CHAPTER-9

SUMMING UP

The present study is an analysis of gender stratification in tribal society in Ranchi, the capital town of Jharkhand. The thrust of the study is to examine and analyze various dimensions of stratification among tribal women relating to freedom, economic dependence, subjugation and socio-cultural backwardness. Our aim is to understand different hidden forms of gender stratification also in the tribal society based on rites and rituals.

The main objective is to describe and analyze the empowerment of women in the light of recent developments relating to education, empowerment and conversion. An attempt is made here to have a comprehensive and critical understanding of the status of tribal women, in an urban setting. Five zones (localities) were selected which represented Ranchi city. In all, a sample of 400 tribal women from both upper and lower strata was selected, based on both stratified and purposive sampling. It is mainly a descriptive study. All the 400 tribal women were in the age group of 18-55 years.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from the educated tribal women through a structured interview schedule, and the illiterate tribal women were interviewed and group interviews / discussions were also held with them. Data from various offices and agencies were also gathered. Beside this NGOs and women’s organizations and functionaries working at the state and district level were also contacted to know about the status of tribal women. Area profile sheet and observations were used for collecting specific
information. Secondary data were gathered by going through various reports and documents. Both the quantitative and qualitative inputs have been incorporated.

The strength of this study lies in outlining the position of tribal women in an urban centre Ranchi, and in pointing out the gender stratification and gender specific problems. Though traditionally tribal women have played an important role in the tribal social and economic life, yet gender inequality has existed in decision-making, division of labour, land rights and patriarchy. However, today education, employment and conversion have played an important role in determining status of tribal women. At the same time, restrictions on tribal women have also increased due to Hinduisation and Sanskritisation and cultural-contact.

To evaluate the position of tribal women in an urban setting both in theory and practice is the main concern of the present research. How gender stratification can be defined and through what strategy it can be conceptualised in tribal society? It is not possible to define the status of tribal women, unless one is clear about this question. A majority of the available studies on tribal women have completely ignored this question. Even the studies on exploitation of tribal women focus on the invasion of the market forces. On the question of exploitation, most of the studies simply emphasize on exploitation of tribal women by non-tribal or Diku. However, it is fact that a tribal woman is also exploited within the family and the community. The tradition of witch hunting is an example of cultural oppression of tribal women.

Tribal women are differently placed in different setting. In an urban centre such as Ranchi, a section of tribal population is quite advanced, educated and socially awakened. We have studied women of the Munda,
Santahl, Oraon, Ho and Kharia tribes. Intra-tribal gender stratification was also evident. A regional and ethnic difference among tribes is equally important while analysing gender stratification.

The status of tribal women in an urban setting needs to be distinguished from the position of women in non-tribal community. At the same time, one should realise that the urban tribal women are passing through transition. Their goal is to be equal to the Hindu upper/middle class/caste women. There is a trend to abdicate traditional customs, rituals and social practices, even if these are for the betterment of tribal women.

Tribal women are trying to catch up with the modern, better-off sections of non-tribal society. The process of urbanization has also weakened the traditional institutions, behavioral patterns and mechanisms of social control. A situation of flex exists; hence it becomes quite difficult to distinguish between the individual and the collective, the immediate and the past and the intended and the unintended consequences in the tribal society in general and with regard to women in particular in an urban setting.

In the absence of a comparison with the rural tribal women, we can draw tentative analysis regarding gender and stratification among tribal women. Status of health could also provide understanding of socio-cultural factors, attitudes and practices relating to health. However, we have not studied this aspect due to our concentration on urban tribal women. Further, displacement, deforestation and land rights are directly concerned with rural tribal women; hence we have omitted this aspect as well. Our study of tribal women in the urban setting is basically related to gender and stratification taking into consideration the upper and lower strata of tribal society. Nevertheless, we would analyse the gender stratification in the tribal society,
and see the extent of education, employment and conversion in the empowerment of tribal women.

