

## **Empowerment of Tribal Women Through Education**

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**Background:** The tribal women of Jharkhand have been enjoying honourable position in their respective communities. They play important role in socio-economic, cultural, religious and political life. The status of tribal women can be said to be very high, in the sense of gender equality among the sexes in most of the tribal communities in Jharkhand. The tribal women are work more harder and the entire family, economy and management depends on them. This paper aims to analyse the empowerment of tribal women through education. Education is the key element in the process of social, economic and political empowerment of the tribal women. It helps to increase women's access to economic resources and open opportunities in different areas such as skill development, knowledge, financial services and market information.

**Material and Method** The present study qualitative and quantitative in nature and based on both primary and secondary data. For this purpose, the secondary data were collected from published and unpublished document of government departments, research reports, research papers, journals, books and newspapers and primary data were collected through interview and observation method. The present research study is based on stratified and multistage sampling. A sample of 240 respondents between 15 to 55 years of age group were selected for the study. The interview schedule was designed to get detail information from the respondents. The data collected from the field carried on in the sample village of three blocks of Dumka district of Jharkhand. In order to gain confidence on the sample size and assess the difficulties in the field work of the main survey, a pilot survey was conducted. For this purpose, an interview schedule was designed and interview of tribal women were taken.

**Result:** Tribal women in their society are not struggling for their socio-economic and political empowerment because their traditional and customary norms and laws are comparatively more liberal to women in their society. The tribal women have unique status and even though they had low literacy level, they are much more empowered than non-tribal women due to their significant role in social, economic, religious, political and cultural field in their family and village or community level. Finding of the study shows that educational qualification plays a significant role in empowerment of tribal women. It concludes that if tribal women are to be empowered then it can be only possible through increasing their level of education.

**Key word-** Tribal women, Community, Empowerment, Education, Tradition, Decision.

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Date of Submission: 07-10-2020

Date of Acceptance: 22-10-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The tribal society is the most modern and developed society in which all the tradition, customs, culture, belief are exist since time immemorial. The tribal society is a society in which people are simple, innocent, truthful, hard worker, egalitarian society, gendered, caste and class less society, existence of good governance and feeling of fellow and neighborhood. Tribal society is the most advanced society where discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, class and religion and system of dowry is absent. Whereas there exist bride price and widow remarriage. The tribal women in their society constitute about half of the tribal population. A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic, cultural, religious and traditional political structure of her community and society. The tribal women are the periphery of the family around which the social, cultural, management of family, natural and economic resources and agricultural development revolved. Generally, in a tribal family husband plays a head role, the wife also plays a significant role in large part in its control and overall management of daily family affairs. They are laborious and, in some cases, they work more harder than their counterparts. They do not depend much more on men for their substance and they are considered as economic assets. Bhasin (2007)<sup>1</sup> wrote- 'in their world, the tribal women have a freedom, and a self-expression'. The tribal women have equal participate with tribal men in all the socio-economic activities. Quite often their women do more physical labour in their agricultural fields and forest than that of tribal men. Tribal women have usually enjoyed a higher social status in their own communities than non-tribal community.

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<sup>1</sup>Bhasin Veena (2007), 'Status of Tribal Women in India. Stud. Home Comm. Sci., Kamla -Raj Enterprises, 1(1):1-7

In spite of significant role there are many facts which indicate a low status for tribal women in Jharkhand. The patriarchal tribal society, tribal women does not have property rights except in matrilineal society which is small portion of the tribal population. They paid less wages than her male counterparts for the same work, there are several taboos which discriminating against tribal women exist in certain tribal groups implying impurity and low status. The tribal women are restricted in some activities like ploughing and thatching the roof and they cannot hold the office of a priest. Tribal women, while being a disadvantaged and vulnerable group are, nevertheless, better placed, in many respects, their counterparts in the general population and are, in certain areas, more empowered. The tribal women have little benefits compared to men regarding personal income, assets, healthcare, education and employment. About 85% of the tribal women are living in the rural areas where primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture. This study examines the empowerment of tribal women through education. Education is an essential foundation for all social, economic and cultural development (Sen, 1994)<sup>2</sup> that enhance the human capital and economic prospects of a country (UNFPA, 2005)<sup>3</sup> Education is viewed as a prime necessity for the establishment of gender justice for women society. Education helps to empower women by improving their confidence, increase their skill and knowledge and awareness about their rights and assert those rights.

