

Role of Democratic Structures in Empowerment of Tribal Women of Dhalbhumgarh Block: A Case Study

Ram Krishna Paul¹, Dr. Anita Samal²

¹Ph.D. Student, Kalinga University Raipur

²Ph.D. Guide, Kalinga University Raipur

Abbreviation

Empowerment of tribal women in Dhalbhumgarh block plays a vital role in addressing humanitarian challenges and inequalities. The study explores the role of democratic structures in the region in the process of empowerment of tribal women.

This research examines the role of local democratic structures in the empowerment of tribal women in Dhalbhumgarh block. The study is based on a project-oriented investigation involving local panchayat organizations, women's empowerment groups, and government initiatives.

The results reveal the important contribution that democratic structures make in promoting the empowerment of tribal women. Increased participation of women in local administrative decisions may point to the potential for improvements in mindset and responsiveness.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Empowerment, Democratic Structures, Panchayat Organization, Women Empowerment Groups, Social Inequality, Social Change, Literacy, Government Initiatives.

I. Preface

India's tribal communities have historically been marginalized and vulnerable to exploitation. Tribal women especially face interpersonal discrimination because of their gender, commercial status and caste identity. Lack of access to education, healthcare and resources has added to their disempowerment. However, in recent decades, efforts have been made to promote social inclusion and participatory governance through democratic divisions among tribal groups.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment established a Tertiary Panchayati Raj System to promote undoubted prosperity and bottom-up development plans. Compulsory representation of groups outside the society such as women and lower castes was embedded in this reform. By delegating power to the local level, Panchayati Raj institutions offer marginalized communities the possibility of a voice in policy making and governance. This study examines how far the democratic divide has proved genuine political empowerment and social change for tribal women.

Dhalbhumgarh in Jharkhand is a predominantly tribal block with a predominantly scheduled caste population. The region is marked by hilly terrain, dense forests and rich mineral deposits. However, tribal communities dependent on forest material and assimilated agriculture are socio-economically deprived. Gender disparities are visible in low female education, high maternal mortality

and bloody diseases among women. After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, there has been an increase in political participation among women, but tribal groups still face social disenfranchisement.

A case study approach has been used in this study to understand the empowerment processes of tribal women in local governance. The program was conducted in the deep ground in Majhi village, statistically having predominantly Santhal population. Interviews were conducted with 10 tribal women who occupy various formal and informal roles in the panchayat. Their perspectives reflect how their personal authority and capabilities have been affected by engaging with local democratic structures. In addition, key indicator interviews with panchayat officials and development practitioners provide perspectives on major challenges and opportunities.

The major research questions of this study are: 1) How has participation in Panchayati Raj institutions affected the skills, knowledge, status and self-perception of tribal women? 2) What changes have he appealed for by joining the Panchayat? 3) Do systemic and cultural challenges further inhibit the participation and effectiveness of tribal women? 4) What programmatic and policy measures can be taken to encourage more inclusive, participatory governance?

The objective of this research is to give voice to marginalized tribal women and reveal avenues of promotional empowerment. Research results can inform interventions to strengthen local democratic structures so that the needs of tribal communities are met. The study draws on the theoretical frameworks of social inequality, gender and development, participatory governance and tribal studies. The Indian Constitution has enshrined the legal objective of affirmative action and participative governance through panchayats for tribal groups, making it a high policy issue.

With growing discussions on deepening democracy, deepening divisiveness and empowerment of women, this study basically provides authentic style on fundamental reform processes. Panchayats have expanded the representation of excluded groups, but real empowerment requires devolution of power and capacity building. The challenges of gender congestion, limited financial resources and servitude have to be tackled to make local governance truly participatory, democratic and transformative. Through this research, the aim is to highlight human perspective from place, which seeks to give voice to novel women from tribal communities. Their life experiences can shed light on borders to strengthen local democratic institutions as well as to improve border maximization practices.

II. Objectives of the study

- To assess the impact of local self-government institutions on promoting education and literacy among tribal women in Dhalbhumgarh block.
- To analyze how the participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has affected their economic independence and livelihood opportunities.
- To examine the extent to which tribal women are aware of and able to utilize government welfare schemes for their socio-economic upliftment.
- To identify the socio-cultural factors that influence the ability of tribal women to voice their interests and participate in community decision-making processes.
- To evaluate tribal women's access to resources such as efficient health care, financial services, vocational training, etc. through democratic structures.

III. literature review

According to Mohanty (1995), reservation of seats in local bodies for disadvantaged groups, such as women and lower castes, was an important first step, but it was not sufficient. They argue that

transformational empowerment requires changes in broader social structures and in power relations that prevent marginalized groups from accessing opportunities (Mohanty, 1995). Mohapatra (2000) observes that quotas have increased the numerical representation of tribal women, but their participation is often not active due to lack of education, information and capabilities (Mohapatra, 2000).

