

TRIBAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SOUTHERN RAJASTHAN

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ABSTRACT: 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 southern Rajasthan (India).

INTRODUCTION

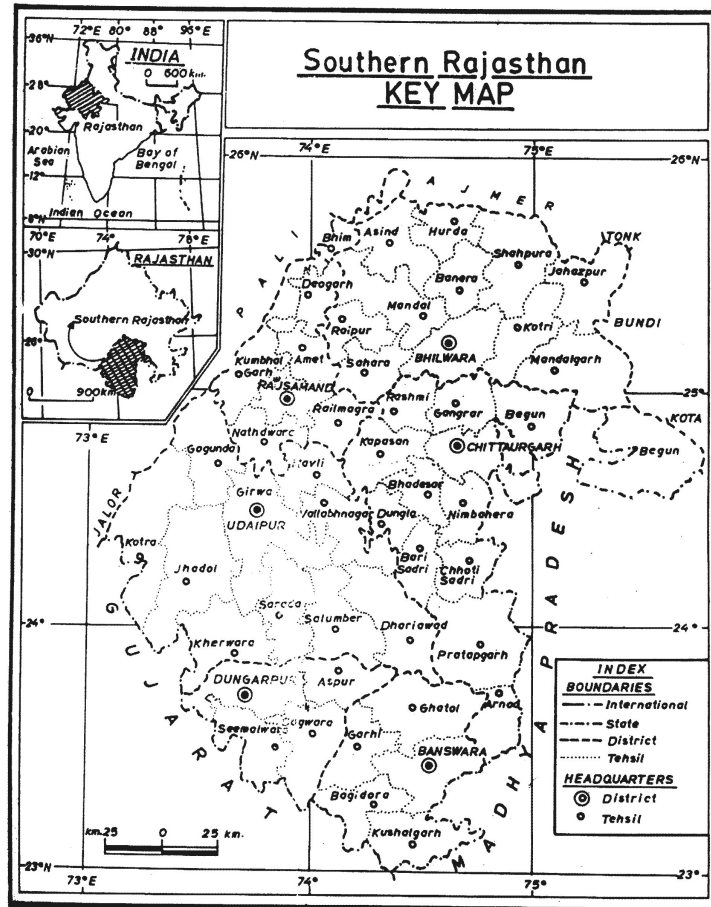
Women constitute almost 50% of world's total population. In India this percentage is about 48.27, according to 2011 census. Country having such a high ratio of women section still lack behind in their status and empowerment. The situation is more sever among the tribal or primitive societies, which constitute approximately 8.9% of the total population of the country. India is also the second largest country to have highest concentration of indigenous population after the African continent.

The tribal population is an imminent part of India's social fabric. According to oxford dictionary 'a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor'. These indigenous communities live in about 15% of the country's geographical area with various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains, forests and inaccessible terrains rich in natural resources. It is the fact that the dependence of tribal on forest is of much greater magnitude. In their natural adobe (forest), their life had been fuelled by the environment that provide them food, fodder, medicinal plants and also satisfy their deep rooted sentiments. They have lived as isolated for centuries untouched by the modern society developed around them. This age old seclusion form country's mainstream has been responsible for the slow growth and dissimilar pattern of their socio- economic and culture development. This isolation has caused much of the hindrance to the women of this indigenous society. In tribal society women are more important than in other social group, because they work harder and the family, economy and management depends on them. However, there tribal women face problem and challenges in getting sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to lack of socio-economic empowerment and also to some extent of ecological destruction or degradation.

Empowerment is a complex concept and it is interpreted in many ways. It comes from the term 'empower' which mean 'to give power or authority and to enable or permit'. This power or authority can only be achieved in these tribal women through reducing poverty, increasing role of education, improving health and nutrition level and also conserving their natural habitat by checking on ecological destruction regularly taking place in their natural home.

