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**Rekha Chandel**  
Independent Scholar, Delhi  
University, New Delhi, India

## Political and social empowerment of tribal woman in India: A study of Draupadi Murmu's journey from a tribal woman to becoming the President of India

**Rekha Chandel**

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### Abstract

It has always been a serious issue to empower the tribal women of the schedule. Over the last three decades, there has been a continuous rise in awareness of the need to empower women through greater social, economic, and political fairness, broader access to basic human rights, and advancements in nutrition, basic health, and education. In the current article, an effort has been made to assess the roles of educational attainment, economic involvement, social capital, knowledge, and wealth in empowering women as well as their connections to health outcomes, with particular emphasis on India's tribal people. It was discovered that the poor health status of the primitive tribal women was caused by their low proxy empowerment indices, such as their illiteracy, limited media exposure, and substandard living conditions. As a result, female empowerment has a favorable impact on health outcomes.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, women, tribe, political participation, socio-economic bias

### Introduction

Empowerment is a dynamic, active process. Empowerment entails awareness, improvement of capability and participation in decision-making, ownership of resources and power, and a situation in which rights and obligations are correctly carried out. Therefore, empowerment can occur in a variety of contexts, including social, economic, political, religious, etc. The level of empowerment indicates the stage of development in a given field or overall development. Women play a significant and vital role in tribal communities. In India, tribal women actively participate in livelihood activities in addition to managing their homes and families. Tribal women are still far behind despite several economic, political, and social advancements. This essay evaluates and analyzes the state of tribal women's empowerment in central India, focusing on their roles and standing in the social, economic, religious, and political arenas as well as their access to education, freedom, and legal protections. Indian Journal of Research in Anthropology article published. After the continent of Africa, India boasts the second-highest population of tribal people, who form an integral part of its social structure. How many tribes are listed as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian Constitution. They have lived in seclusion for a long time, largely undisturbed by civilisation. This seclusion has been linked to their slow growth, distinct socioeconomic and cultural patterns, and inability to deal with the consequences of being forcibly assimilated into mainstream society and business. Tribals still live in subpar socioeconomic circumstances.

### Literature review

1. Rani, G. S., Rajani, N., & Neeraja, P. (2011)-Education should enable people to better meet the needs of a dynamic, ever-changing environment. The ability to pursue and develop talent to whatever level one is capable of should be adequately acknowledged by changes made to educational systems, which should also aid in bridging socioeconomic differences. The indigenous minority has been subjected to a number of forms of deprivation throughout India, including the alienation of land and other resources. Tribal women are cut off from the majority of national life, but they are nonetheless susceptible to the consequences of socioeconomic changes in civilization.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Rekha Chandel**  
Independent scholar, Delhi  
University, New Delhi, India

2. Dr. Ramakrishnappa (2015)-The socioeconomic standing and female empowerment of scheduled tribes in Karnataka were the main topics of the article. The study found large disparities between policy and scientific advancements and tribal women's actual independence. Along with their weight, women's economic, social, and political identities determine how empowered they are. A sizable portion of tribal women reside in rural locations, where they have limited access to things like education, health care, and productivity.
3. Thakur (2009)-The lowest, most economically and socially disadvantaged groups are generally believed to be tribal societies. When compared to their male counterparts, women in these social categories have the worst living conditions.

It explored the condition of women, asserting that although people are two distinct human beings born with different genders, both are equally significant, women are consistently treated as the weaker and secondary segment of society, necessitating various means and procedures to better their standing. More consideration needs to be given to this impoverished, persecuted, and sometimes disregarded group of people called tribal women.

**Objective of the study**

1. To clarify the concept of Empowerment of tribal women.
2. To evaluate the importance for empowerment of tribal women.
3. To Analyze the Challenges faced by Tribal women.
4. To propose the strategies of handling those challenges.

**Methodology**

This research study is based on secondary data that has been analyzed by a number of authors and academics. For the relevant information and knowledge that is listed in the references section, a search has been done in a number of

books, journals, and reliable websites. All the statistical and Numerical data gathered from Ministry of tribal, Office of the Registrar General census 200-2011 and Election commission of India.

**Who are the tribes?**

Tribes, often known as Adivasis, make up about 8.6% of the country's overall population. Tribes are typically a human social group that inhabits a forested area close to mother earth and relies on shifting agriculture, animal hunting, and gathering for sustenance. They have their own cultural, religious, and traditional practises that are wholly different from those of the majority. Scheduled Tribes are "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purposes of this Constitution," according to Article 366 of the Indian Constitution (25).

