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Role of Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) in Socio-Economic Development of Tribals in Central India

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Abstract

The Government of India established Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) a national level cooperative body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Its primary goal is to institutionalize the trade of Minor Forest Produce and Surplus Agricultural Produce. India is home to the world's second-largest tribal population. There are 700 hundred schedule tribes spread over different states and union territories of the country. The population of scheduled tribes in the country as per census 2011 is 10.45 crore and thus Scheduled tribes constitute 8.6 % of the country's total population. As per census 2011, total population of Chhattisgarh state is 2,55,45,198 out of which ST population is 78,22,902 which is 30.60% and total population of Madhya Pradesh is 7,26,26,809, out of which 1,53,16,784 is scheduled tribes' population which constitute 21.1 %. The purpose of study is to explore the main role of TRIFED in economic development of tribals in central India and to assess the role of TRIFED in central India. This study is descriptive and analytical in nature based on secondary data for those various secondary sources is used. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative techniques such as content analysis. TRIFED has become an important institutional of promoting inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development of tribal people in Central India. Through merging the old knowledge and the new marketing, processing and value-chain building, TRIFED has managed to change the livelihoods of tribal populations relying on the minor forest produce and tribal crafts.

Keywords: TREIFED, Tribals, Central India, Economic Development, Minor Forest Produce.

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INTRODUCTION

Under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984, the Government of India established Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited in August 1987 as a national level cooperative body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023). Its primary goal is to institutionalize the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) that the country's tribal population collects or cultivates, which is also known as tribal products. Tribal products mean tribal natural products, tribal cultural products, services and tribal processed products (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023). Basically, a fair and genuine rate of non-timber minor forest produce declared by ministry of tribal affairs on the recommendation of Minor Forest Produce Pricing Commission of TRIFED. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is in charge of TRIFED, an apex national organization. TRIFED has a network of 15 regional offices spread across the nation, with its headquarters situated in New Delhi. The goal of TRIFED, a market developer and service provider, is the socioeconomic advancement of the nation's tribal population through the marketing of the tribal goods that are essential to their daily lives. TRIFED has

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developed a portal for tribal products and became a one stop destination for all information about tribal products including tribal handicrafts, handlooms, art and craft, tribal value chain activities, markets skill developments training and modules, custom hiring centres, trainer and trainee database and tribal artisans' database etc. Ministry of Tribal Affairs was set up in 1999, after bifurcation of the ministry of social justice and empowerment with the objective of providing more focused approach on integrated socio-economic development of the scheduled tribes. Ministry of tribal affairs is the nodal minister for coordination of programmes of development for the Schedule Tribes (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). India is home to the world's second-largest tribal population. Indian society has included tribal communities since the time of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. With distinctive lifestyles and customs, the nation's tribal people have rich traditions, cultures, and legacies.

The tribes are more homogeneous and self-contained than non-tribal social groups, and they live in relative geographic isolation, despite some regional variation. Tribal areas make up a sizable portion of the nation's underdeveloped regions. As per article 366(25) of the constitution of India schedule tribes refers to those communities who are scheduled in accordance with the article of 342 of the constitution. This article says that only those communities who have been declared by president through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending act of parliament will be considered to be scheduled tribes. Scheduled tribe communities live in about 15% of the country's areas, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forest to hills. Tribal groups are at different stage of social, economic and educational development. There are 700 hundred schedule tribes notified under article 342 of the constitution of India, spread over different states and union territories of the country. The largest number of communities listed as scheduled tribes are in the state of Odisha that is 64 (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). The population of scheduled tribes in the country as per census 2011 is 10.45 crore and thus Scheduled tribes constitute 8.6 percent of the country's total population. Population of ST males is 5.25 crore and ST females is 5.20 crore (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). Total population of Chhattisgarh as per census 2011 is 2,55,45,198 out of which ST population is 78,22,902 which is 30.60 % and total population of Madhya Pradesh is 7,26,26,809, out of which 1,53,16,784 is scheduled tribes' population which constitute 21.1 %.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The current research is required to come up with new affordable, and efficient approaches and technologies that can lead to the efficient exploitation of the forest minor forest products (MFPs) that are accessible in forest areas. Minor forest products are a major part of the livelihood of forest-dependent and tribal communities, but their potential is not yet fully utilized as no proper techniques and technological assistance are available. There is thus need to develop suitable methods, procedures, tools and implements that can facilitate sustainable collection and harvesting of these resources, without spoiling the forest ecosystems. Besides, the paper has indicated the need to come up with appropriate post-harvest management technologies including sorting, grading, cleaning, dusting, scientific storage and primary-level processing. The technologies will be useful in increasing the shelf life of small forest products, reducing the losses during processing, and adding value to them in the market. Eventually, this kind of development will help to enhance the income and livelihood security of communities that rely on forest as well as implying the sustainable management of forest resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mishra et al. (2025) studied how entrepreneurship has evolved among the indigenous people in central India, with a particular emphasis on the socio-economic consequences of the process. The research intended to determine the important enablers and effects of entrepreneurship. The data were gathered based on a quantitative and cross-sectional study and analysed by use of PLS-SEM among 186 respondents. The results found that government support and training have a great impact on the entrepreneurship that results in job creation, increase in income, skill development and preservation of the culture and access to the market was not significant. The research found out that policy and training interventions are essential in empowerment. Nevertheless, it found some gaps in longitudinal analysis and insufficient investigation of cultural dimensions and regional differences.