The term 'empowerment' has been used to describe wide range of concepts. The term has been used more often to advocate grassroots participation of the people especially the marginalized, the economic, social and political affairs of the society. The World Bank has defined empowerment as the 'expansion of freedom of choice and action'. Although empowerment is the need of the hour for women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups, it is necessary to understand that empowerment of women includes some additional element. According to Kabeer (1999)<sup>4</sup>, "empowerment refers to the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability". Empowerment can be viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make a choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Hashemi Schuler and Riley, 1996).<sup>5</sup> Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomy way. Through empowerment, one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. Empowerment includes control resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes) (Batliwala, 1994).<sup>6</sup>

Empowerment of women is the process of raising the social, spiritual, educational, political, gender or economic strength of women, the traditionally backward and underprivileged ones in the society. Empowerment define as higher literacy level, education, better health care, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities, improved standard of living, self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence. The empowerment of women also determined as women economic, social and political identity and their weightage. Tribal women who live in the rural areas, backward and hilly isolated areas, in the informal, unorganized sector and they got less education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate.<sup>7</sup>

Education is the key element which help tribal women to raise their level of health, nutrition, self-confidence and enable them to get better jobs engage them into some productive work, ensure social security and prevent them from fraudulent activities. Education increase the skill, knowledge and awareness of their rights and the ability to assert those rights and also helps to reduce the child and maternal mortality and morbidity rate and to raise better children and empower them to make better choices in their lives. The literature has pronounced that women education plays a significant role that enhance their participation in socio-economic, political activities and decision making at family and community level.

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<sup>2</sup>Sen, A. (1994), Population policy: authoritarianism verses co-operation, social change 24 (3-4):20-35

<sup>3</sup> UNFPA (2005), State of world population 2005, The promise of equality: gender equity, reproductive health and the Millennium Development Goals, UNFPA

<sup>4</sup>Kabeer N. (1999), "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on Measurement of women's Empowerment. Development and Change Vol.30 pp 435-464.

<sup>5</sup>Heshemi, S., S. Schuler, and A. Riley (1996), "Rural Credit Programs and women's Empowerment in Bangladesh". World Development, 24(4), 635-653.

<sup>6</sup>Batliwala S. (1994), "The meaning of Women's Empowerment: new Concept from Action. In Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment, and Rights, Sen G, Germain A, Chen LC (Eds). Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies: Boston

<sup>7</sup>Talavar, YamanoorappaYenkoba and ManikammaNagindrappa (2014), "Critical Assessment of the Scheduled Tribe Women Empowerment in Present Social Order" Review of Literature, Volume 2, Issue 2, Sept.2014, p. 1-10

Bloom (2001)<sup>8</sup> in his study “Dimension of women’s Autonomy and the influence on Maternal Health Care Utilization in a North Indian City” comes with some interesting finding that education helps the women to gain freedom of movement. Further, there are studies which reveals that there is a positive relationship between women’s education and women’s decision-making power. Chaudhry and Rahman (2009)<sup>9</sup> in their work explained the most important tool for the development of the human resources is education. The study reveals that gender inequality in education has adverse impact on poverty. According to UNESCO Report (2012)<sup>10</sup> Literacy provides a foundation for reduction of poverty and sustainable development. It provides a basis for the aspect for human rights, the universalization of basic education, conflicts resolution, nutritional sufficiency and for an overall improved quality of life. Surveying women in Gilgit – Balistan, Murtaza (2012)<sup>11</sup> affirmed that highly educated women had higher personal confidence, attained and enjoyed financial freedom and improved social status within their family and the community. Barma (2012)<sup>12</sup> analysed the educational empowerment of the tribal women in Odisha and observed that tribal women education was considered as an important activity by the state government. The researcher reported that tribal women education created better employability, space, self-confidence and self-esteem for the tribal women in the study area. The researcher suggested that tribal education should be incorporated in the process of tribal women education an empowerment in Odisha.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To study the educational status of tribal women.
2. To study the role of education in the empowerment of tribal women.
3. To examine decision making role of the tribal women of Dumka district in their socio-economic status.
4. What are the impact of education on tribal women’s participation on political activities?
5. What are the impact of education on involvement of tribal women employment and economic activities?
6. To identify the problems and challenges of education
7. To analyse the factors influencing the women empowerment.

