

Empowering Tribal Women in India through Inclusive Development and Gender Equality Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

Tribal women in India have a highly vital role in the economy, culture, and natural resources of their community. They serve important roles in society, yet they have to deal with a lot of problems, such as low literacy, limited access to resources, conventional patriarchal values, and not being very politically active. This study analyzes the contemporary position and duties of tribal women in India, the factors influencing their empowerment, and the enduring injustices they encounter. Some successful techniques and initiatives that could help them improve their socioeconomic situation and promote gender equality are educational opportunities, skill training, self-help organizations, entrepreneurship, and participatory government. The study advocates for inclusive development strategies that integrate cultural sensitivity with targeted initiatives, enabling tribal women to gain empowerment across all facets of their lives and engage fully in India's developmental process.

Keywords: Empowerment, Equality, Education, Tribal, Gender, Equality.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, it has become clear that giving tribal women in India more power is a vital step toward changing society. This can be done through programs that support gender equality and development that includes everyone. Most people in India live in groups of tribes. These tribes are very connected to their traditional ways of life, which often include deep linkages to the natural world and social structures that many people share. Women have traditionally played a big role in these societies. They have been the principal caretakers, artists, gatherers, and keepers of cultural traditions. Tribal women are remaining one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, even if they have done well. Because they are women, poor, and culturally secluded, they are discriminated against in numerous ways. To give them power, we need a plan that includes both old and new approaches to go forward and achieve equality, as well as particular legislation.

Tribal women in India are not doing well financially, which shows both their strengths and weaknesses. New sorts of inequality have come about because of modernity and outside pressures that have torn down old social institutions. In many tribal societies, there is more equality between men and women than in more conventional patriarchal tribes. In many tribal places, women's power has been slowly fading. It used to be strong in making decisions, managing land, and community rituals. This is due to market forces, institutional management, and patriarchal customs. They have even fewer chances to get active in the economy because there hasn't been any infrastructure development in distant areas, and they still have much worse access to healthcare and education than the national average. Many people have accepted low-paying jobs or moved to big cities where they are not safe. This makes them even more susceptible because they are impoverished, unemployed, and have lost their land because of industrialization or deforestation.

Education is a very important way to give authority to indigenous women, but it is also one of the biggest issues. Many indigenous communities have low literacy rates because they have to work instead of going to school, there aren't enough female teachers, there are language obstacles, and there aren't enough good schools. Some reasons why girls in tribal communities leave school early include that they have to undertake tasks at home, get married young, and travel a long way to get to school. They can't learn about their rights, get information, or move up in society without a solid education. To fight this, some places have launched inclusive education programs that include tribal languages and traditions and other ways of teaching.

For indigenous women to be equal, they also need to be able to make money on their own. For a long time, indigenous women and their families have made money by farming, logging, and manufacturing products by hand. But these places don't always get adequate assistance from the government or businesses. Many indigenous tribes have had to leave their homes because of construction projects and the commercialization of forest resources. This has left women without a method to support themselves. In response, cooperative structures and self-help groups (SHGs) have become

useful ways for indigenous women to receive legitimate financial services and create their own businesses. Women can become financially independent, learn how to manage their money, and take part in important family and community issues through microcredit programs and cooperative businesses. The Tribal Sub-Plan and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) are two government programs that intend to help women get more involved in the economy. They achieve this by supporting traditional items like handloom, bamboo crafts, and organic food, as well as by providing women money, training them practical skills, and helping them find markets.

Tribal women are more likely to be poor, hungry, not have access to healthcare, and not know much about reproductive and maternal health. Maternal mortality, child malnutrition, and anemia continue to be significant issues among indigenous populations. Some people only go to traditional healers for health care, which is important to their culture, but also causes other people concerned about the quality of care they get. Many government programs are designed to help moms and their children stay healthy. Some of these are the Janani Suraksha Yojana, Poshan Abhiyaan, and mobile health clinics in remote tribal areas. But these initiatives won't work until they reach out to people and adapt to their culture. In the long run, teaching women about the importance of health, giving local health workers the tools they need, and combining traditional knowledge with contemporary medicine may be beneficial for tribe health.