Vachhani Ajit (2025) in his study survey was conducted to understand the impact that sales and procurement patterns of tribal livelihoods are

affected by the yearly sales and procurement in Gujarat. The study compared and correlated data on 2021-2025 to determine that sales were very volatile but procurement was relatively stable, and a lag effect existed between the two. The results showed that the existence of a greater fit between the procurement and sales enhances performance. The research came to the conclusion that TRIFED has become a significant factor in the sustainable livelihood development, although, the advances are slow. It determined an existing gap in the research area of poor marketing networks and insufficient previous studies on tribal product marketing in Gujarat.

Bandhu and Sharma (2024) have discussed the impact of TRIFED on the livelihoods of Indians living in tribes. The paper was trying to describe the concept, history and other related schemes of TRIFED. The descriptive methodology was used based on the secondary data provided by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The results showed a high increase in the creation of jobs, marketing and incomes among the tribal communities. The research decided that TRIFED has been playing a significant positive role in the socio-economic development but its awareness is still low in many tribes. The gap in the research is the absence of analysis based on primary data, and the area-specific impact analysis, especially among marginalized groups such as PVTGs, which means that there is room to conduct empirical and micro-level research.

Kannamudaiyar and Chellasamy (2023) in their study investigated the changes in the livelihood security of tribal families in Nilgiris District that TRIFED had. It was aimed at evaluating its contribution in promoting sustainable livelihoods. Primary data, which were collected using a purposive sampling technique, were analyzed using factor and regression techniques, and comprised 180 respondents. The findings showed that there was a major enhancement of income, savings, employment, and financial inclusion of tribal households. The research study established that TRIFED significantly affects the livelihood security, but their level of awareness in remote communities is low. Nevertheless, it has found a research gap in terms of discussing region-specific obstacles and long-term sustainability effects.

Chellasamy and Kannamudaiyar (2023) studied the effect of TRIFED on sustainable livelihood security of tribal households in Tamil Nadu. The study was supposed to determine the impact of TRIFED interventions on income, employment, and overall well-being. The results based on primary data collected on 190 respondents of PVTG using the Structural Equation Modeling and structured interviews show that income, savings, employment, and empowerment significantly improved. The research drew a conclusion that TRIFED has a beneficial effect on livelihood, but there is still little understanding of it in remote locations. The main research gap that has been identified is the absence of region-specific comparative work and the lack of attention to long-term sustainability and outreach effectiveness.

Chellasamy and Kannamudaiyar (2022) analysed variables that affect the livelihoods of the PVTGs in the Nilgiris District. The research was based on primary data of 120 respondents and factor analysis to determine economic, financial, social, and psychological variables that accounted 66.50% variance. The results showed that livelihoods are greatly influenced by income improvement, financial inclusion and MFP profits. The research was able to conclude that, even with the efforts by government, remote PVTGs still have limited benefits and TRIFED is critical in improving livelihoods. It established research gaps in the geographical constraint, ignorance about schemes, and long-term sustainability research.

Balkrishna et al. (2022) analysed the impact of Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDVY) on the entrepreneurship of tribal people in North-East India. It was conducted to determine its effects on the tribal livelihoods and economic empowerment. With the help of a descriptive methodology founded on the secondary data and program reports, the results indicated that PMVDVY boosted income, employment, and market connections by value addition of small forest products. The analysis came to the conclusion that the scheme is very robust to strengthen tribal economies and promote self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, it recognized a research gap of less primary data analysis as well as inadequate region-based micro-level evaluation of beneficiaries.

Thangavel et al. (2020) suggested an interactive platform that is mobile and collaborative in the effort to enhance tribal empowerment via economic growth and social assimilation. The design will entail Android application, client server design with Android application, product sales, geo-tagging and recommender system will be used. The article highlights how technology can transform the lives of the tribal by making them sell their products, exchange their culture and information hence enhancing their economic situation and social status.

