

# Enhancing the Social Status of Tribal Women in Kanyakumari District

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The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the social and economic empowerment of tribal women in Tamil Nadu, India's Kanyakumari region. Six of Tamil Nadu's 36 tribal clans may be located in the district's southernmost area, Kanyakumari. Kaniyan, Kanikkaran, Kattunayakan, Kuluva, Malaivedan, and Malaikuravan are their names. All Kani tribes in the Kanyakumari District were the subject of this paper. Especially Kani tribe lives in Tamilnadu's southernmost Kanyakumari District's Forest Mountains. The tribe is spread out over mountains and forests in 48 settlements. The tribe's habitat region is included in the list of world heritage sites that, physically speaking, are located in the Agasthiyar Sub-Clusters of the Western Ghats.

## **Introduction:**

The second-largest tribal population in the world is found in India. The Indian Constitution refers to the indigenous people as Scheduled Tribes. India's indigenous peoples are the 461 ethnic groups that are designated as Scheduled Tribes. A tribe is a group of individuals who live in primitive or barbaric circumstances. It is an endogamous social group with geographical affinity and no functional specialization. They have a headman or chief in charge of overseeing the group's operations. Tribal society refers to a number of subgroups that make up a tribe. They were the first settlers in India, yet it is very difficult to establish if they are Native Americans or not. From ancient times, they have lived in woods, and some of the communities still adhere to these practices now.

They go by the names Vanyajati, Vanvasi, Pahari, Adivasi, Anusuchit Jati, Anusuchit Jamati, etc. in India because they are elder settlers who live in the forest. Tribes are significant in India because they have their own culture and way of life. The socioeconomic standing of indigenous women is inadequate. The verdant tribal forest is dotted by a variety of significant horticulture crops. Placement in various public or private institutions or self-employment programs, horticultural education, and training can assist indigenous women in becoming self-sufficient.

Through horticultural training, tribal women may also feel more confident in their diet and health. Their services may benefit society in a variety of ways. The majority of feminist literature on the status of women makes the claim that, in comparison to women in other nations, they are in a relatively good position thanks to nearly 60 years of state social programs that include provisions for free public health care, food subsidies, and universal education. The goal of social development is to improve people's social well-being, and as such, it emphasizes the provision of services for health, education, housing, and cultural amenities as well as the protection of children, a change in women's status, labor regulation, better working conditions for employees, and reeducation of disease, poverty, and other social ills.

According to reports, there are no stereotypes or preferences for women in tribal communities. The status of women cannot be claimed to be poor on all counts, despite the fact that there are obvious inequalities between the duties of men and women in several aspects of tribal life. The status of women in tribal society is significant. Despite

the fact that the term “status of women” lacks a precise meaning, it is generally understood to refer to women’s responsibilities and contributions to significant social and economic spheres.

### **Localities of Kani:**

The Kani tribe is aware of a wild herb that may supply nearly limitless energy for hours-long forays across the jungle. The Kanis have incredibly extensive and distinctive traditional knowledge of how to exploit the resources around them, notably biological resources. The Kani tribals are a historically nomadic group that today largely lives in permanent communities in the woods of the Agast-Hymalai hills of the Western Ghats, a mountain region in southwest India.

“Kaani” symbolizes a landowner. The “Kaanis” were referred to as “Malai Arasar” in the past, which means “kings of the forest”. They had most of the dense woodlands. They resided in modest cottages. The huts are built with the use of grass, mud, and wood. They just have a few basic amenities. Others refer to the Kaanikkaran, who also goes by the names Kaanikkar and Kaanikkarar, as Kaanikka.

In the district of Kanyakumari, there are 48 Kani settlements. Males are referred to as Kanikkaran and women as Kanikkaree. The indigenous women are often little and dwarfish. They are of the platyrrhines variety and have black skin. They are straightforward, sincere, and kind. They frequently lend a hand to the forest’s newcomers. In the home, women wrap their bodies from the breasts to the feet with maravedi. After the age of 14, they stop wearing the shoes that ladies wear with dresses. Ladies wear dhotis below the waist and blouse above it. Ear studs made of silver or brass are worn by both men and women.