The goal of gender equality programs is to offer people more power in politics and society. To make sure that indigenous women's views are taken into account when creating policies, they need to have a voice in government at both the village and national levels. Because of the women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions, many native women are now leaders in the governing bodies of their villages. But they often don't get involved because they don't know enough, don't feel secure, and are affected by men. They can't make good decisions without training and programs to help them enhance their skills. Indigenous women's networks and associations may also be an important means for them to speak out and for others to join them in their struggle for what they deserve and to reform laws that affect land ownership, forest rights, and job security.

Keeping cultural practices alive gives people a lot more power. Tribal women's community life, customs, and traditions are vitally significant to how they see themselves. Any plan to give individuals more authority should not make them adopt outside views about how to grow. It should instead respect and include their own cultural norms. If development projects take into account cultural norms and beliefs, they may do a better job of promoting gender equality and meeting the needs of indigenous people. For example, community-based programs that let tribal elders and local women's groups help in decisions work better than therapies that come from the top down. In this setting, men and women work together to help one other, which benefits both of them.

To achieve gender equality among indigenous women, there must be a system of laws and rules in place. The Indian Constitution protects Scheduled Tribes and makes sure that everyone is treated the same by the law. The Forest Rights Act and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) are two laws that give women the power to help manage resources. The Tribal Sub-Plan and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women both strive to make sure that gender concerns are taken into account while creating plans for development. But these steps are still not being used regularly due to problems with the bureaucracy, a lack of coordination, and the fact that the individuals who need them don't know how to use them. We need to make sure that budgets are gender-sensitive, keep institutions accountable, and foster cooperation between government agencies, NGOs, and tribal organizations in order to actually empower people.

A comprehensive strategy to empower tribal women in India through gender equality and inclusive development measures must encompass education, economic autonomy, healthcare, legal protections, and political engagement. It takes a lot of work from both the government and the people to get rid of the things that keep inequality going. Empowered tribal women can also help their communities by encouraging sustainable development and protecting India's cultural variety. Indigenous women can only be truly empowered when they can speak out for what they believe in, be heard, and have a fair say in how their communities grow socially and economically.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Naveen, Set al., (2023) this study seeks to emphasize entrepreneurship within a particular tribal environment. Women entrepreneurs, particularly those from indigenous communities, face discrimination because of their language and way of life, which hinders their business growth and competitiveness and ultimately impacts their life choices. Despite numerous efforts by international organizations and governmental institutions to assist them, these women continue to face isolation. Finding ways to help indigenous women in Odisha's Mayurbhanj area gain access to entrepreneurship is the focus of this research. Using a combination of an interview schedule and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 111 women entrepreneurs from the Santhal tribal group were interviewed. The Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) was utilized to gauge the advancement of social and economic opportunities, and a linear regression model was employed to determine which dependent variables impact entrepreneurs. Before and after an entrepreneurship intervention, the participants were interviewed and asked to rate themselves on a battery of WEI measures. Findings and analysis Based on the study's parameters, the Women's Empowerment Index increased from 0.61 to 1.26, indicating a favourable shift

in women's empowerment following the establishment of their work. Furthermore, research has shown that women's decision-making within the family is positively and significantly impacted by entrepreneurship. As a result, there should be more government and related organization intervention in the form of initiatives aimed at enhancing women's education and financial capabilities so that they can start their own businesses.