There are 705 distinct ethnic groups, etc., that have been notified as Scheduled Tribes, and they are distributed throughout 30 States and UTs. The country's 10.43 crore tribal people make up 8.6% of the overall population, according to the 2011 census. Only 10.03 percent of them reside in cities, with 89.97% living in rural areas. Tribes have historically resided in around 15% of the nation's geographical areas, primarily in plateau regions with abundant natural resources, forests, hills, and undulating difficult terrain.

**Table 1:** Percentages of Schedule Tribe to total population:2001-2011

Percentage of STs in 2001			Percentages of STs in 2011		
	Total	8.2%		Total	8.6%
1.	Rural	10.4%	1.	Rural	11.3%
2.	Urban	2.4%	2.	Urban	2.8%

**Source:** Census of India 2001-2011, Office of the registrar of general

**Table 2:** Schedule Tribe Population by sex and residence: Census 2011

Total	Male		Female		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
5,24,09,823	4,71,26,341	52,83,482	5,18,71,211	4,66,92,821	51,78,390

**Source:** Census of India 2001-2011, Office of the registrar of general

**Concept of Empowerment and Women**

In India today, the term "Empowerment" is frequently used in relation to women and marginalized communities, such as "women's welfare, upliftment, development, or awareness usage." However, there have been relatively few conceptual explorations of what exactly empowerment means, what the empowerment means, and what the empowerment of women implies in terms of social, economic, and political terms. Empowering women is a universal problem. Its definition is "The manifestation of power redistribution that opposes patriarchal ideology and male dominance." The definition of empowerment is the act of gaining power. To eradicate gender inequality in India, empowerment has gained importance. There are many ways that gender inequality shows up.

Women are fighting the unequal distribution of power in society and trying to free themselves from the constraints that hold them back all over the world. Leadership in the government, markets, and civil society are required to

change the current inequitable structure of gender relationships. Power is, in fact, the key to empowerment. It is the ability to access, control, and make impromptu decisions. To borrow an Indian metaphor, it is Shakti that manifests via the employment of a combination of power, efficacy, capability, force, and influences to challenge and transform patriarchal ideology's structures and institutions and current power relations.

**Distribution of Tribes**

In India there are 705 distinct ethnic groups that have been notified as Scheduled Tribes throughout States and UTs. According to the 2011 census, there were 10.43 crore tribal people living in the nation, or 8.6% of the overall population. Of them, 89.97% reside in rural areas, while 10.03% do so in cities. Compared to the overall population, tribal populations have grown by 23.66% throughout the decade from Census 2001 to 2011. The sex ratio for the entire population is 940 females to every 1000 men, and it is

990 females to every thousand males for Scheduled Tribes. The STs primarily live in two major geographic regions: Central India and the North-Eastern Area. Madhya Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%), and Rajasthan (8.86%) are the states with the highest concentration of Scheduled Tribes. Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim,

and Arunachal Pradesh make up the North East, which is another unique region.

Only seven States in the nation—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh—are home to more than two-thirds of the nation's ST population, there is no ST population in 3 States (Delhi NCR, Punjab, and Haryana) and 2 UTs (Puducherry and Chandigarh).

**Table 3:** Seven States with the Largest Scheduled Tribal Population in India

S. no.	State	Population of Schedule Tribe (in lakh)	Percentages of the state in the total population of Scheduled Tribes in the Country
1	Madhya Pradesh	152.3	14.70%
2	Maharashtra	105.3	10.10%
3	Odisha	95.9	9.20%
4	Rajasthan	92.8	8.90%
5	Gujrat	89.6	8.60%
6	Jharkhand	86.5	8.30%
7	Chhattisgarh	78.2	7.50%

Source: Ministry of Tribal, Office of the Registrar General census 2011

### Tribal Women's Empowerment Indicators Economic Participation

Indian tribal women engage in subsistence tasks with men and make a beneficial contribution to the community's economy. As they take part in all agricultural operations as well as other indigenous cottage businesses, women really put in more labor than males. They also take care of domestic duties. They are also accountable for raising the children. In India, compared to 53% of the overall population, more than 80% of tribal people work in the primary sector. Compared to 32.5% of the general 23 population, about 45% of the tribal people cultivate. Tribal women put in a lot of effort to support their family's way of life, but they still live in poverty. Their whole revenue is used to cover their fundamental needs, such as food and other necessities. The economic roles that women fill typically determine their status. They are below the poverty line as a result of their lack of skills and leisure activities. Social development is influenced by women's economic environments. Therefore, in order to empower impoverished women economically, income-generating activities must be carried out among them.

