

Harnessing Indigenous Heritage to Empower Women Entrepreneurs and Drive Innovation in India's Cottage Industries

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Abstract: This paper examines the intersection between traditional knowledge and women-led innovation, and to analyze how indigenous practices foster sustainable livelihoods, grassroots entrepreneurship and social empowerment across India's cottage industries. A qualitative methodology was employed, drawing insights from scholarly literature, government policy documents, NGO reports, and documented case studies from regions such as Gujarat, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and the North-Eastern states of India. The findings highlight that women in rural and tribal communities continue to innovate within traditional frameworks, reviving handloom weaving, natural dyeing, organic food processing, and herbal wellness products, often with limited access to formal infrastructure or markets. The study emphasizes the need for policy recognition and institutional support to protect traditional knowledge and amplify women's voices within India's informal economy.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Women Entrepreneurs, Cottage Industries, Grassroots Innovation, Empowerment

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