



## Economic Development of Tribal Women during Festivals in India

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### Abstract

Festivals are a time of celebrations. People increase their purchases during the festive season. This is the time when the market absorbs more employees to meet the demand of consumers. Enterprises and organisations try hard to accelerate their sales during the festive period. This is the best time for the tribals too, especially the women, to join this flow of festivity and get involved in the business of profit. Through Tribal Co-Operative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) and National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs promotes entrepreneurship among tribal women. Pradhan Mantri Jan Jatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) provides help for marketing of MFP and tribal products. The fruits of these policies of Government are reaped by the tribals, mainly during the festivals. Festivals provide a platform for the tribals to showcase their crafts, gain recognition and earn a better income. As most craft makers are women, this leads to their economic development. The products are demanded not only in India but even in foreign nations. This could be seen in 'Tribes India Aadi Mahotsav'. So, festivals are spreading their lights and colours in the lives of tribal women by increasing their source of income, making them self-sufficient and helping in their economic development.

**Keywords:** Economic Development; Festivals; Tribal Products; Tribal Women

### Introduction

India is a country rich in tribal diversity. Following Africa, it boasts the second-largest tribal population in the world (Press Information Bureau, 2023). They are commonly referred as "Adivasis", which reflects their deep-rooted cultural history (Vidyarthi & Rai, 1977). The word "tribal" has its origins in "Tribuz", and it is believed that the powerful Bharat tribe contributed to the name "Bharat" (Sood, 2023). The Indian Constitution acknowledges these tribes under "Schedule 5", designating them as "Scheduled Tribes". India is home to around 645 distinct tribes. According to the 2011 census, about 8.6% of the population are the tribal communities (Press Information Bureau, 2023). In regions like Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, and Meghalaya, Scheduled Tribes make up a significant portion of the population (Ministry of Tribal Affairs Statistics Division, 2013).

The tribal people of India are often seen as the lifeblood of the nation, yet many face challenges due to poverty. When any part of the population struggles, the overall development of the nation is at risk. Therefore, for the economic growth of India, it is crucial to focus on the economic development of its tribal communities. The tribal communities of India, despite constitutional safeguards and targeted initiatives, continue to face significant socio-economic challenges (Bhatnagar, 2024). Festivals are the time of celebrations and economic advancement. The purchasing and spending of people increase in the mood of celebration. This is the time when production, manufacturing, and sales increase, creating

Received 5 January 2025, Received in revised form 2 February 2025, Accepted 10 February 2025

huge opportunities, including for tribals. This is the best time for the tribals, especially the women, to join this flow of festivity and get involved in the business of profit.

Through the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED, 2021-22) and the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs promotes entrepreneurship among tribal women. They are provided with immense opportunities. *Pradhan Mantri Jan Jatiya Vikas Mission* (PMJVM) provides help for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and tribal products (PIB, 2023). The fruits of these policies and programmes of the Government are reaped by the tribals, mainly during the festivals. As most craft makers are women, this leads to their economic development.

Today, major marketplaces like Amazon and Flipkart feature tribal products on their platforms. Beyond the Government initiatives, numerous websites are selling authentic tribal products online. This shift has provided economic support to tribal women. They are becoming more connected to the mainstream economy, contributing to the nation's growth, and achieving self-reliance.

### Review of Literature

Katherasala and Chinthakindi (2025), in their study, look at methods for strengthening and empowering tribals. They contend that empowerment is a complex process with social, political, and economic facets that has to be customised to the requirements and knowledge systems of tribal people. To ensure long-term sustainability, they promote a comprehensive, culturally aware approach to tribal development that incorporates economic sovereignty, cultural respect, empowerment, and inclusive government.

Human (2024) explores the role of vocational education and skill development in empowering tribal women. This work underscores the importance of providing tribal women with vocational training as a means to facilitate their economic independence and integration into mainstream society. Through an analysis of existing programmes, Human argues that skill development offers a viable pathway for tribal women to transcend traditional constraints, which often include gender, caste, and socio-economic limitations.

Paramasivan and Ravichandiran (2024) focus on the role of entrepreneurship in empowering tribal women. They discuss how entrepreneurship can serve as a significant tool for socio-economic upliftment, particularly in rural tribal areas. The authors emphasise that entrepreneurial initiatives enable tribal women to build self-sustaining businesses, improve household incomes, and gain financial autonomy.

