

Women in Tribal Society: Balancing Multiple Roles in a Family

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ABSTRACT

Women in India always carry out their 'dual responsibilities' in and outside the domicile. Their roles hold significance not only in economic activities, but also in non-economic bustles. Tribal women inhabiting in the interior pockets of India occupy an economically significant place in their respective households and society in general. The present study corroborates the premise that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities. Although they lack control of material and social resources, their contribution to subsistence economy give them important and irreversible position. It tries to comprehend the status and position of women in the studied society, accesses their extent of participation in different economic activities and also examines their role and responsibilities in household care and maintenance. The study has been conducted in three villages namely Pahadpur, Tileighutu and Dighia Beda in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. All the three villages are multi-ethnic in composition where scheduled tribes like Santal, Munda and Ho (Kalha) live together. The empirical data have been collected from the field using anthropological methods like observation (both participant and non-participant), interview, and focused group discussion. Few voices have also been recorded to present the inner feelings of these women in different economic activities. In a nutshell, it is understood that women can merely be appreciated on their individual stipulations. Burden and responsibility of women are huge, as woman has double play either for being a mother in the household or a woman in the other womanly responsibilities. Equality between men and women will not be a waste of time effort if women act upon her ability to be competitive with men to their womanhood.

Keywords: Tribal women, role, status, economic activities, household

INTRODUCTION

India as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official and religious sphere Indian women suffer profoundly. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society. Gender roles are socially constructed. The family structure in India is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. For any country, participation of women in the development process is of utmost necessity as they comprise of a half of the population percentage. It is an established fact that the development of a nation depends on

maximum utilization of her man power. Therefore, development of the nation in true sense cannot be achieved without proper development and empowerment of the women population. The contribution of women to society cannot be ignored as they constitute almost one-half of the total population of the world that accounted for around 496 million as against total population of 1027 million. In a country like India this becomes doubly essential as India traditionally has been a country which worships its women only in temples, but its women are completely marginalized in all other sectors. Perhaps this philosophy was well accepted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, he had given a brief statement that, "when a woman moves forward, then the entire family and village moves forward, and when the village moves then the entire nation moves."

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO):

"Societies cannot afford to ignore the potentials of female labour in reducing poverty and the

need to search for innovative ways of lowering economic, social and political barriers. Society's ability to accept new economic roles for women and the economy's ability to create decent jobs to accommodate them are the key prerequisites to improving labour market outcomes for women as well as for economic development as a whole (ILO, 2008)."

Women in her life have relatively heavier responsibilities than men. Double play of women today has not only responsibilities at home as a housewife, but also out of door as career woman. In a simple way the roles of women can be understood as:

- Being a citizen of the country with regards to civil rights and politics; it includes fair deal to female labor force participation, also called as external function.
- Being a mother in a family and wife in the husband-wife household, also called as internal function.

These internal and external functions are foundation for woman, especially for those who have career, so woman has to be capable of managing roles to prevent two-side roles negligence.

Equal participation of women with men in decision making, free expression of their views and participation in the community life help them to get recognized in the society. The power of expression and ability to solve problems through their views and ideas, make women capable of getting attention from everyone. The financial independence along with employment opportunity makes a woman capable of asserting her voice in community as well as in the family.

Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in noneconomic activities is equally important. Women's role as wives, mothers, organizers and as the basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of utmost importance. The tribal women in these areas occupy an economically significant place that is reflected in the generally high position and the importance that they have. The socio-economic equality of sexes can be observed in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage, divorce and household harmony.

Women exhibit ingenuity, creativity and initiative in solving their daily problems of sustenance and survival and often demonstrate organizational skills as revealed during labour

exchange (mutual aid groups) and communal service ventures. These social networks are important for the local economies. This cultural acceptance of the fact of their raised status gives them a voice in household affairs that is almost equal to their husbands. The present study corroborates the premise that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities. Although they lack control of material and social resources, their contribution to subsistence economy give them important and irreversible position.

OBJECTIVES

Keeping in view the above perspectives the present study tries to:

- Comprehend the status and position of women in the studied society
- Access their extent of participation in different economic activities &
- Examine their role and responsibilities in household care and maintenance

Area of Study and Methods used

The study is conducted in three villages namely Pahadpur, Tileighutu and Dighia Beda in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. All the three villages are multi-ethnic in composition where scheduled tribes like Santal, Munda and Ho (Kalha) live together. But in Tileighutu village a handful number of weaving as well as caste families reside here. The Prime occupation of most of the households is settled agriculture. Besides agriculture, tribals in these villages supplement their source of living by daily wage labouring, small scale business and government employment. As per 2011 census, the population of the Pahadpur village is 572 (male-302 & female-270), Tileighutu 362 (male-172 & female-190) and Dihiabeda is 539 (male-259 & female-280) [District Census Handbook Mayurbhanj, Census, 2011].

