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August 2024

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/123675/>
MPRA Paper No. 123675, posted 15 Feb 2025 21:48 UTC

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA: EVIDENCE FROM A TRIBAL SOCIETY IN NORTH EAST INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Through a sociocultural lens, this study explores the roles, rights, and difficulties faced by women in Assamese tribal tribes. Women frequently occupy special roles in the family and community in Assam, where a sizable section of the population is from indigenous cultures. Despite the fact that many Assamese tribal communities have historically offered more gender equality than non-tribal societies, women continue to confront barriers in areas such as political involvement, economic opportunity, and education. This study emphasizes the intricate relationship between tradition, modernity, and outside factors on women's position by drawing on anthropological data and current polls.

Key words: Women, Tribal, North East India.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The status of women in any society reflects the level of development of the particular society. Contours of status of women in Indian society change over time. It is dynamic rather than static. The status of a person or a group in a society is primarily determined by the status of health, status of education, occupational status, and position of the family in the tribal society are not exceptional in this regards. All these factors are almost co-related. The higher level of education will generate employment opportunities through skills, health awareness, and decision-making ability among these groups.

2. CONTEXT:

The tribal population in India constitutes a small in percentage of the total population of the country but is a Significant in various ground. Most of Indian states viz. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and North Eastern Region constitutes 8.6% of total population of 1211 million of people as per Census 2011. The state of Madhya Pradesh constitutes largest Number of tribal population anywhere in the country .The state of Rajasthan has a tribal population of 92 Lakhs in the total population of 685 lakhs accounting for 13.5 percent of the state Total. After independence and adoption of the Constitution of India some major policies are being taken for their upliftment, provision for Reservation is important to cite. The term ‘scheduled tribes’ first appeared in the Constitution of India, to Confer certain constitutional privileges and. Like all other communities, development of Status of tribal communities also to a large. Tribal people have their own unique features like - long periods of history they were always socially and geographically isolated. They belonged to different races with diverse cultural characteristics, Speaking own dialects, following a variety of religions and spread across various climatic zones. Living in danger prone area (Mishing a tribe of Assam generally found in river banks area most of NER hilly state are inhabitants of Tribal) is common features of schedule tribe people. Basic developmental facilities such as good connectivity in terms of roads, railway, power, banking, quality education, basic health, water facilities are lacked by tribal people, among women these deprivation are more intense.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To study the socio-economic status of women in North East India with special reference to the tribal women.
- To study what are the problems and prospects associated with studied population.
- And to provide some recommendations for the upliftment of the tribal women.

4. METHODS & METHODOLOGY:

The study is purely based on secondary sources of data and descriptive in nature. The data collected for the study are from Various secondary sources viz. Research papers, journals, books, government official publications, newspapers, Different websites etc.

5. DISCUSSION:

Socio-economic Profile of Tribal Women in North East India mainly comprises of – social status, education status, health status, housing status, employment opportunities, standard of living, so and so forth.

5.1. SOCIAL STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN AND ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS:

In India it is generally found that there is a predominance of the patriarchal family structure where males predominate in all the aspects. However, this phenomenon can't be generalized. Among many tribal communities, the predominance of matriarchal families could be found. Contrasts to that of the patriarchal societies, the status of women is found to be higher in these matriarchal families. It is found that the Garo, Khasi, Some Tribes of Naga of North East India assign a relatively higher position to women due to the system of matrilineal descent, matriarchal residence and inheritance of property through the female line. Though other tribal communities which follow patriarchal norms, the status of women is not as high as it is in matriarchal societies. A study on the Naga women made by Hutton (1921) revealed that they have substantial freedom and higher social status. However, in tribal societies, tribal women are extra important than women in any other social groups because tribal women are very hardworking and in almost all the tribal communities they participate in economic activities almost equally with men or works harder than men, and the family economy and income also depends on women. The tribal women's are regularly engaged in occupations which do not generate much income such as hunting, crafts making, and agriculture.

5.1.1: ISSUES RELATED TO SOCIAL STATUS:

Industrialization and urbanization have brought about a change in the life and living of the tribal by uprooting them from their day to day activities and making them dependent on the vagaries of non-tribal. The concept of Sanskritization is very common in tribal society.

5.2. STATUS OF EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS AMONG TRIBAL WOMEN:

Education is one of the important socio-economic indicator that reflects the development of a society. It enables peoples to participate in developmental activities and promote awareness among the people. Education is much required for tribal women to be able to participate and benefit from the development process. It will help tribal women to enhance their literacy skills, better hygiene, caring for family health, vocational skills development for their economic enhancement, empowerment against women violence. By acquiring knowledge women can take decision in their life

5.3. HEALTH:

A state of physical, mental, and social well-being is called health. It is a result of comprehensive integrated social, cultural, economic, and educational development in addition to medical care. Health is one of the key conjecture to determine the Socio-economic status of a person in a society. Tribal society is not exception in this regard. Tribal society experience a complex of problems in this context. An essential aspect of the health seeking behavior of tribal women is maternal and child health (MCH) care. Nevertheless, MCH services are almost absent. Case study that shows the health status of women in Indian states of Assam.

1. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR): 313 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is quite higher than national average .It shows the pathetic condition of maternal health in Assam.
2. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR): Infant mortality rate is the probability of a child dying before reaching the age of one, expressed per 1,000 live births. It is the important health indicator to measure the health of the society deaths. Over the years Assam has experienced a very pity picture in this regard.
3. Life Expectancy: Life expectancy at birth is the average number of years a newborn is expected to live, assuming that the mortality rates for each age remain the same. Life expectancy at birth of Assam is 58.4 which is lower than All India level.
4. Anemia prevalence: 64.5% among tribal women.
5. Sanitation access: 22.6% of tribal households have toilets.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the status of women in the tribal societies of Assam reflects a complex interplay between traditional values, economic contributions, and social roles. While tribal communities often afford women greater autonomy, particularly in economic and domestic spheres, challenges persist, including gender-based violence, limited access to formal education, and unequal political representation. Nevertheless, women in these societies continue to play crucial roles in preserving cultural heritage and sustaining their communities through active participation in agriculture, crafts, and community rituals. Efforts to empower women through education, healthcare, and skill development can further enhance their status, fostering equality and sustainable development within these tribal communities.

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