

**AUTONOMY AND DECISION MAKING ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN: A
CASE STUDY OF SANTOSHPUR VILLAGE IN SUNDERGARGH
DISTRICT OF ODISHA**

A Dissertation Report

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Submitted by

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CERTIFICATE

Date: 07.05. 2012

This to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Autonomy and Decision-Making Role of Tribal Women: A Case Study of Santoshpur Village in Sundergargh District of Odisha**” being submitted by Gargi Das for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies of NIT Rourkela, is a record of bona-fide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. The contents of this thesis, in full or part, have not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree.

Seemita Mohanty

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the study were to assess the level of autonomy and decision making power of tribal women. Traditionally women have always been subjugated. True development of a nation is not possible if one half of the population is ignored or marginalized. Therefore the Constitution of India has many rights and acts in favor of them. The present study examines the decision making role of tribal women and to find out the impact of their socio-economic status on their decision making roles.

The study was based on primary data collected from three tribal hamlets of Santoshpur village.

The major findings state that the tribal women enjoy autonomy at their household level, especially in social aspects and enjoy equal rights along with their husbands in economic matters but their community participation is passive and autonomy level is very low. The major reason behind this is low literacy rate and unemployment.

The development of tribal community can not be accelerated without women participation. Therefore the government should focus on developing the literacy rate among the tribal women which would facilitate their economic upliftment. This would surely result in their qualitative participation and decision making among all aspects of their living.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is an established fact that the development of a nation depends on maximum utilization of her man power. For any country, participation of women in the development process is of utmost necessity as they comprise of a half of the population percentage. Therefore, development of the nation in true sense cannot be achieved without proper development and empowerment of the women population. 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 (Bhatt and Ela, 1984). 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.” Realizing that this constant marginalization has become a bane for the Indian society that has hampered growth in every direction, both government and private organizations have taken measures to empower the women and develop their socio-economic status through various plans and policies.

The term status here includes not only the personal and proprietary rights but also duties, liabilities and disabilities (Bhadra, 2004). In case of the Indian woman, it means her personal rights, proprietary rights, and her duties, liabilities and disabilities vis-à-vis the society and her family members (Prakash, 2001).

From time immemorial women have been associated with domestic lives, where as politics and livelihood generation is often viewed as male dominated activities. It is always culture (norms, values, and beliefs of people) with gender inequalities and socialization which determines position of woman in societies (Arun,S. 1994).

The socio-economic status of Hindu women were very much low (Vasistha, 1976). Lack of education, early marriage, non existence of employment opportunities, absence of absolute property rights were considered as main reason of inequality of sex in the socio-economic field. The assumption of superiority of males has built up the ideas of male dominance and female

dependence. Most of the major decision making roles are thus in the domain of males in most cases.

1.1 Background Information

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. According to the world scenario, 60percent of the working hour in the world go to women's share, it make up 30 percent of the official labor force, thus 50 percent share of world economy is contributed by them. (Department for International Development)

The status of women can be measured in terms of degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by them. (Bala, 2004) 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.

After independence, the Constitution of India has provided a framework for equal opportunities to men and women by granting them equal political, economic, and social rights. Since then more than half a century have passed but have not produced results close to the desirable level. Women in India still now are largely confined to the domestic chores of life.

Unlike non-tribal societies, it is understood that the tribal societies have given special status to their women (Mitra, 2007) who is considered to be better than the practices in Hindu societies. In Bhutia community the tribal women play a vital role in domestic economy. They have a major share in contributing to the family income. They hardly allow women to participate in formal political decision making process, but they are often consulted by their male counter parts (Bhasin, 2007). In few tribal societies the land matriarchy is also practiced. But then also the land in reality is managed and control by men. Indigenous women's right to land is usually only a nominal right. Ownership normally rest with their fathers, brother or husbands. Men therefore tend to have greater control over agriculture production and product. However the Bhisnois give their women every right to choose their life partners and also to complain against him to Village

Council, if he is suspected to harass his wife. There is no such activity from which she is debarred. She is even allowed to attend funeral of her near and dear ones, something that 'refined' Hindu do not allow for their women.

The concern lies with the fact whether increase in decision making power of tribal women help them in their development process.

1.2 Research Problem

The previous studies show (Andal, 2008) that women movement internationally has gained lot of attention and various plans and policies are implemented by both government and nongovernmental institutions. Women are capable and have great potential but still then it is seen that the objectives to empower women has not been achieved. It also stated that various indicators were contributing to the status of the women, i.e. decision making role, control over resources, income and literacy being the prominent ones. But question arises how and to what extent these indicator influence their socio-economic status and why development programs are failure in increasing their status.

1.3 Research Objectives

Specifically the main objectives of the present study are:-

- To examine the decision making role of tribal women
- To explore the extent to which the decision making role of tribal women is affected by their socio - economic status.
- To make a comparative note on decision making role of Tribal and Non-Tribal women.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are:-

- How far the tribal community allows autonomy to their women?
- What is the role of social and economic indicator on decision making role of tribal women?

- Is there any difference between tribal and non-tribal women in the context of autonomy?

1.5 Definition of Key Terms:

- Decision making: It can be act or opinion of choice. It can be regarded as mental process (cognitive process) resulting in selection of course of action among alternative scenarios.
- Autonomy: Independence or freedom, as of the will or one's action. (dictionary definition)
- Women empowerment: A "bottom up" process of transforming gender power relation, through individual or group developing awareness of subordination and building their capacity to challenge it.
- Gender Disparities: The inequality between male and females.
- Gender role: It refers to the role of females. The social ideas, beliefs, and practices as per which a female position in society is decided.

(Oxford dictionary definition)

1.6. Significance of the Study

Women constitute about half of the world population and play a crucial role in socio-economic context of the society. Therefore development of the nation in true sense can hardly be achieved without proper development and empowerment of women's. Modernization and development process is affecting both men and women life differently. Gender Disparities is seen in each and every societies and it's the social and cultural norms which validates the status of women in a society. Culture is transferred from one generation to another, and so also the gender role. (Transferred with culture). Therefore it is most essential in present context to know and identify the various factors that determine the status of women in a society and role of these factors in empowerment of women as no society can develop ignoring its half of the population.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The precision of the study depends upon the accuracy and reliability of data and their sources and methodological approach followed. All the studies are subjected to errors and few limitations.

The finding of the present study is subjected to the following limitations:

- The study area was confined to a rural tribal village in Sundergarh District. Thus the results of the study are applicable only to similar kind of situation analysis.
- The study pertained to the economic year 2011-12. The result may not be valid for over a longer period of time due to fast changing socio-economic setting in this study area. Because of limitation of time and other resources involved in research, the present study was restricted to a limited number of household in Santoshpur village. The study is on micro basis, The result drawn from this study, therefore may have limited application i.e. the result of study on single village, cannot be assumed to provide information, capable of generalization of a region and have regional biasness but surely the broad similarities will provide some insight.
- Linkage between socio –economic factor and its changing scenario requires an in depth study. It is therefore important that such studies should be taken on macro level in order to make the estimate more reliable and to generalize the inference for wider application

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Many studies have concentrated on the socio economic status of women in tribal society. The present review limits itself to the studies related to the livelihood generation, community participation and decision making role of tribal women.

The review of literature for the study has been done referring to different journals and studies done by individuals to show relevance to the current study.

Arun Kumar (2003) stated that even if government is undertaking various development programmes, it fails to reach its goal. Lack of awareness, control of economic resources, family problems, traditional values are various factor hindering the women empowerment.