Singh, Anubhav & Ahluwalia, Ishvinder (2023) The tribes in India are characterized by the dominant groups as separate because of their social, economic, and cultural existence, and because they live in relatively isolated mountain and forest locations. The term "tribe" is associated with some Indian ethnic groups due to the colonial rule of the British. This name is still used to describe the exotic native Indians who live outside of India's urban areas and townships. Even in modern times, you can find indigenous communities residing in hilly, forested regions that are abundant in water, minerals, and other natural resources. Also, the cultures of these indigenous groups are completely alien to the modern world. So, those from outside the community find alternative ways to refer to them. Rajasthan has seen remarkable progress in every area after gaining independence. In an effort to empower women and other marginalized communities, the government of Rajasthan has launched a variety of development programs. Active mobilization of tribes and involvement of many stakeholders are essential components of tribal development, which is a complex process. To achieve tribal development goals in the new century, public-private partnerships are essential. A lot of tribal development programs have come and gone in Rajasthan throughout the years. But the indigenous peoples of the state are still severely underrepresented in both society and the economy. This article details the progress made by tribal people in the Indian state of Rajasthan, particularly in the area of tribal women's empowerment.

Ramanji Naik and K. Obulesh (2022) delve into the concept that education is a constitutionally mandated responsibility of the state. The media must fulfill their corporate social duty by empowering tribal women through education, organization, and inspiration. The federal government, state governments, colleges, media outlets, non-governmental organizations, and research institutions specializing in tribal development are all expected to work together in tribal areas to empower tribal women. Media programs geared toward the needs of indigenous women are essential if we want to see their full participation in development efforts. The dissemination of knowledge on the emancipation of tribal women relies heavily on media and non-governmental organizations. In the absence of any existing programs aimed at empowering indigenous women in our town, these groups could exert pressure to launch new ones.

Khan, Sadia & Hasan, Ziya (2020) some people mistakenly believe that Indian women in general do not have the same social position as tribal women. But there are legal studies that disprove this notion. The importance and abundance of women's roles in tribal societies are paramount. The tribal population makes up around 8.6% of the country's overall population, as reported in the 2011 Census. Unfortunately, demographic data shows that the large number of tribal people living in various rural zones has kept them from enjoying full equality for decades. Issues with reproductive health, economic inequality, and educational attainment have long plagued indigenous women, as they do other marginalized communities. This paper analyses the GDI indicators, which include literacy rate, health, work participation, poverty, and economic resources, to determine the negative effects of gender disparities among tribal women. The research relies on both primary and secondary data, including pre-existing literature, preliminary studies, and published data sets of government reports and surveys. Extensive observation of the GDI indicators has shown that existing disparities in tribal communities, together with a lack of awareness, illiteracy, land alienation, and isolation from the outside world, are the main causes of these concerns. So, this research paper's main objective is to analyze the main causes of gender inequality and to identify the major gender issues that impact tribal women's social lives.

Mukherjee, Somnath. (2014) in a tribal world, role of women is more respectful than so called civil society. She enjoys and shares economic burden of her family as well as take part in almost every decision making. Thus, she is more empowered than her counterpart. But in terms of materialistic development point of view a tribal woman still suffers disproportionately from education and decent standard of living. In this juncture the paper tends to explain the status of tribal women education of one of the major tribal communities of purely district, West Bengal namely the Santal. To understand the educational condition of Santal women, a statistical measurement technique is developed known as Female Educational Attainment Index (FEAI) which is comprised of two indices i.e. Combined Enrolment Index (CEI) and Female Literacy Index (FLI).

PRESENT SCENARIO OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

People from many different countries, languages, religions, and cultures live together in India. There are many various kinds of Indians, but tribal groups are different from the rest because they have kept their culture and traditions alive for decades. They have always lived in harmony with the land and its natural resources, and they still do things in their own manner. But they also have to deal with a lot of problems and troubles in today's world, such poverty, being forced to move, being taken advantage of, and discrimination. This is a brief introduction to India's native peoples, including a list of the country's biggest tribal groups.

Distinctive Characteristics of Tribal Communities in India

People that live in India's indigenous tribal groups are noted for their distinct language, culture, and way of life. They are called Adivasis, which means "original occupants," and the Indian Constitution calls them Scheduled Tribes. There

are more than 104 million individuals in India who identify as tribal, which is 8.6% of the world's population. You can find them in all 30 states and territories, but they are most common in the northeastern and central portions of the country.