One of the research gaps found is that the tribal communities are difficult to reach and integrate in the analogue and text-based information systems because they traditionally use the word-of-mouth communication and remote locations.

Objectives

1. To explore the main role of TRIFED in economic development of tribals in central India.
2. To assess the role of TRIFED in central India.

Research methodology

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature based on secondary data. Related information was collected from various secondary sources such as reports and publication of TRIED, Government documents, journals and official websites of Central India i.e. Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, which are tribal populace state. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative techniques such as content analysis and comparative interpretation to evaluate TRIFED's role in tribal economic development. The methodology helps in comprehend institutional activities, livelihood support, and market linkage for tribal products provided by TRIFED thereby assessing its effectiveness in upliftment the socio-economic status of schedule tribes.

CORE ACTIVITIES OF TRIFED

1. Purchase

TRIFED works to provide tribal people with opportunities for employment and a means of subsistence through the marketing and development of natural products that are collected, produced, or made by them, such as handlooms and handicrafts. The main strategy for creating opportunities for tribal communities to make a living is hiring tribal artisans and purchasing the goods they produce.

2. Tribal Artisan Mela (TAM)

TAMs are set up to find new products and artisans at the sourcing level in States, Districts, and Villages in order to increase the number of tribal producers. A balanced growth of livelihood opportunities for tribal people on a sustainable basis requires equal emphasis on developing a sustainable marketing system and strengthening and expanding the supplier base.

3. Sales

TRIFED also help in sell of minor forest produce by collaborating to e- commerce platform and by organising events such as Aadi Mahotsav, Aadi Bazaar etc where artisans/ organisations/ VDVKs are invited to showcase and sell their products.

4. Expansion of Outlets

A network of 119 outlets has been established by TRIFED. As of 31.03. 2022 there were 100 own-sale locations, 11 consignment-sale locations, and 8 franchised locations, spread throughout the nation. TRIFED is able to open a variety of outlets, including airport outlets, franchisee outlets, consignment outlets, and own outlets (TRIFED, 2022).

With the exception of paying a commission to the franchise that ranges from 10% to 25% of net sales, it introduced a new concept for expansion through franchise that does not require TRIFED's infrastructure or manpower. In order to establish TRIBES INDIA outlets at airports, a special drive was started. For the opening of Tribes India Outlets, the Airport Authority of India has reserved space in Guwahati, Jagdalpur, Prayagraj, Kochi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Jaipur, Goa, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Kolkata and Pune (TRIFED, 2022).

5. Exhibitions

Under exhibitions TRIFED organise two type of exhibition which may:

I. National Tribal Festival "Aadi Mahotsav"

A new idea for the National Tribal Festival, "Aadi Mahotsav," was initiated by TRIFED. Tribal medicine and healers, tribal cuisine, tribal craft demonstrations, tribal folk performances in the evening, and displays and sales of tribal art and craft are all part of the event. When all of these are gathered under one roof, the general public can get a glimpse of the rich traditional culture of tribal communities. In keeping with the motto "Be Vocal for Local," TRIFED hosts Aadi Mahotsav at various locations at various times (TRIFED, 2022).

II. Mini Exhibitions

TRIFED organized and took part in approximately 98 exhibitions at State Capitals, major cities, and popular tourist destinations, including New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Dehradun, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Raipur, Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Ranchi, during the fiscal year 2021–2022. In addition,

TRIFED organized five Aadi bazaars in Puducherry, Thanjvur, Ekta Nagar (Gujarat), Rourkela (Odisha), and Bhopal during the fiscal year 2021–2022. The event directly benefited over 450 tribal artisans who took part, with sales totalling Rs.109.06 lakhs (TRIFED, 2022).

6. Commerce

In addition to being present on all of the major e-commerce platforms, including Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, Paytm, and Gem, TRIFED has created its own e-commerce website https://tribesindia.com. Through this initiative, it will be promoted via digital and social media. In the fiscal year 2021–2022, TRIFED sold Rs. 193.04 lakhs (TRIFED, 2022).

