CHAPTER-2
THE PRESENT STUDY

In every known society certain rights and opportunities have been denied to women often on the assumption that women are inferior to men in certain respects. Further, such an assumed inferiority of women has been seen as a subservient fact of nature. Tribal society of India has not been an exception in this regard. Both men and women in Indian society, tend to share historically this assumption which has been passing from generation as a part of culture.

The status of any social group is determined importantly by its level of health-nutrition, literacy-education and employment-income. The tribal women constitute as in any other social group about half of the total population. However, the importance of women in tribal society is more important than in other social groups of India, because of the fact that the tribal women, more than women in any other social group works harder and the family economy and management depend on her.

Despite constitutional protection assurances, the position of tribal women is found to be lower than not only that of women in the general population and the scheduled caste women but is also lower than the status of tribal men. It is characterized by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market forces in tribal society illiteracy, sub-human physical living conditions, high-fertility and high-malnutrition and near absence of modern health care facilities.
Defining Equality and Inequality: Gender, Factors of Gender Identities and Stratification

Gender

It is generally accepted that sociology and sociological theory have not paid adequate attention to the fact that societies are divided or stratified not only on the basis of caste, class, and religion and so on, but also on the basis of gender. The dictionary meaning of gender is “classification of objects roughly corresponding to the two sexes as well as the properties of these two sexes”. While discussing the differences between the sexes we generally focus on biological and reproductive function, but differences in gender relate to various other attributes which may be socially and culturally determined. On the other sex is biological whereas gender is sociological namely, the social meaning we attribute to it. Anthony Giddens (1989) makes an important distinction between sex and gender. He explains that “while sex refers to physical differences of the body, gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between male and female. This distinction between sex and gender is fundamental, since many differences between males and females are not biological in origin”.

So the conventional analyses have tended to concentrate on the traditional and accepted roles of women as bearers and rearers of children and not on their other roles. So far, biological differences have been focused on without adequate attention to the implication of these differences. In this thesis, we shall be looking mainly at these attributes and how they came into existence and how the concepts “Women” and “Men” become important not only in terms of difference between them, but also as concepts which help us better, understand society and social relationships.
Factors of Gender Identities

There are many factors leading to gender identities. The process of socialization, by which people learn what is expected of them from their parents, peers and society at large, teaches men and women the norms of conduct for their gender. In many societies, gender roles i.e. the expected or preferred ways for people of each sex to behave are rigidly defined. Gender socialization encompasses the process learning society’s gender roles and their advantages and limitations.

In most societies, there is a clear categorization of what it means to be male or female. This categorization process and the agents of socialization that transmit knowledge about gender roles, influence how individuals define themselves and others in terms of gender and sex roles. The agents of gender socialization includes parents, siblings, peers, schools, religion and a variety of other institutions which play a central role in shaping gender socialization. Gender identities and gender socialization can have serious ramifications for an individual’s sense of self esteem.

Culture has traditionally been seen as of key significance in the construction of gender identities. The recent analysis of gender and culture has drawn heavily on literary theory on the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault. The emphasis has shifted from individual’s learning experience to the creation of the test or discourses, which constructs our notion of gender. This work often speaks of difference, both between women and men, but also between women. Indeed, some of the emphasis on differences between women has raised problems with the very concept of ‘women’ as a unitary category. For example, in the Indian context, a woman is defined as an ambivalent persona by the dual value-system. On the one hand women are
seen as a fertile benevolent bestowal of prosperity, and on the other, they are perceived as an aggressive, malevolent and destructive person (Shakti).

In no society, men and women experience religion in the same way. Religions are powerful social institutions that shape gender identities in societies. There are sacred spaces where only men are allowed to enter and not women. Similarly, there are norms defined by which only men can perform certain duties or obligations pertaining to religious activities.

The formal education indoctrinates gender roles through which “self” gradually get shape and influence and gender identity. The numerous role models and examples portrayed in the schools and colleges are the major sources of the formation of gender identities. The institution of education has been implied by sociologist in the process of the stereotyping of genders. Apart from this communication and media and language also influence cognitive structures and attitudes towards gender.

**Social Stratification**

Social stratification is a particular form of social inequality. It refers to the presence of social groups, which are ranked one above the other, usually in terms of amount of power, prestige and wealth their members’ posses. Those who belong to a particular group or stratum have some awareness of common interests and common identity. They share a similar life-style which to some extent, distinguish them from member of other social strata.

Social stratification therefore involves a hierarchy of social groups which enjoy or suffer the unequal distribution of rewards in society as members of different social groups. According to K.L. Sharma (1994), “Social stratification being a social phenomenon focuses on general issues
relating to structuring of social inequalities in human societies. Variation in
different societies relating to the structure and process of stratification refer
to specificities of historical and contextual dimensions. The main aim is to
know the compelling facticity of social inequality as persisting phenomena”.