Pesses (2000) concluded that international women rights has led to increase women participation in community development but has not promoted women's role in community development decision making process.

Mangathai's (2001) study revealed that reservation policy of 73rd Amendment have created favorable environment for women. The husbands motivate and support their counter parts but still they play a vital role in influencing women. Most of their decision was influenced by their husbands.

Awias, Aslam and Asif (2009) stated that tribal women have major role in co-management of their natural, social and economic resources. But still they suffer a lot; they are backward due to a traditional outlook, illiteracy, superstition, and submissive role in decision making, social evils and many other cultural factors.

Sudan K Failendra (2007) concluded in his studies that women have great potential and provided with assistance with micro financing, giving full autonomy in their work, has resulted in increased income and improved livelihood.

Khan (2001) says that women's role in decision making process is an important factor and needs to be considered for woman empowerment. Mainstreaming of women through gender specific policies is a necessary precondition for meaningful development. There is a lacuna between gender specific policies and reform agenda. He pointed out that government policies like reservation of seats, can promote empowerment and women access to development projects numerically but not practically.

The main reason behind low participation and decision making process are illiteracy, patriarchy, lack of clarity in government policies for empowerment. The meaningful participation can be ensured through awareness; monitoring of woman status on regular basis; research activities on woman participation in social sphere, their voting right. Importance should be given to qualitative participation rather than quantitative representation.

Mitra (2007) has analyzed the status of women among schedule tribes in India with comparison to main stream Hindus, in term of social and cultural practices. The study shows that isolation from main stream population for many years have been actually helped, tribal community to provide relatively high status of tribal women and there is absolutely no gender discrimination in many tribal communities. It may have occurred due to assimilation of many tribal group with main stream Hindu culture and tradition.

Bhasin (2007) has carried out her study about tribal women in different geographic region i.e. Ladhak, North Eastern Region, Rajasthan and her findings show that the tribal women possess a lot of importance in tribal communities. Even the tribal communities of Rajasthan do not look upon the birth of girl child as a curse. Dowry system is not there. The girl possesses the right to choose her husband. Divorces are easy and well secured. Women play vital role in economic activities. They take joint decision along with the male counterparts.

The study also reveals that women power is not extended to societal or political sphere. Their economic power is not translated in to corresponding community authority. Women supremacy is restricted with household domain and due credit and importance is not given at official level. Women have secondary importance in public affair and community decision making.

Majumdar's (1984) study reviews women empowerment through Panchayati Raj. The study was based on the fact that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all level of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy.

He observed that the participation of women is low in term of number and quality. Most of the participants are over the age of 50 and belong to high class families. The political awareness among the tribal population is below the mark.

In a Yojana (1987) study it is revealed that women's contribution was generally found in two fields: at the household level and at the agricultural field. Their contribution is more than half to the economy but as their contribution is indirect, it has been often ignored by the society from time immemorial. They are not engaged on other sectors due to lack of skills and training required for other sectors. Yet the women play a vital role and cannot be ignored.

Gurnug (1998) suggests that the social and economic status of tribal women is low because of social hierarchy and economic deprivation. The difference in land holding, food security, allocation of resources and role in decision making affects and determines their socio economic status.

The study reveals that among tribal women decision making pattern indicate that the major financial decision are taken by men where as food sharing and other decision were taken solely by women or jointly with men.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematized body of knowledge. It is marketed by accurate classification of facts, discovery of new facts and logical conclusion. The reliability and validity of research findings depend upon methodological framework employed. Therefore the present chapter has been planned to elaborate methodological procedure adopted and various analytical techniques employed in achieving the set objectives of the present study on “Autonomy and Decision Making Role among Tribal Women: A Case-Study of Santoshpur Village in Sundergargh District”

3.1 Selection of Study Area

The present study was carried out in three tribal hamlets of Santoshpur village in Sundergargh district. All the three hamlets i.e Jaratoli, Pahartoli and Militoli have similar socio-economic backgrounds. Here tribal communities, mostly belong to the Oraon and Munda tribes.

3.2 Sample Size

The three hamlets have 225 households all together and the entire sample was taken into account. Therefore no specific sampling technique was employed.

3.3 Tools and Technique

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

1. *Data Collection*

The present study was based on primary data, collected from each household, relating to various parameters of socio-economic status and decision making role, through well designed and structured questionnaire and interviews.

The details of primary data pointers are given below:

- Demographic features (age, education, marital status)

- Assets holding and Ownership rights (land holding, productive and non productive asset)
- Income patterns
- Expenditure patterns
- Social Participation
- Women autonomy

2. *Analytical Framework*

To meet out the set objectives of the present investigation, tabular techniques were employed to analyze the data. The tabular technique was employed to workout the averages, ratio, percentages and indices for the data relating to various socio-economic features of the sample households, and women's involvement in various household and community level decisions.

The following indices relating to various variables were computed as under:

a) Decision Making Index

In order to get clear view of women's involvement in decision making, an index was constructed assigning a higher weightage in case of women's individual independent decision making (Meitei, 2004). The decision making role of tribal women has been studied under two categories: decision making role at house hold level, and decision making role at community level.

In the study to identify the decision making role, 10 areas of women's involvement in decision making is considered in two broad divisions: economically related decisions (household daily expenditures, savings and investments) and socially related decisions (children's education, treatment for the sick, visiting kin and relatives, voting rights etc.)

1. If respondent made the decision by herself then the scoring is done as follows:

- ❖ Decision by respondent - if always - score 1 is assigned
- ❖ Decision by respondent - if most often - score 0.75 is assigned
- ❖ Decision by respondent - if sometimes - score 0.50 is assigned

- ❖ Decision by respondent - if rarely - score 0.25 is assigned
- 2. If the decision is taken along with husband then score 0.5 is assigned.
- 3. If the decision is taken by others then score zero is assigned.

A composite index was constructed summing up all values.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Decision Making Role of Tribal Women

The power to take decisions is extremely important from the view point of empowerment of women because it is often seen that their voice is not properly listened. The decision making power of women should not be ignored. The real development cannot take place without active participation of women. So in the present study, the involvement of women in decision making in the economic and social spheres, both at household and community level was examined.

Economic Decision

Results shows that decision pertaining to minor economic matters i.e. daily family expenses and their personal needs were generally taken independently by women and these finding are similar to the finding of Sethi (1998) and Shyamalie and Saini (2011). 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. This finding is tuned to the findings of Lena and Das (1993) who concluded that husband and wife jointly decided major financial matters. However, these findings do not confirm with the results of Bala and Moonga (2004) who have stated in their result that women play passive role of decision making in economic affairs.

If we compare among three different hamlets, male are more dominant in Jaratoli as compare to Militoli and Phartoli. The major financial decisions are taken by male. This may be because; females of this hamlet do not have any permanent source of income and lack ownership right. Whereas in other two hamlet, as most of the females are engaged in selling of *Handia* (local brew), they have a source of income all round the year. Therefore it is one important factor that gives them a say over financial decisions.

Table 4.1: Percentage Distribution of Women by Decision Making Relating to Economic Aspects.

