

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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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 population of tribal communities scheduled in the Constitution of India and known as Scheduled Tribes (STs) was 8.43 crore (1 crore = 10 million) as per 2001 census and accounts for 8.2% of the total population. 4.26 crores are men and 4.17 crores are women, accounting for 8.01% and 8.40% respectively. They are scattered over all the states/UTs, except Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and the UTs of Pondicherry and Chandigarh.

Tribals have traditionally lived in about 15% of the country's geographical areas, mainly forests, hills and undulating inaccessible terrain in plateau areas, rich in natural resources. They have lived as isolated entities for centuries, largely untouched by the society around them. This seclusion has been responsible for the slower growth, dissimilar pattern of their socio-economic and cultural development and inability to negotiate and cope with the consequences of their involuntary integration into mainstream society and economy. Tribals continue to be socio-economically backward.

### **STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN**

The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women's status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. They constitute about half the total population but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work

harder and the family economy and management depends on them. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite exploitation by contractors and managers, tribals are more sincere and honest than non tribals.

However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. The strategy for tribal development, and specially women, needs improvement, betterment, development and upliftment to effect their empowerment. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources. Undoubtedly, the programmes, oriented towards the empowerment of tribals, particularly women, have improved their socio-economic conditions and status. However, there are wide variations across regions and tribes in terms of work participation, sex ratio, economic productivity and social life. The impact of development planning needs to be evaluated in terms of desired and unanticipated consequences. The development process should be perceived as an involvement and reorganization mechanism of not only the socio-economic system but the entire eco-system. Against this backdrop, the present paper reviews the emerging perspective in the context of the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women and changing paradigms of development.

## **Empowerment and Gender Equity of Tribal Women**

For the accelerated socio-economic development of any community, the active participation of women is essential. In a social set up like India's, their participation has to be ensured through tangible measures, taken at various levels, which result in their empowerment in the real sense. Empowerment of women is one of the concepts that has developed in connection with improving their status. Empowerment includes higher literacy levels, education, better healthcare, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living, self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Raising the status of tribal women is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic one. Within the framework of a democratic policy, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining their status.

Tribal women, while being a disadvantaged and vulnerable group are, nevertheless, better placed, in many respects, than their counterparts in the general population and are, in certain areas, more empowered. They do not suffer segregation or lower status. This is reflected in their higher sex-ratio vis-à-vis the general population (977 as compared to 933 - 2001 census). The child sex-ratio for tribal women also compares favorably vis-à-vis the general population, being 972 as against 919 for the general population - 2001 census. However, the negative practices of the mainstream population seem to have started percolating to the tribal population as well. The child female to male sex ratio shows a decline from 985 (per thousand males) in 1991 to 972 in 2001 while in areas such as education and health tribal women lag behind significantly.

## **Tribal Women in Agriculture**

Over 80% of tribals work in the primary sector against 53% of the general population. About 45% are cultivators against 32.5% of the general population. According to available data, the number of tribal who were cultivators, declined from over 68% to 45% in 2001, whereas agricultural laborers increased from about 20% to 37%, an indication that tribals are steadily losing their lands. Unlike other communities, among tribals there are no restrictions on women's participation in the cultivation process. A tribal woman can participate actively in all agricultural operations including, ploughing, digging, sowing, manuring, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, preparing the granary, threshing, winnowing and storing food grains. In agriculturally backward areas, tribal women are forbidden to touch a plough and can not dig the ground but in all other agricultural operations, women participate actively and traditionally these are a female's job. Processing of food grain is exclusively a woman's job. Every morning tribal women dehusk millet and paddy in husking levers and then clean the grains and cooks them. They not only save money, but also earn it, unlike females of other communities.

Tribal women work as men's partners in agriculture, yet their status remains the same. Tribal women work very hard for the livelihood of the family but live a poor life, in spite of their many contributions in the house and on the farm. Tribal women are important for the improvement and progress of tribals. They are the pivot of tribal agriculture, performing many household and agricultural jobs. Without them, tribal welfare in agriculture is meaningless.

