating high social status of the tribal woman.
- A tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily. She earns and is, therefore, to a great extent economically independent.



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However, there are many facts which indicates a low status for the tribal woman.

- For example, she does not have property rights except in a matrilineal society which is a small proportion of the tribal population.
- She is paid less as wages than her male counterpart for the same work. Several taboos discriminating against tribal women exist in certain tribal groups implying impurity and low status.
- The tribal women cannot hold the office of a priest. There are taboos related to menstruation as in non-tribal communities. The Kharia women, cannot touch a plough nor can she participate in roofing of a house.



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- The Oraon women is also prevented from touching a plough. The Todas of Nilgiri Hills do not touch a menstruating women for fear of destruction of harvest.
- In certain tribes only the males can participate in ancestor worship (Satyanarayana and Behera, 1986). The Toda and Kota women in southern India cannot cross the threshold of a temple. The Santal women cannot attend communal worship.



Tribal Women

- Tribal women in India are hardworking and they contribute significantly towards their family with limited sources.
- Concern for a focus on women in tribal studies has been very recent.
- It emerged out of general interest and concern with women's issues the world over.



- The value system governing larger Indian society has been in the process of change.
- With this there has been a shift in the image of tribal women who are thus invariably portrayed as enjoying a better social status than their counterparts in the larger Indian society.
- Tribal society in the post-Independence era has been witness to unprecedented change, which has been most marked in respect of culture, modes of making a living and social differentiation.
- Their bearing on women's status in society and gender relations has been far-reaching.



Analyses women's status

- The tribal women, constitute like any other social group, about half of the total population.
- The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men.
- Like others social groups, the tribal women share problems related to reproductive health.
- When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men. Status of women varies in different societies.



- The conceptual framework to analyse women's status comprise the seven roles women play in life and work:
 - parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community and as an individual. In order to appraise the social status of women in these diverse ecological areas, the findings have been divided in to subsequent categories:
- (a) a girl; daughter; a unmarried woman;
 - (b) a married woman;
 - (c) a widow;
 - (d) divorcee; and
 - (e) a barren woman. Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important.



- With the onset of development programmes economic changes are taking place but tribal women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources, because they grow food crops rather than cash crops.
- Modernisation is bringing changes, which affect men and women differently. India as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region.



- On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits-economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official, political and religious sphere Indian women suffer profoundly.
- For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society.



It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society. Gender roles are socially constructed.

The family structure in India is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation.

It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures. It justifies the normative process pertaining to the recognition and sustainability of his dominance in society



Consequently a boy is looked upon as the perpetuator of the family line, and a girl 'a bird of passage'. The Indian family organisation makes discrimination between the sexes. It promotes a hierarchy of classification in which man centred issues take dominance where as women derive their personalities from their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. Despite several economic, political and social changes, women, are still far behind.



- One of the most unflattering statistics concerning India's girl child shows that the preference for a son runs across rich as well as poor households, educated as well as illiterate families.
- Widespread use of modern technology, a joint failure of medical ethics and failure to shed concept of a male heir has pushed female foeticide to high proportions.
- Female foeticide is just one side of the vast anti-women behavioural range in India. The tragedy is that even women, who have the choice, opt for a male child. They feel that only with a birth of a son, they will achieve higher status.



Roles women play in life and work



Women's Role in Economic Sphere

- In the traditional societies which lack market system, the business of everyday living is usually carried on gender division of labour the division of labour is mainly between herding and agriculture.



- Major portion of agriculture is done by women who do weeding, hoeing, planting, harvesting and thrashing except ploughing (which are done by men) in the fields adjacent to houses or far off fields.
- The other activities of women include looking after the house, children and cattle. Food processing and cooking is women's job.
- It is the women who with the assistance of children are largely responsible for the cattle, water fuel and fodder.
- This permits them considerable time away from home and the village. When they are away from home, they are free to talk to whom so ever they please, male or female, of any caste or creed.
- As a consequence, communication among women and between men and women is as high as it is among men.



Women's Role in Social Sphere

- Role of tribal women in the study area is not only of importance in the economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important.
- Formation and continuity of family hearth and home is the domain of the women.
- Women's role as wives, mothers, and organisers and as basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of extreme importance. Among Gaddis, as men are out for pastoral duties, the socialisation



- of children automatically becomes mother's business, in the early years of life at least. The Gaddi family assumes mother centeredness with the children and some important decisions falling to the sphere of women's intervention.
- The role of women in childbirth, funerals and fairs and festivals is an important part of village life.
- In the tribal areas, women are carriers of traditional information in absence of written records.
- They are crucial actors in the preservation and dissemination of such knowledge. They are not only competent food producers and house makers but are also the transmitters of rich local oral traditions.



Women's Role in Political Sphere

- The role of women's empowerment for a just society was highlighted in the Beijing Conference (1995). In all the four societies under study, women power does not extend to societal or political spheres.
- The economic power of the women in the household is not translated in to corresponding community authority.



- They are not ignored at household level but are not given due credit and importance at official level.
- Women supremacy is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to social or political spheres.
- It is interesting to note that although by convention every village Panchayat has a female member, the lady never bothers to attend the meeting or to take any active interest in the proceedings of Panchayat.
- Sikkim has a tradition of collective decision making by communities through the institution of *Dzumsha*.



However traditional institutions do not witness a significant role for women and *Dzumsha is constituted of males only*

In the absence of a male member, a female can represent her family unit. If a male head is absent from *Dzumsha meeting, he is fined, however if* represented by female head, she is liable to pay half the amount for her absence.