### Educational Attainment

Education is a well acknowledged effective tool for promoting social, cultural, and health growth. The empowerment of women depends on it. Primary education has thus been an objective in many developing nations for a number of years. There has been a greater emphasis on addressing this concern since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established. There is a gender gap at different educational levels, and the percentage of indigenous women who had never attended school was highest.

Financial limitations, early marriages, submissiveness, motherhood, and parents' limited perspectives are factors that contribute to the lack of education provided to girl children. Strong correlations between girls' education and health have been shown by some research investigations. Education lowers the risk of obesity, disability, and high blood pressure while also lowering mortality rates for women 24,25. The deliberate denial of an education to a girl kid will harm her chances for full growth in the future.

**Table 4:** Literacy Rates Among STs and ALL

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total literate population	28.30%	34.45%	43.57%	52.21%	64.84%	73.00%
Schedule Tribes(STs)	8.5%	11.3%	16.3%	29.6%	47.10%	59.00%
Total female population	12.9%	18.6%	29.8%	39.3%	53.67%	64.60%
Total Schedule Tribes(STs) female population	3.2%	4.8%	8.0%	18.2%	34.76%	49.40%

Source: Ministry of tribal affairs, Office of the Registrar General, India

### Political Empowerment

Political activism by women has significantly improved health and quality of life all across the world. Family planning services have been expanded as a result, giving women more autonomy over when and how many children to have, as well as improved protection from STDs. Declining fertility has provided nations with a demographic dividend, allowing working adults to devote more time and resources to economic activity, which has a significant positive impact on the economy. Abortion-related morbidity has drastically decreased since abortion became legal in many nations. Women's organizations and female

politicians have lobbied for the elimination of diseases that affect women, such as breast and cervical cancer, bringing those goals closer to reality. As a result, advancements in prevention and treatment technologies have saved millions of lives and significantly reduced suffering for both men and women. Tribal women can become more politically active and involved in policy making with the proper education and training.

### Schedule Tribal Women in the society

In tribal societies, women have a significant role in the social, cultural, economic, and religious tenets of the

community and are valued as a source of income. However, they continue to trail far behind in a number of areas, including economic empowerment, employment, good health, and education. Despite their diligence, they have little influence over the economy or other resources. In order to combat inequality, discrimination, and exploitation and achieve their overall growth in society, indigenous women must be given the economic authority they need. In addition to the state and civil society creating a socio-political space for disadvantaged groups, economic empowerment of marginalized groups also entails a process of emancipation from human-made bonds via persistent struggle and resistance. It also signifies the fulfillment of the ambitions and dreams of marginalized groups for a society free from the injustices that negatively impact them politically, socially, and economically. The topic of economic empowerment is related to ideas like liberty, equality, and fraternity. Thus, the idea of "Economic Empowerment" of tribal women is relatively new. In recent years, social scientists, decision-makers, and development activists have contextualized it and given it a new significance. Scientific research is therefore crucial to overcoming all the barriers to indigenous women's economic empowerment. Studies discussing the causes and effects of women's disempowerment are plentiful. These investigations are connected to a broader investigation into the exploitation and dependency of women. According to this research, the reasons why women are not empowered are male dominance over resources and reproductive rights, a lack of education, a lack of skills and training, a lack of property rights, social segregation, and social isolation. These elements, which are relevant to different socioeconomic classes of women in socially heterogeneous groupings like White women versus Black women, educated and illiterate women, high caste women and low caste women, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu women, in varying degrees, contribute to their disempowerment. Tribal women have a low socially and economically backward standard of living. As a result, tribal women frequently experience issues like food instability, malnutrition, a lack of access to healthcare and education, and becoming victims of rape and domestic violence. The tribal groups and tribal women fall far behind in social networking, in contrast to the efficiently run modern societies. This is the kind and extent of the socio economic disempowerment issues affecting Indian tribal women.

#### **Issue and challenges of Schedule tribal womens**

1. **Cultural customs** - Many customs, including genital mutilation, are detrimental to women's physical and mental health.
2. **Health** - Low levels of empowerment and a sense of independence; malnutrition; anemia; inadequate access to healthcare and necessary medications; a lack of possibilities for literacy and education.
3. **Sexual exploitation** - Several reports of sexual offenses committed by officials have come to light.
4. **Isolation** - Prevents women from enrolling in school or gaining access to government programmes like maternity benefits and reservations, among other things. Money lenders abuse their clients' finances.
5. Male migration causes poverty and the feminization of agriculture. Low pay, unpleasant working circumstances, hunger, unsanitary facilities, and

crowded living situations are problems faced by migrating tribal women.