Decision Taken By	Jaratoli	Pahartoli	Militoli
Daily Expenditure			
Females	65	55	84
Males	11	26	7
Both	24	24	9
Major Finances (Investment)			
Females	22	33.3	17.6
Males	52	22.2	29.3
both	26	44.5	53.1
Savings			
females	18	35	73
males	52	37	6
Both	30	28	21
Borrowing			
Females	2	13	6
Males	76	28	22
Both	22	59	72

Source: primary data

Decision Pertaining to Social Aspects

The study reveals that females enjoy a lot of autonomy pertaining to social issues. They take decisive role regarding visiting relatives and kin, whereas decision regarding to children's education were taken care of by both the parents. The result is almost uniform in the entire study area i.e. in all three hamlets. The tribal societies traditionally give lot of autonomy to women in family related matters and the results confirm the hypothesis. These findings are similar to the finding of other studies (Soni and Jindal, 1983 and Bala and Moonga, 2004). The important point arising from the finding was that females in the study area were not ignored in the decision making related to social aspects. The females take independent decision relating to treatment of sick persons, visiting relatives and friends and daily cooking whereas joint decision is taken for children education.

Table 4.2: Percentage Distribution of Women by Decision Making Relating to Social Aspects

Decision Taken By	Jaratoli	Pahartoli	Militoli
Children Education			
females	4	33	16
males	29	30	24
both	67	47	60
Treatment for Sick			
females	54	42	79
males	19	26	11
both	27	32	10
Visiting Relatives			
Females	52	54	77
males	7	19	3
both	41	27	20
Daily Cooking			
females	75	64	79
males	11	17	13
both	14	19	7

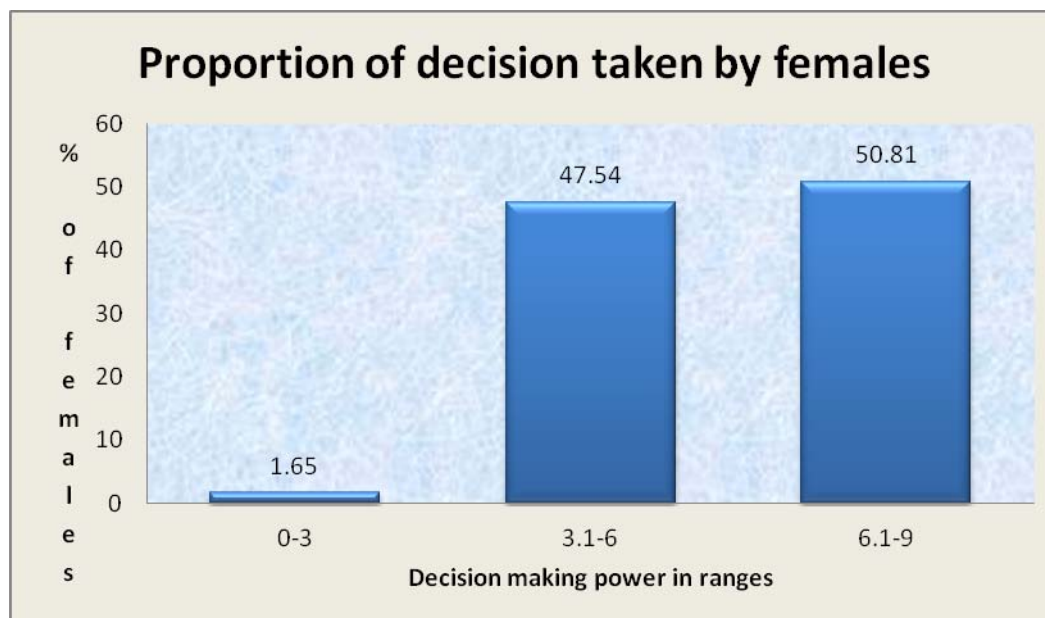
Source: primary data

The findings show that the aggregate decision making role at households' level (including both economic and social decision) is very high among tribal women. The following figure illustrates that about 50.81 Percent of tribal women have high, 47.54 percent fall in the range of medium and only 1.65 percent has low range of autonomy at general home affairs.

The range can be described as follows:

- The range 0-3 as lower range of autonomy.
- The range 3.1-6 as medium range of autonomy.
- The range 6.1-9 as higher range of autonomy.

Fig 4.1 Percentage Distribution of Decision Making Role of Females at Household Level



Source: primary data

Decision at Community Level

The autonomy at community level is very low. The village has many formal and informal institutions like Self-Help Groups (SHG), forest management committee, village Mahila Sangathan and village Panchayat etc.

The figure suggests that participation of women in these institutions is very low.

The tribal women do not utilize their voting rights also. Overall only 56.9% come out to vote out of which only 22% of sample population cast their vote on their own accord. But if we look into it hamlet-wise, the result is bit different. In both Pahartoli and Jaratoli the village head man takes the decision for the entire community. This may be due to ignorance, illiteracy and blind faith in old traditions. The case is different in Militoli, the females take the decision by themselves. The reason behind this is that the tribal communities in Militoli are migrants. They have settled in that area after being displaced by development projects. They do not have any ancestral connection to that place and are not blind followers of old values and traditions practiced by the village Headman and other senior villagers.

Table 4.3 Percentage Distribution of Women by Voting Decisions

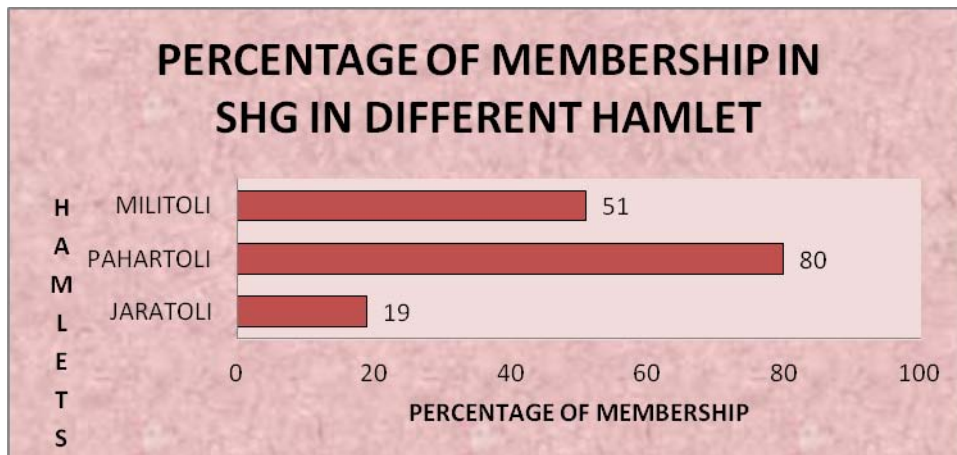
Type Of Decision	Jaratoli	Pahartoli	Militoli
Voting Decision			
females	15	18	43
males	15	10	8
both	12	7	39
other	73	65	10

Source: primary data

The community participation of women as such is very poor; they do not attend meetings, nor are they part of any association. Only 34 percent of them are members in SHGs. They came to know about SHG groups from their friends but most of them are non-functional. The women don't have any idea about working of SHG groups apart from providing loans. They play a passive role and only 6 percent of them give suggestions or take part in decision making. Rests of them are only passive attendees of various meetings where their contribution is non-existent.

The comparison between the three hamlets shows that 80 percent of female populations of Pahartoli are members of the SHG groups, in comparison to 51 percent from Militoli and 19 percent from Jaratoli. The population of Pahartoli is very less, females of the entire nine household have their own source of income. They are engaged as ANM workers, daily wage labourers and rest all sell *handia*, the traditional alcohol of local tribals.

Fig 4.2 Percentage of Membership in SHGs in Different Hamlet



Source: primary data

The findings show that decision making role of tribal women in general is very high. Their tradition and culture give them that liberty. In spite of being uneducated and unemployed, their participation in household decision making is very high.