The empirical data have been collected from the field using anthropological methods like observation (both participant and non-participant), interview, and focused group discussion. Agricultural operation specially weeding and household activities were observed to understand women's involvement in the field. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for interview of key informants in the three villages. Six (06) focused group discussion were conducted by forming 10 to 12 women group (two in each village). Few voices have also been recorded to present the inner feelings of the women in different economic activities.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Status of Women in Society

Social status is a comparative phrase. Considering social vigour, it also keeps varying through time and space. The notion of status is in the cauldron of a paradigm swing where a person's obtained virtues akin to education, occupation and economic status is deliberated but the largely imperative constituent, that is, outlook is uncared for. The word 'status' here contains not only the individual and proprietary privileges but also responsibilities, accountabilities and disabilities (Bhadra, 2004). In case of the Indian woman, it comprises her 'personal rights', 'proprietary rights' and her obligations, accountabilities and disabilities concerning the society and her family members (Prakash, 2001). The eminence of women in a society is a momentous manifestation of the echelon of social impartiality in that society. Such status is time and again portrayed in terms of their intensity of earnings, employment, education, health, fecundity and over and above their responsibilities within the family, the community and society. The prominence of women in India has been an issue to numerous enormous transformations over the preceding millennia. Commencing from a mostly indefinite position in primeval period throughout the stumpy points at the medieval, to the endorsement of equivalent privileges by several reformers, the history of women in India has been exciting.

Various studies contain the stricture of the occurrence and incidence of brutality aligned with women. While conducting his fieldwork in Bangladesh, Chaudhary (2014) observes that education is sturdily related with use of contraception, consequently amplifying lesser fertility. Nevertheless, these parameters themselves pretend a difficulty. They are decided and restricted by the character of existing data and/or the intrinsic gender biasness of official information schemes themselves. Therefore, it has been comprehended that this design is not adequate to analyze the miscellaneous issues, those establish the subordinate position and inferiority of women. Researchers in women's studies have constructed frameworks that comprise both conventional and non-conventional markers to determine the grade of women taking into contemplation the concerns of 'access' and 'control'. Women's subjection and their subordinate position commence from the lack of

resources – human, tangible and intangible. Men are preferred by the regulations of the organizations inside which gender dealings happen, and that they take pleasure in and implement power in imposing these possessions. Gender disparity is then lop-sidedness in power, where men are in conflict of power and women of subjugation. The nonappearance of power has meant the 'deficit of access and control over resources', a 'coercive gendered division of labour', 'a deflation of their work', 'scarcity of control over their own self, proficiencies, labour, mobility, sexuality, time and fertility'. Women's legal and economic reliance restricts her options to childbearing and create more sons whom she can manipulate and depend on for support (Bhasin and Bhasin, 1997). This has been revealed and talked about by numerous other scholars who accomplished their studies on south Asia. Cain (1984) finds high fecundity in patriarchal societies. Furthermore Kate's young's (2000) paper endows with information pertaining to the gender and development approach centring on uneven power dealings stuck between men and women which eventually avert women from gaining from better accesses. Kate's young (2000:323) examines that employing the perception of gender (the socially obtained ideas of masculinity and femininity) and gender associations (the socially created outline of associations amid men and women), they analyze how development schemes redesigns these power dealings. They illustrate now economic and social transformations, whether planned or unintended, time and again provides better prospects to one gender and demonstrated how, in various societies.

In tribal communities the role of women is extensive and essential (Mitra, 2008). Despite of representing about half the entire population, women in tribal society, are more imperative than in other social groups. It is merely because they work harder and the family economy and management relies upon them. Astoundingly, even after industrialization and the ensuing commercialization infested the tribal economy, women sustained to partake a momentous role. Gathering of small forest products are done chiefly by women and children. A lot of them as well work as labourers in industries, households and construction, putting a contribution to their family expenditure. Despite of being exploited by contractors and managers, tribal are more truthful and sincere than non tribal. Nevertheless, tribal women experience

