

## **Empowerment of Tribal Women in Dharmapore Taluka (Valsad District, South Gujarat)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Empowerment means self competence and self efficiency with self awareness for development. Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they are still lagging far behind in the different walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. so there was need to work on empowerment of tribal women. For the present study various variables will be selected for collection of primary and secondary data. Main aims of the study are to integrate socio-economic activities with concern for health and environment protection, tribal women's cultural contexts, invest science and technology in women s education and empowerment programmes to enable them to acquire scientific temper and to enable their family and community to engage in the process of sustainable development through the 'reflection-action' process, find out changes in the socio-economic conditions of women, find Out different economic activities which have been successful/unsuccessful in empowering women, empower the tribal women to become self-confident, to unite the women for community welfare and to make the women economically self sufficient. This study would provide independent economic and social empowerment of deprived tribal women of Dharampur taluka.

*Keywords: Tribal Women, Empowerment, Sustainable Development and Dharampur Taluka*

**E**mpowerment means self competence and self efficiency with self awareness in all kinds. Empowerment is the knowledge and awareness of one's own life and society including legal raise with status and with regarding to the lives. The term empowerment can be interpreted in different ways. Empowerment is of intrinsic value and it also has instrumental value. Empowerment is relevant at the individual and collective level, and can assume economic, social, or political form. The term can be used to characterize relation within household or between poor people and other actors at the global level. There are various component empowerment viz., control over the economy of the family, self development, participation in socio-political decision making, participation in family welfare activities and improvement of managerial technical skills.

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Poverty is one of the major factors that deprive the opportunities of women to participation in development programs, mobility and decision-making. In tribal area the condition of women are very measurable they spend the greatest amount of their time in collecting fuel, fodder water, looking after livestock and kitchen. Poverty pushes them the down to lowest strata of society. So there is need of empowerment of women in various fields. Their mobility, confidence and opportunities increase with social mobility. 'The tribal population is an integral part of India's social fabric and has the second largest concentration after that of the African continent.

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 isolation 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 (Awais et al., 2009). Economic empowerment enables them to smoothen their cash flow throughout the year for various activities (Natarajan, 2009). Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they are still lagging far behind in the different walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights but everywhere men and women are in chain. In the developing countries like India, women in general and tribal women in particular are relatively powerless, with little or no control over resources and little decision making power. The tribal in India constitute about eight percent of the total Indian population, he material states in which poor tribal women live are-low wages, poor nutrition, and lack of access to health care, education and training. The need of the hour is to 'empower' the tribal women so that they live the life of equality and dignity which are being denied by our society Kumar, 2013).

Microcredit Summit Report, 2005 (Daley-Harris, 2005) stated that there were 1.3 billion poor in the world, of which 100 million were women and most of them were in Asia. The anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, policy makers, administrators and people who have been involved with tribes and their problems either on theoretical plane or on practical grounds are not still on the same wavelength regarding the concept.

According to Majumdar (1961) a tribe is a collection of families or group of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same dialect of language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. A Tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding them as having common resources. As per Ralf Linton, (Sociology Guide website), in its simplest form the tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts, and a certain community of interest.

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For the development of tribal women various efforts are being made to reverse the trend of marginalization of tribes all over the world (Darity, 2010). Empowerment is a process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (<http://web.worldbank.org>). The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as "Women's Empowerment Year" to focus on a goal where women are equal partners to men. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The past decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of tribal women. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 aimed at bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women in all spheres of life. However, a close examination of the social and economic status of women, especially in the rural areas shows unsatisfactory achievements in most human development indicators. Citing published facts and figures, the reasons are identified for the failure of the government in India in areas such as growing feminization of poverty and exploitation of women in low paid, hazardous and insecure jobs in the unrecognized sector; wide gender gaps in literacy and in wage rate, escalating violence against women and the rising incidence of female feticide and infanticide.

Tribal women are unjustly disadvantaged not only in terms of female functioning but also in terms of class (social) functioning. Hence utilizing intra-tribal comparison of women empowerment as illustrations, this exercise identifies deficiencies in major capabilities where attention is urgently required.