Some of the things that make India's native people unique are:

- They depend on natural resources for food and live in peace with the environment. They do several different kinds of farming, such as terrace farming, woodland gardening, and rotational farming. They also collect things from the forest, like fruits, honey, medicinal herbs, and botanicals. They have a deep grasp of the plants and animals in their area and see them as sacred. They follow their own rules and traditions and have a strong feeling of community and family. Lineages, tribes, villages, and families make up the social structure of their society.
- They have their own laws and judicial systems, which are often made by everyone agreeing on them and making decisions together. They celebrate many festivals and ceremonies that are linked to the seasons, their agricultural cycle, and important events in their lives. The many languages, faiths, and art forms they have shown how rich their cultural heritage is. They speak a number of languages, including Austroasiatic, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, and Andamanese.
- They follow a number of religions, such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, and animism. They have their own unique ways of expressing themselves via art, including as painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, jewelry, music, dance, and writing. They face a lot of problems, such as poverty, being forced to move, being taken advantage of, and being discriminated against.
- They also have low levels of health, literacy, and economic development. They often don't have access to basic needs including education, healthcare, water, sanitation, and electricity. They are at risk of violence, human trafficking, forced migration, environmental damage, and losing their land. The general public also stigmatizes, excludes, and stereotypes them.

EVOLVING STATUS AND SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA

The Adivasis, or indigenous women of India, make up 8.6% of the country's population. They belong to 705 different scheduled tribes, which the government officially recognizes as having their own languages, cultures, and traditions. Most of these may be found in the central and northeastern parts of India. These areas have a lot of natural resources, but they also face a lot of problems, such as environmental deterioration, conflict, displacement, and poverty. Tribal women have a strong connection to their communities and lands, and their cultural legacy is both rich and varied. They know a lot about and are good at a lot of different things, such as farming, forestry, medicine, art, and sports. They also play a very important role in keeping their native languages, traditions, and rituals alive and well. Tribal women, on the other hand, have to deal with a lot of problems and disadvantages because of things like poverty, illiteracy, hunger, health problems, living far away from services, and not being able to get to them.

They are often marginalized, abused, exploited, and discriminated against by the powerful groups and organizations in society. They don't have many resources or chances to take part in decision-making and development processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. They are also under danger because outside forces and interests are taking away their usual rights and claims to land, forests, and water resources.

Tribal women have shown incredible bravery and independence in protecting their rights and interests, as well as in helping to change India, despite these challenges. They have taken part in many movements and fights for cultural identity, social fairness, and protecting the environment. They have also shown their leadership and creativity in many areas, including as business, health, government, and education. They have inspired and empowered many other women and communities to fight for their rights and well-being.

Tribal women are a big part of India's change since they show its diversity, vitality, and potential. They have a unique point of view and plan for a more sustainable, fair, and open-ended development. The state and society owe them recognition, respect, and help because of what they have done and what they want to do. They must also be empowered and enabled in order to completely realize their potential and rights and to actively and successfully participate in the development process. India can only achieve its goals of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas (Everyone's Cooperation, Everyone's Development, and Everyone's Trust) at that time. The Gonds, Santhals, Bhils, Mundas, Khasis, Nagas, and Mizos are some of the most important tribal communities in India. Each of these groups has its own culture, history, and sense of self. They have their own way of governing, their own religion, their own art, and their own way of organizing society. They also have their own food, music, festivals, and rituals that show how diverse and rich their culture is.

Tribal women are closely connected to their natural surroundings because they need them to survive and get food. They have a deep understanding of the cycles and processes of the environment and use their knowledge and skills to manage and protect the resources. For example, tribal women practice shifting cultivation, which is a method of farming that involves moving crops throughout different regions of land to keep the soil fertile and the number of different plants and animals high. They also practice agroforestry, which is a way to grow trees and crops on the same

area to make it more productive and long-lasting. They also gather and use a wide range of forest resources, such as fruits, berries, honey, plants, and fibers, for food, medicine, and money.

