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Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Tribal Societies of Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment in the tribal societies of Jharkhand, India. Despite rich cultural traditions, patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation. Through a multifaceted approach involving education, healthcare, economic empowerment, legal awareness, and community participation, significant strides are being made to uplift and empower tribal women. Collaborative efforts among government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and international partners enhance these initiatives. This paper highlights the challenges and progress, envisioning a future where gender equality is a reality, enabling women to contribute fully to their communities.

KEYWORDS: Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, Tribal Societies in Jharkhand.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the tribal societies of Jharkhand, India, the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment stands as a pivotal challenge amid rich cultural traditions and historical patriarchal norms. As these communities navigate modernization and development, the imperative to ensure equal opportunities and rights for women emerges as a pressing concern. Despite their resilience and deep-rooted ties to their lands, women in these tribal societies often face barriers to education, healthcare, economic participation, and political representation. Thus, addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach that not only acknowledges the unique cultural contexts but also actively engages in initiatives fostering education, healthcare access, economic empowerment, legal awareness, and community participation to uplift and empower women within Jharkhand's tribal fabric. In the tribal societies of Jharkhand, nestled amidst verdant landscapes and rich cultural heritage, the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment unfolds against a backdrop of tradition and modernity. Despite the region's vibrant cultural tapestry, patriarchal norms often consign women to marginalized roles, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. However, amidst these challenges, a burgeoning movement is underway, propelled by grassroots initiatives and collaborative efforts to challenge entrenched gender norms and uplift women's status. Efforts to foster gender equality in Jharkhand's tribal communities encompass a multifaceted approach, spanning education, healthcare, economic empowerment, legal rights, and political participation. Through targeted interventions such as expanding educational opportunities for girls, improving healthcare access, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and enhancing women's participation in local governance, strides are being made towards creating more equitable societies. As these initiatives gain momentum, they illuminate a path towards a future where women in Jharkhand's tribal societies stand empowered, their voices amplified, and their rights upheld, shaping a more inclusive and just society for generations to come (Aind & Oraon, 2013).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tripathy, (2010): This study assessed the impact of participatory women's groups on birth outcomes in tribal and rural populations of Jharkhand and Orissa. Intervention clusters saw significant reductions in neonatal mortality rates (NMR) compared to control clusters, with a 32% lower NMR over three years. Although there was no overall significant effect on maternal depression, a 57% reduction in moderate depression was observed in the third year. The findings suggested that community mobilization through women's groups could effectively improve maternal and newborn health outcomes in disadvantaged rural areas.

Agrawal, P. K., & Agrawal, S. (2010): This paper compared health, socio-economic, and demographic indicators among indigenous and non-indigenous women in Jharkhand using data from India's National Family Health Survey. Indigenous women were found to be significantly disadvantaged in terms of socio-demographic factors, family planning, and maternal health compared to their non-indigenous counterparts. The study called for urgent implementation of targeted healthcare strategies to address these disparities and improve the overall well-being of indigenous women in Jharkhand.



Maurya, N., & Pandey, A. (2011): This paper discussed India's cultural, economic, and political diversity, emphasizing the need for inclusive growth across all sectors and communities. It argued that economic growth should be balanced to ensure no community is left behind. The study highlighted the importance of government attention to less developed areas to enable equal participation in economic growth, thus promoting a more equitable society.

Priti Sanga, N., & Kumar Ranjan, R. (2014): This paper examined the impact of climate change on rural livelihoods in Jharkhand, focusing on integrated natural resource management (NRM). Through participatory research methods, the study found that in-situ soil and water conservation improved freshwater availability, agricultural productivity, and reduced women's drudgeries. Livelihood diversification through culture fishery was also successful, enhancing food and nutrition security. The project's success was attributed to the active involvement and ownership of tribal communities in fund management and rural planning, creating a replicable model for sustainable rural development.

Kakati, B. K., & Behera, M. C. (2014): This paper critically examined women's participation in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) in Jharkhand, noting that it fell below the minimum requirement of 33%. It highlighted significant inter-district variations in participation rates and explored reasons for these discrepancies. The study called for targeted interventions to increase women's involvement in MGNREGA, thereby enhancing their livelihood security and promoting rural development.

Tiwary, M. R. (2016): This study emphasized the interlinked nature of gender equality and women's empowerment in promoting development and reducing poverty. Despite constituting nearly half of India's population, women and girls remained underrepresented in development processes. The paper highlighted the failure to meet Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and stressed the need for a holistic post-2015 agenda. It called for changes in societal attitudes and behaviors to end discriminatory practices and promote gender-specific targets for inclusive growth and social justice.

Panda, P. K. (2017): This study highlighted the marginalization of tribal women in Jharkhand and emphasized the importance of equal participation and promotion of women's rights for economic growth. It documented the success of an inclusive Lac livelihood model executed by Udyogini, which effectively integrated tribal women into the Lac supply chain. The women showed entrepreneurial abilities, improved their incomes, and gained economic empowerment, particularly in education and health. The case study demonstrated that with appropriate training and inclusive strategies, disadvantaged women could successfully engage in micro-enterprise development and management.