Human productivity and the development process depend on good health. The caliber of a society’s population has a significant impact on its advancement. The best asset he has is his health, which provides a strong base for his enjoyment. The growth of human morality, the arts, commerce, and religion depended on good health. A person's health is not only essential to living a happy life but it is also required for all creative tasks in society.

The younger tribes are emerging from the bush to seek medical attention for their illnesses because they anticipate an immediate solution. The “Mobile Outreach Programme for the Tribes” is a particular facility set up to take care of the health of the tribal population. It comprises a van with a doctor, a head nurse, and a lab technician who are there to help these folks. The vehicle is equipped with everything needed to look for these people's health. In the past, they used to travel during the week to other places.

The level of education is substandard and the amount of unemployment is very high. It would be preferable if Njaraneeli had parallel education facilities to help children who drop out or fail in high school or upper secondary school since the area lacks an adequate educational support structure.

The government now builds a lot of schools for the tribes. They entered higher education. They didn't show up for admission to a university. There are many schools, but the number of girls enrolled is far lower. Instead, they assign the girls to carry out household duties and other tasks. Girls from tribal groups increased higher education as well. The third five-year plan saw the beginning of the girl’s hostel program. Its major objective was to give indigenous females living quarters so they may pursue their studies.

Children, a wife, and a husband make up the family. The woman and husband are on an equal footing. They sit together and converse. Either one or the other can eat from the same leaf. Both leave for a meal outing. Although being prohibited from owning land, women have admirable roles at home. In the hamlets around Kulathupuzha and Neduyangad, a woman is housed in a seclusion shed when she is ready to give birth. There, deliveries take place. Older ladies with midwifery expertise tend to her and assist in the delivery.

Wealth is the subject of economics. It is a science that examines how people behave in regard to finite resources that can be used for other purposes. For the Kani, agriculture is their primary industry. In all sectors, indigenous women are now steadily gaining authority. Similar to this, they were somewhat empowered economically. The women are engaged in a variety of self-employed activities, including tapping, removing weeds from the forest, raising goats, hens, and honeybees, collecting fuel wood from the forest, and tailoring, cultivating, and producing valued items like pepper, among others.

The main source of income for tribal women is raising earthworms for use in making natural manure. The method they make manure is to collect a lot of leaves of various types in a large tank and cover them with cow excrement. The tank is filled with earthworms and sealed for four months. The manure is then collected once it is removed. Then they sell it for five rupees per kilogram at the Horticulture Research Center.

This is these tribes' primary source of revenue. With the use of bamboo sticks, the native women also create mats and baskets. These items gained appeal among other individuals since they had certain therapeutic benefits. They are empowering in all of these ways right now.

Further particular initiatives have been made to enhance indigenous women's development. 29 women self-help groups have been created by the forest department, and a revolving fund has been given to tribal women's self-help groups. Five indigenous women's SHGs in Motheramalai and Mookaraikal produce bamboo seedlings, spin yarn, make clothes, etc. 22 tribal women's SHGs have received support totaling Rs 10,000 through DRDA at the request of the forest department. Also, an Indian overseas bank loan of Rs. 2 lakhs has been given to the Kani women SHGs as part of a forest management effort.

Kanis in the forest region uses a traditional system of governance to uphold law and order in their community. Kani's social structure which is well-organized and hierarchical works well. Despite their lack of education, they manage their community in an engaging and productive way while abiding by local customs. The Kanis place a strong emphasis on traditional forms of entertainment and farming. The inhabitants of the plain are used to the traditional forms of agriculture. Nowadays, they are utilized using contemporary farming techniques. They are receiving a low literacy rate and fewer chances in the field of education. The tribes' way of life will improve in the long run. Kanis' economy is constrained and not self-sufficient. They do not own any land.

So, the majority of their farming is done around riverbanks, streams, and lakes. In contrast to the cultured people who live on the plains, the Kanis live in a primitive and pitiful way. They made advantage of the wild fruits and roots that were easily accessible in the forest. Forest honey that has been harvested is utilized in medicine.

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