CHILD WELFARE IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Livi¹, Dr Navpreet Kaur²

Student, LLM,
School of Law, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara (Punjab) India

Abstract: This study looks into the situation of child care in India's tribal groups, focusing on the problems, current policies, and community views. Indian tribal children face many problems, including being left out of the economy, losing their culture, and not getting enough medical care or schooling. The government has started schemes like the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to deal with these problems. Many programmes don't work as well as they could because of problems with implementation, such as not having enough infrastructure, community input, cultural sensitivity, and too much red tape. From the point of view of the community, it is clear that approaches that are culturally aware and involve everyone are needed to strengthen tribal people and make sure that their unique needs are met. This study shows how important it is to give tribal children access to good schools, health care, and future opportunities. It also shows how important it is to find comprehensive solutions that work for their unique situation.

Keywords: Child, Abuse, Laws, Policies, Safeguards

INTRODUCTION

There are many people in Indian tribe groups. Based on the 2011 Census, these people made up 8.6% of India's whole population. They are also called Scheduled Tribes and Adivasis. Some of these groups live all over India. They add colour to the social tapestry with their own languages, customs, and interesting pasts¹. These groups have a rich cultural past, but they still face many issues, mainly when it comes to the health and safety of their children. It is very important to study child welfare in indigenous groups because of changes in wealth, systemic neglect, and different traditional practices. People from different Indian tribes follow different rules when it comes to how to raise children and plan their social lives. To come up with successful treatments that meet the specific needs and deal with the problems that tribal children face, we need to understand these unique cultural settings. People from indigenous groups are known for having a strong sense of community and sharing a common culture. A lot of things in daily life are affected by traditional practices, like living in groups, following rules that have been around for a long time, and relationships based on family ties. These practices include how to raise children. Many indigenous groups are in charge of raising and socialising children as a whole². A lot of this is up to the older people. People may find it harder to get medical care, an education, and other basic needs met because of these tribal customs. This is especially true in poor and rural tribal areas. They also help people feel like they are part of a strong group.

People in these societies are strong and can change, but there are big issues that make it hard for indigenous children to grow up and be happy. The main issue is that there aren't enough affordable, top-notch medical and schooling choices. It is harder for tribal Children to do well in school and stay healthy because many tribal areas don't have enough schools, skilled teachers, or places to get medical care. This is why reading rates are still low in many indigenous areas, more Children drop out of school, and people get sick when they didn't have to. Indian Children also have to deal with racism, being taken advantage of, and being shut out of society and the business, which leaves them poor and open to abuse. In many tribal places, problems like child labour, child trafficking, early marriage, and hunger put children's rights and

well-being at great risk. Traditional ways of making a living and surviving are important to tribe culture, but they can put families in a tough financial spot, which means Children have to work dangerous jobs or skip school\(^3\).

**BACKGROUND**

In India, the native people are divided into many different tribe groups, each with its own history, language, and traditions. People who live in these areas are often called Adivasis or Scheduled Tribes. According to the 2011 Census, more than 700 different tribal groups make up about 104 million people who live in different parts of India. These groups of people have always lived in peace with nature. They did subsistence farming, hunting, gathering, and raising animals as pets in hilly, forested, and otherwise remote areas. There are a lot of tribal people living in states like Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra\(^4\). There are a lot of tribal groups, but their traditional way of life has been messed up by past wrongs, colonial policies, and modern development projects. This has caused them to be pushed to the edges of society and lost their culture and land.

**CHALLENGES TO CHILD WELFARE IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

There are many things that make it hard for children from India's tribal groups to grow and develop. Even though tribal children are strong and flexible, they face many issues that affect their health, schooling, and ability to get to important services. These issues keep them poor and vulnerable\(^5\).

- **Lack of Access to Education**: A lot of indigenous towns have trouble giving their Children a good education because they don't have enough schools, qualified teachers, or safe, welcoming classrooms. Because tribal villages are spread out physically, it takes a long time to walk to the closest school. This makes daily commutes impossible and attendance irregular. Native students and non-native students already do not do as well in school. Tribal children are even less likely to be able to go to regular schools because they don't speak the language or have tools that are sensitive to their culture. For indigenous groups, it's harder to get a fair education because of long-standing traditions like early marriage, sexism, and male-centered ideas. Norms that make girls do chores early in life and value boys' schooling more than girls' make it harder for girls to go to college\(^6\). Girls already have a hard time going to school because they get married young. This makes it even harder for them to reach their goals and puts them in poverty and unfair treatment because of their gender.

- **Healthcare Disparities**: Lack of access to healthcare services is a big problem for child safety in tribal areas, where bad infrastructure, a lack of medical staff, and cultural barriers make it hard to provide basic health services. Families in many tribal communities can't get to basic healthcare facilities, so they have to travel long distances or see traditional healers for help. As a result, many diseases that could have been avoided are not treated, which causes a lot of deaths among children and bad health results for tribal children. As a major problem, malnutrition stands out, with many tribe children having slow growth, being underweight, and not getting enough micronutrients. Malnutrition is made worse by traditional beliefs, dietary taboos, and not having enough food\(^7\). This shows the importance of culturally sensitive interventions that help tribal children who are having nutritional problems. Even though the government is trying to improve nutrition through programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), these efforts aren't always successful because there are gaps in their implementation and reach.