Tribal women are especially important for keeping their own languages, traditions, and rituals alive and well. They protect their oral history and folklore and pass on their knowledge and wisdom to the next generation. They also teach their kids their native languages, which are often at risk of dying out because of the dominance of mainstream languages. A UNESCO assessment says that many of the 197 languages in India that are vulnerable, endangered, or extinct are spoken by tribal tribes. Tribal women also want to keep their traditional values and customs, which are very important for their health and social cohesiveness. Respect for elders, standing up for friends, and living in harmony with nature are some of these principles.

Tribal women, on the other hand, have to deal with many problems and hardships because of things like poverty, illiteracy, hunger, health problems, living far away from services, and not being able to go to them easily. They are often pushed to the edges of society by the powerful groups and institutions that run it, where they are exposed to violence, exploitation, and discrimination. They don't have many resources or chances to take part in decision-making and development processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. They are also under danger because outside forces and interests are taking away their rights and access to land, forests, and water resources.

Tribal women are also marginalized, abused, exploited, and discriminated against by the most powerful organizations and institutions in society. The media and popular culture often show them as uncivilized, barbaric, and less than others. In the areas where they work as migrant laborers, domestic workers, or sex workers, nontribal men can also hurt, harass, and abuse them. They also suffer human rights violations and atrocities at the hands of state and non-state actors, such as the police, army, paramilitary forces, and armed groups, especially in areas affected by conflict and insurgency. They are also under risk of being forced to move and losing their land, forests, and water supplies because of development projects like dams, mines, factories, and highways that take over their property without their permission or payment.

Also, indigenous women don't have enough chances and resources to take part in decision-making and development processes that affect their lives and their ability to make a living. They are often left out and ignored by the usual political and economic structures and institutions. They don't have a lot of power in elected bodies like the parliament, state assemblies, and municipal governments, and there aren't enough of them. According to the Election Commission of India, just 47 out of 543 members of the Lok Sabha, which is the lower house of parliament, were classed as ST in 2019. Of those, only 11 were women. They also don't have full access to and control over productive assets and resources including land, financing, technology, and markets. According to a survey from the Ministry of Rural Development, just 10.7% of ST households held more than 2 hectares of land. This is less than the national average of 16.1%. Because they live in remote areas, don't know about their rights, and face red tape, they also have trouble getting basic services and benefits including health care, education, water, sanitation, and social security.

External forces and interests are also taking away tribal women's traditional rights and claims to land, forests, and water resources. They have a historical and cultural right to these resources since they have lived on and managed them for generations. They have their own traditional and customary laws and organizations that control who can use these resources and how. However, the state and market forces often violate and deny these rights and entitlements by imposing their own legal and commercial frameworks and interests on these resources. For example, the Forest Rights Act of 2006, which recognizes the rights of communities living in forests to land and resources, has not been fully enforced. This is because the government and businesses are more interested in clearing and diverting forests for development projects. Also, the state and central governments have not done a good job of enforcing or following the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996, which gives local self-governments in scheduled areas more power and jurisdiction. This technique skips over getting the permission and input of the local communities for development projects.

Despite these challenges, tribal women have shown incredible bravery and independence in protecting their rights and interests and helping to change India. They have taken part in many movements and fights for cultural identity, social fairness, and protecting the environment. They have also shown their leadership and creativity in many areas, including as health, governance, entrepreneurship, and education. They have inspired and empowered many other women and communities to fight for their rights and well-being. Tribal women have been at the forefront of many movements and fights for cultural identity, environmental protection, and social justice. They have come together and spoken out against the policies and forces that threaten their rights and interests. For example, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) is a grassroots group that wants to stop the building of big dams on the Narmada River. These dams would force thousands of tribal and other groups to leave. Women from tribes have been very involved in this effort. They have also been part of the Pathalgadi Movement, which is a tribal assertion movement that puts up stone inscriptions saying that tribal settlements are self-governing and free under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. They are also now part of the Birsra Munda Movement, which is a cultural revival movement that commemorates the memory and spirit of Birsra Munda, a tribal freedom fighter and leader who fought against British colonial control and the feudal

landowners. Tribal women have also shown leadership and creativity in many areas, such as health, education, business, and government.