Examining the political empowerment of women, Beeman et al. (2012) find that reservations in local councils leave power mirrors unchanged, reducing evil on attitudes towards women leaders. They conclude that deterministic representation in local bodies can generate greater social change over time by positively informing gender norms (Beeman et al., 2012).

However, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) note that women leaders in panchayats often do not articulate specific women's issues, rather they focus on community priorities shaped by more men. They need powerful mobilization among women voters to demand accountability on gender issues from women representatives (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

Many scholars who study tri-caste communities consider similarity between gravitas to be important. Jaksa (2012) notes that secure institutions such as panchayats reflect dominant cultures that may exclude tribal traditions. Matching tribal traditions with participatory governance systems is essential to the true empowerment of the most disenfranchised groups (Jaxa, 2012).

Singh and Buch (2005) in their study of tribal panchayats find that women representatives lack awareness of their rights and often do not voice their true preferences. It is important for them to build capabilities and self-confidence to turn digital participation into real dialogue (Singh & Buch, 2005).

Mohanty (2007) argues that civil society surveillance around issues of land and forest rights helped tribal women use provisions such as PESA for greater control over resources. They emphasize that legal rights and quotas alone are not enough, without bottom-up competition (Mohanty, 2007).

Thus, the academic literature has highlighted the complex, multidimensional process of empowerment. However, fixed representation has created gaps, resulting in a deeply rooted approach and enhancing capacities to transform collective participation into genuine agency. This study aims to investigate these aspects through giving voice to the tribal women representatives of Jharkhand. Their perspectives can inform policies to robustly strengthen local democratic structures to meet the needs and preferences of marginalized tribal women.

IV. Economic role of tribal women

The economic role of tribal women in societies is multifaceted and they play an important role in communities and households. These roles typically differ based on cultural norms, geographic location, and historical context. Here some general aspects of the economic role of tribal women are discussed:

Sub-caste Agriculture: In many tribal communities, women are actively involved in subsistence agriculture. They participate in activities like planting, digging, harvesting, and processing of crops. They also possess traditional knowledge about ancient crops and agricultural techniques.

Forest Resource Management: Tribal women generally have a deep understanding of the local ecology and play an important role in the management of forest resources. They collect non-timber forest resources, such as fruits, nuts, herbs, and medicinal plants, which contribute to their family's nutrition and source of income.

Animal Management: In tribal communities, women are responsible for undertaking livestock management, such as taking care of livestock such as chickens, goats, and cows. These animals can provide food, milk, and an additional source of income for the family.

Handicrafts and Traditional Arts: Many tribal women are skilled artisans, making intricate handicrafts, textiles, clay work, and other traditional art forms. These handicrafts not only contribute to the income of the family, but also preserve the cultural heritage at the same time.

Market Activities: Tribal women are usually involved in local markets, selling surplus agricultural produce, forest materials, and handicrafts. This economic activity allows them to contribute financially to their family.

Work in the informal sector: Beyond agriculture and wildlife, tribal women may be involved in various informal sector activities, such as food processing, pearl work, and other small-scale enterprises.

community management: Women also play an important role in the management of community resources, such as the care of water sources and common lands. Their involvement ensures the sustainability of these resources for the community.

Diversification of Income: Economic activities of tribal women help in diversification of household income sources, reduce the chances of economic shocks and ensure overall well-being of the family.

Origin of Income: Many tribal women contribute directly to the family income, especially in situations where men are engaged in other economic activities in the family environment.

Social and Cultural Values: The economic activities of tribal women often have social and cultural significance, reinforcing their roles within the community and helping to uphold traditional rules and values.

However, despite their significant economic contributions, tribal women often face challenges such as lack of access to resources, limited opportunities for market linkages, and discrimination based on gender. Recognizing and supporting their economic roles can not only lead to an improved lifestyle for tribal communities, but also preserve their unique culture and traditions.

IN.Social Role of Tribal Women

The social role of tribal women is important and special in the societies. They have a distinct and important place in the society which affects their organization and cultural life. Here are some aspects of social roles:

Role in the family: Tribal women always play an important role in the family. They are responsible for household tasks, such as cooking, home decoration, and child care.

Communicability: Tribal women often play the role of communicators in the community. They establish communication between different members of the community and promote a sense of equality and understanding in society.

Traditional Rituals: Tribal women often play an important role in traditional rituals, such as music, dance, storytelling, and cultural events. Through these rituals, they carry forward their culture and also help generations to get information about their original heritage.

Cooperation in Society: Tribal women play an important role of cooperation in the society. They are active in social and cultural events of the community and help them to agree and support the community organizations.