STUDY AERA

The study area is mainly concerned to southern Rajasthan. It is largest state of India. It is located in the north-western part of the Subcontinent. It was formally known as 'Rajputana' meaning 'the adobe of the rajas (kings)'. It constitute more than one-tenth of the population as aboriginals or tribal, as per details from census 2011, about 13.5% of the total population of the state is of tribal. The highest concentration of this population is mainly in districts like: Udaipur, Bhilwara, Dungerpur, Banswara, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Rajsamand. Geographically the region is located between 23⁰1'10" to 26⁰1'15" north longitudes and 73⁰1'10" to 75⁰43'30" east longitude occupying an area of 47397 square kilometer.



OBJECTIVES:

- Promoting the empowerment of vulnerable section of the population especially tribal women.
- To examine the social benefit of empowerment.
- To examine vital role of tribal women in ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY: The present data of the study have been gleaned from various sources which have been duly acknowledged. Information on tribal women has been obtained from various state government reports, census of 2011, the reports on selected NGOs, Ministry of tribal affair Rajasthan. Information is also obtained from national and international journals.

BARRIERS TO TRIBAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: Lack of tribal women empowerment is bane for the state as large part of southern Rajasthan is concentrated with these indigenous societies. For development of these women, eradication of all related barriers is necessary at all levels. Women empowerment is the development of mental and physical capacity, power and skills in women for them to operate meaningful in social milieu; there by experiencing a more favorable level of social recognition and subsequent enhance their socio-economic status (akomolafe, 2006). Tribal women relegated to the background as they lack educational, economic and political power necessary to actualize their potentials.

Education: Illiteracy is the major hurdle to women’s empowerment in this region. Female children are usually not given adequate opportunity to acquire formal education which is necessary condition for empowerment. Education is a powerful tool for social transformation. Gender sensitivity must be developed. Education for tribal women has to be paid special attention.

Health: Women face risk of malnutrition hence focus should be paid on nutritional need of women at all stages of their lifecycle. The problem in the country is more serious among the women belonging to these indigenous groups.

Indifferent attitude of males: Even though a woman perform large number of household work and also manages economic conditions in these societies, men have been in control of political, economic as well as social sphere of life for many years. Women in these societies are not given equal opportunities.

Economy: As tribal women are illiterate, they lack opportunities to empower themselves economically. Nearly 80% of them depend upon primary sector for their livelihood; they mainly have forest products for their earning. Poverty is reflected in almost all aspect of an average tribal women's life.

Political empowerment: Lobbying by women group and female politician has eliminated diseases that affect women such as breast and cervical cancer closer to the objective of health policy and research the consequent advancement in the prevention and treatment technologies have saved millions of lives. Appropriate education and training can prepare tribal women to mobilize politically and to have greater involvement in policy making.

Decision-making and gender equality: These are important factor to the women empowerment. There is gender equality in tribal families. But decision making ability of tribal women is very less in outside the family but it is equal to male within families.

Environment: Tribal have 'forest based life support system, women of these societies mainly depend upon forest as it provides various products such as food, fuel, timber, wood for house construction etc.as tribal people have little or no ownership rights in the forest lands and forest products, they suffer the most and represent the poorest lot in the whole national socio-economic milieu.

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 of social Rajasthan 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 areas which do 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.

CONCLUSION: "Yatra Nariastu Pujyante, Ramante Tatra Devta" a verse from Vedas meaning wherever women is respected god resides there. Women in every society should be give equal importance and should be respected in every aspect. Education is the most powerful instrument for empowering women. From the above analysis, it is found that modern education and facilities have influenced much in women empowerment. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors- economic, social, political, educational, health-care, nutrition, right and legal etc. Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power. In research we found there is nexus between tribal women empowerment, education and their status in society, as per their perception they always belong to forest and reciprocally the forest to belong to them. They maintain an excelled and exemplary task by protecting forest. These women have vulnerable conditions. Focus should be given specifically for better nutritional status of indigenous women. There is an urgent need for the education empowerment. In order to make any family planning programme a success it is imperative that the status of women is improved so as to give them the power to decide their own destiny and the destinies of their families and environment around them.

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