### **Significance of the study:**

Dumka is the rural and tribal populated area in the state of Jharkhand. tribal women continue to face problems such as poor literacy rates, health issues and socio-economic constraints. Specific suggestions are needed to strengthen the policies and plans meant for tribes. The proposed study is an attempt to understand the problems of tribal women in a wide perspective. Keeping in view all aspects of tribal women’s problems the proposed study is to go to the deep root cause of the problems and suggest sustainable development in social, economic, political and technological sphere to empower tribal women through education and training.

## **II. MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Keeping in view the specific set of objectives enumerated an in-depth study of the tribal women in the Dumka district of Jharkhand has been selected. In this regard methodology needs special emphasis. The study is based on collection of data from both primary and secondary sources in the district of Dumka in Jharkhand.

### **Study Design**

Both qualitative and quantitative method has been used to critically explore the level of literacy among the tribal women and its impact upon their socio-economic status. The questionnaire was structured to find out: the demographic and socio-economic characteristic, educational level, occupation and general information; decision making ability, The research instrument includes question related with different type of empowerment like educational empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment, personal empowerment, psychological empowerment, technical empowerment and demographic characteristics like age, marital status, educational qualification, employment type, family income and saving etc.

### **Socio-Economic Profile of the Dumka District**

Dumka is the headquarter of Dumka district and Santal Pargana region. It is also sub-capital of the Jharkhand state. It was made headquarter of the Santal Pargana region, which was carved out of the Bhagalpur

<sup>8</sup>Bloom, Sheuah S. (2001): Dimensions of Women’s Autonomy and the Influence on Maternal Health are Utilization in a North Indian City, Demography, Vol.38, No. 1, 2001,pp-67-68

<sup>9</sup> Chaudhry, I.S., & Rahman, S. (2009): The Impact of gender equality in education on rural poverty in Pakistan: An empirical analysis. European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences, 15(1),174-188

<sup>10</sup>UNESCO (2012): “Situational analysis of the education sector in Pakistan”. Retrieved from [http://unescon.org.pk/education/documents/situationalanalysis/National\\_Final\\_Report\\_Education\\_Policy\\_Analysis.pdf](http://unescon.org.pk/education/documents/situationalanalysis/National_Final_Report_Education_Policy_Analysis.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Murtaza, Kush Funer (2012): “Women Empowerment Through Higher Education in Gilgit- Balistan”.International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, Vol. 2, No.9,pp342-365

<sup>12</sup>Berma, Padmalochan (2012): “Educational Empowerment of Tribal Women of Odisha: A Study of the PTG of the Nuapada District of KBK, Odisha, Review, pp 59-64

and Suri/ Birbhum district after the ‘Santal Hul of 1855. It was carved out of the southern part of Bihar along with 18 other districts on 15 November 2000 to form Jharkhand as 28<sup>th</sup> State of India. The district lies between 23°45' to 24°38' (North Latitude) and 86°20' to 87°75' (East) longitude. It is situated at the height of 472 feet above the sea level.<sup>13</sup>

The Dumka district is surrounded by the districts of Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal, in North-Godda, Sahibganj (Jharkhand) and Banka (Bihar), East- Pakur (Jharkhand) and Burdwan (West Bengal), South –Jamatar (Jharkhand) Burdwan (West Bengal) and in West- Deoghar (Jharkhand). Dumka town is the Divisional and district headquarter of district itself. According to census 2011, Dumka had population of 1321,442 of which male and female were 668,514 and 652, 928 respectively. Sex ration 977 per 1000 male and density 351 per square kilometre. Average Literacy rate of the District is 61.02% of which male literacy is 72.96 % and female literacy is 48.82 percent. The district is highly populated with Scheduled Tribes (S.T.) constituting 43.22 % of the total population of the district.<sup>14</sup>

**Sampling**

Sampling refers the selection of fews out of the total population to be investigated in such a way to get information to draw a conclusion. For this purpose, sample of 240 respondents of age group 15 to 55 years of tribal women was selected.