**Gender Stratification and Tribal Culture**

In the tribal society, norms and values are important determinants of women’s role and position. Tribal society in Jharkhand is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. However, substantial amount of freedom is given to women within the family. Due to patriarchy important roles are assigned to male members, hence women become inferior to men. Strong patriarchy leads to inequality in the context of political participation. The traditional village assembly is an all-male institution and women are excluded from this. In the tribal society of Jharkhand, land is considered as private property of a man (either held individually or communally), and it is inherited in the male line. Women had certain limited rights in the land, as workers and not as owners. Prohibition on ploughing and roofing by a woman is a way of emphasising a man’s superiority over a woman. Patriarchy is not simply control over reproduction by a woman; it is control over her total labour. Since division and control of labour do not constitute to an egalitarian system of social relations, even new form of division of labour would further strengthen gender hierarchy.

Due to egalitarian tradition of tribal community the boundaries between the private and the public and between the woman’s and man’s spheres are not so clear. A tribal woman certainly enjoys more freedom of movement than her non tribal counterparts. Purdah is unknown among the tribal womenfolk. She can freely roam around in the forest, field and market. And she also freely mixes with male members of her society. She has the right to choose her life-partner and also the right to divorce and
remarriage. Though a boy is desired but birth of a girl is never regretted. A girl was considered to be an economic asset. Instead of dowry the custom of bride-price is there, which itself is the mark of respect for women. Traditional youth dormitories also provide a certain amount of freedom to women. But at the same time, the custom of branding a woman as witch and then kill her is an attack on the status of women. Witch hunting is basically used to change the order of society and to force women into new gender role. Witch hunting establishes the authority of man, in the process of establishing patriarchy. Likewise gender is an important factor in the allocation of role, status and power in the tribal society.

We have tried to know whether the respondents have some awareness about various institutions such as bride price, Khorposh, Jani-Shikar, affecting the status of women. Nearly 41% of them are quite aware about the significance of these institutions, whereas 27% showed their ignorance.

**Education and Gender Stratification**

Nearly 90% tribal women feel that education is the only means by which their status can be improved and their empowerment can be realised. This shows that tribal women are well aware of the advantages of modern education. Around 95% of them agreed with the view that education increases employment opportunities and awareness and it helps in enhancement of their position in the society. However, the level of education is not uniform among the tribal women, 75% of them were illiterate and only 20% had higher education.

The tribal women have a positive attitude towards education, especially for girls and think that education is equally necessary for them
like boys. Women perceive that education creates confidence and a sense of equality between man and woman.

**Tribal Women and Stratification**

We have been analysed general attitudes towards girls in tribal society regarding subjugation, choice of partners, household decision-making and freedom. When asked about the preference for a male child, 31% of respondents agreed that they preferred a male child, while 56% of the respondents felt that they were discriminated by their parents especially with regard to education. However, about 45% respondents strongly felt that the position was better in tribal society compared to the rest of the society in general. When asked to indicate the main reason of tribal girls not attending the school, nearly 29% of them felt that it was that these girls had to work for earning during the school hours. While 13% of them felt that it was the discriminatory attitude of the parents towards girl child, which was responsible for the gendered education. There is a clear indication that the attitude towards girls is changing fast and in some ways it is becoming similar to the larger society.

When asked whether a woman had any right to choose her own life partner. 28% respondents told that they were given enough freedom to choose their life partners, while 33% felt that they were denied such a freedom. For the rest of 40% respondents these questions were not relevant. It is quite clear that freedom to choose one’s own life partner by tribal women had declined due to various factors in Ranchi city.

With regard to decision-making power, 54% of the respondents were consulted on important matters like marriage in the family, buying land or
property etc., though 75% felt that the division of labour within the household was decided by the elders in which women had major say. 31% married women thought that they were free to decide the number of children they wanted to have. At the same time 75% of them believed that they had the freedom to choose the dress code and leisure activity for themselves.

When asked about social freedom for women nearly 87% respondents agreed that they were allowed to keep contacts with friends, relatives and if married, with their parents, but only 44% could independently visit them. While 82% of them were allowed to take part in religious and social functions on their own, and 62% of them were members of some social organizations. So it was clear that a considerable amount of social freedom was enjoyed by tribal women in Ranchi. At the same time three-fourth of the respondents felt that cultural backwardness was the reason for low status of tribal women. Nearly 80% of them felt that due to the presence of various social evils like excessive alcoholism, witch-hunting, and social subjugation, tribal women had.