inconveniences and disputes in attaining a sustainable living and a respectable existence owing to ecological dilapidation and the intrusion of interlopers. Undeniably, due to the agendas headed for the empowerment of tribal women, they have also enhanced their socio-economic situations and positions. Nonetheless, there are ample disparities crosswise provinces and tribes in terms of work contribution, sex proportion, economic output and social life (Awais et al. 2009: 1). Further, they (2009: 2) stated that, the tribal societies cannot have productive settled agriculture without any healthy and productive tribal women. Nevertheless, Awais (2009) have suggested depending on the discerning explanation that to instigate policy measure to amplify agricultural production through better supply of inputs including credit and improving marketing network for the agricultural output of the tribes. Sanjay Kanti Das (2012: 1) has portrayed a case study for the socio-economic empowerment of the tribal women in India. His study recognizes numerous social, political, economic, technological and physiological restraints in the way of the empowerment of tribal women. Das has made his attempt to analyse the limitations in women in the tribal regions of Assam State. His research has initiated that, the cognitive and infrastructural constrictions are chief obstacles for tribal enlargement and empowerment as well. Specifically, he has illustrated that the chief causes for the meagre empowerment of tribal women was documented as deficit of knowledge regarding latest technology and information.

Elwin (1969) comments that tribal women are precisely identical with any other women, with the equivalent situation, adore, uncertainties, similar commitment to her home, to husband and children, with similar error and qualities. In the case of Santal, Ho and Munda society, to assess the status of women we tried to locate their roles or position out there. Any kinds of rigid social hierarchical structure (as in Hindu society) are non-existent in the studied area. It is found to be quite caste-less and 'class-less' and is more or less run by a democratic scheme. A noticeable sense of egalitarianism founded on community membership irrespective of sex is noticed. Furthermore in social, cultural and religious subjects, all take part in their individual right. Being a patriarchal society, the father is the head of the family and only male members of the house can become heir to ancestral belongings (agricultural land). No

female can accede to the family landed possessions.

There are a few social precincts for women in the studied area. For example, they cannot touch plough which comes in the purview of men's domain, join a hunting party, and or become heir to the father's landed property. Subsequent to marriage a woman becomes 'another person' in respect to her parental home, maintains humble relationship with her husband, and tries to be loyal to her husband's family and clan, taking care of children and domestic chores. She is merely left with an emotional connection to her parents and their clan.

In the religious sphere, women are not allowed to participate during village level worships at the sacred grove (*Jaher Than*). In the clan level worship (*tandi bonga*), only men folk participate in all three tribal communities. The function of traditional political council is observed in the studied communities. Looking at the women's participation in the village level decision making, their presence is restricted except the victim, accused and witness. But in the modern Panchayat Raj system, women are equally participating and contributing at par with male counterpart. Among the Santals, divorced woman when remarries, in her in-laws house she is not allowed step into the ancestral worshipping place (*Bhitar*). Barren lady in the Santal, Munda and Ho society are considered inauspicious and experience exploitations from the family members as well as relatives in day to day life. Belief in witchcraft is even today visible in the study area and often women are branded as witch by the shamans which subordinate the status of women in the society.

Assessing the status of woman among the communities under study is difficult because of the dynamics in the women's role play. Certain restrictions in the religious arena indicate to some extent inferior position at par with male counterpart, whereas frequent occurrences of love marriage in the study area in which women enjoy the liberty to select partner without taking consent from the parents indicates freedom. There is no restriction in widow re-marriage. But in other parameters, such as literacy rate of women in the three communities is very less in comparison to male literacy.

Contribution in Economic Activities

Amid the tribal communities inhabiting in Odisha, the position of women is extensive and vital. They rarely endure isolation or

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subordinate eminence in their society. This is echoed in their privileged sex-ratio in relation to the common population. These tribal women folk execute an imperative part not merely in the domestic orb but also presume accountability in complementing family earnings which goes a protracted way in the nurture of children. Even though they are chiefly uneducated they have the proclivity to accumulate for future in terms of cash and/or kind. In any case a tribal woman never squanders savings like her male counterpart in her own community. They vigorously take part in village gatherings arranged by the Panchayatiraj institutions periodically. It has given them the possibility to get rid of the shield of ignorance and apathy. Their level of awareness has improved their enthusiasm to arrange Self-Help Groups (SHGs), endorsing micro financing set-ups.

While interacting with the Santal, Munda and Ho women in the study area they expressed that they vigorously partake in every bubble of economic activities and contribute to the household economy in a momentous way. They provide not just help but equal contribution along with their male counterparts.