- **Child Labour**: Many tribal groups still have a lot of problems with child labour. This is because of bad economic times, a lack of other ways to make money, and traditional ways of passing on skills from one generation to the next. Children often work in dangerous jobs in agriculture, forests, and the informal sector, where they are at risk of being abused or exploited and don't get to go to school\(^8\). Even though laws say that children shouldn't work, they aren't always enforced, and because of the way things are in tribal communities, many Children have to work in situations


that are unfair. Child labour is caused by poverty, a lack of educational chances, and cultural norms that put work above education. This hurts children's health, education, and future prospects. To stop child labour, we need to focus on big-picture plans that deal with the causes, like reducing poverty, making sure Children can go to school, and making sure labour rules are followed.

- **Child Marriage:** It is very dangerous for tribal children, especially girls, to get married as children because it violates their rights and hurts them more than boys. People in many tribal groups get married young because it's socially acceptable, it makes economic sense, and people don't know what the law says. Child brides are more likely to die during pregnancy, be abused by a partner, and be poor for generations to come. This keeps primitive societies vulnerable and poor. In conclusion, the problems with child safety in tribal areas are linked to old customs, differences in income, and neglect that happens all the time. To solve these problems, we need to take a rights-based approach to protecting and developing children, as well as taking into account their ethnic diversity and the socioeconomic situation they are in. To make child welfare better, we need to make sure that all children have equal access to education, health care, food, and safety from being exploited. This way, all children, including tribal children, can grow and reach their full potential.

- **Government Policies and Programs:** The Indian government has put in place a number of policies and programmes to improve the safety of children in tribal communities. This is because the government knows that children from these underprivileged groups face special problems and are more likely to be hurt. Even though these programmes have made big steps towards improving the safety of some children, there are still problems and gaps that need to be filled before they can fully reach and help tribal children.

- **Existing Policies and Programs for Tribal Child Welfare:** The Indian government has put in place a number of policies and programmes to improve the safety of children in tribal areas. These are some important projects:
  i. **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):** As a main programme, ICDS offers a wide range of early childhood care and development services, such as extra food, immunisations, health checks, and preschool education. The programme works to improve the health and nutrition of tribal children and covers places that are home to tribes. ICDS is very important for the health and development of children from birth to six years old because it meets their physical and developmental needs. This sets them up for lifelong learning and growth.
  ii. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** SSA is a government programme that aims to make elementary school available to all and improve the level of education. It includes plans to build new schools, give away free textbooks, uniforms, and scholarships, and hire more teachers, especially in tribal and remote places. SSA wants to close the achievement gap in education by making it easier for more Children to go to school and improving the quality of teaching and learning. This way, all Children, even those from tribal groups, have the same chances to get a good education.
  iii. **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS):** By giving free food to Children who go to school, MDMS hopes to improve their nutrition and get them to go to school more often. Millions of children, including those from tribal groups, will be healthier and able to go to school better thanks to the scheme. Children from low-income families get healthy food through MDMS, which not only improves their physical health but also helps them learn, do better in school, and stay in school longer.
  iv. **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM):** NRHM's main goal is to make healthcare services, like those for mothers and children, easy to get, affordable, and of high quality available in rural and tribal places. Its goal is to lower the death rates of mothers and children by providing basic health services and working with communities. The NRHM wants to improve the health of tribal children and families and make sure they are safe by building up healthcare facilities, training healthcare workers, and encouraging both preventative and curative healthcare practices. These policies and programmes show that the Indian government wants to help native children with their special problems and needs. Policymakers want to protect the rights and well-being of tribal children and help them grow and gain power by putting money into early childhood development, schooling, nutrition, and health care. But more work needs to be

---


done to make sure that these programmes are implemented and supervised properly, and to fix any problems or gaps that might stop them from having an effect on tribal groups.

**CONCLUSION**

Understanding the cultural background, including local stakeholders, and working on long-term sustainability are all important parts of a community-driven, all-encompassing plan to improve child welfare in indigenous communities. Children from indigenous communities should not be treated differently because of their cultural background or socioeconomic position. All children have the right to a good education, good health care, enough food, and protection from being exploited. If lawmakers really want to end generational poverty, make society fair, and protect children's rights, they should make child welfare a top concern for indigenous communities. It is very important that future research and campaigns work to make tribal groups' opinions stronger, keep track of what works, and push for changes in the law that protect the rights and dignity of Indian children from tribal backgrounds. We can build societies where all children, no matter how rich or poor their family is, have a fair chance to succeed and reach their full potential if we work together. It is both moral and practical to make sure the safety of indigenous children if we want to build a future that can survive and grow.

**REFERENCE**