**Subject and selection method:** The present research study is based on stratified and multistage sampling, which is done at four level i.e. district level, panchayat level, village level and respondent level. Three tribal blocks were selected using purposive sampling method. The Purposive sampling method is applied for data collection. Both primary and secondary data are collected. All primary data have been collected through direct interview method. Each and every woman in every house has been directly contacted and relevant information is collected according to the objective of the study. For this study participant and non-participant observation and direct interview method are followed to know their socio-economic background as well as attitude of the parents towards their girl’s children, nature of child sex ration, gender discrimination, female foeticide and their educational status.

**Procedure Methodology:** After selecting size of the sample, a well-designed questionnaire was designed to get detailed information from the respondents. The questionnaire includes socio-economic demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, employment status, educational level, sources of family income etc. The data collected from the field carried on in the sample village of three blocks of Dumka district of Jharkhand. In order to gain confidence on the sample size and assess the difficulties in the field work of the main survey, a pilot survey was conducted. For this purpose, an interview schedule was designed and interview of tribal women were taken. During the interviews the respondent were asked some questions on the basis of a structured questionnaire. On the basis of the data collected from interviews this research paper examined the status of empowerment of tribal women in Dumka district of Jharkhand.

**Statistical analysis**

The interview schedules on tribal women and girls were arranged, edited, codified and tabulated for analysing the data. To analyse the data obtained through interview and questionnaire. In the first instance sorting was done to generate frequency table for each independent variable. Numerical symbols were assigned to the responses within the interview schedule and attention was taken in order to avoid possible error during data processing and calculators and computers were also used for statistical analysis of the data. Apart from tabulation, analysis necessary Graph, Diagrams are also incorporated in the study. In the first instance sorting was done to generate frequency table for each independent variable.

**III. RESULT**

The socio-economic background of an individual, to a large extent, determines his early socialisation, shapes his personality and influence his duty and day to day interaction with other members of the community. Most of the respondents 100 (41.66%) were in the age group of 20 -30 years, 67 (27.92%) respondents were in the age group of 30-40 years, 38 (15.83%) respondents were in the age group of 40-50 years, 24 (10%) respondents were in the age group of above 50 years and 11 (4.58%) respondents were below the age of 20 years.

**Table 1:** Age distribution of the Respondents

Sl.no.	Age in years	Frequency	Total in percentage (%)
1	Below 20	11	4.58
2	20-30	100	41.66

<sup>13</sup> Census of India, 2011, Jharkhand, District Census Handbook Dumka, Series-21, Part-XII B

<sup>14</sup> Census of India, 2011

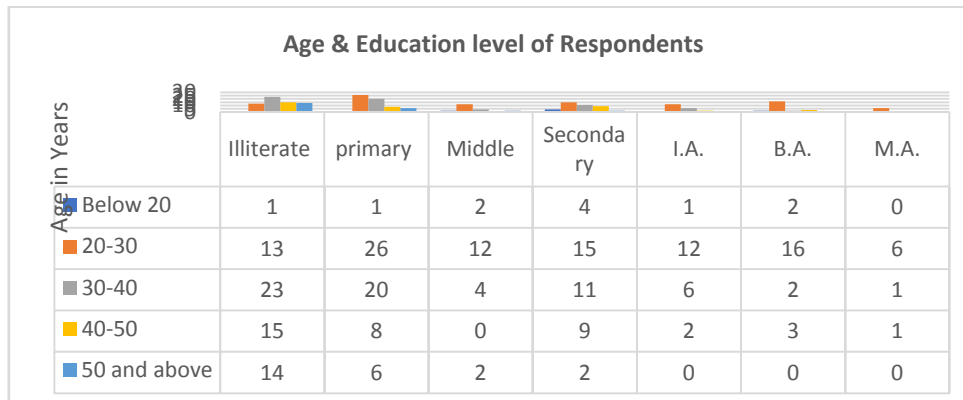
3	30-40	67	27.92
4	40-50	38	15.83
5	Above 50	24	10
	Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey

**Table No. 2** Distribution of Educational levels of the tribal women

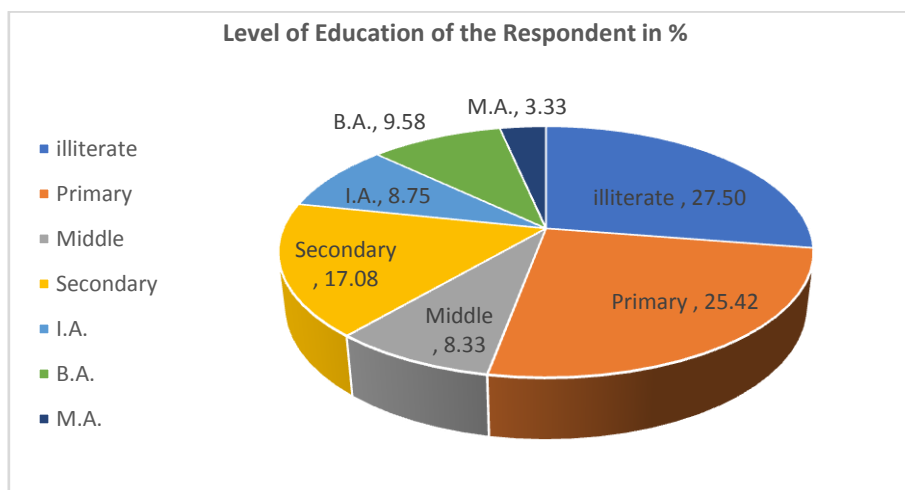
Sl. No.	Level of education	Frequency	Total in percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	66	27.5
2	Primary	61	25.42
3	Middle	20	8.33
4	Secondary	41	17.08
5	Intermediate	21	8.75
6	Graduate	23	9.58
7	Post –Graduate	08	3.33
	Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey



**Fig.1**

The above analysis shows that out of the total population, middle age group women are more dominant in making the family size more relevant.



**Figure-2**

The above table no.2 shows that out of 240 tribal women and girls, 66 (27.5%) were illiterate and the remaining 174 (72.5%) had education varying from completion of primary (class-5) to Post Graduation, from which it has been observed that girls spend their time on household activities help their family and going to get married anyway. Education is not more important for them. Of the 240 respondents enrolled in the study and subsequently interviewed, among these female respondents of tribal communities, 61 (25.42%) were primary level, 20 (8.33%) were Middle level, 41 (17.08%) were Secondary level, 21 (8.75%) were Intermediate level, 23

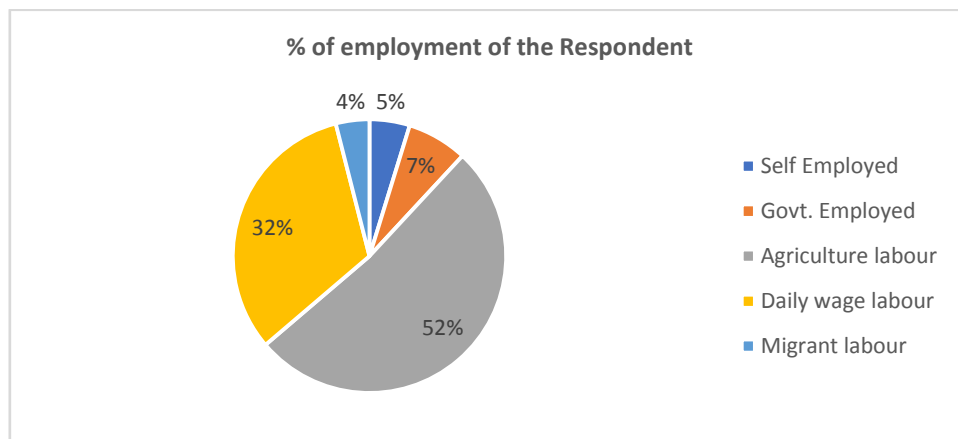
(9.58%) were Graduate and 8 (3.33%) were Post Graduate. The table no.3 (below) shows 75.83% respondent were housewife, 18.33% respondents were employed in different job and 5.83% respondent were student. High rate of school dropout was found in the study area.