## **Tribal Women in Ecological Development**

Environment and sustainable development are firmly on the global agenda. Eco-feminism is to be viewed in this context. The movement began in the U.S., and Sherry Ortner was among the first to point out that women's interests coincide with

nature's while man's with culture. Eco-feminism considers that: (a) there is a distinct relationship between women and the environment, (b) women have certain responsibilities which make them dependent on nature and (c) women have an extensive knowledge of natural resources. Eco-feminism points to the need for an integrated view of nature, culture and gender issues. An appropriate strategy of development would be one which is not only ecologically sustainable but takes the interests of women into consideration. The problems of ecological distress and climatic changes require immediate attention with a specific formula to achieve ecological safety. All the initiatives taken under UNEP, biosphere programmes, various governmental and non-governmental actions lag behind since none was specifically empowered to achieve eco-equilibrium and ecological security. Women provide sustenance to the family and community by their judicious use and management of natural resources. Women are consumers, producers, educators and caretakers of their families, playing an important role for a sustainable eco-system in the present and future. However, environmental deterioration has a negative effect on the health and quality of life especially of girls and women. A policy of conservation of natural resources will be successful only if women are integrated into all programmes and policy making.

Tribal habitations are facing environmental hazards everywhere due to careless, unplanned and faulty development policies followed by government's skipping the necessary environmental safeguards in development projects. Most development activities impinge upon the environment and adversely affect the ecological balance. The large scale cutting of forest trees in tribal habitats has led to a shortage of fuel, fodder, foliage and forest produce which form the economy of tribals. In the changed context of development, environment protection and sustainable development with a human-centred approach must be ensured. Since tribal women are engaged in ecological

movements, environmental protection and conservation, their role may be enhanced through capacity building and empowerment in the context of ecological development.

### **Tribal Women and Forests**

Tribals have been residing in forest areas for generations, cultivating land and collecting non-timber forest produce. As per the Forest Survey of India Report, 2003, 60.04% of the 63% forest cover of the country and 63% of dense forests lie in 187 tribal districts, though the geographical area of these districts is just 33.6% of the country's geographical area. Out of 58 districts, which have more than 67% of their area under forest cover, 51 are tribal districts. A comparison of the 2001 and 2003 assessments of forest cover in tribal districts shows a net increase of 321,100 hectares underscoring a very strong symbiotic relationship between tribals and forests and of tribals being at the forefront of conservation regimes.

While tribal women have more say in family decisions than their non-tribal counterparts, they also share more responsibilities. Preparing food and providing for drinking water is solely their responsibility so they operate closely with the forests from where they get water, fuel and minor products including edible fruits, tubers, flowers, vegetables and berries.

Minor forest produce plays an important part in the tribal economy. Its collection and marketing is a major source of livelihood for most tribal families contributing around 70% of their total income. The different varieties are classified as plants for use in tanning, natural gums, resins and balsams, plants and seeds used in pharmacy and perfumery and *tendu* leaves.

Firewood is also provided by forests. Since firewood gathering is done mainly by women, the interaction between forests and women gets further enhanced. Since all the duties of tribal women are connected with the forests and they look towards the forest for nature's gifts, theirs

dependence on forests is strong and intrinsic.

### Tribal Women in Education

Tribal women play a significant role in the economic development of tribals as they contribute in various economic activities and education is one of the them.

Education is a crucial requirement for the sustained growth of a developing society and lack of it is largely responsible for the exploitation and pitiable plight of the tribals. The literacy rate of tribals was 8.53 in 1961 and steadily increased to 47.10 in 2001, yet it is far below the national rate of 64.84 (2001 census).

### Literacy in STs

Year	Total population			STs		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	40.40	15.35	28.30	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	45.96	21.97	34.45	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981	56.38	29.76	43.57	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	75.26	53.67	64.84	59.17	34.76	47.10

Source : Selected Educational Statistics 2002-2003, Ministry of HRD.

There has been an overall increase in the enrolment of children belonging to STs. At the primary stage, against an overall increase of 15%, ST enrolment increased by 25%, whereas that of ST girls increased by 36% against overall increases of 23% from 2000 to 2004.