Sahu and Baral (2024) have examined how marketing initiatives in the Bastar region contribute to both the preservation of tribal heritage and the economic empowerment of tribal communities. The authors explore the role of tribal women in marketing traditional handicrafts and agricultural products, emphasizing the link between cultural heritage and economic sustainability. They suggest that strengthening tribal marketing supports the preservation of traditional arts and creates avenues for income generation.

Sood (2023) outlines the major issues facing tribal communities in India, with a focus on the challenges to women's empowerment. Sood emphasises that despite the government's efforts, tribal women still face significant barriers, such as access to education, healthcare, and employment. The paper highlights the importance of addressing these systemic issues to ensure that tribal women can benefit from development programmes and stresses the need for comprehensive policies.

Neman (2022), in his work, discusses the evolving landscape of financial inclusion for tribal communities, particularly focusing on the role of NABARD. The paper explores how financial services, including microfinance and credit facilities, are crucial in empowering tribal women by enabling them to access capital for entrepreneurial ventures. He emphasises the need for targeted financial interventions that consider the specific needs of tribal women.

Punjani (2022) addresses the potential of handicraft as a livelihood option for tribal communities, particularly for women. The study demonstrates how tribal handicrafts can be marketed as sustainable

products that offer a source of income while preserving the cultural heritage of tribal groups. He argues that empowering women in handicraft production not only provides economic benefits but also helps in the socio-cultural upliftment of the tribe.

Bandekar and Jaiswar (2022), in their study, focused on the impact of SHGs in empowering tribal women. Their research highlights the transformative effect of SHGs in improving the socio-economic status of tribal women, particularly in rural Maharashtra. The authors argue that SHGs provide women with access to savings, credit, and income-generating opportunities, which significantly contribute to their financial independence and overall empowerment.

Guha (2022) provides an overview of the status and challenges faced by tribal arts, particularly those produced by women in central India. Guha discusses the intersection of culture and economy, where women's participation in arts not only sustains tribal heritage but also provides them with economic opportunities. The paper explores the significance of preserving these arts through supportive policies and market access to empower tribal women.

Lal (2020) explains the impact of various empowerment programmes in Telangana, particularly focusing on microfinance and self-help groups. He finds that access to financial services has greatly improved the economic status of tribal women, who have gained the financial literacy and resources to establish small businesses and become active contributors to the communities. However, he also highlights some challenges that continue to affect the overall effectiveness of these programmes.

Naik and Dasaratharamaiah (2019), in their article, delve into the relationship between education and socio-economic development for tribal women in India. They emphasise that education is a key factor in improving the socio-economic status of tribal women, as it opens doors to better employment opportunities and social mobility. The study advocates for targeted educational programmes that cater to the unique needs of tribal communities to bridge the educational gap between tribal and non-tribal populations.

Kumar *et al.* (2019), in his article, explore how seasonal agricultural work affects the livelihoods of tribal women. If it provides vital income for many tribal families, it is often characterised by low wages, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities for skill development. He argues for better labour policies that ensure fair wages and work conditions for women.

Modi, Patel and Patel (2014) explore the role of microfinance in empowering rural women, including those from tribal communities. Their study demonstrates that microfinance services, by providing small loans and financial services, help rural women gain financial independence and improve their socio-economic status. The authors emphasise the importance of making microfinance services accessible to tribal women to facilitate their empowerment.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs Statistics Division (2013) provides crucial demographic and socio-economic data that informs policies and programmes targeting the welfare of tribal communities. This report serves as an essential resource for understanding the living conditions and challenges faced by tribal women in India, which is necessary for framing effective development strategies.

## Objectives

The following objectives are to be achieved in the study:

1. To find if festivals are playing a pivotal role in the economic development of tribal women.
2. To know if the sale of tribal products is accelerating during the festive season.
3. To analyze if the Government policies and programs are adding to the festivity profits of tribal women.
4. To understand if there is contribution of various marketplaces in boosting the sales of tribal products and giving an economic benefit to the Tribal women.
5. To find if festivals are adding the tribal women in the mainstream of economy of the nation.

## Hypothesis

The study aims to prove the following hypothesis:

1. There is an important relationship between festivals and the economic development of tribal women.
2. There is a noteworthy connection between the increase in sales of tribal products and the festive season.
3. There is a substantial link between government policies and the profits from festivities for tribal women.
4. There is a considerable relationship between the sale of tribal products in marketplaces and the economic benefits for tribal women.
5. There is a significant connection between festivals and the inclusion of tribal women in the mainstream Indian economy.