**Table 3** Distribution of structure of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Type	Frequency	%
1	Housewife	192	75.83
2	Employed	44	18.33
3	Student	14	5.83
	Total	240	100

Source: Field Survey

The study revealed that out of total, 47.69% of them work as agricultural labour and thus seasonal employment, 4.38% are self-employed (selling forest product, vegetable, handia i.e. rice bear, etc), 29.68% are daily wage labour, 3.65% are migrant labour, and 6.57% are employed in government sector. Their works has been characterised by long working hour and high physical labour. The employment has positive impact on the women autonomy. The respondent who are educated and are employed in the government sector and their income is higher than the illiterate female respondents. Due to low literacy level, skill and training, the tribal women are migrated to the near town and state. The saving among the educated women has also high comparison to the illiterate women. the working women has high decisive power in comparison to the unemployed females.

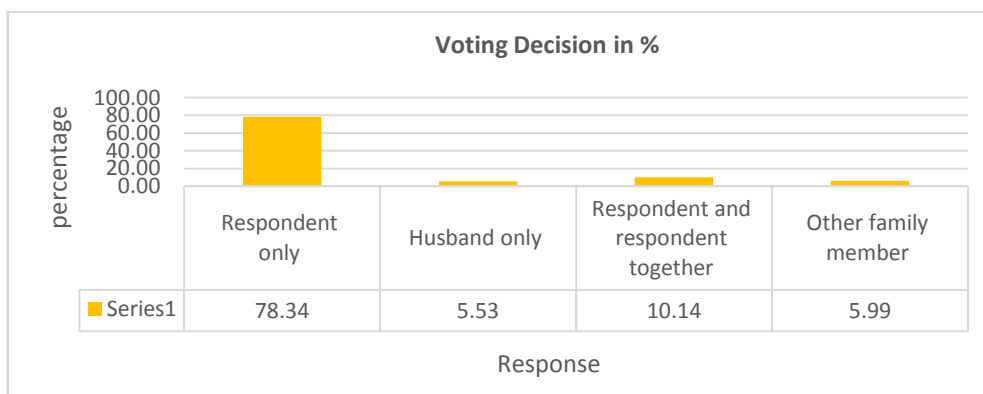


**Fig.3**

**Table No. 4** Distribution of voting Decision of the Respondent

Sl. No.	Response	Frequency	%
1	Yes	217	90.42
2	No	23	9.58

Source: Field Survey

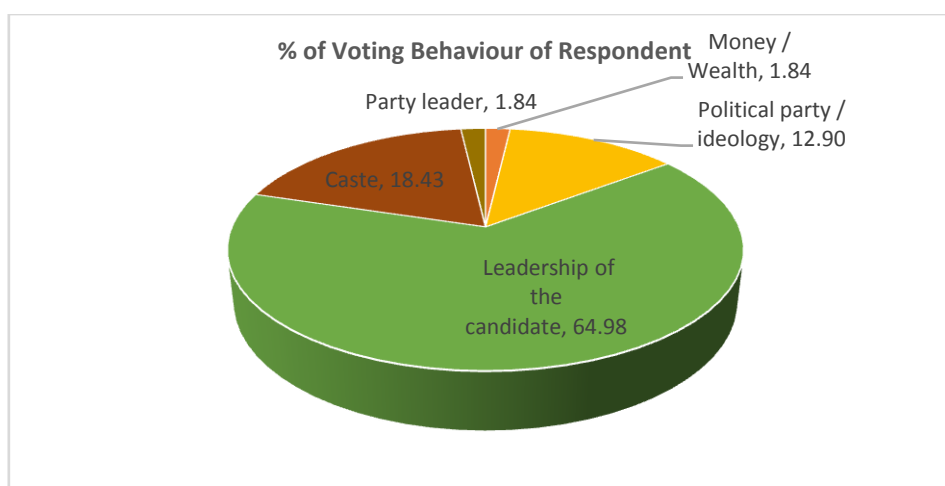


**Figure: 4**

Table-4 (above) observation during field study that tribal women take pleasure in their voting rights and about 90.42% of women in the study area exercised their right. Of the total 78.34% take own decision regarding voting in election. While 10.14% were take decision together with husband, 5.99% depends on the other member of the family and 5.56% respondent's voting decision were taken by their husband only.

