

Challenges and Prospects of Empowerment of Tribal Women with reference to Jharkhand

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Abstract - Women empowerment is a dynamic process of different dimension-social, economic, political, cultural, legal, familial/interpersonal and psychological. Empowering women may be understood as enabling the weaker sections like poor, marginalized, backward women especially the tribal women. Women empowerment means women's participation in decision making and development of her life. Women in tribal society play a significant role in their social, economic, religious, political and cultural ways of life. In tribal society girls and women are equal status with men and are considered as an economic asset. Women in tribal community enjoy higher than the non-tribal women. Tribal women share the economic burden as well as take part equally in every decision within family and society. In this term, tribal women are more empowered than their counterparts. From materialistic development point of view, tribal women are still deprived from education and decent standard of living. This paper is based on the secondary sources of data collected from various sources. The purpose of this paper is to find out the challenges faced by the tribal women and to discuss the strategies that they can consider for handling challenges successfully. The study finds that low literacy rate, lack of education and knowledge about new technology, lack of property rights, lack of skill and training, lack of political participation and male control over resources and reproductive rights are responsible for tribal women disempowerment. The Government (Central and State) has undertaken various programmes to empower women.

Key word: Tribal, Women, Empowerment, Economic, Social, Decision-making.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'empowerment' has been used more often to advocate grassroots participation of the people especially the marginalized, the economic, social and political affairs of the society. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individual and communities. Empowerment of women is considered as a process where they can challenge relation of power and take control of their own lives. Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decision and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. The World Bank has defined empowerment as the 'expansion of freedom of choice and action'. According to Kabeer (2001) empowerment as "the expansion of people's ability to make strategies life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them".^[1] Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. Empowerment is very important for the development of individual, society and for nation.^[2] The United Nations Organisation had declared the year 1975 as women's year and the decade 1975-85 as women's decade on the international level.

President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said "Empowering women is a pre-requisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thought and value system lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation".

According to United National Development Fund for a Women (UNIFEM),^[3] the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relation and the ways in which these relations may change.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives and in their society, by acting on issues that they consider as important.^[4] Empowerment occurs within sociological,

psychological and economic spheres and at various levels such as individual, group and community and challenges our assumptions about the status quo, asymmetrical power relationships and social dynamic (Sheetal Sharma, 2006).^[5] Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. It is a process through which people of communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and decisions that affect their day -to – day life.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women’s Empowerment. The National Policy for the Empowerment for Women was passed in 2001 the goal of which is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women by giving them an environment, fundamental freedom, equal access to participation, decision making and legal protection. The Policy was thought to be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goal. This policy includes the following prescription for promoting women empowerment:

1. Legal-Judicial system will be made more responsive and gender sensitive.
2. A women’s equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making, so as to encourage women to participate effectively in the development process.
3. Policies, programmes and system will be established to ensure mainstreaming of women’s perspectives in all development process, as catalyst, participants and recipients.^[6]

Objective of the Study

1. To understand the concept of women empowerment.
2. To analyse the status of tribal women in Jharkhand.
3. To identify different schemes and programmes of Government for women empowerment
4. To identify the problems and challenges in the path of women empowerment.

II. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive method has been adopted for this study. The purpose of the research design is to describe the problems and other units under investigation like socio-economic background and new information about the tribal women through the present study based on secondary sources of data; the nature of research is exploratory and collected from the data census of India 2011, Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, (2013-14), books, research journals, articles, newspapers and websites.

III. BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF JHARKHAND

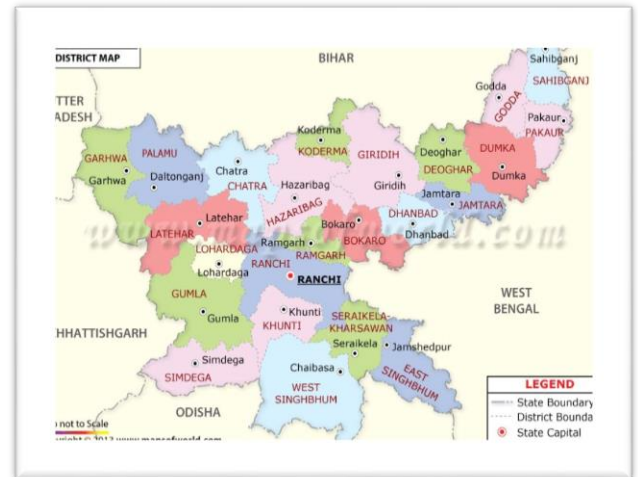


Figure 1: Map of Jharkhand showing District

Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Jharkhand is the land of forest, situated in the eastern India, which was carved out of the southern part of Bihar state on 15th, 2000. The state is surrounded by Bihar to the north, Odisha to the south, West Bengal to the east, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to the west. The capital of the state is Ranchi. The state is rich in mineral and natural resources accounts more than 40 % of mineral resources in India. The table below gives some key demographic indicators and their comparison with India-