**Gender Stratification and Economic Independence**

Economic independence does not always lead to empowerment or enhancement of status. Even if a woman becomes economically independent, she may not have decision making power in her family, and her husband or her father may have effective control over her income. 27% of the respondents were allowed to spend their earnings for themselves, while 62% were allowed only sometimes to do so. 50% of them were of the opinion that they were consulted prior to decision-making. At the same time, only 57% of the employed tribal women were free to spend their income as they desired. However, 15% of them have to hand their pay-packets to the
heads of their families either fully or partially. Most of the lower class tribal women working in the unorganized sector suffered discrimination. Nearly 45% of them working as manual workers were paid less wages, and 35% of the respondents were victims of sexual harassment at their work places. Nearly 62% of them strongly felt that economic independence was most important for a tribal woman to acquire a higher position in the family and society. Most of them considered the wage-discrimination as inhuman, and 90% of them felt that it was a false notion that women are incapable of hard work. The data clearly indicated that if women were educated and had good jobs, they would be able to become economically independent as well.

Almost all the women, irrespective of their class, ethnic or religious differences stated that modern education could improve their status. Nearly all of them expressed that conversion to Christianity had brought modern education to the tribals. Although 53% of them felt that conversion had raised awareness level among the tribal women, yet 31% of them believed that it had not helped much in eliminating social evils like alcoholism, witch-hunting, and subjugation.

Perceptions of tribal women regarding modern employment, and its impact on social status were also analysed. Nearly 95% of them felt that employment especially white collar jobs had increased the decision-making power as well as the status of tribal women, not only within the tribal society but also in general in the larger society. While more than 70% of them believed that the impact of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation had been negative for the majority of tribal women, and because a small section of the tribal society had been benefited, and that too only in towns and cities. 95% of them were of the opinion that the recent developments had lead to more exploitation of tribal women.
Gender Stratification and Cultural Contact

When asked to indicate if cultural contact with the wider society had any impact on the life of tribal women, nearly 95% of them felt that gender stratification and sexual division of labour had been introduced through the process of Sanskritisation. While more than 55% of the respondents believed that Sanskritisation had resulted into restriction on free movement, choice of life partner, widow remarriage, right to divorce, deprivation of modern education etc., by way of imitation of Hindu customs and practices. Today tribals strictly adhere to the notion of chastity of women. At the same time, 85% of them observed that dowry was fast replacing bride-price. At the same time, most of them believe that cultural contacts have increased the awareness, and however, some also hint at the negative impact of Sanskritisation.

Gender Stratification and Awareness

It was observed that 91% of the tribal women were aware of the national immunization programmes, especially the polio eradication programme. More than 87% of the tribal women were aware about the reservation policy and educational schemes available for the tribals, as most of the respondents were keen to educate their children. On an average about two-fifth of the respondents were aware of the existing government’s programmes. A majority of the respondents told that media (newspapers and television) were the major sources of information. More than 90% informed that education and employment were emerging among tribal women in cities.
To know whether the respondents had some knowledge about various socio-cultural institutions, their awareness was examined on a three point scale. Most of the women were fully aware about tribal festivals (87%), and the problem of witch-hunting (87.5%). On an average, 45% of the respondents were aware about various tribal socio-cultural institutions, 33% of them were partially aware, and 27% were not aware at all.

With regard to the health awareness, more than 90% of them have indicated that they believed in small family norm. Even one child norm for a family was acceptable to some women. Most of the women (80%) were aware of the right age at marriage for both boys and girls. 97% of the respondents felt that vaccination was essential for good health, while 95% of them believed that doctors and hospitals were most reliable for child birth. But most women belonging to lower class could not specify their answers regarding various specific issues.

When asked about elections, voting system and rights of people, we found that nearly 50% of them were aware about such issues. Nearly 50% of the women confirmed that their political awareness had increased especially after the formation of the Jharkhand State with Ranchi as the capital.