KEY DETERMINANTS AFFECTING EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA

Empowerment and gender equality are two ideas that are closely associated and are important for the growth and health of any society. Empowerment is the process of giving people and groups more options and skills, especially those who are disadvantaged or oppressed. Gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys, have the same rights, chances, and results in all areas of life. Empowerment and gender equality are not just human rights, but also important for the economy, social justice, and the environment.

Tribal women in India, who make up around 8.6% of the country's population, confront many problems and obstacles that make it harder for them to gain authority and achieve gender equality. Many things can affect these problems and issues, including:

- Most tribal women live in India's central and northeastern areas, which are sometimes hard to get to, secluded, and not very developed. They don't have essential services and infrastructure, such roads, electricity, water, sanitation, health care, schools, and ways to talk to each other. They also have to deal with natural disasters like floods, droughts, and landslides that put their lives and jobs at risk.
- Compared to the national average and other social groupings, tribal women have low levels of literacy and education. The literacy rate for women in tribes was 49.35%, whereas the national average for women was 65.46%. The number of tribal girls who dropped out of school was likewise significant, especially in high school and college. Tribal women don't get a good education because they are poor, live far away, don't speak the same language, follow cultural norms, marry young, have to take care of the house, and don't get good or useful education.
- The Constitution of India legally recognizes Scheduled Tribes (ST) as socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Tribal women are part of these groupings. The upper castes, the state, the market, and the media are some of the main groups and institutions in society that discriminate against, exploit, violate, and push these people to the edges. They also suffer from the loss of their traditional rights and claims to land, forest, and water resources since outside forces and interests are taking them away. They don't have many chances or resources to take part in decision-making and development processes that have an impact on their lives and livelihoods.
- Tribal women have a rich and varied cultural history, and they are very attached to their communities and the environment. They know a lot about and are good in many things, like farming, forestry, medicine, art, and athletics. They also play a big part in keeping their native languages, traditions, and customs alive and well-known. But some of these cultural elements also make it harder for them to gain power and achieve gender equality. For instance, certain tribal groups have patriarchal and patrilineal systems that give men more power and preference than women when it comes to inheritance, property, marriage, and leadership. Some tribal groups also do things that are bad for women, like marrying children, having more than one wife, chasing witches, and giving dowries.

These and other things, like health, nutrition, violence, and migration, have different effects on the empowerment and gender equality of tribal women in India. They restrict their access to and control over material, human, and intellectual resources, including land, credit, information, technology, and education. They also limit their ability to speak up and act in public and private settings, such politics, government, the economy, and family. They also affect their health, safety, and self-esteem, which are all important for their pleasure and well-being.

STRATEGIES AND MEASURES FOR PROMOTING EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

For India to prosper in a way that includes everyone and lasts, tribal women need to have more power. People from tribal communities make up a large part of India's rural population. They like to live in regions that are far away and not well cared for. Women in these civilizations had several important responsibilities, like gardening, running a home, collecting food from the wild, and keeping their culture alive. Even so, several kinds of unfairness, such sexism, low literacy rates, poverty, and not being able to get to healthcare and decision-making institutions, make it impossible for them to get involved in politics, the economy, and society. Women need to get rid of these unfair distinctions and reach gender equality by going to school, working, having legal protection, being engaged in politics, and being accepted in their society.

Educational Empowerment

Education is the key to social mobility and awareness for indigenous women, as well as the key to women's empowerment. In areas where indigenous people dwell, the government has tried several times to get more people to attend to school and read. Both the National Education Policy (2020) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) advocate

inclusive education, especially for females from tribal groups. They do this by giving out scholarships, special dorms, and bridging courses. Indigenous women can also produce more money by taking part in adult and vocational education programs that teach them valuable skills like sewing, making bamboo products, and processing food. PRADAN and SEWA are two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have worked hard to make literacy and life skills programs that teach both academic and gender-sensitive abilities. Helping women instructors from tribal groups makes girls feel more at ease with the culture and builds trust, which helps them stay in school.