## Methodology

To analyse the objectives and validate the hypothesis, the study utilised secondary data. The information was collected from diverse sources, such as newspapers, research papers, news articles, published market studies, international publications, and official government documents. This wealth of information played a crucial role in the literature review and helped in drawing meaningful conclusions (Pederson *et al.*, 2020).

## Results

Following the order in which the study objectives have been listed, they can be analysed as follows:

### 1. To find if festivals are playing a pivotal role in the economic development of tribal women.

Tribal communities have a deep connection to nature. These communities are not unskilled; rather, they possess advanced skills in handloom, particularly in sericulture and handicrafts. Many tribes excel in crafts like basketry, tool-making, carpentry, etc. Among these artisans, tribal women are particularly prominent, with over 60% of craft makers being women.

During the festive season, when purchases soar, the demand for tribal products also rises. The growing admiration creates demand for these products, with people willing to pay a premium for them. Some of the tribal crafts include Antiques, Art, Baskets, Paper Mache, Ceramics, Embroidery, Block printing, Ornamental Painting, Glass Work, Jewellery, Leather Crafts, Metal Crafts, Paper Crafts, Pottery, Puppets, Stone, and Wood Works. Their uniqueness and beauty create a strong demand in the market, especially during festivals.

Since the fiscal year 2019–20, TRIFED has employed 3,069 tribal suppliers and craftsmen, the majority of whom are women, generating sales of ₹172.55 crores through the marketing of various tribal product categories on both online and offline platforms (as highlighted in the TRIFED Annual Report 2021-2022).

**Table 1: Showing Yearly Gross Sale of Tribal Products**

S. No	Year	Gross Sale (in crores)
1	2019-2020	40.29
2	2020-2021	30.12
3	2021-2022	43.42
4	2022-2023	36.12
5	2023-2024 (up to 30.11.2023)	22.60
	Total	172.55

Source: <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/262/AU455.pdf?source=pgars>

With the launch of the "Aadi Mahotsav" National Tribal Festival, TRIFED introduced the idea of organising the event in all the nation's major cities. The festival showcases a delightful array of tribal craft demonstrations, folk performances, and various tribal art, crafts, medicine, and cuisine. Taking place in November, during the festive season, the event not only boosts the visibility of tribal products

but also empowers tribal women, helping them become economically stronger. As a result, these women can reap significant profits from their products, marking a vital step in their economic development.

## 2. To know if the sale of tribal products is accelerating during the festive season.

The Government of India is promoting Tribal products to increase the sales, especially during the festivals. The opening of various shops and outlets and franchises are some of the initiatives. Establishment of TRIBES INDIA outlets at airports in cities like Guwahati, Jagdalpur, Prayagraj, Kochi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Jaipur, Goa, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Kolkata, and Pune have been successful. Additionally, mini exhibitions and the presence of tribal products on e-commerce platforms have increased the sales nationally and internationally.

**Table 2: International Exhibitions of Tribal Products of India**

Year	Name of International Exhibition	Date of Exhibition
2015-16	AFL Artigiano Infiera, Milan, Italy	5- 13 December, 2015
2018-19	Asian Gifts & Premiums Show, Hong Kong	20-23 October, 2018
2020-21	Berlin Bazaar, Germany	3-7 November, 2021

Source: <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/262/AU455.pdf?source=pqars>

The tribal products are biodegradable, breathable, and reflect the essence of nature. As more consumers prioritise green products to celebrate festivals sustainably, they choose tribal goods. Tribal products are swadeshi, embodying the spirit of "Vocal for Local". This sense of nationalism boosts the appeal of these products. These products evoke memories of Dadi and Nani, drawing people in with a sense of nostalgia and warmth. The purity and authenticity are other qualities.

During Aadi Mohotsav in 2019, tribal artisans achieved impressive sales of ₹34.92 lakh, and by 2023, that figure soared to nearly ₹3 crore. On one particularly fruitful day, sales reached a remarkable ₹60 lakh, as noted in the TRIFED Annual Report 2021-2022.

During the 2021–22 period, procurement of tribal products amounted to ₹2900.32 lakh, a significant increase from ₹6151.72 lakh the previous year, thanks to collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing retail marketing activities. As of now, TRIFED has approved 2,282 tribal suppliers, ranging from individual artisans to small groups organised into self-help groups (SHGs) and larger cooperatives linked to state government organisations.