But it is quite clear that awareness is closely related to education and employment. Most women of the upper strata were well aware about social issues, while a very few women of the lower strata had such an awareness.

**Gender Stratification and Political Participation**

Most of the tribal women in Ranchi had voted in the elections. But a very few of them were members of political parties. Nearly 95% of the respondents felt that the main reason for less participation in active politics was a lack of resources due to poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation. While
75% of them believed that the problems such as discrimination, low status, non-inclusion of women in the tribal council played a major role in low level of political socialization. But 37% also felt that the lack of interest was the main reason.

**Gender Stratification and Empowerment**

The fact remains that a very little is known about gender stratification in tribal society. Its consequences on the empowerment of tribal women have to be seen carefully. Therefore, the basic objective is to analyse the specific components of empowerment of tribal women in Ranchi. These are:

- A sense of self and vision of future.
- Mobility and visibility.
- Economic independence.
- Decision-making power within the family and community.
- Ability to interact effectively in the public domain.
- Participation in out-groups.
- Focus on socio-economic rights and equality.
- Awareness regarding exploitation by both tribal and non-tribal men.

The above parameters of empowerment were selected keeping in view the developments like education, employment, modernisation and urbanisation. These indicators were related to positive self-image and sense of self-confidence, increase in articulation and participation in various social-political and economic activities.

Most of the women’s organisations and NGOs in Ranchi organise women around basic issues, like education, gainful employments, health and child care, community development, credit co-operatives, alcoholism and wife beating. Camps and regular meetings organised on behalf of these
organisations brings women together and now a whole series of leadership is developing among them in their fight against social evils and rebuilding of the communities.

In Ranchi, it is clear that groups of tribal women work for solutions of their common problems. We have observed that motivation and interest of tribal women have increased for in participation, in various women’s organisations. Enhanced of participation was ensured by a large scale mobilisation by social activists. The tribal women functionaries in social organisations feel satisfied with their changed status. Self-confidence, better articulation and increased ability have been reported as their achievements.

**Empowerment and the Individual**

Education and employment have a wide-ranging effect on the personality development of the urban tribal women. Majority of them (64%) felt that there was a change in their attitudes due to education, employment, and conversion. The respondents reported a higher level of self-reliance and self-confidence. More than 75% of them felt positive about changes in their attitudes. Income generation, gender equality and overcoming of superstition were reported as positive developments by 2/3rd of the respondents. At the same time, 95% of the women felt that equal property rights, especially, land ownership and control of resources could help in improving the status of tribal women. Nearly 45% of the respondents informed that they had participated in various seminars, meetings and rallies organised by various organisations on issues related to women.

On education, employment and development, the respondents were examined on a three-point scale. More than 50% of the women felt that increased self-esteem, overall improvement in the status of family as well as
the tribal community, enhanced awareness about health, education of girl child, economic independence and ability to take vital decisions were the main positive achievements of the urban tribal women.
BROAD CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters, we have analysed the social status of a cross-section of tribal women in Ranchi. We have noted that even in an urban setting status of tribal women is determined by gendering as a dominant factor. The implications emerging out of our study are briefly recapitulated here.

1. Our study explodes the myth, that there is gender equality in the so-called egalitarian tribal society. The male-dominated tribal society considers women in their traditional social roles which are subordinate to the roles assigned to men. Patriarchy determines women’s roles and relationships. A woman is not accepted as a woman if she is competent, over ambitious, dominating and devoid of feminity. Tribal women are deprived of inheriting property and are not allowed to own or sell it. There is a gendered division of labour. Women are not allowed for ploughing and roofing. They are excluded from the traditional political activities. A tribal woman is prohibited to act as a priest. Moreover, the heinous practice of branding a woman as witch and then killing her publicly is unabated in the tribal society. Thus, women experience subordination in many ways. A home, at work place and in everyday life a women faces male domination. A woman is expected to confirm to the ideal of a hard working person ready to sacrifice her own interest to the happiness of members in her family without any demand in return. Since a tribal girl is socialized to become submissive and passive, norms dictate that a woman is to work and be dependent on man. Even today a woman is kept insulted and deprived access to knowledge agencies, information and
technology. Industrialisation, urbanisation and recent developments have a negative impact on tribal women. Due to displacement and deforestation they have to work hard for livelihood. In Ranchi city the poor tribal women work as labourers in the unorganized sector, where they are exploited both economically and sexually by the employers. The construction and domestic workers are the worst sufferers as they neither have proper wage-rates nor fixed working hours. Sanskritisation and contacts with outsiders have largely affected tribal way of life. It has adversely affected freedom of tribal women regarding their mobility, sexual life, mate-selection, divorce and remarriage. Due to these factors a boy is given preference over a girl. And there is also a tendency to replace the custom of bride-price with dowry.

