

EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The tribal people are economically and socially backward. Their plight worsened because of pressure of nontribal population on tribal lands. There is also state demand on tribal lands and private demand on tribal community land. The Tribal lands have been alienated to their better endowed tribal neighbors or non-tribal's. Protective laws prohibit sale or transfer of tribal land to non-tribal's. In spite of Constitutional safeguards, majority of tribal people still live in conditions as their predecessor lived a century ago. Their condition worsened because of exploitation by the nontribal. Because of low literacy level, most tribal peoples do not take active interest in the activities of self - help groups. They simply accept the views of few leading members who generally belong to better off communities.

Those living on the periphery of national parks, have to bribe forest Indo Asian Scientific guards in order to gain entry into the jungles for firewood, fodder for cattle, seeds, roots, fruits and berries that they need for their survival. The tribal's do not even get potable water. Owners of factories and mines are not prevented from releasing toxic industrial waste into rivers and streams that flow through the tribal areas. Every day the tribal people have to trudge many kilometers to fetch a pot of water. In most habitats, there is neither safe drinking water nor small irrigations structures such as tanks and dams that can host agricultural and horticultural production. Also to get their quota of subsidies rice and wheat, the tribal people have to walk 15 to 20 kms once or twice a week to the nearest ration shop. But their quota is not sufficient even for a family of three. Medicare is a much-neglected area in tribal belts. The government doctors are reluctant to work in tribal areas. Epidemics such as malaria, gastroenteritis and encephalitis play havoc with the tribal population. There is evidence of exploitation of tribal women by forest and mining contractors. The incidence of sexual assaults on tribal women have increased. State atrocities on tribal women are on the rise. Thus, the tribal women face formidable problems in raising their socio-economic status.

The discrimination against women is more pronounced in the Third world countries consequent to the prevalence of poverty, ignorance and illiteracy. India is one such Third world country, which is characterized by poverty and unemployment. Women face different problems for their existence depending upon the class to which they belonged. Therefore, treating all the women as one category may not be helpful in proper understanding of the phenomenon. The women belonging to the upper strata are relatively at some advantage, while women in poorer section are to start struggles for their existence. The women in the tribal community about half of the tribal population. Their role in the tribal society is even more important than in other social groups in India, because the tribal women, more than women in any other social group, work harder and the family economy and management depend on them. Educational backwardness is a distinct gender

dimension. An education system should provide a new culture of work ethos and an array of young talented, skilled and well-equipped target group who will be able to shoulder the developmental responsibilities

EDUCATION AMONG THE TRIBES

Education is not only a means of adjustment into the society and all-round development, but it is also an end in itself. Education affords perfection to life, and it is closely associated with socio-economic development. After a long struggle when India gained independence, Government of India in article 45 of the directive principles. In this article, there is a "Provision for free and compulsory education for children". It directs that the state shall endeavor to provide, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. For the promotion of educational interests of the Scheduled Tribe the constitution includes an article in the chapter relating to the directive Principles of the State Policy stating that the "State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all form of exploitation". As a result of this, now there is at least a primary school in every remote corner of the tribal belts within educational backwardness is a distinct their easy approach. Literacy levels of the various tribal groups in India differ widely.

Hence, this supports the findings that of young talented, skilled and well-equipped target the girls are favored in matter of education and there is no discrimination on ground of sex in matters of education. For the promotion of educational interests of the Scheduled Tribes, the number of educational institutions as well as teachers has been increased every year and today there are schools and colleges in every district town. There are special incentive schemes of scholarship and grant of books for scheduled tribe children to encourage the intelligent students to continue their education up to higher level. These facilities are provided by the Government and other Institutions. Hence, value of education is increasing day by day. The highest literacy rate of North-East tribe shows that they are very enthusiastic about education; they feel that without education their society as a whole cannot be advanced. Generally, they know that educated children when grown up will get white collar jobs will get Government jobs/other honorable professions, raise standard of living and have a secure life. They well to earn families hire tutor at home for coaching their children, and they also do not hesitate to send their boys and girls to different Universities. The State Government has provided a number of facilities as a part of the tribal education programme in the tribal areas. The rate of scholarship for girls is slightly higher.