**Table-4** Distribution of Respondent influence voting behaviour

Sl. No.	Response	Frequency	%
1	Money/ wealth	4	1.84
2	Political Party/Ideology	28	12.90
3	Leadership of Candidate	141	64.98
4	Caste	40	18.43
5	Party leader	4	1.84
	Total	217	100



**Figure-5**

The study reveals that 64.98% of the respondent vote on the basis of leadership of the candidate. While 18.43% were vote on the basis of caste of the candidate, 12.90% respondent take political party and their ideology into consideration and 1.84% were influenced by the party leader and money or wealth provided during election respectively. The study also shows 19.58 % respondents take part in campaign activity in village to provide information of various welfare schemes and programmes. 39.58% respondents were aware about constitution provision of the reservation of seat for the women in the local bodies, panchayat, municipalities, Vidhansabha, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The study revealed that 79.17% respondent in the study area were aware about the various organisation like village panchayat, Mahila Samiti and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Of 58.95% were member of these organisation. 68.75% respondent had joined these groups to get benefit from it and 25.89% joined to help themselves and others, 3.57% joined because of their husband and family pressure.

The study revealed that 17.92 % respondent were taking decision regarding children matter, 22.92% purchasing jewellery and major household items of the family, 36.67% daily expenditure of the household, 36.25% monthly saving. 42.92 % respondent had replied that visiting paternal, relative, friends and sibling. 49.17 % take own decision regarding spending their income on their choice on herself and family. 64.58% respondents were taking decision of their personal matters, 70% respondents take decision about their health matter. In tribal society, tribal women take part in all social and cultural activities thus study shows that 63.75% respondent take decision regarding the social matters, 47.08% actively participate in social activities in the village.

The study found that freedom of mobility was very high among the tribal women. 76.25% respondents visit to local market (Called Hatiya/Hat) to sale their agri-product and buy day to day needs of the household. The tribal women are independent and there is no restriction on their activity, so the study found 56% respondent visit panchayat, 49% visit blocks and local fairs.

From the above data analysis, it is clear that household decisions are mostly taken by jointly with husband and wife. But decision regarding day to day small expenses, social and personal matters were generally taken by herself only. The matter related to agriculture like crops, cattle, land and any asset, construction of house were taken by their husband. They tribal women can freely visit to their relative, friends, sibling and parental houses to meet them. They participate in all agricultural activities except ploughing, collect forest produce and free to sale them in the market. The tribal women have access and control over their own earnings

and they spend it on her and on the family. These data provide comprehensive information about the social, economic and political empowerment of tribal women in the study area. However, the literacy rate is low among the tribal women, they are empowered in different level in their family, village and community.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

The above study was carried out in Dumka district, one of the most backward and tribal populated district of the state of Jharkhand. From the above findings, the empowerment of tribal women in relation to social, economic and political are relatively influenced by the respondents' level of education. The above analysis shows that educational empowerment, social, political and psychological empowerment were the significant predictor for overall empowerment. The process of empowerment depends much more on the awareness, rights and requirements. With more education women have greater access to employment opportunities, increase in the ability to secure their economic resources and decision making at family and village or community level. During the data collection I came to know that most of the educated tribal women in the study area were unaware about the empowerment. While the illiterate tribal women were more empowered in some areas than the educated women. In the study area tribal women were facing various problem related to proper and better health facilities, education, and employment opportunities.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

In the tribal community especially among the tribal women, education has always been considered as less importance due to excessive pressure of maintain daily means of subsistence. As the tribal resides in the rural and interior areas, geographical and social isolation, poverty, and lack of educational facilities, etc leads low literacy among the tribal women. Due to economic and educational constraints in the rural area, women potential and skill have not been fully utilised for the efficient utilisation of human as well as natural resources for the empowerment of tribal women and country development. If tribal women to be empowered and to bring them into the mainstream of development, it can possible only through the education. It is necessary to create an environment that will allow tribal women to participate in educational programme and share the benefit of economic development.

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