In essence, tribal products hold tremendous potential to attract consumers. People are eager to purchase these goods, and this interest is driving sales, particularly during the festive season.

## 3. To analyze if the Government policies and programs are adding to the festivity profits of tribal women.

Established in 1999, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the main body responsible for the overall policy, planning, and programme coordination aimed at the development of scheduled tribes. Under it, TRIFED operates as the highest-level national organisation. The government has launched several initiatives. Some policies and programmes are:

- Tribal Artisan Melas (TAMs) aim to discover new products and craftsmen at the state, district, and village levels. The government seeks out tribal artisans who are creating innovative products, allowing them to be promoted. TRIFED facilitates the marketing of these products.
- TRIFED organises the 'National Tribal Festival - Aadi Mahotsav', which aligns with "Be Vocal for Local". This festival showcases Craft, Culture, Cuisine, and Commerce, taking place in major cities across the country. It provides a platform for the rich traditional culture of tribal communities.
- TRIFED has created its own e-commerce portal, [www.tribesindia.com](http://www.tribesindia.com), and also listed tribal products on major e-commerce sites like Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, Paytm, and Gem. Through digital promotions, TRIFED generated sales of ₹193.04 lakhs in the financial year 2021-22, with sales soaring to ₹710.35 lakhs in 2022-23 (TRIFED, 2021-22).

- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Jatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) combines two earlier programmes aimed at enhancing tribal livelihoods: 'Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/Produce' and the 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP'.
- The 'Development of Value Chain' component has evolved into the 'Van Dhan Yojana'. This initiative encourages the SHG units at the village level, known as Van Dhan Self Help Groups (VDSHG), to generate additional income through entrepreneurial activities. Each VDSHG comprises up to 20 forest inhabitants.
- 3,225 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) have been sanctioned by TRIFED across 25 states and 3 Union Territories, benefiting around 9.63 lakh individuals (TRIFED, 2021-22).
- Under the "Tech for Tribals" initiative, TRIFED teamed up with the MSME to provide advanced entrepreneurial training to the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras through the MSME ESDP scheme. TRIFED partnered with CAU in Imphal, TISS in Mumbai, KISS in Bhubaneswar, and IIE in Guwahati for training.
- The Ministry of MSME, Government of India, has launched an innovative cluster development programme known as SFURTI, designed to help artisans and rural businesses. TRIFED is the Nodal Agency for implementing the SFURTI scheme. Here clusters can receive funding ranging from Rs. 2.5 crore to 5 crore for various interventions.
- The government has introduced TRIFOOD Projects aimed at adding value through food processing in Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP). These initiatives are primarily focused on improving the living standards of tribal populations in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

The Indian government is working on building a platform called 'TRIBES INDIA' to create marketing opportunities for tribal products. The programmes are offering significant opportunities for tribal women, demonstrating that government policies are promoting tribal products and enhancing the financial well-being of tribal women during festive seasons and beyond.

#### **4. To understand if there is contribution of various marketplaces in boosting the sales of tribal products and giving an economic benefit to the Tribal women.**

Sale of tribal products through marketplaces is bringing the rich world of these products and produce to your doorstep. This has become possible due to TRIFED. By offering a platform for tribal artists, TRIFED serves as a bridge between people. The plan is multi-channelled, and every channel is being optimised for sales. By providing an outlet for their work, the intention is to increase the tribal people's income.

While TRIFED has its own e-commerce portal, it has also partnered with major platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, etc. to feature tribal products. These marketplaces have become popular destinations, especially around festivals.

One notable initiative is 'Amazon Karigar', by Amazon India. It helps the tribes to display their handicrafts and earn profits. This programme also provides training in packaging and branding, empowering tribal artisans to sell their goods online independently. Another initiative is 'Spotlight North East', which focuses on supporting around 50,000 artisans from North East India, with a significant portion being women. Amazon has partnered with the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department to promote forest produce and create selling hubs for tribal artisans (Amazon Smbhav, 2024).

Similarly, Flipkart, with 'Flipkart Samarth', supports approximately 700,000 artisans across the country, a substantial number of whom are tribal artisans. At their Bengaluru office, Flipkart has even created an impressive 80-foot tribal wall art, painted by Gonds and Bhil artists, which has further boosted the visibility and sale of tribal goods (Flipkart Stories, 2022).