But the tribal women have very low decision making role at the community level.

Table 4.4 Level Of Autonomy At Community Level In Different Hamlets (In Percent)

Hamlet	Level of Autonomy		
	Low	Medium	High
Jaratoli	75	15	10
Pahartoli	67	18	15
Militoli	72	15	13

Source: primary data

2. The Relationship between Socio-Economic Status and Autonomy among Women.

The status of women in any society and women empowerment is closely associated with each other. The status of women is determined by interplay of various socio-economic factors. Hence the following section attempts to compare the autonomy of females with respect to their socio-economic characteristics.

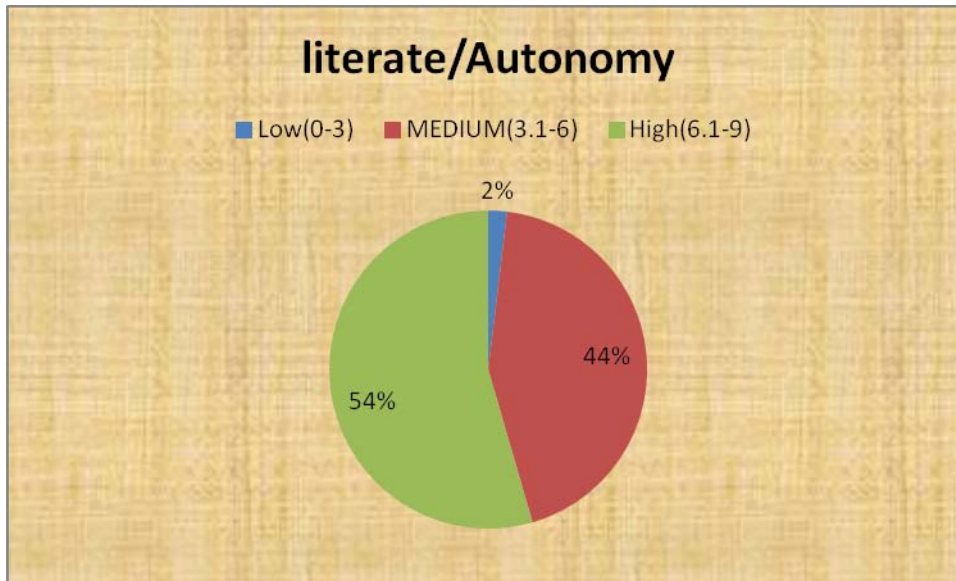
Education

Education helps in generating awareness, makes an individual well informed about the overall changes taking place all around, liberates its mind from ignorance, sharpens it for logical thinking, mobilizes and generates capacity building, and thus increases the ability to understand the problem and to take effective decision, and thus one of the key determinants affecting the autonomy of any individual.

The findings show that the literacy rate of study area is very poor. Only 52 percent of the tribal women are illiterate, 38 percent of them have completed higher secondary education, 8.9 percent are matriculate, and 5 percent are pursuing higher studies after matriculation. The education has direct impact upon autonomy. The literate individual has high autonomy power in comparison to

illiterates. As the chart given below, denotes, 54 percent of literates have high decision making power, in comparison to 47percent among illiterates.

Fig 4.3 Decision Power among Literates



Source: primary data

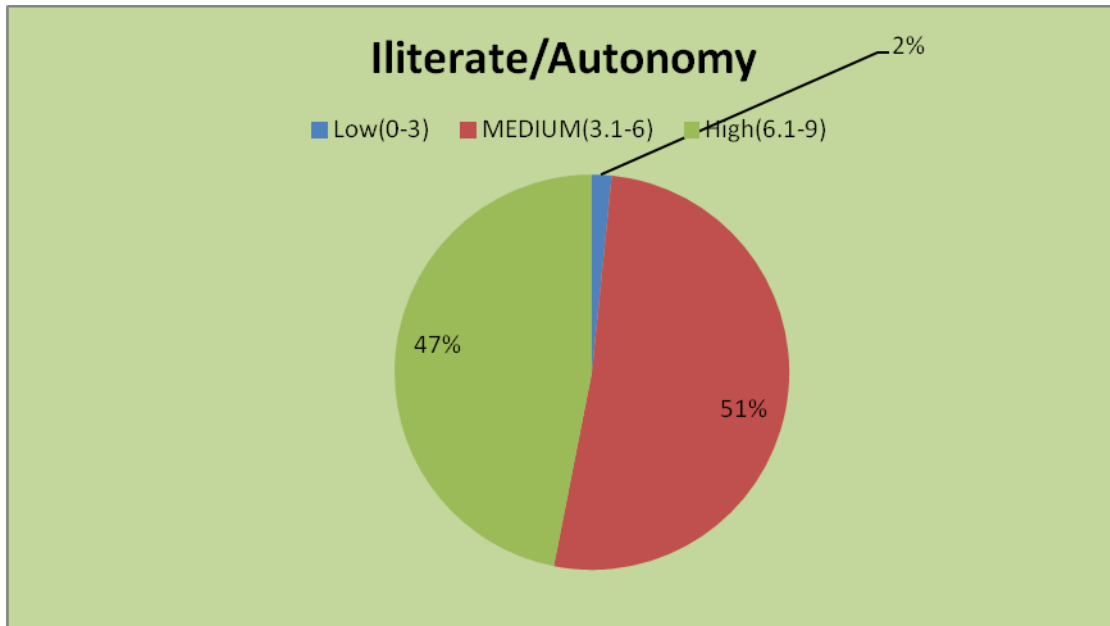
Among all the three hamlets, the literacy rate among the Militoli women is quite high.80 percent of them have completed their education till high school level. 5.0 percent of them are pursuing higher studies after high school and matriculation and 15 percent of the tribal women of that village are illiterate.

The tribal women of this hamlet are well informed and well aware; they play a prominent role in taking various decisions at their household and community level.

About 98 percent of women in Pahartoli and Jaratoli are illiterate. But they do have considerable role in taking minor decision at household level, the reason may pertains to their tradition and culture while major decision were taken by their male counter parts.

Due to lack of awareness and illiteracy,the autonomy level of tribal women, in case of community participation is also low.They are not aware about new things happening around them as a result they act as mere spectator and don't play a lead role in community matters.

Fig 4.4 Decision Making Power among Illiterates



Source: primary data

Although the females are illiterate, they have very positive attitude towards girls education.

They have the keen desire to make their daughter highly educated. Early marriage and poverty were the main cause of low literacy rate.

Employment

The critical analysis of nature of employment helps to understand the economic liberty of the females. Economic self independence empowers the women to take its own decision. The family and society give due respect to their opinion and looks upon them for all matters.

The study reveals that only 46.7% of the female population are employed, out of which 80 percent of them work as agricultural labour and thus have seasonal employment, 11 percent are self employed (selling handia, and forest product), and rest 9 percent are daily wage labor.

The employment distribution between three hamlets is as follows:-

Jaratoli: 90 percent of tribal women are agricultural labour, 6 percent are self employed i.e. they sell "handia" or forest product collected by them and 4 percent are housewife.