### **OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Awais et al. (2009: 1) point out that tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of the outsiders. Budlender (2000: 133) state "poorer women are often rapped in abusive relationship due to their dependence on partner for food, shelter and money", However, there are wide variations across regions and tribes in terms of work participation, sex ratio, economic productivity, and social life. Awais et al. (2009: 2) further pointed out that without any healthy and productive tribal women, the tribal societies cannot have productive settled agriculture. That means tribal women contribute immensely to the tribal agriculture. However in modern India, the natural resources and natural habitat of the tribes are used for commercial purposes and thus their ecological sustainability is damaged. This has the potential to damage the life sustenance of goods from the forest and its water bodies. This study suffers from primary data about tribal women participation by different State sponsored employment and welfare programmes in tribal regions. However, Awais (2009) have suggested based on the intuitive reasoning that to initiate policy measure to increase agricultural production through better supply of inputs including credit and improving marketing network for the agricultural output and MFP of the tribes.

**Heggade (1984)** with special reference to India has identified the socio-economic and politicocultural obstacles for women participation in economic development and also identified different institutional mechanisms and policy measures to promote women empowerment in India.

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**Kate's young (2000)** provides information concerning the gender and development approach devised at the feminist scholars at institute of development studies focus on unequal power relations between men and women prevent women from benefiting from greater accesses.

**Gowda and Yogesh (2006)** in his paper have given a good account of the evaluation of the vision of women empowerment in India.

**Gurulingaiah (2002)** has attempted to analyze the role of NGO"s in the empowerment of tribal women in tumkur District of Karnataka.

**Rao (2002)** has analyzed the determinants of social economic status of tribal women in Arunachal Pradesh.

**Sathya sundaram (2004)** examined the difficulties and issues in empowerment of tribal women.

**Lal Suresh and Padma (2005)** have analyzed the problem of empowerment of tribal women of Andhra Pradesh.

**Ramakrishna mancial (2008)** examined the role of tribal women in socioeconomic development of a developing economy and the society.

**Mohammad Awais Tosib Alam Mohd (2009)** noted the status of tribal women in a present society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society.

**Majumdar's (1984)** study reviews women empowerment through Panchayati Raj .

**Gurnug (1998)** suggests that the social and economic status of tribal women is low because of social hierarchy and economic deprivation.

### **AIMS AND/OR OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

*The main aim and objectives of study is to*

- Organize educational and empowerment programmes for tribal women.
- Integrate socio-economic activities with concern for health and environment protection, tribal women's cultural contexts.
- Invest science and technology in women's education and empowerment programmes to enable them to acquire scientific temper and to enable their family and community to engage in the process of sustainable development through the 'reflection-action' process.
- Find out changes in the socio-economic conditions of women.
- Find out different economic activities which have been successful/unsuccessful in empowering women.
- Empower the tribal women to become self-confident.
- To unite the women for community welfare. eg. Claim for their right to health, education, equality in society, right wages etc.
- To make the women economically self sufficient.

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### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

Tribal women empowerment, encompassed an economic dimension, this dimension has become increasingly visible within the international policy discourse in recent years. There is need to tribal women's economic independence, including employment, and 'ensuring equal access for all. To produce productive resources, opportunities in multidimensional field and public services, there is need of proper guidance and education. The Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment adopted an increase in women's share of non-agricultural employment as one of its indicators of women's empowerment. Full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people were later added as a target in relation to the overarching MDG on halving extreme poverty. While neither of these documents attempted to define women's economic empowerment, their formulation paved the way for a greater equation between women's economic empowerment and their access to productive resources, including paid work.

Given the dominance of economic thinking within the World Bank, it is not surprising it was one of the first agencies to explicitly adopt the language of women's economic empowerment: 'Economic empowerment is about making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level) (World Bank 2006: p.4). From the point of view of gender advocates within the Bank, this definition, with its clear focus on economic sectors (specified as land, labour, product and financial markets), had the advantage of giving gender issues more traction institutionally (p.3). Throughout the world and particularly in South-east Asia and Africa, the gender problem has assumed importance during the recent years. The gender issue has become virtually a crucial point of argument. It is now widely believed that empowerment of women, in general and particularly for tribal women, to provide equal rights, opportunities, asset ownership and responsibilities, will go a long way in removing the existing gender discrimination. Women empowerment in contemporary Indian society, in the form of their work, education, health, and media images in the context of lineage, rule of residence and household chores has to be achieved. Women participation in social and political activities, their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property, seeking health care should be taken into consideration. Empowerment means in terms of knowledge and awareness of one's own life and society including legal status with regard to the human lives. Empowering may be understood as enabling women, especially tribal women, to acquire and to possess power and resources, in order to make decision on their own or resist decisions that are made by others which affect them. A person may said to be powerful when e/she has control over a large portion of power resources in society (Gowda and Yogish 2006). The extent of possession of various resources such as personal wealth, assets, land, skilled education, information, knowledge, social status, and position held, leadership traits, capabilities or mobilization of resources etc., indicate the level of empowerment. According to Chambers English Dictionary "to authorize", in the context of people, they have authorised to have control over their lives. When applied in the context of development the particular segment of population, the poor, the women, the vulnerable, the weak, the proposed and the discriminated have to be "empowered" to have control over their lives, to better their socio-economic and political conditions. Women's development can be attained by improving their status and bargaining power in the economy. Sahay (1998) observed that empowerment could be possible by outlining the mechanisms and tools that still influence the women empowerment, decision - making process, multidimensional process that enable women to realize their full identity and powers in all walks of life. The