2. Patriarchy has acquired a new form a practice in an urban tribal situation. Though the traditional patriarchal control has weakened in Ranchi, but it has created new forms of control built after women’s subordinate position. And many a times the traditional and the new forms of control, put together have increased and have resulted into violence against women within and outside domestic boundaries. These new methods of control generally push women back to traditional domain and subordinate them further. Women are markers of boundaries especially in the patrilineal societies. Gender roles and relations are appropriate for political gains, identity formation and boundary creation at the personal level within the community and for expressing differences between the communities. Religious, cultural or ethnic revivalism often becomes a tool for manipulating people’s faith and sense of cultural identity to restore the power of patriarchy.
A community-based identity against women's rights has overtaken women's freedom to work, to study or to marry according to their choice. Moreover, with the disappearance of certain traditional norms, such as Bitlaha that protected woman from sexual aggression has ceased to exist in the urban situation. Today, urban women have a heightened sense of insecurity and enhanced dependence on their men-folk and institutions dominated by men. Many a times, a woman is forced to prefer marriage which further binds her to patriarchy. Any deviation from patriarchal norms is taken as a social evil and invites stigma. New norms relating to marriage have adversely affected even working tribal women. The subordination of tribal women to patriarchal ideologies, institutions and interests is considered responsible for their low status. K.L. Sharma (1997) has clearly states that patriarchy, stratification system and status of women are closely interrelated and any kind of change in status of women would entail an attack on patriarchy, caste and class.

3. The study shows that now division of tribal society into various social strata or classes is being accepted as a stark reality. Apart from economic strata, tribal society in Jharkhand is further divided on the basis of ethnicity, religion and socio-cultural criteria. We have seen that gender discrimination varies from significant to moderate in accordance with class (economic standing), place of work (urban and rural), and social and cultural aspects such as ethnicity and religion. In the urban context, the women of upper strata are economically better-off. They have access to higher education, hence high socio-political awareness. Although they have acquired positions of power and authority, yet a few of them are concerned about various socio-
economic problems of the tribal people. It has been observed that most of the middle class tribal women in Ranchi city are mainly in white color jobs as clerks, teachers, doctors, secretaries etc. Neera Desai (1996) has pointed out that “the main reason for middle class women to work is economic necessity, and these women tend to avoid taking up any top level positions as these positions conflict with a woman’s role as a wife, mother and manager of the household”. This is also applicable to most of the middle class tribal women as they avoid being members of any women’s organizations. They are working in a sense, to use their education and to bring their salary home for their family and then to look after the needs of the family, and thus continue to perform their traditional roles. Most of the urban tribal families want their womenfolk to study or to take up jobs, but dislike their participation in any women’s organizations and related social activities. Moreover, changes are not liked in the home management. There is a persistence of the primacy of the role of the family vis-a-vis women- whether they are married or not, employed or unemployed. Young women are especially discouraged to take up any non-traditional work like joining women’s organizations, and this prevents crusade against prejudices. So keeping a low profile in social activities and such restrictions have implications for familial obligations. Thus women’s empowerment is governed not by free choice but by the ideological and gender considerations. Another reason for the upper strata women being only confined to their jobs and families is that they are economically better off and problems relating to gendering, inheritance of property, ownership and control of land and decision-making, etc., do not affect them directly. Hence,
organizations of the tribal women are more active outside Ranchi, and in small semi-rural areas. The exclusive pre-occupation of the tribal women with two square meals create special challenges for them in the city. The traditional norms of mutual help and cooperation are no longer in vogue. Even in the city, tribals are divided on ethnic, religious and class lines. Only a few of the major tribal groups like Santhal, Munda and Oraon are well placed in Ranchi. The small ‘primitive tribes’ like Birhor, Asur, Kharwar, etc., are still living in a deplorable condition. The converts (both Christians and Hindus) are, however better-off both socially and economically than the non-converts. So intra-women stratification among tribals is clearly evident in Ranchi. The study also shows that tribe (ethnicity), class and religion overlap and gender is the fourth dimension that affects the division of labour and social status. The role of social institutions like religion, marriage and education are important in defining gender relations. M.N Srinivas (1978) observes: “The changing position of Indian women has many facets and generalization is impossible because of the existence of considerable variation among regions, between rural and urban areas, among classes, and finally among different religious, ethnic and caste groups”.