Agriculture

There is barely any bustle in agriculture, except ploughing in which women do not partake. Such exemption is only due to taboo averting women from touching the plough. Astoundingly different informant gave different rationalization behind this. One of such appealing justification

was the mythological one. They explain it in this way that, god *Krishna's* brother *Balaram's* weapon is plough and they think that their husband brother is *Balaram*. Hence they don't touch the plough. Women from diverse age group chip in agricultural deeds as helping hand with their family members and community altogether. The agricultural manoeuvre can be divided into pre-harvesting, post-harvesting and harvesting activities where the women folk participate in dissimilar extent. Pre-harvesting operations contain selection of seed, application of fertilizers, repair of irrigation channels, sowing of seeds, uprooting and transplanting seedlings, weeding application of pesticides, insecticides, irrigation and guarding which consume 5-6 hrs per day. During harvesting jobs women's time utilization is less than pre-agricultural operation as it is majorly accomplished by the male folk. The post-harvest operations are exclusively women's domain of work which includes thrashing, winnowing, and drying of grains, storage and transportation. As the fieldwork was carried on in the month of August we could witness some pre-harvesting works like weeding done by women in groups belonging from different age groups. This operation is locally termed as *Hered*. Maximum amid the sample respondents added to this that during early pre-harvesting seasons, they do most of the work in the field from loading cow dung to the field for levelling the soil and finally transplanting the seedlings, and to weed the field everyday all along the rainy season.

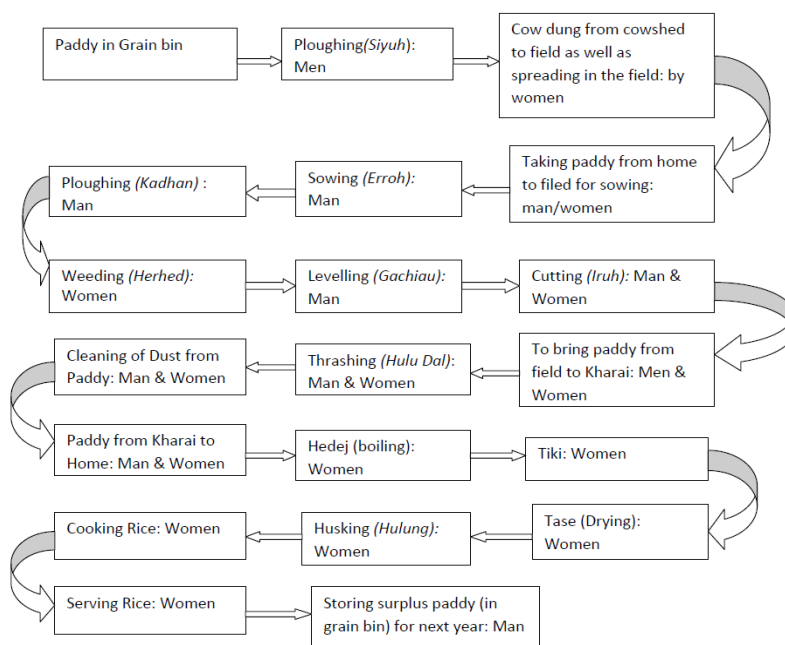


Figure1. Role of Women in Cycle of Paddy from Production to Consumption

The donation of women in agriculture cannot only be weighed up by counting on the time spent, but also by the joy, celebration and participation of them, in ceremonies during each phase of agricultural season. During rainy season, following the completion of animal weeding work, the women and girls exclusively observe the ritual ceremony of *Hered Muchad* which embraces songs, dance and merry-making by all the women in the village. Women embellish each other with mud of the paddy field. They adorn their agricultural equipments, umbrellas etc. with mud and create different geometric, floral pattern on it, occasionally with artificial flowers and beautifying materials. Each women and girl unwearingly linger for each other turns. Usually an older woman of the groups initiates the process. Later on they drink *Handiya* (local liquor) and dance with each other all along the way from their field to their home. It was also noticed that women sing together while working in a high pitch and shrill voice on the last day of weeding work. As per their narration, they do so only because it can be heard by villagers also people from nearby villages. Astonishingly, while returning from the field they continue such singing in thick voice. Such difference in sound is explained by them is purposive and utilitarian. The thick voice is used only to notify the villagers that have finished the work. It also signifies their enjoyment and happiness after a relief of work load in rainy season.

Since the houses in the village are observed to be present far away from the agricultural lands, the women labours have to cover a long distance everyday to reach the field. Apart from land farming, homestead agriculture for vegetable production is religiously practiced and it is invariably the responsibility of women member of the household to maintain homestead farm. It was found that most of the houses have some adjacent small areas where they grow multiple crops like – black gram, tomatoes, drills, potatoes, beans, pumpkin, onions, radish, beet root etc maximum amongst which (except tomatoes and potatoes) are grown for domestic consumption.