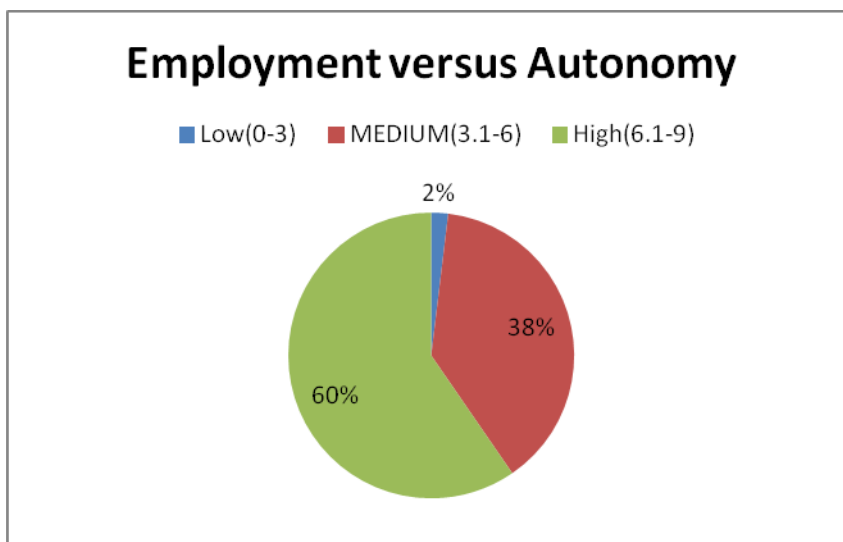


TRIBAL WOMEN ENGAGED IN MAKING TRADITIONAL ALCOHOL

Pahartoli: Most of them are self employed.

Militoli: As education level is high,most women are engaged as ANM workers,as sells man in nearby shops,laborer in factories ,self employed(tailoring,etc). The illiterate are also engaged in selling tadtional alcohol “handia” and also as agricultural labor.The employment ratio is also high in this hamlet.

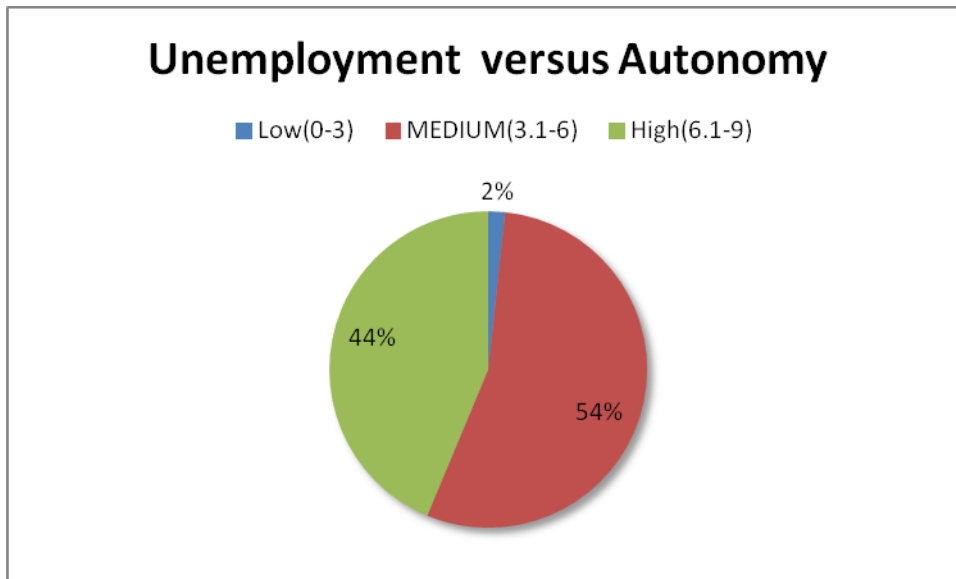
Fig 4.5. Autonomy among Employed.



Source: primary data

Their work has been characterised by long working hours and high physical labour. The employment has positive impact upon women autonomy. 60 percent of the working women have high decisive power in comparison to 44 percent of unemployed females. But if we consider the decision making power as a whole, both employed and unemployed females have 98 percent of autonomy.

Fig 4.6. Autonomy among Unemployed.



Source: primary data

The main reason behind the unemployment is lack of job opportunities near their residences. More over they have house hold responsibilities. They cannot move to distance places for job opportunities. Sixty six percent of working population confirmed that they get recognition from family because of being employed.

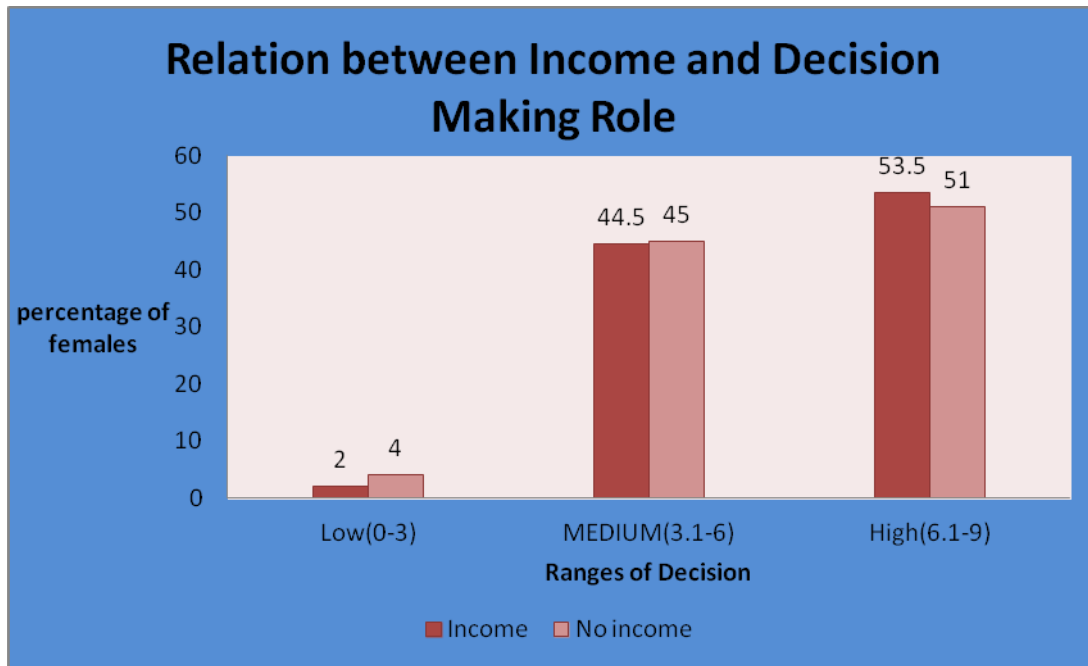
Income

Women's share in household income throw light on the fact that it is a crucial factor that affects the decision making role of women. Impact of income in women's autonomy could be visualized in that particular area very effectively. For the present study income is calculated not only on the basis of payment made for employment but also, the house rent, allowances, pension etc are also taken into account.

Although employment ratio is nearly 50 percent, about 66 % of the working females share half of the family income.

The chart below shows that about 54.4 percent of women from income groups have high autonomy in comparison to 46.9 percent from no income groups. Overall the income group has more autonomy than non-income group.

Fig 4.7. Relation between Income and Decision making role



Source: primary data

Table 4.5. Decision Making Power among Income and Non-Income Groups (In Percentage).