4. Our study attempts to deconstruct the popular and simplistic notion that tribal women have “sexual freedom” and are “free from male domination”. The sexual division of labour and role-stereotyping puts unequal burden on tribal women in the city. Moreover, it is important to situate the tribal women along with a stratification axis. It is true that equal opportunity does not exist in practice, because there is inadequate support system at home and at the work place. A woman
is discriminated in all walks of life. However, a small section of the urban educated women are not tied to the bonding of traditions. They have jobs that give them a regular income and social esteem. These women have made a successful transition from the tradition to modernity. Men have learned to share and cooperate with women in many ways. Husbands also help their wives in household chores. Male domination is not absent despite such a change. Neera Desai (1987) points out that a woman’s entry or withdrawal from the labour market is not her own decision, but it is determined by her socio-economic position and familial obligation. The familial role continues to get preeminence over the work role in spite of change in her social role due to education and employment. Even withdrawal of women from work among the middle class families adds to the social status of the family, which shows that men are no longer dependent upon the earning of women. Tribal women were able to accomplish their goals only if these also suited their male relatives especially fathers/brothers/ husbands. For example, a woman’s education could not be higher than that of a man or her husband. Tribal women in the lower strata suffer from twin disadvantages: (i) lower socio-economic status, (ii) gender based disability. Due to such drawbacks, women get deprived of education and training in specialized skills and other pursuits. Drop-out rates are very high. Low education and low household income compel women to get into low level economic activities. Women contribute a lot to the family income, there is a very little or no recognition of their contribution. Many a time’s parents force their daughters to discontinue their studies and insist on supplementing of the household income. Some married women work
for their livelihood in addition to doing household chores. In some cases the unemployed and alcoholic husbands ill treat their wives and demand food, money and other things. Abusive language, beating and threats of ouster are often used by the disoriented husbands. Thus, gender and class reinforce subordination of lower class women. Though tribal women are not socially or economically homogeneous, they are differentiated and hence reflect differences in their activities, life styles and perceptions. However, it would be presumptuous to claim that there is a complete division between the women of higher and lower strata. There is likelihood of a continuum in the social and cultural domains. Despite such changes, tribal identity and cooperative endeavors, fellow-feeling are quite strong and pervasive.

5. It is clearly evident that gender equality and development; need not necessarily correspond with each other. Even if the two do, the process is quite slow. It is true that women being subordinate to men have enjoyed comparatively less benefits of development. In the tribal society, women and children constitute an overwhelming majority. The children are malnourished. Women are illiterate and unemployed and are deprived of proper health care. Gender differentiation instead of reducing with economic development, tend to widen with increasing capitalist development. Disparities with regard to access to economic and social services and resources appear to increase with the improvement in women the level of such services. The gender gap widens in the context of higher life expectancy rates and reduced mortality. Change in the position of women implies change in the hierarchical order of society. There is a visible relationship between patriarchy and social hierarchy, and both drawing strength from each
other. When the hierarchal order is threatened by new forces, it reasserts its strength through patriarchal control over women. So the basic hierarchical order remains virtually unchanged, only the position of the incumbents change. New technology and life-styles have resulted to a renewed and wield covered form of oppression and exploitation of women in the form of dowry, purdah (social seclusion), wage discrimination and educational deprivation, etc, in Ranchi.