TABLE - 1

Sl. No.	Indicators	Jharkhand	India
		In Lakh/Sk. Km	
1	Geographical area	3.42	32.87
2	Population	32,988,134	1,210,854,977
3	ST Population	26.30	8.4
4	Male	16,930,315	623,724,248
5	Female	16,057,819	586,469,174
6	ST Male	4,315,407	52,547,215
7	ST Female	4,329,635	51,998,501
8	Sex Ratio (Female/1000 male)	949	940
9	Density of Population/Sq.Km.	414	382
10	Literacy Rate	66.41	74.04
11	Male Literacy Rate	76.84	82.14
12	Female Literacy Rate	55.42	65.46
13	Birth Rate	23.70	22.50
14	Death rate	6.10	7.3
15	Decadal Growth Rate (%)	22.42	17.64

Source: Census of India, 2011

The total geographical area of the Jharkhand state is 3.42 sq.km. Jharkhand has a population of 32.98 million, consisting of 16.93 million males and 16.05 million females. The sex ratio is 949 females to 1,000 males. The literacy rate of the state was 66.41percent. The male literacy

rate is 76.84% and female literacy is 55.42 percent which is lower than the national literacy rate (65.46%). The tribal constitutes one fourth (26.30) of the Jharkhand total population in 2011. The state is the second highest ST (8.6%) population after Odisha in the country. The birth rate and death rate of the state is (23.70%) and 6.10% respectively. The decadal growth rate is also higher (22.42%) than the national average and density of population of the state is 414 person per sq./km.^[7]

There are 32 tribes (2011) in Jharkhand of which Asur, Baiga, Banjara, Bathudi, Bedia, Binjhia, Birhor, Birjia, Chero, Chik Baraik, Gond, Gorait, Ho, Karmali, Kharia, Kharia, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lohra, Mahli, Munda, Mal Paharia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Sauria Paharia, Santhal, Savar, Bhumij, Kol, Kanwar. The poverty ratio of the state is 39.1% and high-income inequality, and there is wide gap between the rural and urban areas.^{[8],[9]}

IV. TRIBAL WOMEN IN JHARKHAND

A tribal woman plays a very important role in tribal community. The tribal women occupies equal places with the men, she has her rights along with obligation according to customs and tradition, although she has inferior place than to her counterpart but higher position in comparison to the non-tribal women. A tribal girl can choose her partner by her own choice and there is no dowry system in the tribal community rather there is bride price. In tribal society, the work is divided between male and female but this arrangement is based not on inferiority but on conveniences and propriety.^[10] Tribal communities do not look upon the birth of a girl child a curse. They participate in all agricultural operation (except ploughing). Women in tribal community enjoy lots of freedom before and after marriage. The wife may divorce her husband on the grounds of cruelty, impotency, incompatibility, poverty, infidelity or negligence. The tribal women may leave her husband's house with /without intimation to her husband. Although she enjoys full liberty to choose her life partner and also to break the marital bond and marry with another person. The tribal women enjoys higher freedom of movement as they go local market (*Haat*) to sale their agricultural and forest product and purchase necessary household items and her own choices commodities as clothes, bangles, etc.^[11] They have community entertainment with total village participating and the men, women, boys and girls all participate at equal level. They freely sing and dance with each other and joking, laughing goes on freely specially on occasion of marriages and on festivals like Sarhul, Karma, Sohrai, Baha, Holi, Tushu, Jatara, Jitiya, Dashera, etc.^[12] It is only in the tribal rituals connected with religious practices that the men folk get a priority over the women. Though tribal women play significant role in their society but they are not allowed to hold office in the village council and to participate in the council meeting. They can raise voice in the decision-making process at the family and home

but they have no direct say in the matters relating to the community. They can convey their opinions through their husband and other men to the village council.^[13] Tribal women possess relatively high status due to both abundance of natural resources and the equal status like the male partner in family and social arena. The women has more decision making power in her family, economy, and social-cultural spheres. She takes the decision concerning children's upbringing and marriage.^[14]

However, from materialistic development point of view, tribal women are still deprived from education and decent standard of living. The literacy rate among the tribal's and more so in case of tribal women is quite low and this is also associated with poor nutritional and health status among the tribals. Tribal women play a major role in the co-management of their home, natural, social, economic, resources and agricultural development including crop production, livestock production, horticulture and post-harvest operation but they remain backward due to traditional values, illiteracy, superstitions, and dominant roles in decision making, social evils and many other cultural factors.^[14] Tribal women face problems and challenges in getting sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environment degradation and displacement. The programmes oriented towards the empowerment of tribal women, they have also improved their social, economic and educational status. However, there are wide variation across regions and tribes in terms of sex ratio, work participation, social life, educational level and productivity.

V. CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Although the tribal women are playing a significant role in the advancement of agriculture and economy and largely to the society. In spite of various Constitutional provision and government measures, a number of challenges faced by the tribal women due to various reason. The main problems and challenges that were faced by the tribal women are still exist today in some extent.

Challenges and problems faced by the tribal women

- **Low literacy level-** The literacy and education level of the tribal women is low. The education system, school curriculum do not create much interest among them
- **Mass Poverty:** The tribes are economically poor as they mainly depend on cultivation, hunting, food gathering, pastoral and forest to meet their basic needs.
- **Inadequate job opportunities:** The tribal women are engaged in agricultural or traditional and non-gainful activities for their livelihood.
- **Lower wage rate:** The wages for women is low as compared to male workers which lowers the economic status.
- **Inadequate health facilities:** Tribal women are not healthy and suffer from malnutrition, anemia, and

various disease. The poverty and illiteracy create hurdles to access the medical facilities.

- **Inadequate transportation facilities:** Mostly tribal residing in the rural, hilly, mountain and interior area. There are lack of transportation and communication facilities which make them to remain isolated.
- **No Land rights:** In patriarchal tribal community, tribal women do not have rights on their land and legally restricted from the rights which create gender inequalities.
- **Lack of access of information and communication facilities:** Tribal women faces technological challenges as they have inadequate exposure to outside world and continue to depend on traditional practices, which affect their efficiency and productivity.

VI. WAYS TO EMPOWER TRIBAL WOMEN

- **Participation in decision making:** Participation of tribal women in decision making, voting, in politics, to run office, giving fair chance of being elected, at home, school, community, national level etc.
- **Provide good education and resources:** Empowering women usually involves giving them opportunity for better education.
- **Changes in the attitude of women in the society:** Women's own perception towards themselves and on their own empowerment should be changed. They should strive to change their image as weak, dependent, passive, and try to become active and self-reliance.
- **Courses in agriculture and allied field:** About 60 percent of India's population are engaged and dependent upon agriculture. Tribal women are working in the farm activities. So, by training and skill in different aspects of agriculture, their efficiency and productivity can be increased.
- **Implementation of laws:** Tribal women are engaged as worker in agriculture, construction, brick clin, house maid, etc. and in the unorganised sector, the government should protect their labour rights and also make special laws to prevent the exploitation of the women workers at work place.
- **Awareness campaign:** Workshops, seminar and training programme about education, health, employment etc. should be arranged at the village level.
- **Providing marketing facilities:** The government should provide a market for their agricultural, forest produce, handicraft and traditional goods.
- **Ownership rights:** The tribal women need to have control over resources like land, livestock, productive ownership and other resources.
- **Provide financial assistance:** Micro credit programmes should be extended to provide small loans to tribal women for self-employment to generate income for self and for their families.

VII. PLANS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN

Within the framework of democratic policy, our laws, development policies, plan and programme have aimed at women's advancement in numerous spheres. From the fifth five-year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift within the approach to women's issues in determining the status of women. The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendment (1993) to Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

Government programme and policies for women empowerment-

1. Swa-Shakti Project
2. Swayamsiddha
3. Swavlamban Programme
4. Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)
5. Swadhar
6. Mahila Samridhi Yojana
7. Mahila Samakhya Yojana
8. Integrated Rural Development Programm (IRDP)
9. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)
10. Priyadarshini
11. Pradhan Mantri Matryu Vandana Yojana
12. Ujjawala Yojana
13. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)
14. Indira Mahila Yojana
15. Rajiv Gandhi Schmee for Employment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)
16. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)
17. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
18. Stand Up India
19. Mahila e-Haat
20. Short Stay Home for Women and Girls
21. One Stop Scheme
22. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREG)
23. Nari Shakti Puraskar ^[15]

Jharkhand government schemes for empowerment of women and girls ^[16]

- **Mukhyamantri Sukanya Yojana:** Jharkhand govt. has launched Mukhyamantri Sukanya Yojana scheme for girls from 1st January, 2019. Under this scheme all the girls from their birth till the age of 18 years will be financial assistance of Rs. 30,000/- (Rs. 5000 at birth) through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode. In case the girls remain unmarried till 20 years of age, then girls would to get an additional Rs. 10,000/- assistance.

