



# PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

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# TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Tribal communities in India form an integral part of the country's cultural and social fabric. With a rich heritage and diverse traditions, these indigenous groups have unique socio-economic and political characteristics.

Tribal communities in India contribute to the country's rich cultural diversity, but they also face several socio-economic challenges. Despite progress in recent years, tribal communities continue to face various challenges, including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and issues related to land and resource rights.

# TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

As of the 2011 Census of India (the latest conducted Census by the Government of India), the tribal population was approximately 104 million, accounting for about 8.6% of the country's total population. Tribal communities are dispersed across different states in India. The states with the highest tribal populations include Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Gujarat. The Indian government has identified certain tribes as Scheduled Tribes (ST) based on criteria related to their socio-economic and cultural characteristics. As of 2021, there are 705 officially recognized Scheduled Tribes in India.

# TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

The Indian government has implemented various programs and initiatives to address the socio-economic development of tribal communities. These include the Integrated Tribal Development Programs, Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Schemes, and Eklavya Model Residential Schools, among others.

Despite these measures, the tribal communities of their own, have several traditional and cultural practices which they adhere to, to protect their children and themselves.

# CHILDREN IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

In India, a child is usually referred to an individual who has not completed eighteen years of age. Children in tribal communities grow up immersed in their unique cultural traditions, customs, and practices. They inherit ancestral knowledge, traditional arts, music, dance, and oral storytelling, which play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of their tribes. Tribal children often have a deep connection to nature and the environment, carrying forward sustainable practices and wisdom passed down through generations.

# PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Child protection in tribal communities in India is a crucial aspect of ensuring the well-being and rights of children. Traditional practices of child protection in tribal communities in India have evolved over centuries, reflecting the indigenous wisdom and cultural values of these communities. These practices are deeply rooted in the social fabric and aim to ensure the well-being and safety of children.

# PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Some common traditional practices of child protection in tribal communities in India are as follows:

- ❖ Collective Responsibility
- ❖ Oral Tradition and Knowledge Transmission
- ❖ Kinship and Extended Family Networks
- ❖ Communal Living and Close-Knit Communities
- ❖ Rituals and Ceremonies
- ❖ Nature and Environment
- ❖ Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Collective Responsibility:

Tribal communities often have a strong sense of collective responsibility towards child protection. The entire community, including extended family members, neighbors, and tribal leaders, takes part in nurturing and safeguarding children. This collective approach ensures that children have multiple caregivers and support systems.



# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Oral Tradition and Knowledge Transmission:

Tribal communities pass down cultural values, knowledge, and skills through oral tradition. Elders play a crucial role in imparting wisdom, teaching traditional practices, and instilling cultural values that promote the well-being of children. This knowledge transmission fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging among children.

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Kinship and Extended Family Networks:

Tribal communities emphasize the importance of kinship ties and extended family networks in child protection. Children are surrounded by a web of caring relatives, who provide emotional support, guidance, and protection. Extended family members often step in as caregivers when parents are unavailable, ensuring continuity of care and protection.

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Communal Living and Close-knit Communities:

Tribal communities typically have close-knit social structures and communal living arrangements. This fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that children are constantly surrounded by caring adults who provide supervision, guidance, and protection. The close social bonds within the community contribute to the safety and well-being of children.

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Rituals and Ceremonies:

Traditional rituals and ceremonies within tribal communities often play a role in child protection. Birth ceremonies, naming ceremonies, and initiation rites mark significant milestones in a child's life, symbolizing their entry into the community and providing protection through the blessings and rituals performed by elders and tribal leaders.

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Nature and Environment:

Tribal communities have a deep connection to nature and the environment. Children are taught to respect and live in harmony with the natural world. This understanding fosters a sense of responsibility towards the environment, instilling values of conservation and sustainability, which indirectly contribute to the protection and well-being of children.

# TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF CHILD PROTECTION

## Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:

Tribal communities often have their own traditional conflict resolution mechanisms that address disputes and conflicts within the community. These mechanisms aim to maintain harmony and resolve issues in a manner that considers the best interests of the child, prioritizing reconciliation and restoration over punitive measures.

# NEED FOR MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Child protection in tribal communities in India requires a multifaceted approach that integrates traditional practices with modern child protection frameworks. While traditional practices of child protection in tribal communities have their strengths, it's essential to recognize that they should not be seen as a replacement for modern child protection systems. Instead, a balanced approach that combines traditional practices with contemporary child protection measures can provide comprehensive support and ensure the holistic well-being of children in tribal communities.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Government of India has implemented various measures and policies to protect the children of tribal communities and ensure their well-being. These initiatives focus on areas such as education, healthcare, nutrition, legal protection, and socio-economic development. Here are some key measures taken by the government:

- ❖ Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
- ❖ Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)
- ❖ National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)



# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM – CONTD.

