

SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA: A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract - “Women perform 66 percent of the world’s work, and produce 50 percent of the food, yet earn only 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation”.

Former President Bill Clinton addressing the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (September 2009)

Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. The tribal women work very hard, in some cases even more than the men. The tribal women have a freedom, and a self-expression. With the onset of development programmes economic changes are taking place, which affect men and women differently. This inequality arising from the development process calls for a detailed scrutiny because it has resulted in not only inequality between tribals and nontribals but also among tribals on gender basis.

This paper has been written on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary source and discussed socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in india in a descriptive manner. The tribal population is an integral part of India’s social fabric and has the second largest concentration after that of the African continent. It is more than the total population of France and Britain and four times that of Australia. The tribal women have been equal partners with tribal men in the contribution to household economy. Quite often their women do more physical labour in their agricultural fields and forest than that of the tribal men. Tribal women have usually enjoyed a higher social status in their own communities than Indian women in general. Some of the tribes like Khasi in Mizoram and Meghalaya are matriarchal. However, the literacy rate among the tribal’s and more so in case of tribal women is quite low and this is also associated with poor nutritional and health status among the tribal’s. The estimate of poverty made by Planning Commission for the year 1993-94 shows that 51.92 percent rural and 41.4 percent urban Scheduled Tribes were still living below the poverty line. They are engaged in various occupations like hunting shifting cultivation to settled agriculture and rural crafts. A very negligible percent are engaged in non-agricultural activities. The Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.2% of India’s total population. In all there are 700 Scheduled Tribes in India. States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa all together have about 40% of the total tribal population of the country.

To develop or capacitate self reliant and self respect tribal society by strengthening the tribal community comprehensively, promoting, strengthening and expanding community based tribal women oriented society where sustainable development initiatives could be undertaken for marginalized sections of the society.

- The government should focus empowerment of schedule tribe women and allocate separate Funds throughout the five years plan. Health, education and nourishment should be selected Key focus areas, besides; women should be provided ample opportunities for economic development, based upon the traditional skills, women should also be provided additional skills For value additions to the produces

- The government should ensure 100% literacy among the tribal women by the welfare programmes and through the five years plan, the adivasi girls, who are desirous of higher education should be provided subsidy for education like technical, the state should provide the hostel facilities for motivation.

- The tribal women workers, who are engaged in agriculture, construction, brick klin etc, are un-organized; the government should protect their labour rights. And the government should make special allocation for implementation of labour laws for the schedule area to prevent the exploitation of the workers.

- The tribal forest land cultivators, who have been given the land entitlements, should be assisted by enhancing the yield by soil and water development process. The farmers should be provided the high yielding seeds varieties along with training to improve their agriculture. Such farmers should be provided the loan assistance for improving their agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Women empowerment, tribal women census, women literacy.