Decision Making Role	Income	Non -Income
Low (0-3)	1.9	1.6
Medium (3.1-6)	43.6	51.5
High (6.1-9)	54.5	46.9

Source: primary data

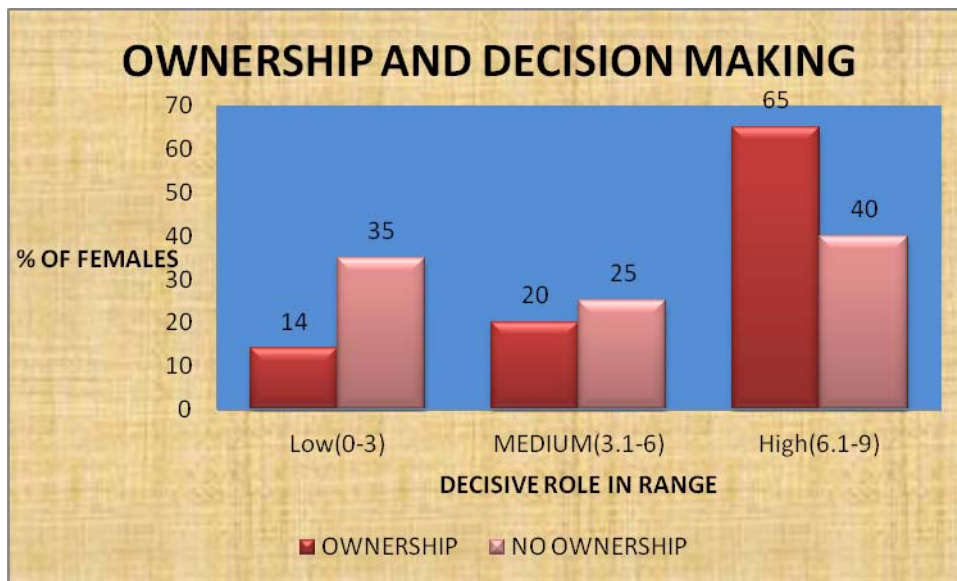
Ownership

The results show that about 93.4 percent of the females do not possess any ownership rights. The ownership right is restricted to land ownership and having bank accounts. Only 3.2 percent of them have ownership of land and about 5.7 percent have bank accounts out of which 57.7 percent have joint bank accounts and 42.3 percent have personal accounts. Moreover about 45 percent respondents operate it by own self or else it is operated by husbands or other members of the family.

Still then the comparison between ownership holders with non-ownership holders with respect to autonomy shows that those who have some sort of ownership rights have a better life than those who do not have any ownership holdings.

65 percent of owners have high decisive rights in comparison to others.

Fig 4.8. Relationship between Ownership and Decision Making



Source: primary data

Marital Status and Age

Marital status indicates whether a person is married, unmarried or a widow and this is one important factor that determines the level of autonomy among females in any community. A majority of widows who lost bread-winners of the family have taken the entire responsibility upon themselves. They have to take face insecurities, non-cooperation etc. In the study area the widows have more decision making powers in comparison to others. The unmarried females also have high decision making role in comparison to married females. Married females have to take decision pertaining to their family members and in-laws.

Table 4.6. Marital Status and Decision Making Power.

Marital Status	Decision Making Role (In Percent)		
	Low (0-3)	Medium (3.1-6)	High (6.1-9)
Unmarried	50	0	50
Married	0	55.1	44.9
Widow	4.8	19.1	76.1

Source: primary data

The age distribution shows that decision making power increases with increase in age. It is high among the age group, 48 - 57. The women are at the peak of their maturity, with confidence level at the highest at this age, which help them to take effective decisions.

Table4.7. Decision Making Power with Reference to Age Categories.

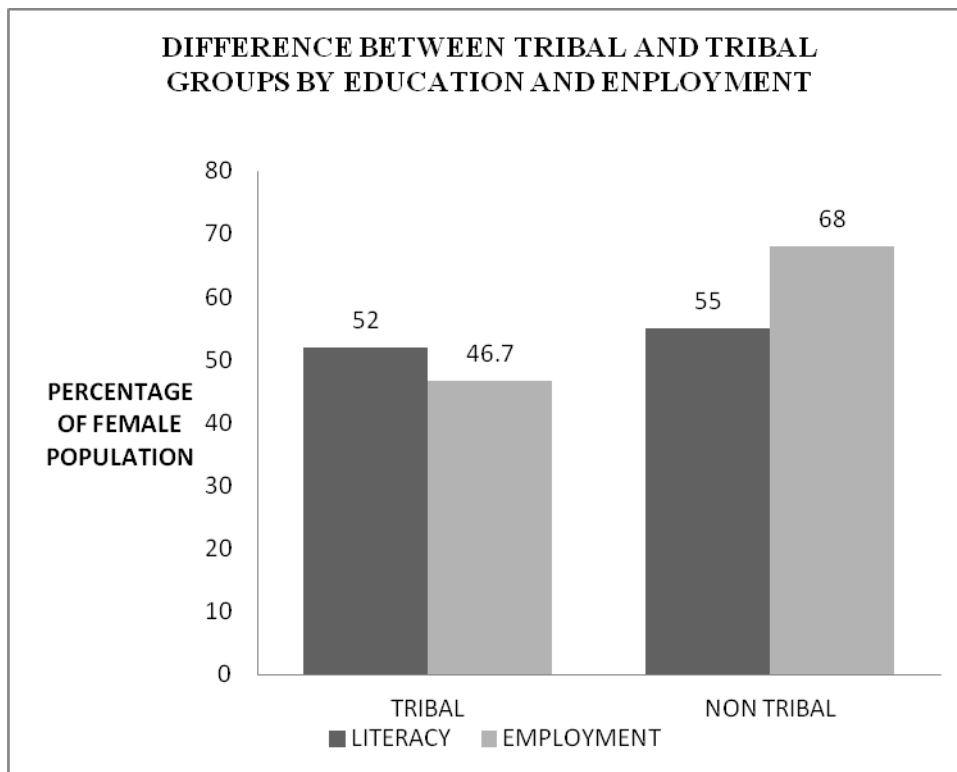
Age in Categories	Final Decision Making (In Percentage)		
	Low(0-3)	MEDIUM(3.1-6)	High(6.1-9)
18-27	7	43	50
28-37	0	48	52
38-47	26	21	53
48-57	1	41	58
58-ABOVE	1	49	50

Source: primary data

3. Decision Making Power among Non-Tribal's.

The study area also houses Muslims, General Caste people, and Other Backward Caste (OBCs) as non-tribal groups. The comparative study between tribal and non-tribal's shows that non-tribals, specifically the Muslim women enjoy more autonomy than others in that particular area. The reason behind this is that most of them are migrants from other regions and they are engaged as daily-wage earners in nearby factories and workshops and most of them have studied till high school level. Hence they are more empowered than their tribal counterparts because of their better social and economic conditions. Additionally, in many of these families the husbands don't stay with the family year round, as they work at distance places, sometimes even outside the country, for their livelihood.

Fig 4.9. Difference between Tribal and Tribal Groups by Education and Employment



The literacy rate of non-tribals is quite high in comparison to tribal population, as they are more educated and have better job opportunities. The general caste people who comprise about 8 % of the population have high literacy rate, but the society is male dominant. The women lack voices in major financial issues.

Table 4.8.DECISION MAKING ROLE (at house hold) IN PERCENT AMONG TRIBAL AND NON TRIBAL

VARIBALES	DECISION MAKING ROLE(at house hold) IN PERCENT		
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
TRIBALS	1.65	47.54	50.81
MUSLIMS	1.4	47	51.6

Source: Primary data

The table 4.8 shows that the decision making power among tribal and non tribal is almost equivalent with negligible variance. The non tribals have better position pertaining to their high educational and employment status whereas the tribal women are far behind in terms of community participation. The non tribals have 75.3 percent of community participation and decision making role, which is only 10 percent in case of the non tribals as given in table 4.9.