- ❖ Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009
- ❖ Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006
- ❖ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015
- ❖ National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan)
- ❖ Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Schemes

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):

ICDS is a flagship program that addresses the health, nutrition, and early childhood development needs of children, including those from tribal communities. It provides services such as supplementary nutrition, immunization, healthcare, and pre-school education to children below the age of six and pregnant/lactating women.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):

The EMRS scheme aims to provide quality education to tribal children by establishing residential schools in tribal-dominated areas. These schools offer education from Class I to Class XII and focus on providing a conducive learning environment, including a strong foundation in tribal languages and culture.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):

The NCPCR is a statutory body established under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. It is responsible for monitoring, implementing, and promoting child rights across the country, including in tribal areas. The commission is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of child rights legislation, policies, and programs.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Right to Education (RTE) Act:

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, also known as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, is a landmark legislation in India that guarantees free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years. Enacted on August 4, 2009, the RTE Act aims to provide quality education and equal opportunities to children, irrespective of their socio-economic background, gender, or any other barriers. It ensures that children from tribal communities have equal access to quality education and prohibits discrimination based on socio-economic background.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006:

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, commonly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA), is a significant legislation in India aimed at recognizing and securing the rights of forest-dwelling communities, including Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. This act recognizes and protects the rights of tribal communities, including their children, over forest lands and resources. It aims to address historical injustices, prevent displacement, and provide a secure livelihood for tribal communities.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act:

The Juvenile Justice Act provides a comprehensive legal framework for the care, protection, and rehabilitation of children in need of care and protection. It establishes child welfare committees, provides for specialized institutions, and emphasizes the principles of rehabilitation and reintegration. The Act acknowledges that tribal children may face distinct challenges due to their socio-economic background, cultural heritage, and geographical location. It emphasizes the importance of addressing these challenges in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan):

The National Nutrition Mission, also known as Poshan Abhiyaan, is a flagship program of the Government of India aimed at addressing malnutrition and improving the nutritional status of women and children. Tribal children, belonging to indigenous communities, often face multiple vulnerabilities and have higher rates of malnutrition compared to other sections of the population. Poshan Abhiyaan seeks to address these challenges through targeted interventions and inclusive approaches.



# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Schemes:

The SCA to Tribal Sub-Schemes aims to provide additional financial support to various tribal development programs, including those related to education, health, and livelihoods. This assistance is specifically targeted towards tribal communities to bridge the socio-economic gaps. The SCA to Tribal Sub-Schemes has a significant impact on tribal children in the following ways: Education, Healthcare and Livelihood promotion.

# MODERN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

These measures demonstrate the government's commitment to protecting and promoting the well-being of children from tribal communities. However, continued efforts are required to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these programs to address the unique needs and challenges faced by tribal children and bridge the existing gaps in their development and protection. By raising awareness, strengthening child protection institutions, addressing specific challenges such as child marriage and gender-based violence, and ensuring access to essential services, the rights and well-being of children in tribal communities can be safeguarded.

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

It is crucial to promote collaboration, involve the community, and empower children and families to create a protective environment that nurtures the growth and development of tribal children. The key measures to be taken are as follows:

- ❖ Awareness and Education
- ❖ Participation of Community and Elders
- ❖ Strengthening Child Protection Institutions

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

- ❖ Preventing Child Marriage
- ❖ Addressing Gender Based Violence
- ❖ Strengthening Child Welfare Services
- ❖ Collaboration with Government and NGO's
- ❖ Land and Resource Rights

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

Awareness and Education: Promoting awareness about child rights, child protection laws, and the importance of child well-being is essential in tribal communities. Conducting workshops, campaigns, and educational programs targeted towards parents, community members, and children themselves can help raise awareness and empower individuals to recognize and respond to child protection concerns.

Participation of Community and Elders: Engaging the community and tribal elders is crucial in designing and implementing effective child protection strategies. By involving community leaders, elders, and influential members, a collaborative approach can be fostered to address child protection issues and ensure sustainable change within the community.

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

Strengthening Child Protection Institutions: Building robust child protection institutions at the grassroots level is vital. This includes establishing Child Welfare Committees, Village Child Protection Committees, and District Child Protection Units that can effectively respond to child protection cases and provide support to children and families in need.

Preventing Child Marriage: Child marriage is a significant concern in some tribal communities. Efforts should be made to raise awareness about the detrimental impact of child marriage on children's health, education, and overall development. Promoting girls' education, empowering girls and their families, and providing economic opportunities can help prevent child marriages and protect the rights of children.

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

Addressing Gender-Based Violence: Tribal communities, like other communities, may face challenges related to gender-based violence. Promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender norms, and providing support services to survivors of violence are crucial steps in protecting children, particularly girls, from violence and abuse.

Strengthening Child Welfare Services: Enhancing child welfare services, such as access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, and psychosocial support, is vital. This includes ensuring the availability of schools, anganwadis (childcare centers), healthcare facilities, and counseling services that are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of tribal children.

# MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION

Collaboration with Government and NGOs: Collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations is essential for effective child protection in tribal communities. By working together, these stakeholders can coordinate efforts, share resources, and implement comprehensive programs that address child protection concerns.

Land and Resource Rights: Recognizing and protecting the land and resource rights of tribal communities is crucial for the well-being of children. Access to and control over traditional lands and resources play a significant role in securing the livelihoods and future prospects of tribal families, thereby indirectly protecting the rights of children.



# CONCLUSION

The children of tribal communities in India hold immense potential, embodying the cultural richness and heritage of their tribes. Addressing the specific challenges they face and providing them with equal opportunities in education, healthcare, and protection is essential for their overall development. Through collaborative efforts involving government, community organizations, NGOs, and civil society, we can create an environment that nurtures the well-being, cultural identity, and future aspirations of tribal children, ensuring their rightful place in India's diverse and inclusive society.

**THANK YOU!**