#### **Case study**

##### **Drapadi Murmu (First Schedule Tribe Women President in India)**

The first tribal president of India and the second female president after Pratibha Patil, 64-year-old Droupadi Murmu took office on July 25, 2022. She is an indigenous scheduled tribal member, hence with her election as President to succeed Ram Nath Kovind, the country anticipates a better upliftment of the underprivileged tribes. The former Jharkhand governor who is now a cabinet member in the Odisha administration will preside over India for the next five years.

The current Indian President's first name was "Puti Tudu," but a teacher at her school later gave her the moniker "Droupadi." Droupadi Murmu spent much of her early years in Rairangpur, Odisha, where she was born on June 20, 1958, into a Santhali family. After initially having her name altered multiple times, Droupadi Murmu was the last and formal name she decided to take. She earned her degree in arts from Rama Devi Women's College, and her grandparents were local council heads. In the beginning of her career, she worked as a junior assistant in the irrigation department of the Odisha government. She worked as a teacher at the Sri Aurobindo Integral Educational Centre in Rairangpur, where she taught geography, math, Hindi, and Odia.

#### **Political Journey**

In 1997, Draupadi Murmu began her political career in Rairangpur Nagar Panchayat, Odisha, and in 2000, she was appointed a minister in that state's administration. On a BJP ticket, she was elected as an MLA for Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj twice (in 2000 and 2009). During the BJP-BJD coalition administration that assumed office in 2000, she held the portfolios of Commerce and Transport, followed by Fisheries and Animal Husbandry.

Additionally, Draupadi Murmu served as the BJP's Scheduled Tribes Morcha's vice president before becoming its president. In 2013, she was also nominated for nomination as a member of the BJP's National Executive (ST Morcha). As the first female governor of Jharkhand, Draupadi Murmu also holds a unique distinction. The 9th Governor of Jharkhand, Draupadi Murmu, assumed office on May 18, 2015, and held the position until July 12, 2021. She served the state's first full term as governor.

The Odisha Legislative Assembly gave Draupadi Murmu the Neelkanth Award in 2007 for being the finest MLA of the year. She is praised as a "compassionate and balanced" administrator who remained "accessible and down to earth" by Jharkhand officials and MPs.

#### **Selection as the President of India**

Droupadi Murmu was selected by the BJP to represent the National Democratic Alliance as a candidate for president. She ran against Yashwant Sinha in the election. She ran a campaign across all of India's states in an effort to gain support for herself. Finally, she received a maximum number of votes to defeat Yashwant Sinha and become India's 15<sup>th</sup> president.

**Table 5:** 15th President Election Result

S. No	Nominee	Draupadi Murmu	Yashwant Sinha
1	Party	BJP	AITC
2	State	Odisha	Bihar
3	Vote Percentages	64.03	35.97

Source: Election commission of India

### Conclusion

The study "The Status of Tribal Women in India - with Special Reference to Case Study of Ms. Draupadi Murmu" set out to discover the atrocities committed against tribal women in India and, ultimately, to develop a strategy for their improvement. However, it is an unfortunate fact that tribal women continue to fall behind in many industries, despite the fact that there are several constitutional protections and projects for tribal people. They are crucial in the construction of an organized process of tribal development because of their low levels of economic engagement, social regression, low literacy levels, and poor physical and mental health. While significant progress has already been accomplished, there is still much more that needs to be done in the various initiatives for the development of the Schedule Tribe people that are put into place over the plan years. The region's literacy rate should be increased, and programmes administered by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) should be active and operating in full force. The ability to change tribal women's traditional norms and lifestyles, as well as their perspectives and ability to become economically independent, depends heavily on education. This will put the nation on the right path for progress and help the literacy rate rise. Or otherwise, the educational system needs to be reformed by the hiring of highly competent professors, raising stipends, and motivating pupils to attend class by emphasizing their future prospects. To ascertain how well-aware the tribal members are of their own health, the condition of their health is examined. Sometimes they could be lacking in certain nutrients. Because there is a general lack of knowledge about health and cleanliness among the populace, they are susceptible to many ailments. In conclusion, the reality that hurdles and hardships are standing in the way of their termination according to the facts and data cannot be rejected. Tribes have recently attempted to create a market with the assistance of the government. The case study of Ms. Draupadi Murmu ascending to the highest constitutional position demonstrates the progress being made in Indian tribals' legal standing and the measures being done to advance their group.

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