At the upper primary level against an overall increase of 20%, ST enrolment increased by 35%, whereas that of ST girls increased by 47% against girls' overall increase of 30%.

### Enrolment of ST students in schools (in 000)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper primary/middle (VI-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2000-01	6330	4665	10995	1879	1205	3084
2001-02	6691	5040	11731	2054	1306	3360
2002-03	6422	5408	11830	1930	1320	3250
2003-04	6776	5741	12517	2136	1526	3662
2004-05	7367	6369	13737	2395	1776	4171

Source : Selected Educational Statistics 2002-2003, Ministry of HRD.

The dropout rate among tribal school children is alarming. Various steps taken by state governments to check dropouts, including free distribution of books and stationery, scholarships, reimbursement of examination fees, free bus travel, mid-day meals, etc. have had an impact but still fall short. The performance of certain states in providing matching grants, maintenance of service and management of hostels is not encouraging. The pace of construction of hostels has been very slow and the basic

amenities provided therein are substandard.

Low literacy especially among tribal girls and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels are areas of serious concern. The main causes are (i) poverty, (ii) contents of the education, (iii) inadequate educational institutions and supporting services in tribal areas, (iv) absenteeism, (v) medium of instruction and (iv) education policy.

### Health

Healthcare is a major problem in far flung isolated tribal areas. Lack of food security, sanitation, and safe drinking water, poor nutrition and high poverty levels aggravate their poor health status. The problem of malnutrition is multidimensional and intergenerational. Health institutions are few and far between. Till recently, an abundance of fruits, tubers, roots and leaves in forests on the one hand and indigenous health-care systems on the other, contributed positively to tribal health. Tribal people have over the centuries developed their own medicinal

system based on herbs and other items collected from nature and processed locally. They have their own system of diagnosis and cure. But the skills and natural resources are fast disappearing. Moreover, the traditional systems can not treat or prevent many diseases that modern medicine can.

Some health indicators of tribals, SCs and others (per thousand persons) are given below to establish their poor state of health:

#### Health Indicators

	Infant mortality rate	Under 5 mortality rate	Under nutrition
SC	83.0	119.3	535
ST	84.2	126.6	559
All	70.0	94.9	470

Source : Bulletin on Rural Health Statistics in India, 2005. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

#### Money lending and Indebtedness

Despite legal and protective measures to curb money lending in scheduled areas and provisions for debt relief, enforcement has been weak and ineffective. The non-recognition of the consumption needs of tribals and the non-availability of institutional consumption credit makes tribal people fall easy victim to money lenders and leads to dependence on them. The enormous rates of interest keep tribals in perpetual debt, resulting in the mortgage and ultimate loss of land and property.

Positive measures to improve the flow of institutional credit for consumption through self help groups must be taken. The Andhra Pradesh model for food security and consumption credit would be worth emulating in other states.

#### Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights

Dwelling amidst hills, forests, coastal areas and deserts, tribals have gained vast experience in combating environmental hardships and leading sustainable livelihoods. Their wisdom is reflected in their water harvesting techniques, agricultural practices, irrigation systems, construction of cane bridges, adaptation to desert life, utilization of forest species like herbs and plants for medicinal purposes and meteorological assessment. This invaluable knowledge needs to be properly documented and preserved to prevent it getting lost as a result of modernization and the passage of time.

Tribal communities have a close dependence on biological resources related to *flora* and *fauna*. Their livelihood and lifestyle depends upon and is shaped by these resources. Their survival and sustenance is intricately linked to conservation and utilization of these resources. Corporate protectionism in

terms of patents and intellectual property rights arising out of various international treaties/instruments on trade and common property resources such as TRIPs and WTO represent a real threat to their economic livelihood and a source of potential exploitation of their resource base as bio-diversity expressed in life forms and knowledge is sought to be converted into private property and treated as an open access system for free exploitation by those who want to privatize and patent it. There is an urgent need to provide appropriate legal and institutional arrangements for acknowledging the rights of tribals to such resources and knowledge.