Livestock/Poultry

Poultry production and live stock production is an important area marked by the vigorous participation of women where they play multiple roles and provide their productive inputs in terms of working hours. Maximum households in the area do possess livestock,

mainly cows (*dangri*), goats (*merom*), sheep (*bhidi*), pig (*sukri*) and poultry birds (*sim*). Ample amount of time is reported to spent by the women in care of livestock/poultry activities such as bringing fodder/feed, chaff cutting, preparing and giving feed and water bathing animals, clearing shed, compost making, milking, grazing, medical treatment. Many a times elderly women also actively participate. Some women were found to take their livestock especially cows, goats for grazing during noon and returned at afternoon. Normally they take 2 hrs to do so. During the evening hours they finally feed their poultry birds. Though men also help them in accomplishing the grazing job but caring, feeding and cleaning task of livestock/poultry animals is the sole responsibility of women and even girls.

Wage Labour

The involvement of the tribal women in wage earning (*hajri kami*) or working as labourers within or exterior to the village is significant. The most imperative and appealing fact of tribal economy we could observe that they never follow one occupation exclusively. Along with the male folk seasonal variation brings dynamism in work participation and contribution of women. Depending on the accessibility of time, employment openings and session they keep shifting their work roles and perform multiple jobs. While conducting the field work women's contribution as wage labour to household economy are observed to include two broad categories:

- (1) Wage labour outside the village
- (2) Wage labour inside the village

Wage Labour outside the Village: In this category the most prevalent forms are mining wage labours and construction wage labours. Other than this woman also work as agricultural wage labour in others' farms. Maximum women in this category (75%) are reported to be involved in mining wage labour and employed at *Badampahad* iron ore mining. This kind of job is generally done by them in the rancid season of agriculture. These labours are locally known as *Mainis* and are always gets appointed in contractual basis. Many women prefer this kind of jobs for higher payment though the risk (health hazards, accident and sometimes sexual exploitation) for them remains always high. They work for 6 days in a week from 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. The mining job includes two kinds of employments. The wage labours either work

in quarry (are locally known as *Khadan*) or load rocks in wagons. The loading work is termed locally as *Baghin Kami* or *Baghin Perej*. This work always stipulates a team effort as it is quite a hard work. Women from neighboring homes form a group of minimum 10 people to 14 people including male to get it done. Mothers often take their toddlers in their working zones though they ask help from other women to take care of them. The task is generally done by any senior women member of the house specially mother-in-law. And for those who don't have such provision, can take their elder children for the care of toddlers.

While working in the loading section women get paid on daily basis though those occupied in quarry mining obtain a fixed amount of it. Astoundingly, only voter card holders are capable of registered themselves as contractual labours in quarry mining. The payment of quarry mining is Rs. 700 to Rs.800/- per week. After carrying out the strenuous work for 6 days, the payment is given on Saturday. They also gets yearly bonus of Rs. 2000/4000/- depending on their work and shovel. In case of loading work the payment is given to the group according to the number of box loaded by them which generally varies from Rs. 1700 to 1850 per box. The bonus is also divided amid the group members while it is being paid. People irrespective of sex who work in quarry or *khadan* get bonus of 9% along with shawl and money. Though some safety equipments are provided by the administration including helmet, mask, sunglass, cap, soaps, coat etc, mining work is quite hazardous and risky due to the rocky and dusty atmosphere. In summer season especially it often leads to respiratory problems for the workers and villagers as well. Mining area always seems to be an accident prone locale with a range of risks. While getting affected by any kind of health complication or accident, they are provided with immediate first aid on the spot and then taken to *Badampahar* hospital. The major complicated cases are referred to *Rairangpur* hospital only and the entire cost of treatment is borne by the company.

Tribal women also participate as construction labours within and outside their village. In these jobs women generally go in tiny clusters and work under different contractors. This work is accomplished majorly by the middle aged women in the studied area. Akin to mining, for this kind of job, the quality of the environment in the working zone determines the quality of the workers' life even after their working hours.

Regrettably they are not provided with any safety appliances, despite of working with dust and other hazardous materials. Particularly, if accident occurs, it becomes nobody's accountability. The contractors never provide any kind of free health care facility for their workers. Furthermore there is a noticeable amount of discrepancy between men and women with regards to payment. A few young unmarried girls are reported to get migrated to some distant places in search of these kinds of construction works. Two cases were recorded where they are migrated along with their families to Bhubaneswar to supplement their family income.

Other than these two forms, agricultural labour is also observed to be an important form of wage labour in the study area. It is mainly seasonal where along with male counterparts women of all ages participate. As already referred earlier, their participation is mainly needed during harvesting and weeding phase. A significant number of women told that if some work is left during any season of agricultural operation they deliberately go to help these household and in return paid in cash or kind. The payment is not equal for men and women. The men are paid Rs. 80/- per day while women are paid Rs. 70/- per day. Otherwise at times they are paid in kinds such as rice. The girls also assist their mothers and seldom play the main role in absence of them.