6. To understand the gender equality in the tribal society, we have analysed backwardness and overall socio-economic conditions. Our view is that if the society progresses than equality between the sexes enhances. Our study clearly shows that women belonging to the upper strata are less discriminated and exploited compared to the tribal women of the lower classes. We know that the standard of living among the tribals is lower than the national average. Poverty, malnutrition, mortality and morbidity are much higher among them. Nearly 85 per-cents of the tribals are below the poverty line as against the national average of 38 per-cents. Most of them suffer from nutritional deficiency. The state control of forests, large-scale immigration of non-tribal people, exploitation of mineral wealth, hydrological and environmental sources, tribals have been loosing their land and land-based endowments. Independent India has taken a serious note of such a situation and several avenues for amelioration of the conditions of the tribals have been created. Since resources are limited and improperly distributed, the benefits are also limited and have reached to a select few. Even Sanskritisation has strengthened ethnic identity. Besides this, value of kinship, institutional reciprocity,
knowledge of shared history and territorial occupancy are some other aspects of the tribal society. The tribes are rediscovering their philosophical and cultural roots and potentialities. There is also an increasing trend to have inter-tribal unity and consciousness. The communal control of customary resources and revival of traditional institutions and values of egalitarianism may act as a mechanism against gender stratification. Likewise, socio-economic improvement is also necessary for gender equality.

7. The study also examines that whether empowerment of the tribal women in Ranchi is possible without development which especially means social and human development and inclusion of gender in the development paradigm. Is there a close alliance between development and empowerment? Can empowerment without development enhance the status of tribal women? Our study indicates that, empowerment is not possible without an overall development of the tribal society and that of tribal women in particular. Women’s empowerment could be realised as a concrete reality only if the gender equality is actualized. The very issue of women’s empowerment crops up because of man’s refusal to view a woman as his other half without which his individual identity is incomplete. Development especially in the field of education and employment for tribal women will raise the awareness level and their ability to take decisions. It is noted that certain aspects of women’s degradation follow from certain negative consequences of the process of development. Government has adapted certain strategies, for the tribal development and welfare which over emphasizes on economic growth and the neglect of social parameters from ‘development’ planning, programmes and processes in the
context of women have resulted in acute exploitation of the tribal women by the non-tribal men. Especially in a city, a tribal woman is forced to become a concubine or to have illegal marital alliance with the non-tribal men. Such deceitful men avail facilities in her name, which are meant for tribal welfare. Transfer of land in her name and getting bank loans for transport vehicles or small business etc., are some of these fraudulent activities. Likewise, tribal women in an urban setting are sidelined from the main-stream as a use and throw commodity. Such exploitation ultimately results in strengthening of the notion of “purity of women” within the tribal community and further restricting women’s free movement. The tribal men are totally against women’s freedom and for giving them equal share in property and land in the name of safeguards of the customary laws and protection of the tribal women from the “Dikus”. Thus, the tribal society is in transition. This can be seen in the tendency to deemphasize the traditional customs, rituals and social practices, even at the withdrawal of the rights of women in the traditional society.

There is also a trend among the tribals to adopt the outdated social and religious practices of the better off sections of the society. The tribal culture is being reinterpreted to meet the interest of the emerging power elite. The paradox is that been much people proclaim to have a desire to revive the cultural heritage including communal land holdings. However, their reappears to be an innate compulsion to retain private ownership of basic resources in the hands of men. Economic independence does not enhance the social position of tribal women, because men earn more than women for the same work. In urban setting, there is still a high degree of occupational segregation
based on gender and value load. Three strategies are essential for women’s development from the margin to the core of the society. These are: (1) economic independence (2) educational development, and (3) access to healthcare and family planning.