### **Information and Communication Technology**

Tribals live in far-flung areas often outside the reach of modern means of information and communication technology. They are thus deprived of crucial information regarding development initiatives, employment programmes etc. Use of IT could help women to improve agricultural productivity and become entrepreneurs and information intermediaries. It could provide tribal women with farm-related information such as best package of practices, weather forecasting, access to credit, price and availability of farm inputs, market information etc.

### **EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBALS IN DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING**

The need for empowerment of tribals hardly needs justification. Their primitive way of life, economic and social backwardness, low level of literacy, outdated system of production, absence of value systems, sparse physical infrastructure in backward tribal areas and demographic quality of tribal areas make the development of tribals and tribal areas essential.

#### **Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy:**

The tribal sub plan was adopted for the first time at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan in 1974-75. It applies, at present, to 21 states and two Union

Territories, where tribals constitute a sizeable population and provides for the allocation of funds in proportion to the tribal population in the country by each of the concerned central ministries/departments in proportion to the tribal population of that state.

The TSP as originally conceived had a two prolonged strategy: promotion of development activities to raise the living standards of tribals, and protection of their interests through legal and administrative support. The TSP mechanism has however become routine and humdrum in most states with little awareness of its original objectives. TSP has become a loose agglomeration of schemes prepared by line departments and driven more by departmental priorities than by any broad philosophy or thrust on development of tribals and tribal areas.

After the adoption of this approach, since fifth five year plan, the flow of funds to TSP areas has significantly increased. TSP expenditure which came down to poor 0.51% during the 4<sup>th</sup> five year plan increased to 9.47% during the 8<sup>th</sup> five year plan. The objective of the Tenth Plan was to empower STs through their educational, economic and social development. An outlay of Rs. 1,719.71 crore was provided in the Annual Plan for 2007-08, which is 3.79% higher than the outlay of Rs. 1,656.90 crore for 2006-07 (RE). The outlay includes Rs. 816.71 crore provided as Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal-Sub Plan (TSP) which includes Rs. 220.00 crore for development of forest villages and Rs. 150 crore for Minor Irrigation of tribal lands. SCA to Tribal Sub-Plan is a 100% grant extended to States as an additional funding to undertake developmental, family-oriented, income-generating schemes, the creation of critical infrastructure, the extension of financial assistance to Self Help Groups (SHGs) for community-based activities, and the development of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and forest villages. Grant-in-aid under Article 275(1) is also being provided to the States to promote the welfare of STs, improve administration

and take up special welfare and development programmes which are not included in the Plan.

Under the TSP strategy, a number of development schemes have been evolved to bring Scheduled Tribes up on the ladder of development. One strategy has been the attempt to earmark funds for the TSP in TSP states/UTs which are equal in proportion to the ST population in the state/UT. Pooling of funds has been envisaged from various sources like central Schemes, state plan and institutional funds. The strategy has been largely successful in garnering more funds for the TSP.

### **PESA**

The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) came into force on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1996 with the objective of safeguarding and preserving the traditions and customs of people living in scheduled areas, their social, religious and cultural identities and traditional management practices of community resources.

PESA is an instrument for tribals' empowerment of tribals. To make it effective, it is necessary to (a) endow Panchayats at the appropriate level and Gram Sabhas with ownership of minor forest produce (MFP), (b) empower Gram Sabhas to approve beneficiaries under poverty alleviation programmes and the provisions relating to minor forest produce, minor minerals and settlement of land rights in forest, (c) make prior consultation with Gram Sabha or Panchayats at the appropriate level mandatory before acquisition of land for development projects, (d) make the recommendation of Gram Sabha or Panchayat at the appropriate level mandatory for granting prospecting licences or mining leases for minor minerals and (e) get State Governments to change their existing laws whenever they are inconsistent with central legislation.

For the PESA Act to be more meaningful, provisions relating to Gram Sabhas as per the Constitutional amendment and the

amended Panchayat Raj Act have to be translated into local tribal dialects and made available to all Gram Panchayats in scheduled areas. Training programmes should be organized so that all Gram Sabhas members including tribal women are aware of the function, responsibilities and powers of Gram Sabhas.