The primary objective this scheme is to support girl's education, curb under nutrition and child marriage and this scheme will benefits girls from around 36.57 lakh families. The govt., non- govt. entities and institution of Panchayati Raj work in coordination to remove the social evils in the society like child marriage and dowry system etc.

- **Mukhyamantri kanyadan Yojana:** Under this scheme the state government will support the poor people in their daughter's marriage who cannot afford the cost of marriage. The state government provides assistance of Rs. 30,000/- to each girls beneficiaries to improve the condition of the girls and reduce financial burden on the poor father.
- **Mukhyamantri Annapurna Yojana:** Under this scheme the govt. provides meals to poor hungry people at Rs. 10/- to reduce the infant mortality rate (IMR) and to ensure proper nutrition to women and children.
- **PTG Dakiya Yojana- Free Rice Scheme for Primitive Tribal Group (PTG)-** under this scheme, a free rice (foodgrain) packet of 35 kg is provided door to door every month. This scheme is working in the district of Godda, Sahebganj, Dumka and Palamu.
- **Tejaswini Yojana- Socioeconomic empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young women (AGYW):** Under this scheme girls between 14 to 24 years age group will be strengthen with the help of World Bank. The girls would be provided informal education to inspire them about higher education. The aim of the project socially and economically empower the adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) to provide market-driven life skill training (informing girls about rights and protection, development programmes and schemes, health, nutrition and hygiene to ensure physical and mental well-being of girls), financial literacy (entrepreneurship) and education.
- **Free Mobile Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs-** Under this scheme free smart phone will be provided to the women entrepreneurs. The aim of the scheme is to boost the digital India and to make women digitally literate and economically strong.
- **Udyamai Sakhi Mandal Yojana-** The main objective of this scheme is to empower rural women by providing financial assistance to start their own small business. Under this scheme a group of 15 women can set up small industries which in turn would increase their annual income and get financially strong.
- **Jharkhand Ajivika Samvardhan Hunar Abhiyan (ASHA):** This scheme was launched on 29th September, 2020 for the empowerment of women. Through this scheme women be provided self-employment opportunities related to local resources

including agro-based livelihoods, animal husbandry, forest produce, entrepreneurship. 17 lakh rural women of the state will be connected through this scheme.

Constitutional and legal safeguard

The Constitutional of India provides a number of safeguard measures for protection and promotion of interest of the SCs and STs Community. These provisions are:

Art-15(2): the provision related to prohibition of restriction of any access to public places;

Art-16(4): reservation of post in Government services for marginalized backward classes;

Art-17: abolition of untouchability;

Art-23: restriction of traffic in human beings and forced labour;

Art-29.2: protection of right to admission to educational institutions;

Art- 46: special care for promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes;

Art-244 and Scheduled V & VI: social administrations arrangement and control over Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in the States

Art-335: reservation in services;

Art- 339: Union government direction to state government for welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

Panchayati Raj Institutions: as per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, all the local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women. Such a provision was made to increase effective participation of women in politics.

VIII. FINDING

- Tribal women should be educated with labour legislation and welfare measures to promote awareness among them to avoid all types of exploitations. To empower the tribal women steps are to be taken to implement adult education programme among the women workers of unorganised sector.
- Although Central and State government has launched a number of schemes for providing financial assistance for self-employment of the tribal women irrespective of sex, education and rural background, hardly few rural and tribal women could have availed this opportunity due to lack of education, vocational training, entrepreneurship as well as lack of incentive from the government and the society. There is still a wide gap between the reality and the expected.

- Poverty and unemployment are the other major problems which need to be worked upon, tribal women can be empowered when they are educated, healthy and feel safe.
- Women empowerment is possible when they are economically free and have all rights to take financial decisions of their own life for these several social and economic measures are to taken.
- There are many laws and amendments that have been carried out to end the discrimination against women and empower women in all aspects of life and gender equity is enshrined in India Constitution that empower the state to end the gender-based discrimination against women.

IX. CONCLUSION

To fulfil the true potential as potent women empowerment, tribal women should be included in main stream through improving the tribal women's literacy rate, education, health, their decision-making role, access to health amenities and infrastructural facilities, exposure to media, greater mobility, employment opportunities, etc. Empowerment of tribal women is possible only when they are endowed income and property so that they became self-reliance and build up their identity in the society. The tribal women in Jharkhand has equal status than non -tribal women. even though they are not completely empowered and still facing various challenges to be empowered. For empowerment of tribal women, access to employment and opportunities must be increased at very fast pace.

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