Websites like 'Tribes India', 'Truly Tribal', and 'Tribe Concepts' provide authentic tribal products, making it easy for consumers to order and support these artisans. The contribution of various marketplaces

plays a significant role in enhancing the sales of tribal products, ultimately providing economic benefits to tribal women.

##### **5. To find if festivals are adding the tribal women in the mainstream of economy of the nation.**

Today, tribal products from India are witnessing an impressive surge in demand, not just within the country but also across international markets. Factors including exhibitions both in India and abroad, an increase in retail outlets, franchises, government initiatives, and the efforts of tribal artists have played a significant role in generating income and profits for these communities. This brought economic benefits, particularly for tribal women, contributing to the overall development of the nation. The progress can be summarised by several key milestones:

- The "Go Tribal Campaign" was launched to promote tribal goods domestically and internationally, resulting in significant income for tribal artisans.
- "Tribes India" made its global debut through a collaboration with Amazon Global Selling, introducing TRIBES India merchandise on Amazon.com. This aims to market tribal products in the U.S., fostering the growth of international markets for tribal exports.
- A collaboration between Tribes India and the Central Silk Board has focused on developing, promoting, and selling tribal silk products, empowering tribal weavers.
- TRIFED collaborated with the "I Am Khadi" Foundation to incorporate Khadi kurtas and jackets into its offerings, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth.
- India was represented at the Oscars with handwoven silk from tribal artisans in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra, showcasing Tussar silks and highlighting the production process as a testament to the principle of Ahimsa.

The surge in sales is not only boosting the economic status of tribal women but is also helping to integrate them into the broader economic framework of the nation.

##### **Societal Benefits**

Festivals play a vital role in raising awareness about tribal products, enhancing their visibility and demand. They present a valuable opportunity for tribal women to showcase and sell their crafts and products, which can significantly boost their income and economic stability. This newfound financial independence fosters self-reliance and builds confidence among these women. This uplift in earnings translates into improved living standards for their families, leading to better education, healthcare, and overall community welfare.

The focus on handicrafts supports the livelihoods of tribal artisans while also promoting environmental conservation, as many crafts utilise sustainable materials sourced from nature. Moreover, the emergence of self-help groups (SHGs) empowers women by providing them with shared resources and skills to innovate and expand their businesses.

As more tribal producers enter the market, the variety of products flourishes. The initiatives contribute to a holistic and sustainable model of economic development that uplifts tribal communities while honouring their unique identities and environments.

##### **Discussion**

The economic empowerment of Indian tribal women has garnered significant attention in recent years. Festivals offer a platform for women to engage in various business activities, paving the way for their financial independence and economic upliftment, as said by Paramasivan and Ravichandiran (2024). However, despite numerous efforts, there still lie the challenges.

Human (2024) explained that training programmes focused on enhancing these skills can empower women to seize the economic opportunities presented by festivals. Social media and e-commerce platforms have allowed these women to expand their market. However, this transformation also highlights the need for digital literacy training and resources, which remain a significant challenge.



Neman (2022) explains that microloans have empowered tribal women to invest in traditional crafts and food ventures. These financial initiatives have helped women surmount economics, allowing them to expand their businesses during festival periods.

Significant challenges continue to hinder the economic empowerment of tribal women. Beyond economic barriers, the importance of social networks cannot be overlooked. Rao and Filbert (2019-2020) highlighted that festivals help tribal women to build and strengthen social connections. Strengthening these social networks creates economic opportunities for tribal women.

## Conclusion

To foster the nation's economic development, it is crucial to uplift the tribes economically. When tribal communities are left behind, it not only robs them of economic benefits but also hampers the overall growth of the country. The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is actively working to promote tribal arts and culture during festivals, helping to boost their sales and visibility. Tribal women are reaping significant benefits from these initiatives, allowing them to generate income and improve their livelihoods. It is not just the government that is stepping in; private companies are also launching initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of tribal artisans and their communities.

The combined vision of the government, the efforts of private sector players, and the dedication of the tribal people are yielding positive results. This collaboration is providing an advantage to everyone involved—the tribal communities, the government, and the economy.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to their Institutions for providing them with the necessary resources, support, and academic environment to carry out this research. They would like to acknowledge the tribal communities and the women whose participation and experiences provided the foundation for this study.

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