Village Market Production

The village *Haat* (local market) holds an imperative position in tribal economy for all kinds of transaction of goods and services. It has been sustaining since an immemorial time to perform several socio-economic functions for the tribal community. While carrying out the fieldwork, tribal women of the area narrated several times that how they sell forest-based produces like seeds, mushrooms, fruits and leaves to contribute to their household income. They also shared their attachments with different enterprises like business or shop keeping in the local market.

Own Enterprises

Apart from all the economic involvements mentioned, women in the study area are also reported to be involved in shop keeping. Two women shopkeepers in Pahadpur village could be located who sell different grocery objects along with regular household chores amidst which most of the objects they bring from

Badampahar market in two alternative days. These shopkeepers keep their shops open most of the time. Selling country liquor (*Handi* in Santali and *Diang* in Ho) in the weekly local markets as well as in their respective villages is mostly done by women. During cultural events at night in the neighbourhood villages, selling of country liquor by women is a regular phenomenon.

Self-Help Groups

The credit needs of the rural poor are determined in a complex socio-economic milieu, where it is difficult to adopt project lending approach. It has been conceived that the objective of eradicating poverty cannot be achieved without the active participation of woman in the process of development. While doing the fieldwork we could locate 3 more or less active self-help groups in the village which are:

- Bharat Mata Group
- Nari Bharat Group
- Maha Laxmi Group

The Bharat Mata group was the first group established in 2005. Then in 2006 came Nari Bharat Group and the last of all the group is Maha Laxmi group which came in existence in 2007. Among all these groups Bharat Mata is the most successful and active SHG group and presently this group is still working strong. But the other two groups have become more or less non-existent. All these groups are formed with 10 members and running accounts at either “Bank of India, Badampahad” or even at the private banks. Then they also took labour cards from Block Development Office and then only received payment. When we were interacting with them they reported that they took 3 lakhs of loan and paid 2 lakhs on time. So, 1 lakh is still redeemed. All the groups initially took loan for animal husbandry specially goat etc. And then after doing business they paid monthly installment of Rs. 4000/-. The 1 lakh which was redeemed by the bank was their profit initially. While being interviewed, most of the members from different groups claimed that the profit of 1 lakh had been distributed among its members equally and they kept half of the profit for further business and half for their own use.

Household Care and Maintenance

“Household” is defined as an assemblage of people usually inhabiting collectively and consuming food from a common kitchen.

Nashat and Tucker (1999) refer household relations as the heart of maximum societies, as families operate as the chief culture-bearing component. Several social scientists have considered family as the keystone of society. As we all know Murdock (1949) defined family as a social cluster characterized by common residence, economic collaboration and reproduction which embraces adults of both sexes, at least two who uphold a socially permitted sexual relationship and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. Therefore, the constituents or members of the household dwell in collectively, gather and stock up its assets, work mutually and generate progeny. Amid the Santal, Ho and Munda community in the study area, the households can be located as a social, cultural, economic and religious unit. Every domestic body operates as a constituent of food manufacture, utilization, allocation and of assets possession. Undeniably, their financial system can be commonly categorised as ‘production-consumption’ economies and the family organizations are related as much to the affiliation of economic production. The households generally include an extensive array of kith and kin, counting grandparents, parents, children, brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles. Even though these people do not reside in one household or village, the feelings of mutual accountability and commitment is extensive and firmly felt. Their society follow patriarchal structure and follow exogamy where women are married from another clan, that is, a completely different group of families. They follow both the nuclear and joint family system.

Results shows that decision pertaining to minor economic matters i.e. daily family expenses and their personal needs were generally taken independently by women. But the major financial decisions relating to investment, savings and borrowings are taken mostly by mutual consent. The patriarchal social setting of the study area could perhaps be attributed to the male dominance in the economic related matters. Household work is observed as a very imperative and fundamental part of the economy for which women are not remunerated though time allotment is enormous. It includes diverse conducts ensuing in creation of goods and services which facilitate the family to function as a productive unit. Kalpagam (1999) comprehends that the kinds of household work women basically execute diverge not merely across societies and over time, but inside groups

as well in a society, at a point in time. Such deviations in the household work that women accomplish are, to a large degree, depends on the economic rank, socio-demographic qualities and ubiquitous cultural standards regarding the splitting up of labour in households. In reality, women's work is significantly underrated in economic stipulations. This is because of the limitation of the explanation of economic bustle in statistical data. Women's input in copious conducts affords an inclusive depiction of jobs done by them, which principally comes under the sphere of household duties. This fragment of deeds visibly specifies that housework is not a standardized sort pertinent for all women and that it is accomplished along with household tasks like cooking, cleaning and child care. Women do employed in a multiplicity of conducts, a number of which are evidently 'economically productive work', in a prolonged elucidation of that phrase, and others that are favourable to the household.

