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SUB-DOMAIN: 4. HEALTH EQUITY, INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

PANEL TITLE:

HEALTH EQUITY: A FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

The WHO constitution asserts that “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of health, is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.” To attain this goal, it is essential to understand the social determinants of health and the mechanisms behind the observed social differences in health outcomes. This would require giving credence to sociocultural determinants of health that includes customs, food habits and availability of nutritious food, gender parity in access to available food and understanding of social taboos, if any, that may hinder in attaining highest standards of health. It is here that focus of public health and anthropology synergise to give holistic understanding of community health. Individuals live in communities, and it is this ecosystem which is largely responsible for generating generalizations required for health interventions. A culturally appropriate, sustainable, and acceptable approach to community health is responsible for making significant interventions in health behaviours. Successful responses to public health emergencies often require collaboration between specialists such as clinicians, epidemiologists, and social scientists. To achieve the desired end goal, every concerned professional and citizen must first divert attention to one of the most marginalized sections of our population- the Adivasi/tribal. To have an inclusive healthy society, we must acknowledge that they are the path pavers to ensuring sound and peaceful living. This is a positive precursor to achieving success in public health and establishing health equity.

It is intriguing to know how some indigenous people have survived or did survive for so long without any modern medical intervention, this underpins the behaviour they attach to their perspective of life and the existence of humanity. Having a different look at why they are seen to be opposing modern technology in health system is imperative to arrive at a holistic understanding of health behaviour and is a curtain raiser for providing equitable health services to all.

Keywords: Health Equity, Social Justice, Health for all

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