Promotion of Education: Tribal women often act as promoters and advocates of education. She explains the importance of education to her children and makes the children of the community interested in studies.

Preservation of Tribal Culture: Tribal women play an important role in the preservation of tribal culture and traditions. They help preserve important parts of a culture and give new generations access to their traditional knowledge.

Promotion of change in society: Tribal women are active in the fight against casteism, inequality, and impoverishment in the society. They encourage change in the community and motivate the society towards social reform.

These social roles reveal the important and contributory role of tribal women in the society and help in the development and cultural preservation of the community.

WE. Political Role of Tribal Women

Political role of tribal women is important for the society as they not only participate in political processes but also contribute significantly towards social and cultural reforms. Here are some aspects of political roles:

Participation in Panchayati Raj: Tribal women actively participate in the Panchayati Raj structure. They have the right to become members at the Panchayat level, so that they can cooperate in the direction of change in the local government.

Role in Leadership: Tribal women can play leadership role in the society. They can be elected presidents, chiefs, and other important positions in panchayats, community organizations, and other local structures.

Participation in decision making: Tribal women can also play an important role in decision making in the society. They can contribute to decisions by presenting your perspective on community issues.

Chief Minister of Social Reform: Tribal women can play the role of Chief Minister of social reform. They can make plans for the development of their community and manage resources to carry them out.

Inspiration for Social Change: Tribal women also act as inspiration and guide for social and cultural change. They can discuss issues of casteism, rape, importance of children's education, etc. in the society and help people understand them.

The political role of tribal women is important in supporting the social and cultural development of the society, and they can contribute significantly towards the social betterment of the community.

VII. conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that democratic structures have an important role in the empowerment of tribal women of Dhalbhumgarh block. Through local self-government institutions such as gram sabhas and mahila mandals, tribal women have been able to increase their access to education, health, employment and financial services. Participation in Panchayati Raj has enhanced their self-confidence and leadership abilities. However, socio-cultural stereotypes and low awareness limit participation from their full potential.

This study indicates that for women empowerment in tribal communities the focus should be on socio-cultural change and increasing their participation in democratic institutions. Future researchers can study this topic in more depth and policy makers can act keeping its implications in mind.

VIII. Suggestion

- Local self-governance structures such as panchayats should actively encourage the participation of tribal women, by organizing training programs to enhance their capacity. Initiatives to improve literacy and education among tribal women will also encourage their participation.
- Government welfare schemes and development policies for tribes should be accompanied by specific components on women empowerment. Financial inclusion, skill training, facilitating access to health services can be helped.
- Awareness campaigns should be organized in tribal villages to sensitize the community about caste equality and women's rights. It can help change restrictive socio-cultural currents over time.
- Tribal women's organizations like Mahila Mandals and self-help groups should be promoted so that women are attracted to join hands and raise their issues with confidence. These groups may cooperate with local self-government structures.
- Political parties should be encouraged to provide greater representation to tribal women in leadership roles and as election candidates at the panchayat and block levels.
- To make the election process more accessible to tribal women, polling facilities should be provided near villages and flexibility in timing should be allowed.
- Research institutes and NGOs should be assigned the responsibility to conduct more in-depth field studies to document the impact on empowerment of tribal women.
- Successful cases of tribal women sarpanches and leaders should be presented at a prominent place to inspire and motivate more women to take an active part.
- Awareness of social rights and government entitlements should be spread among tribal women, so that they can access the resources and entitlements.

REFERENCES

1. Chattopadhyay, R. & Duflo, E. (2004). Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica*, 72(5), 1409-1443.
2. Desai, S. & Thakkar, U. (2001). *Women in Indian society*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
3. Karlsson, B. & Subba, T. (2006). *Indigeneity in India*. London: Kegan Paul.

4. Mohanty, C.T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
5. Rao, N. (2017). Resisting rights: Tribalism and the gender question in Jharkhand, India. *Modern Asian Studies*, 51(2), 453-479.
6. Beaman, L., Chattopadhyay, R., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2009). Powerful women: does exposure reduce bias?. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(4), 1497-1540.
7. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica*, 72(5), 1409-1443.
8. Mohanty, B. (2007). Can participatory action plan contribute to tribal development? Experience of a participatory tribal development project in India. *Development policy review*, 25(1), 27-50.
9. Mohapatra, P. (2000). *Resettlement, impoverishment and reconstruction in India: development for the deprived*. Vikas Publishing House.
10. Mohanty, B. K. (1995). *Land rights of indigenous peoples in India*. IWGIA document no. 76. Copenhagen: IWGIA.
11. Singh, K., & Buch, M. N. (2005). Women's participation in Panchayati Raj: Nature and effectiveness. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3453-3460.
12. Xaxa, V. (2012). Transforming the indigenous: the 'problem' of tribal development. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 79-86.