Amid the Santal, Ho and Munda people in the study area, domestic work plays a significant role in their livelihood scheme. To figure out the notion of 'housework' in their milieu, at first we tried to comprehend their habitual economic structure and livelihood outline. It was also similarly imperative to comprehend how they recognize housework corresponding to their social and cultural traditions. For them, the major kinds of housework executed in a household are preparing food, cleaning, fetching water, gathering firewood, looking after children, drying paddy, thrashing, husking of rice, repairing of house before festivals and rituals which include plastering of floors and walls as well as paintings of walls with natural soil colors. This work is measured as a significant economic bustle of the household.

It is always seen in almost every society that women generally perform household duties and those are counted as 'economically productive' work. Women who effort for earnings or men who labour in their personal or on family land are undoubtedly in the labour force, excluding those wives who do a number of works in the family land or family business. Bullock (1994:2) interprets that while we come across the sorts and statistical figures regarding "work", we have to solicit what is being reckoned as 'work'. For several years, in several societies, only "work outside the home" (productive work) has been calculated as factual work. Moreover since it is correlated to pay or income is as well, these

are considered as economic activity in official statistics "The crucial question arose when it has been appeared that a vast number of women, who are periodically engaged in subsistence agriculture, are quietly ignored in the instructions issued in most censuses and classified as economically inactive (Blacker 1977:49).

While carrying out field work it was noticed that, women in the study area are always expected to be 'docile' and 'obedient'. They simultaneously execute the responsibility of a wife, mother, child-bearer, food manufacturer and household supervisor. It is quite obligatory that they will respect and follow their husbands and elder family members. They have a huge array of everyday jobs, commencing from domestic responsibilities to several agricultural conducts containing bigger work burden in both. It is found quite tricky to assess their agricultural work since it is intimately associated with their social function inside the family. Their time is segregated amid household job like cleaning, cooking food, nurturing children, and tasks exterior to the home (gathering of firewood, fetching water, and agricultural and farming works).

Regarding this, few general annotations are unearthed from the FGDs and personal interview of Parbati Singh (26) mother having two children:

"Agriculture season for us is the most hectic season and we get no spare time to do other work. Males seldom do works like transplantation or weeding or carry harvest from field to home as they hardly have patience to do such work. We only have to cover a long distance more or less each day with our children to get the work done."

Manka Kisku, a young Santal girl of 14 years, studying in Class VIII expressed as:

"Several domestic jobs are unremitting. I bring water daily and do almost all the household works because my mother's health problem does not permit her to do those activities. I have to help her by cleaning dishes and washing most of the family clothes. I hardly get time to study during the morning hours. The only time I get is in the evening after the dinner."

The above statements bring to light the feelings of women regarding their routine schedule in their everyday lives. It reveals as to how they are hard pressed in various household activities.

Women in the study area shared that they are the first to get up and commence the day's job. For them, everyday life is rather a balancing act as they strive to assimilate a series of responsibilities and errands. Their daily chores range from preparation of family meals, cleaning and maintenance of households (sweep the floor and finally polish it which is locally called *Gurij*, prepared by cow dung and water), child care and looking after elderly people. In spite of their hectic housework, they go to agricultural field for the whole half of the day. This kind of daily work is done by women of all ages where they actively and voluntarily participate. The lending of care for young and aged has no specific time allocation. It was also found the girls both school going girls and non-school going girls actively participate in household chores and its maintenance. Even some young girls of age group 8-13 yrs or above was found to assist their mother in household chores and sometimes due to some reason took the responsibility of household maintenance and care in absence of their mother. Thus in this process some girls have no time for education and leisure activities.

Apart from these women also accomplish social and religious activities which include entertaining guests of home, visiting relatives /friends/neighbours, attending marriages and other religious ceremonies. Tribal people in the study area have various religious occasion and ceremonies which are very important in their lives and intrinsically related to the economy and psychological belief and well being. Tribal women engross themselves in various economically extended activities along with household chores which are vital for running of the household. It incorporates the following:

Collection of Fuel Wood

Availability of fuel (*sahan in Santali and san in Ho*) influences time and energy consumption of collection of the fuel. The traditional *Chulha* was observed to be used for preparation of food for the family members. Their dependence on forest is string and intrinsic. In the study area, women and girls go more or less regularly or at time in 2-3 days gaps for collection of fuel wood and accomplish this job from 7-10 a.m. in the morning.