Economic and Livelihood Empowerment

Getting financial independence is a key step in giving women more power since it affords them more options and a higher social status. Indigenous women have been in charge of subsistence farming, taking care of animals, and laboring in the woods for a long time. But in formal economic systems, these activities are usually not paid for or recognized. There are a lot of programs that have been set up to help people make money and fix this problem.

Setting up Self-Help Groups (SHGs) is very important to the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) since it helps tribal women access micro-credit, training, and connections to markets. These clubs have not only helped women become more financially independent, but they have also made them feel more empowered and connected to their communities. TRIFED's Van Dhan Yojana and other similar programs also intend to set up businesses owned by the community to help market and add value to minor forest products.

Women from indigenous communities may be able to gain more jobs if they take part in skill-development missions and entrepreneurial training programs that focus on traditional crafts, organic farming, and eco-tourism. They might be able to connect traditional ways of living with modern economies by integrating digital literacy with e-commerce platforms. This also gives them access to broader markets and banks.

Health and Social Welfare Measures

Health and nutrition are key components of gender equality since a person's physical health impacts how well they can participate and contribute. Indigenous women are more likely to die during childbirth, have their development slowed down, and not be able to get reproductive health care. The National Health Mission (NHM) and the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) work to solve these challenges by focusing more on the health of mothers and children in distant tribal areas.

It is necessary to focus on merging old and new health practices, making primary health centers (PHCs) stronger, and educating Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) from tribal communities. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Poshan Abhiyaan are two initiatives that help address short- and long-term nutritional needs. These organizations include extra meals, preschool care, and health education.

Gender-sensitive health policy should also include programs that teach people about family planning, menstrual hygiene, and reproductive rights. Better access to clean drinking water and better sanitation systems for women lowers their physical and mental stress, which in turn makes their lives better.

Political and Legal Empowerment

One important way to give women influence is to get them involved in politics so they can have a say in which development projects get the most attention. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution specify that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) must have a specified number of women, including women from tribes. Because of this, hundreds of native women have become leaders in their communities, serving on councils and as village chiefs.

But merely having individuals in power won't make them powerful; they need programs that teach people about their rights, how the government works, and how to be a leader. The government has begun programs like the Training of Elected Women Representatives (TEWR) program, which is run by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, to satisfy this need. The legislation changes have made men and women much more equal. There are many laws that protect women from abuse and discrimination. For example, the Forest Rights Act (2006) gives women the right to use forest resources, and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989) keeps them from being taken advantage of. There should be community seminars and paralegal volunteers to help individuals learn more about their legal rights. This will help women receive what they deserve faster.

Role of NGOs and Community-Based Organizations

In places where the government doesn't work well, non-governmental groups are particularly significant. To fight for women's rights, health outreach, literacy programs, and women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use participatory development methods. The Hunger Project and the Mahila Samakhyas Program have enabled tribal women work together to solve problems including alcoholism, domestic abuse, and land rights. Community-based organizations also help keep traditional governance institutions and indigenous knowledge systems alive so that empowerment doesn't erase cultural identity. When traditional leaders are involved in programs that teach people about gender issues, it's easier to change how people feel about women's education and engagement.

CONCLUSION

For India to have fair and long-lasting national development, it is important to give tribal women power. This is more than just a question of social justice. Women in indigenous societies have been crucial for a long time in raising food, taking care of forests, and keeping their customs alive. To make lasting reforms that promote equal opportunity and freedom, empowerment must go beyond only social initiatives. Indigenous women must be included in everything from grassroots governance to policy execution for development planning to be truly inclusive. Providing people with access to education, training, and financial services is a crucial step in empowering them and fostering self-sufficiency. Development should not supplant communal values; rather, it should augment them. So, efforts that give people power must put respecting cultural identity and traditional customs first. Empowering indigenous women makes life better for everyone, including their families and communities as a whole. Gender equality, social inclusion, and cultural preservation must all be important parts of India's development framework if the country wants to empower people for the long term.

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