

# **De-Skilling of the Skilled Women The Case of Denotified/ Other Tribes of Indian Punjab**

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## **Abstract**

*Women account for half the human population. They had always been skilled people and the tribal women are doubly so compared to their men. They look after the household chores, take care of the young and the old alike besides mastering the skills of their tribe's traditional occupation that is considered a specialisation of men. The processes of industrialisation and modernisation have rendered these doubly skilled women de-skilled. Their occupations have become obsolete and so are their skills. They have been coerced to undertake such jobs – collection of scrap (kabad) and waste material – that need neither any skill nor any training. They may beg or act as petty peddlers selling cheap goods. This de-skilling of women is clearly borne out in occupational change over three generations.*

**Keywords:** Women, tribes, denotified tribes, traditional/ modern occupations, de-skilling, Punjab.

## **Introduction**

In this paper, I intend to argue that the tribal communities attach a substantive, as opposed to the formal meaning to their economic system, that Polanyi suggests as 'man's dependence for his living upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying him with the means of material want satisfaction.' (1957: 243) Since the tribal communities had hitherto been living with and in nature, their men and women both and especially the latter had been skilled people in the technical sense of the term. Presently, the world over, their skills have been rendered useless due to the modernising forces of industrialisation, urbanisation and allied processes. Their traditional occupations have become obsolete. New occupations based on new skills have been developed and the tribal communities have not been enabled by the modern state to undertake them. The tribal people are getting homogenised with regard to their de-

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