APPROACH TO TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

The Constitution of India aimed to give protection to women against exploitation in genera and particularly in regard to their interest in land and forest and to save them from exploitation by the money lenders and unscrupulous contractors. It provided for protection for all tribal's living scattered and residing in other parts protection for all tribal's living scattered and residing in other parts not declared as scheduled areas through general legislation. Protection also implied prohibition of bonded labour and adequate alternative credit through simple procedures.

Development aspects involve fourfold development, namely,

1. Economic,
2. Educational
3. Health
4. Communication through Tribal Development Blocks.

Economic development involves agriculture, forest, animal husbanding and cottage industries. Education development involves vocational and technical education, girl's education stoppage of waste facilities and health care system and communication required breaking of business through roads and flow of idea the tribal areas.

TRIBAL SUB-PLAN (TSP) APPROACH

The strategy for the development of the Scheduled Tribes is based on the TSP approach which comes into operation since 1974-75 during 5th plan period.

The main objectives of the TSP are:

To raise the socio-economic condition of the tribal population and strengthen infrastructure in the tribal areas and to protect and promote tribal interests through legal and administrative support. (Thakur, 1997). The programmes are now being implement through

1. 194 Integral Tribal Development projects (ITDP) comprising. generally, blocks/ tahsils with 50 percent or more scheduled tribes' population.
2. 277 pockets of trails concentration Modified Area Development Approach Projects. (MADAP) having a total population of 10 thousand or more and scheduled tribe population of 50 percent or more, and.
3. 90 primitive tribal projects or Micro Projects. The TSP has a twofold thrust of socio-economic development of the tribal are and socio- economic development of tribal families.

GENDER ISSUES IN TRIBAL WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT:

The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchyats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their

participation in decision making at the local levels. Active participation of women in the entire development process is essential for the overall socio-economic development of any country. Therefore, raising the status of women in general and that of socially and economically, backward women in particular is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic one. Low female literacy among STs being a particular concern, the gender-specific scheme of "Setting up Educational Complex in Low Literacy pockets for development of Women's Literacy in Tribal Areas" introduced in 1993-94, was revised in 2008-09 and renamed as "strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts". The revised scheme became effective from 1st April 2008. The revised scheme is being implemented in 54 identified low literacy Districts where the ST population is 25% or more, and ST female literacy rate is below 35% or its fractions, as per 2001 census. Any other tribal block in a district, other than aforesaid 54 identified districts, which has scheduled tribe population 25% or above, and tribal female literacy rate below 35% or its fractions, as per 2001 census, are also covered. The areas inhabited by particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) and Naxalite affected areas are given priority. The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy levels between the general female population and tribal women, through facilitating 100% enrolment of tribal girls in the identified Districts or Blocks. More particularly in Naxal affected areas and in areas inhabited by PTGs, and reducing drop-outs at elementary level by creating the required ambience for education. The scheme is implemented through Voluntary Organizations (VOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and autonomous society / institutions of State Government/Union Territory Administration.

Ministry provides 100% assistance for running and maintenance of educational complexes for ST girls which include free education, boarding and lodging, books, uniforms, medical help, coaching, incentives to girls, periodical awards, etc.,. The revised scheme envisages the convergence with the schemes of Sarva Shikshana Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya of Ministry of Human Resource Development. It meets the requirement of primary level students as well as middle/ secondary level students and provides residential facility to ST girls students to ensure their retention in schools. Besides formal education, the revised scheme also takes care of skill up gradation of ST girls in various vocations.

The revised scheme also envisages establishment of District Education support Agency (DESA) in each also play the role of monitor, facilitator and support linkages with various institutions.

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