In reality, PESA has not become part of mainstream policy. Many state governments have passed laws not fully in conformity with the central law. While PESA remains unimplemented, tribal areas are increasingly being opened up by State Governments for commercial exploitation by national and multinational corporate bodies.

### **State/UT Minor Forest Produce Act 2005**

The tribals are in need of forest-based sustainable livelihoods for which ownership of forest resources and management of the ecology are crucial. The Government of India has come out with the Minor Forest Produce Act (MFPA) 2005 whereby forest dependent communities should be endowed with collection, processing and trade in minor forest produce on the principle of "Share and Care". Other provisions include coverage of a minimum 1/3 of area under trees, demarcation of area under Biological Diversity Act 2002 and safeguarding forest area covered under wild life (Protection) Act 1972. If these initiatives are effectively implemented, the ecological balance will be restored and tribals will have safe livelihoods with assured participation and ownership.

### **Development and Employment Programmes**

The Government has implemented various programmes which encourage tribals to take up new ventures. The assistance for the poor households of SCs/STs under the major programmes is as follows:

#### **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NAREGA)**

NAREGA guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural

household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act came into force in 200 selected districts on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006, and an additional 130 districts from 2007-08. The Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) have been subsumed into NAREGA in these 330 districts. All districts will be included from April, 2008. NAREGA is a demand-driven scheme so separate earmarking of employment/resources for SCs/STs has not been provided. However, the reports of physical achievements during 2006-07 reveal that more than 61% of the total man days of employment generated were for SC/ST households. During 2007-08 (up to Dec. 2007) total employment of 8557.97 lakh man days was generated out of which employment for SCs and STs was 2330.36 lakh man days (27.2%) and 2648.02 lakh (30.94%) man days respectively.

- **Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)**

While the SGRY is open to all rural poor who are in need of wage employment, preference is given to SCs/STs and parents of child labourers withdrawn from hazardous occupations, who are below the poverty line. 22.5% of the annual allocation (inclusive of food grains) at district and intermediate panchayat level is earmarked for individual/group beneficiary schemes of SC/ST families living below the poverty line. A minimum 50% of the village panchayat allocation (inclusive of food grains) is for the creation of need-based village infrastructure in SC/ST habitations/wards. A total employment of 1170.75 lakh man days was created during 2007-2008 (up to Dec. 2007) out of which there were 435.49 (37.2%) lakh man days for SCs and 151.31 (12.9%) lakh man days for STs.

- **Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)**

The SGSY is a major self employment programme being implemented all over the country. Its guidelines stipulate that at least 50% of the Swarozgaris will be SCs/STs, 40% women and 3% persons

with disability. Subsidies will be uniform at 30% of the project cost, subject to a maximum of Rs. 7500. For SCs/STs and the disabled, the subsidy limit is 50% of the project cost subject to a maximum of Rs. 10,000 respectively.

The number of swarozgaris assisted under this scheme during 2007-08 (up to Dec. 2007) was 776408. This includes the Swarozgaris of SHGs and individual swarozgaris out of which the SC Swarozgaris assisted were 267740 (34.4%) and ST Swarozgaris 113215 (14.58%).

### **Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)**

The Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is being implemented at national level to provide dwelling units to people below the poverty line living in rural areas. Preference is given to BPL families belonging to SCs/STs. 60% of the total allocation during a financial year is for construction of dwelling units for SCs and STs.

The guideline provides for allotting houses in the name of the female member of household or in the joint names of husband and wife. 3% of the funds are reserved for the disabled below the poverty line in rural areas. Homes completed during 2007-08 (up to Dec. 2007) were 1063920 out of which 462273(43.4%) were allotted in the name of SCs and 188247 (17.69%) in the name of STs.