Table 4.9 .DECISION MAKING ROLE (at community level) IN PERCENT AMONG TRIBAL AND NON TRIBAL

VARIBALES	DECISION MAKING ROLE(at community level) IN PERCENT		
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
TRIBALS	65	25	10
MUSLIMS	4.3	20.4	75.3

Source: Primary data

The overall finding shows that the tribal women have low decision making power at community level where as they take major decision at their household level. Their decision are mostly affected by their education and employment status. The non tribals have more decision making power than tribal women.

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The researcher drew the following conclusions from the findings of the study and theoretical propositions of the related literature. The study area is economically backward; the basic amenities of life, like housing, safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity are not available to common people. Agriculture is main source of livelihood. As there are no irrigation facilities, people mainly depend upon rain water for cultivation. Lack of alternative source of livelihood is main reason of their poverty

The women of the study area have high decision making role in the house hold matter. They take independent decisions regarding their own expenditures, daily household expenditures, decisions pertaining to visiting kin and relatives, treatment of sick etc. They have equal decisive role with their male counterparts, regarding children's education. The finding shows that the tribal society now also continues to provide autonomy to females to the same extent that they have been doing since earlier days.

But the tribal women are passive participants in decision making at community level. Out of 122 tribal household, none of the females are members of any welfare organization at village level. The nearby forest is managed by the villagers, but females do not play any decision making role in forest management also. They only take part in planting the young saplings. 80 percent of the tribal females vote according to the family decision or upon the decision of the village headman. The village women attend the Panchayat meeting once in a while and are just passive participants.

There are five SHGs working in the field area, where only 40 women are members, each SHG having eight members. These SHGs are formed with the help of the Block Development Officer as the facilitator. Even if they are member of SHG groups, only 2 percent of the participants give suggestions to the committee and rest all participants restrict their activities to only attending the meetings.

The tribal women are mostly engaged in household activities, along with it, 52 percent of them go for agricultural activities as labourers and other menial jobs to earn some livelihood. They also sell homemade alcohol *Handia**. Their job is mainly characterized by job insecurities, heavy physical labor, emotional and psychological harassment, and long working hours. Most females leave their work or are unemployed due to lack of availability of job and even if it is available, long distance from residences acts as a major hindrance. Moreover they are confined with household work and elderly care. When the employment ratio is compared among the three hamlets, the work participation is found to be more in Militoli. The employment helps in female empowerment. In this village, working women exercise better decisive power in the society.

The literacy rate among tribal women is very low. The poverty may be grounded as the main cause of low literacy rate. The girls' dropout ratio is more after primary schooling. The main reason behind it is that families don't allow girls to travel far of distance for education. There is no high school in the village.

Even if the females are uneducated, they have positive attitude towards girls' education. They regret for being uneducated and are willing to provide all support for their daughter's education. Education will bring awareness and enhancement in the decision making power of women.

The empowerment among non-tribal women, especially among migrant Muslim community is seen to be more. They have high socio-economic status which gives them an edge over tribal women. The other caste females, from general and OBC caste have high literacy rate in comparison to tribal females but they stand out in term of autonomy at household level.

Recommendations

- The livelihood securities need to improve to eradicate poverty. Alternative sustainable source of livelihood should be generated. The village forest should be revived with active participation of women. Training should be provided for agro based livelihood sources, like mushroom cultivation, rearing of bees, which will

* "Handia" is traditional drink of tribal community prepared from rice, roots of medicinal plants. It act as an alcohol, more prevalent in North eastern tribal community of India.

help tribal women to be self-reliant and this will directly affect their autonomy and decisive power.

- Educational status of tribal women is very low with high dropout ratio. It is a matter of great concern and need to be addressed properly. It is the root cause of low autonomy among tribal women.
- To increase the female participation at the community level and to give more decision making power it is needed to understand the existing traditional pattern of tribal community in more details which would help in formulation of more effective developmental policies and it will also help to bring out the lacunae lying within present policies.
- Formulation of development policies for tribal women is not so important, as that of implementation. The main stress should be given to create awareness and to inbuilt self reliance among tribal females
- Women should be provided with opportunities for leadership training.
- More research activities on women participation, and decision making behavior should be encouraged.
- Priority must be given to timely monitoring the improvement in their status condition.
- Women empowerment does not signify increasing the numbers of women in decision making position. There should be measures to improve the quality of participation. The quality of participation signifies taking initiatives in new projects, identifying problems and providing suggestion towards effective solution.

Case-Study Report

1. Mrs. Julia Tigga (37) is a married woman without any children. She has been elected as the Sarpanch of the Village Panchayat in the last election. But she visits the Panchayat office only once in a month for monthly meeting or at the time of emergency. She is not aware of any developmental projects taken up by the Panchayat or about the funds released by the Government. Her husband has all the powers of a Sarpanch, while she is only the Sarpanch by name.

When we interviewed her regarding her roles and responsibilities as Sarpanch, she looked upon her husband for each and every answer. The study revealed that, she lacks the ability to mobilize people and to bring them together.

Her low educational qualifications, unemployment, lack of income source are main factors affecting her decision making role. She is a married woman staying with her in-laws and her autonomy is affected by them also.

She is an example which shows that the government policy of reservation is not worth until and unless it comes from the core of the society. Superficial changes can bring temporary development but not in the long run.

2. Sabina Khartoum (28) is a non-tribal woman from the local Muslim community. She is educated, employed, and plays a active role in community affairs. She is mother of two girl's child. Both husband and wife are employed in private sector. From the field observation it was observed that she is well aware about, different developmental work going on in the study area. She is president of village school committee and secretary of a SHG group named "Chandni". She not only delivers her role effectively in both the committee but also plays an active role to solve dispute among the villagers.

She exercises her voting rights. She is a migrant from West Bengal, with low economic status but being literate helped her lot to stand aloof from other women in the village. She not only takes active part in community affairs, but also takes major decision of her family along with her husband. One cannot ignore her husband role for her empowerment. Her husband is educated and his thoughts are free from cultural biasness. Both husband and wife advocate girl education and women empowerment. He agreed that to run his family effectively, it is essential for his wife to share equal rights and opportunities in decision making. He believes that together they can fight back poverty and oddities of their life and lead towards a happy life.

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APPENDIX I

“SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND DECISION MAKING ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN”

QUESTIONNAIRE

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

VILLAGE.....
HAMLET
HOUSEHOLD NUMBER.....
HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD
NAME OF THE RESPONDENT.....
CASTE _____ _____

NO	Question and filters	Coding Categories	Response
1.1	Age	18-35years.....1 35-49 years.....2 50 and above.....3	
1.2	Marital Status	Unmarried.....1 Married.....2 Widow.....3 Divorcee.....4 Separated.....5	
1.3	Do you have children	Yes.....1 No.....2	
1.4	How many children do you have		

SECTION I; SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

A. EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

1.5	Have you ever attended school?	Yes.....1 No.....2 →1.9	
1.6	How many year of schooling you have completed?	Illiterate.....1 Lower primary(1-4).....2 Upper primary(5-7).....3 High school(8-9).....4 Matriculation.....5 Inter.....6 Graduate.....7 Graduate and above.....8	
1.7	Do you think being educated or literate was helpful for you?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
1.8	Do you get special recognition in family for being educated?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
1.9	Will you promote girls education at higher level in your family?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
1.10	Do you think that, if you were literate your position at your family would have been better?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