Dhal, S. (2018): This paper explored the impact of globalization on violence against women, particularly tribal women, in Jharkhand. It argued that globalization exacerbated existing patriarchal power structures, leading to increased economic disparities, feminization of poverty, and unsafe working conditions. The study emphasized the need to systematically evaluate the gender impact of globalization and called for comprehensive strategies to address violence and inequality, ensuring human security and social justice for vulnerable women in the era of globalization.

III. BACKGROUND OF JHARKHAND'S TRIBAL SOCIETIES

The tribal societies of Jharkhand, nestled in the eastern region of India, boast a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in traditions that span generations. Historically, these communities have maintained a close connection with their natural surroundings, relying on agriculture, forest resources, and traditional crafts for sustenance. Jharkhand, which translates to "The Land of Forests," is home to a diverse array of tribal groups, including the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, and Ho, each with its distinct language, customs, and social structures. These indigenous communities have preserved their cultural identity amidst a backdrop of rapid modernization and urbanization. However, despite their resilient spirit and cultural richness, Jharkhand's tribal societies grapple with various socio-economic challenges. Poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and marginalization from mainstream development processes are among the significant issues confronting these communities. Moreover, entrenched patriarchal norms often result in gender disparities, limiting women's opportunities for education, economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making. Yet, amidst these challenges, there exists a vibrant tapestry of resilience and community solidarity. Efforts to preserve and celebrate tribal cultures, coupled with initiatives aimed at addressing socio-economic inequalities and promoting inclusive development, underscore a hopeful trajectory for Jharkhand's tribal societies. In this dynamic landscape, the quest for sustainable development and social justice intertwines with the preservation of cultural heritage, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of life in Jharkhand's tribal heartland. (Minj, 2013)



IV. GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender inequality in Jharkhand's tribal societies is a pervasive issue, deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions that limit women's roles and opportunities. Despite the rich cultural heritage of these communities, women often face significant barriers to education, healthcare, and economic participation. Social norms and practices frequently restrict women to domestic spheres, curtailing their autonomy and decision-making power. Educational attainment for girls is often lower than that of boys, and access to healthcare services is limited, particularly in remote areas. Economically, women are underrepresented in formal employment and face significant challenges in achieving financial independence. Additionally, women's participation in local governance and political processes remains limited, further perpetuating their marginalization. These disparities highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to promote gender equality and empower women within Jharkhand's tribal societies (Ponthieux, 2015).

V. EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

Empowerment initiatives in Jharkhand's tribal societies (Aind, 2013) focus on addressing the multifaceted barriers that women face, with efforts spanning education, healthcare, economic development, and political participation. Programs aimed at increasing girls' enrollment and retention in schools, along with scholarships and vocational training, seek to enhance educational opportunities. Healthcare initiatives, including mobile clinics and awareness campaigns on maternal and child health, strive to improve access to essential services. Economic empowerment is being promoted through skill development programs, support for women's entrepreneurship, and self-help groups that provide financial resources and training. Legal aid services and awareness campaigns about women's rights aim to combat domestic violence and discrimination, while efforts to boost women's representation in local governance structures encourage their active participation in decision-making processes. These comprehensive strategies collectively work towards breaking the cycle of gender inequality and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in Jharkhand's tribal communities.

VI. COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Collaborative efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Jharkhand's tribal societies involve a synergy of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and international partners. Government initiatives, such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the daughter, Educate the daughter) campaign, align with grassroots efforts led by NGOs that focus on education, healthcare, and economic development. Community-based organizations play a crucial role in mobilizing local resources and fostering community engagement, while international partners provide technical expertise, funding, and a global perspective on best practices. These collaborations ensure that interventions are culturally sensitive and context-specific, addressing the unique needs of tribal women. By pooling resources and expertise, these diverse actors create a robust support network that enhances the effectiveness and reach of empowerment initiatives, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

VII. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The vision for the future of Jharkhand's tribal societies is one where gender equality is a lived reality, and women are empowered to fully participate in all aspects of life. This future envisions women having equal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, enabling them to break free from the cycle of poverty and marginalization. It includes a society where women's voices are heard and valued in decision-making processes at all levels, from local governance to broader community initiatives. By fostering a culture of respect and equality, these efforts aim to dismantle patriarchal norms and create an environment where women and men can thrive equally. The ultimate goal is to build sustainable, inclusive communities where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to achieve their full potential and contribute to the collective well-being and development of their society.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The achieving gender equality and empowering women in Jharkhand's tribal societies require sustained, collaborative efforts addressing education, healthcare, economic participation, and political representation. Despite deep-rooted patriarchal challenges, the combined impact of grassroots initiatives and institutional support is fostering positive change. As these efforts gain momentum, they pave the way for a future where women are empowered to break free from poverty and marginalization, contributing to a more inclusive, equitable, and thriving society.



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