### **National Rural Health Mission (2005-2012)**

The Government of India launched the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in April 2005 to provide effective healthcare to the rural population throughout the country with special focus on 18 states, with weak public health infrastructure and poor performance in demographic and health indicators. Those states are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, J & K, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The NRHM will cover all villages through approximately 2.5 lakh village-based "Accredited Social Health Activities" (ASHA) which will act as a link between villagers and health centers. One ASHA will be formed in every village or cluster of villages to advise villagers about sanitation, hygiene, contraception and immunization. Rs. 67 billion was provided in the budget in 2005-06. A National Health Insurance Scheme has also been launched for BPL families to ensure annual health coverage of Rs. 30,000 for families or individuals. Rs. 100,000 will be paid to the families of those who die in accidents and in cases of disability. Rs. 50,000 is paid in case of partial disability.

### **SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The role of tribal women is important but their socio-economic development is poor. More needs to be done. The problems of tribal women and tribals are largely common. Suggestions and recommendations to strengthen and empower tribals as well as tribal women are:

- Increase agricultural production through conservation to settled agriculture, where possible, with linkage to easy credit and markets and assured irrigation.
- Undertake a comprehensive survey of water resources, including surface water and groundwater, in tribal areas with the help of remote sensing to prepare land use maps. Where water levels have gone down, an integrated watershed management approach must be adopted. Ponds and tanks should be increased and renovated for optimum use.
- Promote the diversification of agriculture and non-farm sectors to create job opportunities. Train tribal women in kitchen gardening, childcare, food preservation, handicrafts and other house-based activities.
- Form and stabilize tribal women's co-operatives to take up dairy, sericulture, fisheries, handicrafts, horticulture agri-food processing and post harvest technologies
- Impart practical knowledge and training in modern techniques 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 incomes and eliminate adverse ecological effects.
- As per the PESA 1996, the Gram Sabha enjoys the authority to decide the natural resources which include non-timber forest produce (NTFP). The monopoly restrictions over NTFP should be immediately removed while ensuring social protection through provision of support prices to tribals who should be allowed to collect, process, transport and market the NTFP.
- Low literacy especially among tribal girls and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels are areas of serious concern. Focus on girls' education, inclusive of context-specific traditional and innovative interventions. Launch special and sustained education initiatives/drives in low female literacy tribal pockets.
- Teach tribal children in their mother tongue at least at primary level. Prepare textbooks in tribal languages.
- To prevent teacher absenteeism in tribal areas, give preference to local and tribal teachers from local panchayats, and place the teaching and non-teaching staff of primary schools under the control

of the village management committee.

- Devise new systems to improve the access of tribals to modern healthcare.
- Promote the synthesis of Indian systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Sidha and Unani with the tribal system.
- Provide good drinking water facilities in tribal areas.
- Strengthen the TSP strategy with an institutionalized mechanism for compliance and monitoring. Make TSP funds non-divertible and non-lapsable – develop a workable system.
- Take measures through community efforts to eliminate pernicious practices which result in the torture and oppression of women e.g. witchcraft and superstitions.
- Discourage the migration of tribal women to urban areas, to take low paid, domestic and mental work by providing an enabling regulatory framework.
- Train tribal women to take up their responsibilities and sensitize the Gram Sabha about the new provisions.
- Inform all Gram Sabha members, including tribal women, of the functions, responsibilities and powers of Gram Sabhas.
- Encourage women's organizations working among tribals and ensure the formation, stabilization and bank linkages of SHGs to promote viable micro-economic activities with substantial support in terms of credit and market.

These strategies would empower tribal women and bring them into mainstream development.

## CONCLUSION

Tribal women play a major role in the co-management of their natural, social, economic resources and agricultural development including crop production, livestock production, horticulture and post harvest operations but they remain backward due to traditional values, illiteracy, superstitions, dominant roles in decision making, social evils and many other cultural factors.

The participatory role of tribals in improving their living conditions by fully exploring natural endowments and alternative uses must find an appropriate place in the strategic approach. The social dynamics of tribal welfare and development is such that effective strategies to protect tribals and their livelihood imply negotiating some kind of social consensus about criteria concerning tribal development and values of the society that evolves from such programmes. This also implies a broad social consensus about the basic rights and opportunities that tribals should enjoy and the responsibilities that should be taken by different individual and social groups.

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