7. Minor Forest Produce (MFP) Development

Non-wood forest products, commonly referred to as Minor Forest Produce (MFP), are a significant source of income for tribal people. Bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins, and a variety of foods like nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, and tussar are all included in this category. For those who reside in or close to forests, the Minor Forest Produces offer both financial support and subsistence. They make up a significant amount of their food, fruits, medications, and other consumables, and they also generate revenue through sales. An estimated 100 million people rely on the gathering and selling of minor forest products for their livelihood, according to the 2011 Report of the National Committee on Forest Rights Act. Minor Forest Produce accounts for about 20–40% of their yearly revenue. Additionally, it has been noted that women gather, use, and sell the majority of minor forest products.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Jatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM), which was created by combining two already-existing programs for the advancement of tribal livelihood, is being carried out by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The "Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/ Produce" and "Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP, Van Dhan Self Help Groups (VDSHGs) are primary SHG units at the village level, and it highlights the enterprise route for bringing in extra money. Up to 20 forest residents make up each VDSHG, which is responsible for the sustainable collection, processing, and value addition of minor forest products. Each Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) with up to 300 members absorbs about 15 of these VDSHGs in order to benefit from economies of scale in training, raw material aggregation, branding, packaging, and marketing operations intended to create an inherent strength.

8. Retail Marketing and Development

By developing a sustainable market and giving tribal people business opportunities, TRIFED seeks to enhance the standard of living in tribal communities. It entails developing a brand, investigating marketing opportunities for the sustainable promotion of tribal goods, and offering other essential services. It has been sourcing a variety of natural, food, handloom, and handicraft items. TRIFED has been promoting tribal goods through exhibitions and its retail locations around the nation (TRIFED, 2026).

With 15 regional offices spread across New Delhi, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Bhopal, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jagdalpur, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Guwahati, Kolkata, and Chennai in India, TRIFED finds and sources tribal products for marketing through its Tribes India retail marketing network. Through its nationwide network of empanelled suppliers, TRIFED has been sourcing a variety of handicraft, handloom, natural, and food products.

9. Empanelment of Tribal Producer/Tribal Artisans

TRIFED has established a system for obtaining goods from its tribal suppliers. These suppliers are empanelled in accordance with the guidelines for supplier empanelment and include individual tribal artisans, tribal Van Dhan Self Help Groups (VDSHGs), and organizations/NGOs that assist tribal people. In order to bring their tribal artisans under the purview of tribal operations, TRIFED identifies the suppliers through institutional agreements with Central/ State Departments/Organizations/reputable NGOs. Other strategies used by TRIFED to find appropriate suppliers include reaching out to district Collectors and district level officers who deal with tribal artisans, contacting craftspeople, artisans who have received training from TRIFED and other organizations, conducting field visits, and setting up Tribal Artisan Melas.

10. Research & Development

An essential component of TRIFED's operations is Research and Development (R&D). Research on a variety of minor forest products has been sponsored by TRIFED. Tribal people still gather produce from

the Minor Forest using traditional methods, and they typically sell it unprocessed. In this regard, R&D on MFP is crucial for raising tribal collectors' earnings, decreasing waste and drudgery, and boosting tribal productivity. Through a number of reputable institutions, including IITs, IICT, Hyderabad, CFTRI, and Mysore, TRIFED funds research and development projects to discover new and innovative products and processes that can improve the value of minor forest products and tribal people's standard of living (TRIFED, 2026).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Status of Retail Marketing for Livelihood Development as on 01/02/2026 in India

Artisan Families	Products	Retail Outlets
3,05,403	1,00,000	110

Sources: https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/

The above table shows that 3,05,403 artisan families are associated with the programme or organization, indicating a large base of beneficiaries involved in traditional and craft-based livelihoods. These artisan families collectively produce around 1,00,000 different products, reflecting the wide diversity and richness of indigenous and handmade goods. To support marketing and sales of these products, there are 110 retail outlets, which act as distribution and sales points connecting artisans with consumers.

Status of Van Dhan Yojana as on 01/02/2026 in India

VDY Beneficiary	VDSHGs	VDVKs	Districts	Crores Funded (In Rs.)
11,83,412	55,036	3,958	381	587

Sources: https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/

The above table summarizes the coverage and scale of the Van Dhan Yojana (VDY), showing that the scheme has benefited 11,83,412 beneficiaries through 55,036 Van Dhan Self-Help Groups (VDSHGs) organized into 3,958 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) across 381 districts of India, with a total financial support of ₹587 crore, reflecting the programme's wide outreach, strong institutional framework, and substantial investment in promoting tribal livelihoods and value addition of minor forest produce.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK) Kaurinbhatha, Chhattisgarh

VDVK Kaurinbhatha is a Self-Help Group composed of a number of women in Rajnandgaon. Their first challenge was to acquire skills and knowledge required to process the raw produce into the products that could be sold. They were provided with a hands-on training in product development, packaging, food processing, and food preservation. Some of the products that members of SHG learnt to make include Mahua Juice (RTS), Mahua Squash, Mahua Energy Bars, Mahua Cookies, Mahua Jam and Mahua Aachar (Pickle) (TRIFED, 2024).