Collection of Edible Fruits, Roots, and Leaves

Besides the staple food, the daily diet of the studied communities is supplemented by seasonally available fruits, vegetables, leaves,

seeds etc. They consciously collect different vegetables, leaves, fruits according to their knowledge and availability. For this, they venture into the forest for collection of edible materials. Other than this, they also collect different varieties of mushrooms from the forest and snails from the agricultural farm during rainy season. The snails are termed as *Gongha* (large snail) and *Rokoj* (small snails). Thus, collections of edible materials also directly contribute in their diet and nutrition and indirectly in the economy and household well being.

Fetching Portable Water

In the study area, several hand pumps and wells are noticed to be scattered in different parts of the village. The task of fetching water from different sources is completely done by women. Usually women bring water for different household activities twice or thrice in a day. Apart from cooking and drinking they also use it for washing utensils, feeding cattle and rarely for bathing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite of diverse legitimate provisions and guidelines for the tribal communities, it is still a harsh actuality that women in these indigenous communes are wadding behind in numerous facets along with facing countless confrontations. Considerable gap has been measured stuck between policy progressions and concrete empowerment of tribal women. Hence, even with active reservations, it is a high time to augment the responsiveness concerning right and responsibilities of this mass to obtain the identical prominence at the state and national levels. Being answerable inhabitant of this country tribal woman should get hold of education to comprehend their rights and duties as it is associated to their overall empowerment.

Subsequent to the other tribal communes of Odisha, women in the study area execute incredibly momentous function in the co-management of their natural, societal, profitable possessions and farming growth. Regarding their status, they exist in an imperative position in the socio-economic arenas and contain a liberty of self expression despite of dwelling in a patriarchal structure. In a nutshell, they can merely be appreciated on their individual stipulations. Though in family purview husband performs the role of the chief, wife also take a hefty part in organizing and overall execution of every day family dealings. Women in the

studied community, have substantial say in the family decisions above and beyond sharing numerous responsibilities. Their dormant headship excellence has been visible in the supposition of positions under Panchayatiraj institutions and they have become rationally verbal to articulate their individual ideas for the development of their community altogether. On the contrary, scores of realities also designate their stumpy position in the family and society at large. For instance, women in the study area do not contain property rights and always paid a lesser amount of wages than her male counterpart for the equivalent labour. Furthermore, a number of existing prohibitions create discriminations against them entailing impurity and low status. Women in the studied community are not considered eligible to hold the role of a priest because of the taboos correlated with menstruation as a result of which they are also not permitted participate in the rituals performed in sacred groves. As a consequence of which they endure mutually by tribal usual customs along with the state machines and persist to subsist with the diverse favouritisms.

Women are unvoiced workforce and excellent co-worker for the socio-economic growth of the country in general and the family in particular. If appropriate atmosphere and amenities can be guaranteed, they can make an additional imbursement to the socio-economic escalation of the family. As it has been discussed in the paper, financial needs are somewhat converting their conventional responsibilities of housewives into wage earners. Though women's input in diverse conducts as well as in entire family earnings was significant, its pattern is changing bit by bit. Woman in the studied communities, are observed being occupied with not only in household errands but also play a fundamental role in family earnings both unswervingly and obliquely by assembling of different forest products. The study also reveals that women are partaking in a variety of farm and non-farm profit generating conducts particularly in crop production and post-harvest activities, vegetables production, livestock and poultry rearing, and wage earning. So more and more provision of logistic supports such as health care facility, credit facility, input supply, agricultural extension services, need-based training, etc. can only perk up their overall financial situation and trim down their monetary, societal and political restraint. These facilities can also augment their input in more

and more income generating deeds and diverse household decision making proceedings. The prospective of women should be plugged for the socio-economic enhancement of the families and growth of the nation in a complete way. They should be prepared and be made alert that they contain identical right of participation like their counterparts.

In concluding remarks, it might be articulated that the tribal women are still distant from social and economic empowerment despite of their sound involvement in several economic activities. The socio-economic empowerment of tribal women could be kept as a long term development objective in India. Economic sovereignty and education of tribal women will go an elongated way in achieving autonomy for women. So expansion or empowerment responsiveness, education, competitiveness, eagerness, self-belief, self-motivation, state of mind, back-up from family and society is indispensable for the financial empowerment of tribal women. The accomplishment attained in this regard is accommodating for carrying tribal women into the conventional comprehensive expansion procedure in India. Plummeting poverty and joblessness of the tribes would overlay the means en route for their empowerment.

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