8. Our study shows that the interplay of external and internal factors and micro and macro processes affect the choices available to women. On the one hand, the macro situation and external factors (such as industrialisation, urbanisation, Sanskritisation and cultural- contact) influence the position of women, on the other class, religion and ethnic affinity influence the gender perceptions roles and values. Internal factors (such as strategies and decision-making) affect education and employment for women. Since women have concentration in the subsistence sector, their labour remains generally invisible. The increase in burden of women’s work and their reduced ability to provide food to their family are direct consequence of economic development. Women do not have control over such a situation. The paid and the unpaid work can be seen as the basis of gender stratification because women do the unpaid work. Such biases project women as consumers and non-workers dependent on men for their subsistence. Amartya. Sen (1990) observes: “The specific pattern of sexual division even outside the household can be seen as being partly reflective of the traditional within household division related to establishment arrangement, which differentially bias the cultivation of skill and tend to sustain asymmetry of opportunities offered for acquiring untraditional skills”. The ideological biases, along with the processes of socio-economic transformation, institutional and legal
change, and population dynamics, are the main reason for inferior position of tribal women in both traditional and modern society.

9. Our view is that gender is an important factor of stratification studies and it is also notable factor in the social stratification system in the tribal society. Though the fact is that the relative deprivation of women vis-à-vis men is by no means uniform across the tribal society, and even then it does not reduce the importance of gender as a dimension in social stratification. Tribal women may be treated as a special target group. Though tribal women in the city have more income, opportunities and bargaining power within the household, yet they are not able to compete with men on equal terms, due to gendered limitations. Hence, tribal women continue to remain powerless and marginalized. Amartya Sen (1990) again observes: “The systematic inferior position of women inside and outside the household in many societies points to the necessity of treating gender as a force of its own in development analysis... in fact, the importance of gender as a crucial parameter in social and economic analysis is complementary to, rather than competitive with, the variables of class, ownership, occupations, incomes and family status”.

10. In Jharkhand, aspirations and identity of a tribal community can be seen by way of its distinct existence different from other communities. For assertion of ethnic identity various tribes have formed associations in towns and cities. Such associations in Ranchi function as agencies of social welfare and political spaces for their members. Thus, new forms of power have emerged. The new power structure is very different from the traditional one. The new modes of power accord more importance to ascertaining of inequalities. Women are
largely treated as the markers of these ethnic boundaries. Many a times they are seen as violators of ethnic norms. Hence, the control of sexuality, norms of chastity and social sanctions against women show that the patriarchy operates differentially for tribal men and women. Such a situation leads to unequal access to resources for men and women. In Ranchi city, in the name of preserving the cultural ethos and revitalization of tribal customs, violence against women has been institutionalised, including subjugation of women in everyday life. There is no tribal women’s movement in Ranchi, and there is no alliance with the feminist movement. No considerable space has been created for the tribal women as a person independent of her family and community. The tribal organisations are very strong compared to the women’s organizations in the city. Because of the patriarchal ambience, granting equal rights to tribal women have never been a reality. It is basically a feeding on the culture of silence as many of the tribal women say that they don’t want to break up the family as well as the ethnic solidarity. Inequality is so naturalized in everyday life that the subjugated women do not protest.

Though there is provision for one-third reservation in the civic bodies for tribal women, but such a provision acts as an empty empowerment. As the basic problems are of alienation form land and forests, lack of jobs and training for employment, and patriarchal dominance, the tribals have not changed much. Women are the worst sufferers, also due to unfavorable sex-ratio (1991 census). The sex ratio among the tribals was higher (972) than the general population (929). But over the decades there is a decline, even at times, more than the general population. Only 15 % tribal women were literate against 32 % female
literacy in general population. Participation of the tribal women is woeful in the political processes. For an effective empowerment, there are six parameters namely, information and education, marketable skills, economic assets and income, social support, political voice and access to services and technology. But it is not the sum total of these factors which will make a woman empowered. It is only when a woman participates in the process of access to these resources the she gets empowered. According to 1991 census, 7% of the tribal populations live in urban areas. The present study aims to touch upon a small fragment of the urban tribal women.

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