The group went beyond mahua products to produce milk-based products such as Kodo Cookies and Ragi Cookies to satisfy the increasing demand of healthy traditional snacks. Depending on the challenges of business operation and production, SHG has been exposed to many rounds of continuous training in business management and production nuisance (TRIFED, 2024).

Impact on their life and income

Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Kaurinbhatha is a shining example of success today. With its Mahua and millet-based products, which are offered for sale in regional markets, exhibitions, and even online, the SHG has developed a strong brand. In addition to improving the SHG members' financial situation, the revenue has given them a sense of pride and

independence. Because of their distinct flavor and health advantages, Kaurinbhatha's products particularly the Mahua energy bars and Millet cookies have grown in popularity. Up until FY 2023–2024, VDVK's total sales were approximately 47 lakhs. Families can now afford better healthcare and education for their kids thanks to higher incomes, giving the next generation a better future (TRIFED, 2024).

Status of Van Dhan Yojana as on 01/02/2026 in Chhattisgarh

Gatherers	VDSHGs	VDVK Clusters	Districts	Lakhs Funded (In Rs.)	VDVKCs
41700	4170	139	31	2085	139

Sources: https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/

The above table highlights the operational scale of the programme, showing that 41,700 gatherers are organized into 4,170 Van Dhan Self-Help Groups (VDSHGs), which are further clustered into 139 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) clusters operating across 31 districts of Chhattisgarh to support these activities, a total of ₹2,085 lakh has been funded, with 139 VDVK clusters (VDVKCs) established, reflecting a structured approach to mobilizing gatherers, strengthening institutional units, and expanding value-addition infrastructure.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK) Charegaon, Madhya Pradesh

Since its founding in 2020–21, VDVK Charegaon has become a major producer of wild honey. Thanks to extensive training provided by the Center of Discovery of Village Development, Mandla, the VDVK has made notable progress in honey production. Honey processing, value addition, branding, and packaging were all covered in this December 2020 training (TRIFED, 2024).

Impact on their life and income

The installation of a honey processing machine, the FSSAI certificate for packaged honey, and the creation of the "Organic Jungle Honey" brand are some of the major accomplishments of this VDVK. In terms of collaboration, the VDVK is a significant raw honey supplier. VDVK has sold about 11.89 lakh in total. In an effort to boost production capacity and market presence, the VDVK intends to keep growing its honey production and investigate new products like Mahua flower. VDVK Charegaon is notable for its creative strategy and substantial economic impact. Its dedication to sustainability and quality has made it a role model for rural business success (TRIFED, 2024).

Status of Van Dhan Yojana as on 01/02/2026 in Madhya Pradesh

Gatherers	VDSHGs	VDVK Clusters	Districts	Lakhs Funded (In Rs.)	VDVKCs
37,860	1,605	126	14	1,890	126

Sources: https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/

The table above shows the coverage of the programme showing that 37860 gatherers are being arranged into 1605 Van Dhan Self-Help Groups (VDSHG) which are again divided into 126 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) clusters operating in 14 districts of Madhya Pradesh to facilitate these livelihood and value-addition activities with funding of 1890 lakh provided with 126 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) clusters (VDVKCs) being set up.

CONCLUSION

TRIFED has become an important institutional apparatus of promoting inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development of tribal people in Central India. Through merging the old knowledge and the new marketing, processing and value-chain building, TRIFED has managed to change the livelihoods of tribal populations relying on the minor forest produce and tribal crafts. The introduction of Van Dhan Yojana

and MSP of MFP has minimized the exploitation of the middlemen, providing fair prices, and also has maximized the bargaining power of the tribal gatherers or mostly women.

The Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh case studies point to visible changes in the income levels, skills and entrepreneurship as well as social empowerment under Van Dhan Vikas Kendra. Programs that include branding, packaging, training, expansion on retailing and through digital commerce has helped tribal products reach national and international markets. In addition, the emphasis on research and development, institutional relations and sustainable harvesting habits of TRIFED guarantees that livelihood security is ensured in the long run without interfering with the ecological balance.

Nevertheless, with these successes, there are issues like volatility in the market, and weak infrastructure, as well as lack of awareness. The impact of TRIFED can be further increased by strengthening marketing networks in the region, improving digital outreach, strengthening capacity-building programs, etc. On the whole, TRIFED is an example of participatory development, which proves that the concepts of tribal empowerment and inclusive development in India can be promoted through cooperative marketing and institutional support.

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