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Government of India has adopted the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women on 20th March 2001. The main objective of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the women and to ensure their active participation in all spheres of life and activities. Articles 15, 16, 39, and 42 of the Indian Constitution have ensured the freedom to women in every sphere of life. In Sen's (2001) parlance, women agency means any bargaining process of their own to within the economy. The women agency, thus, can take place both at the individual level and in collective form by way of women forums or organizations.

The support of livelihoods is increasingly being seen as an important area related to microfinance. Indeed, the term livelihood finance has been coined and is in vogue at leading NGOs. The need for livelihood support is critical to SHGs development as livelihoods are typically financed by the loans that members receive from the SHG. The needs of SHGs vary from the introduction of new livelihoods to providing support such as market-linkages or procurement techniques to refine existing livelihoods. State government programs such as Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) in Andhra Pradesh have successfully executed increased livelihood cash flows to SHG members as they have been able to bypass middlemen and sell their goods at market rates and cut costs. Experience has indicated that these benefits would not have been possible without external intervention. SHPIs can provide the technical livelihood support as needed to help develop SHGs (Reddy & Manak, 2005).

Tribal women are far away from advancement and development. Poverty, exploitation, low paid jobs, problem of livelihood, problem of illiteracy are major problems of tribal women in general, in India, and hence, efforts from outside are essential for their empowerment. Self Help Groups can play a very important role in empowering tribal women. This can be the answer to their problems.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS OR HYPOTHESES:**

*The research questions of the present study are:*

- what is the status of tribal women in Dharpore taluka?
- What is the role of social and economic indicator on decision making role of tribal women?
- Is there any difference between tribal and non tribal women?

### **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY:**

Based on the above objectives and hypotheses the following research methodology of the present study is evolved:

- (i) Selection of the variables or parameters
- (ii) Data collection and analysis
- (iii) Selection of the study region
- (iv) Selection of the reference period of the study

### **Selection of the Variables or Parameter:**

The various Socio-economic parameters of the present study are;

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**(a) Tribal development/empowerment agencies and organizations:** Government, Panchyatraj, NGOs, Tribal Co-operatives (LAMPS), SHGs, Caste Organizations, Civil Society Groups.

**(b) Tribal development/empowerment schemes and programmes:** Wage, employment, Public Distribution System, Credit facilities, Educational programmes, Health programmes, Skill development programmes, Housing, Sanitations, Agriculture and animal husbandry development schemes, etc.

**(c) Quality of Life Indicators of the tribes:** Health, Education, Life expectancy, Household consumption expenditure, Per capita income, Household income, Household assets and liabilities, Common property resources increase/decreases.

The Parameters are carefully selected so as to help the researcher to investigate the objectives and hypotheses.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:**

The present study is based on both secondary and primary data and field observations. All India and Gujarat state level experience of the tribal development/empowerment is explained by using the secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from the published documents like the National and State as well as different level of Census Report for the period of 1951 to 2001; data available from the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and SC and ST Commission, New Delhi, various National and State Level Five Year Plans documents, Human Development Reports and data obtained from departmental publications like District Statistical Department, Integrated Tribal Development Department(ITDP), Tribal Co-operatives (LAMPS) and Non Governmental Organizations etc.,. The relevant questionnaires are used to collect the primary data required for the present study.

### **Relevance, Anticipated Outcomes and Proposed Outputs from the Research :**

Women constitute about half of the world population and play a crucial role in socio-economic context of the society. Therefore development of the nation in true sense can hardly be achieved without proper development and empowerment of women's. Modernization and development process is affecting both men and women life differently. Gender Disparities is seen in each and every societies and it's the social, cultural and modern education norms which validates the status of women in a society. Culture is transferred from one generation to another, and so also the gender role. (Transferred with culture).Therefore it is most essential in present context to know and identify the various factors that determines the status of women in a society and role of these factors in empowerment of women as no society can develop ignoring its half of the population. This study would provide independent economic and social empowerment in the favour of tribal women.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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