B. EMPLOYMENT:

NO	Questions and filters	Coding Categories	Response
2.1	Are you currently employed?	Yes.....1 No.....2 → 2.8	
2.2	What sort of employment do you have?	Self employed.....1 Employed in govt sector.....2 Employed in pvt sector.....3 Agricultural labor.....4 Industrial labor.....5 Migrant labor.....6 Daily wage labor.....7 Animal rearing.....8	

2.3	Continuity of employment	Throughout the year.....1 Seasonally/part of year.....2 Once in a while.....3	
2.4	What is your work duration in a day?	Full time-8 hrs.....1 Part time-4 hrs or more.....2 Hourly-less than 2 hrs.....3	
2.5	Is your job characterized by:-		
	i) Heavy physical labor	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	ii) Job insecurity	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	iii) Over time, long working hours	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	iv) Emotional, psychological harassment.	Yes.....1 No.....2	
2.6	Who share's child care when you are at work?	Child usually taken to work.....1 Husbands.....2 Older boys.....3 Older girls.....4 Relatives.....5 Neighbors.....6 Child is in school.....7	
2.7	Do you get special recognition in family for being employed?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
2.8	If you are presently not working, did you ever work before?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
2.9	Since when, are you no longer working?	Past 3 months.....1 Past 6 months.....2 Past 1 year.....3 More than one year.....4	
2.10	Was your job characterized by:-		
	v) Heavy physical labor	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	vi) Job insecurity	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	vii) Over time, long working hours	Yes.....1 No.....2	
	viii) Emotional, psychological harassment.	Yes.....1 No.....2	
2.11	Why did you leave your work?	No availability of job.....1 For household work.....2 For elderly care.....3 Job site was far from residence.....4 Spouse don't want you to work.....5 Old age.....6	

2.12	Do you think, your employment would have affected your position in your house?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
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C.INCOME

NO	Question and filters	Coding Categories	Skip
3.1	What is the monthly household income of your family?	Rs 10,000 only.....1 More than,5000.....2 Rs 4,500 only.....3 Rs 3,000 only.....4 Less than 3,000.....5	
3.2	What is your source of income?	Earning from employment or self employment.....1 State retirement/Old age pension.....2 Job seeker allowance.....4 House rent.....5 No source of income.....6	→4.1
3.3	What is your type of earning? It is in.....	Cash only.....1 Cash and kind.....2 Kind only.....3 Not paid.....4	
3.4	Does anyone else in the household have an income from any source?	Yes.....1 No2	
3.5	What is your share of earning to the entire household income?	Almost nil.....1 Less than half.....2 More than half.....3 All.....4	
3.6	As you have a contribution to household income, does it affect your position in your family?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

D.OWNERSHIP

NO	Question and filters	Coding Categories	Skip
4.1	Do you owe any assets, i.e. land, house?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
4.2	Do you have any bank accounts?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

4.3	If it's 'yes', It is joint account or personal?	Joint.....1 Personal.....2	
4.5	Who operates your account?	Respondent.....1 Husband.....2	
4.6	If 'yes', As you have ownership right, do you get more respect and autonomy in your family for that?	Yes.....1 No.....2	

SECTION-B (I) HOUSEHOLD DECISIONS

Who takes major household decisions in the following cases:-					
No	Question and filters	Coding and category		Respond	
		Column 1	Column 2	C-1	C-2
5.1	What item to cook?	Respondent only.....1→ husband only2 respondent and husband together..... ...3 other family members....4	Always.....1 most often.....2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.2	Obtaining health care for sick person including you.	Respondent only.....1 → husband only2 respondent and husband together..... ...3 other family members....4	Always.....1 most often.....2 sometimes...3 rarely.....4		
5.3	Regarding children's education.	Respondent only.....1 husband only2 respondent and husband together.....3 other familymembers....4	Always.....1 mostoften...2 sometimes...3 rarely.....4		
5.4	Purchasing jewellery or major household items i.e. land, vehicles etc	respondent only.....1 husband only2 Both.. ...3 other familymembers.....4	Always.....1 Most often...2 Sometimes...3 rarely4		

5.5	Daily expenditure of the household	respondent only.....1 husband only2 respondent and husband together.....3 other family members....4	Always.....1 Most often...2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.6	Monthly saving for the household	Respondent only.....1 husband only2 respondent and husband together.....3 other family members....4	Always.....1 most often.....2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.7	Taking loan or keeping mortgage	respondent only.....1 husband only2 respondent and husband together.....3 other family members....4	Always.....1 Most often...2 sometimes...3 Rarely4		
5.8	Visiting parents/relatives,/friends/siblings	respondent only.....1 husband only2 Both together.....3 other family members....4	Always.....1 most often...2 sometimes...3 rarely.....4		
5.9	Who decides about how to spend your income?	Respondent only.....1 husband only2 Mutual consent.....3 other family members....4	Always.....1 most often.....2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.10	Does your husband get angry when you get late in preparing food	Yes.....1 →6.15 No.....2	Always.....1 most often...2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.11	How does he behave?	Scold you.....1 Beat you.....2 Abuse you.....3 Throw the served food.....4	Always.....1 most often.....2 sometimes...3 rarely4		
5.12	Does your husband drink?	Yes.....1 No.....2			
5.13	Does he behave badly when he is drunk?	Yes.....1 No.....2			

SECTION B (2) COMMUNITY LEVEL DECISION MAKING BEHAVIOUR.

6.1	Are you aware of various organization's like village panchayat, mahila samiti, mahila swayam sahayak gosti(SHG), VSS, JFM, pani panchayat etc.	Yes.....1 No.....2	
6.2	Apart from these any other organization is working in your village-----		
6.3	Are you member of any of those organizations?	Yes.....1 No..... 2 →	6.17
6.4	If yes which one? -----		
6.5	How did you come to know about it?	i)informed by husband.....1 ii)informed by friends.....2 iii)through TV/radio/mass media..... ...3 iv)through campaign in village..... .4 v) Other sources.....5	
6.6	Why were you interested to become its member?	I will get benefit from it.....1 I can help myself and others also.....2 because my husbands and other family asked me to join.....3 Because my friends are members of these organization.....4	
6.7	How often do you participate in its activity?	Always.....1 Most often.....2 Often.....3 Rarely/hardly.....4	
6.8	Do you hold any position in that committee?	Yes.....1 No2 →6.12	
6.9	All decisions regarding your responsibility are taken by you or do you seek other's help?	By myself.....1 Others help.....2	

6.10	If by other's help, then how often?	Always.....1 Most often.....2 Often.....3 Rarely/hardly.....4	
6.11	Do you give any suggestion to your committee	Yes.....1 No2	
6.12	Is your suggestion generally accepted?	Yes.....1 No2 →6.15	
6.13	If yes, then how often?	Always.....1 Most often.....2 Often.....3 Rarely/hardly.....4	
6.14	If no, then why do you think it is not accepted?		
6.15	Did you ever have arguments or objection on committee's decision?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
6.16	If 'yes', then have you ever tried to make your own committee or join the new one or influenced other who agree to your decision to join new one.	Yes.....1 No.....2	
6.17	Even if you are not a member, do you attend its meeting or take part in its activity?	Yes.....1 No2	
6.18	If you are not a member now, were you before?	Yes.....1 No.....2	
6.19	Why you are not a member of any such organization?	I left the group.....1 I was removed or dropped out...2 Not interested.....3 Interested but don't get time...4 Family members don't allow.....5	
6.20	Do you vote in election?	Yes.....1 No2	
6.21	If yes, who decides whom to vote?	Respondant only.....1 Husband only.....2 With mutual consent.....3 Others.....4	