This shows that women have a secondary importance in public affairs and community decision-making. Women are generally bypassed and marginalised either they lack the requisite skills, or because women's heavy and unending domestic responsibilities makes attending meetings and participating in decision making difficult. It always happens that men take over the more profitable activities.



Women's Role in Religious Sphere

As the religious sphere is most dominating among tribals it constitutes a major field for male domination. The women are deprived of public authority. Religion legitimises gender hierarchy.

The subordination of women in religious activities and their denial of access to positions of religious leadership has been a powerful tool in most world religions in supporting the patriarchal order and the exclusion of women, from the public form (Ortner, 1974; Sered, 1994; Franzmen, 2000). The religious sphere is a major field for male dominance, and a strategy to deprive women of public authority (Scott, 1988; Jones, 1993).



- There are a few innovations in religious sphere, and hence these changes must exist within a traditional, ritual and textual structure.
- Religious institutions are resistance to gender equality. In structure an explicitly male religious framework contains the tribal societies.
- Though the secular institutions strive to eradicate inequality but it was seen that women of these areas were lagging behind in all fields.



- Even the economic power of the women in the household is not translated into a corresponding community authority.
- They are not ignored at household level but are not given due credit and importance alongside. However, female labour is central to all economic activities among tribals. Women perform waged and non-waged, productive and unproductive labour.
- The workload that is associated with these activities most unlikely does not give women any time to indulge in community affairs



- women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities.
- Although they lack control of material and social resources, their contribution to subsistence economy give them important and irreversible position.
- It may be said as it is observed that ecology and environmental factors existing in tribal areas have given these women a special economic power, and an elevated status.



- However, there are certain domains in which men continue to dominate, as is culturally required.
- Moreover, community still is in the hands of men. There is kind of duality observable here.
- Men dominate in public, in social and religious affairs, and continue to play the role of the head of the family and breadwinner, women enjoy a greater say in their family life, they have a greater deal of social freedom and several of their actions are condoned/tolerated (Bhasin, 1991).
- This confirms with Ortnel and Rosalindo's thesis in one way that in spite of the public/domestic dichotomy the ecological/economic division interferes further modification in women's position.



- Modernization is bringing changes, which affect men and women differently. Modernization brought by outside agencies is set in a malebiased ideology, women are seen as inherently ‘incapable’; the new techniques are aimed at men by men.
- Male values are also reflected in the view that development is solely dependent on technological and economic advances. Such values exploit both the environment and vulnerable groups such as women (Hewitt, 1989: 351).



- The thought that women are being treated shabbily, women centered programmes for developments were evolved which tended to overlook the importance of man-woman relations.
- Inadequate planning and implementation as well as culture resistance gave rise to more gender disparities.
- Though efforts have been made in almost all countries to improve the status of women but it is still an unequal world.



Government schemes for the upliftment of tribal women

- AdivasiMahilaSashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY): Under the scheme, Scheduled **Tribes women** can undertake any income generation activity. ...
- Micro Credit Scheme for Self Help Groups: The Corporation provides loans upto ₹50,000/- per member and ₹ 5 Lakhs per Self Help Group (SHG).
- **GOAL: Digital Skill Training Programme for Tribal Women**



Government and NGO schemes for tribal women

- Govt, and NGO are boosting the tribal women empowerment
- Policies and programmes were these women group should be brought in to mainstream of development.
- As the development process starts from self reliant, unless and until the women have the confidence about her self reliance, making her empower is impossible the first objective by ministry was fi-aming the strategy in this regard.
- The provision of constitutions for governnient took decision to sanction a grant and this grant was made available by ministry of state and center.



Program for women's empowerment'

1. Indira Mahila Yojana
2. Integrated women's empowerment employment development (RWED)
3. Swayamcidha is centrally sponsored scheme for the period 6 years. It is recast of Indira Mahila Yojana aimed at encouraging women through tiny savings this was extended up to 31.3.2007. It promoted self-reliant women's self help groups and through this programme, 90% of them have been linked to banks.



- 4) Swashakti - Rural women's Development and empowerment project (RWDEP) centrally sponsored scheme funded by international fund for Agri Development (IFAD) self Help group based scheme for socio - eco empowerment of women in this scheme aim was multidimensional and participatory approach.
- 5) Support Training and employment programme (STEP) - The objective of this scheme was to provide skill training to poor and needy women firstly it was centrally sponsored scheme but from April 2006. it was transferred to state govt.
- 6) Swadhar - To provide support service it was also launched in 2001-02 with a flexible and innovative service to provide shelter, food, clothing care to marginalized women & girl to provide social economical support to women without family.



Women development MoTA initiatives

1. Access to Quality Education
 - Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs), focuses on improving access to quality education. In Ashram School
 - The Pre and Post Matric scholarships for ST students, majority of whom are girls is to enable them to pursue their education till 12th standard.
 - “National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students



2. Schemes for Economic Development

- The National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation is an apex organization under Ministry of Tribal Affairs for economic development of STs.
- “Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana” (AMSY). Under the scheme, the Corporation provides financial assistance upto 90 percent to projects at a concessional rate of interest of 4 per cent
- Schemes like Minimum Support Price to Minor Forest Produce (MSP to MFP) and support to tribal artisans by Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) also benefit the ST women large



3. Right to Forest Produce

- The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, provides for full and unrestricted participation of women at all levels.
 - Under the scheme of Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Scheme (SCA to TSS) and Grants under Article 275(1) of the constitution skill development and capacity building of ST women are taken up by States with complete support of MoTA
4. 'GOAL' initiative under which the social networking giant is helping tribal girls from across India to become village-level digital young leaders for their communities. Etc.





Thank you