Besides being a fundamental reality and a fact of life social
stratification is a sensitive subject as it refers to social ranking of people in
high and low positions in society. Caste, class, race and gender are treated as
the basis of social stratification. They are not universally and uniformly
effective in all societies. For example, caste was an effective basis of social
ranking in traditional India, whereas class is found more acceptable as the
basis of social stratification in the western countries. South Africa continues
to give race a premier place in their ranking. Gender is operative more or
less as the basis of social hierarchy in all societies. Besides social ranking,
these factors also determine avenues and opportunities of social mobility in
the respective societies where they are accepted as the main basis of social
stratification.

Approaches to the Study of Gender-Stratification

Various methods exist for studying structures and changes of
phenomenon in societies. A comprehensive presentation and discussion of
these approaches are beyond the scope of this study. We will only indicate
some major general features of them.

Structural-historical approach as forwarded by T.B. Bottomore (1972)
is found suitable to study gender stratification in tribal society of Ranchi
town, keeping in view the historicity and specific structural ad cultural
dimensions of the tribal social structure. The main methodological features
of historical approach are that particular historical changes of social
structures and types of societies are investigated and compared in certain respects with other types of change and society, likewise both casual explanation and historical interpretation finds a place. And the most significant feature of structuralism is that it aims to discover universal elements in human society.

There has been a tendency to assume that in stratification studies, stratification implies hierarchy and inequality which is quite misleading. Dipankar Gupta (1991) argued that all system of stratifications is not hierarchal. He clearly stated that “it might figuratively persuade one to believe that stratification implies layers that are vertically or hierarchically arranged. Differences rather than hierarchy are dominant in some stratificatory system. In other words, the constitutive elements of these differences are such that any attempt to see them hierarchically would do offence to the logical property of these very elements. The layers in this case are not arranged vertically or hierarchically, but horizontally or even separately”. Now the point being made that there is no logical reason to make hierarchies of differences such as linguistic, religious and ethnic or gender. But as D. Gupta (1991) himself acknowledges, “in the eyes of most people religion, languages, sexes, nationalities are all hierarchized though it would be difficult to get an unambiguous statement of the criteria on the basis of which these hierarchies are constructed. In fact, a worthwhile question for a sociologist is to ask: why do people tend to hierarchize horizontal differentiation whose logical property is equality?”

In the present study the importance of logical distinction notwithstanding, differences are hierarchized as tribal women face a great deal of antagonism, prejudices and discrimination. Prejudice operates mainly through the use of stereotypical thinking. Even though differences are not
necessarily unequal or hierarchal, but in practice, gender is attributed with features of both hierarchy and inequality. Stratification theories should use gender as an analytical category to understand how patriarchy was reproduced through both class and family and ethnicity.

**Review of Existing Literature**

During the British rule, scholarly oriented administrators were posted in different parts of the country to enquire into the conditions of the tribes and low castes in India. Among them were Framers, Buchanam, H.H. Riseley, Dalton O’Malley, Thruston, Crooke and several others.

They wrote about the tribes in India in forms of handbooks, gazetteers and monographs, which provide only the basic information about the aboriginal people in India, influenced by them, S.C. Roy, the first Indian anthropologist who was latter known as the “Father of Indian Ethnology” published his first work on “The Munda” (1912) and “The Oraon” (1915).

The tribal study gathered momentum when anthropologist like P.N. Mishra, L.K. Anantha Krishana Iyer, G.S. Ghurye, Iravati Karve provided the initial stimulation to the organic scientific researches by conducting field expedition and by writing books and articles.

Majumdar’s (1941) work:– “The Changing Hos of Singhbhum”, N.K. Bose’s (1928) publication on “Hindu methods of tribal absorption” marked a turning point and provided modals for the study of dynamics of the tribal culture. During this period Verrier Elwin published a series of monographs on the tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Orrisa like the Baiga (1947) the Maria (1943) and the Muria’s Ghotul (1947). Furer Haimendorf also published monographs on the tribals of Hyderabad (1943).
After independence there was a positive increase in the researches on tribal communities. The tribal communities begin to be studied in terms of inter-relationships. The differences and similarities among the tribal and non-tribal communities were emphasised in these studies.

The census operation of the govt. of India also launched schemes of tribal studies during 1961 census, which are still continuing. S.C. Roy undertook detailed monographic studies of some of the tribes of Chotanagpur. He took a humanitarian interest in the Mundas of Chotanagpur. He studies their language and also other languages. His first monograph “The Mundas and their country” was published in 1912. This was followed by a series of monographs on the Oraon (1915), the Birhor, Oraon religion and customs (1928) and the Kharia (1937) of Chotanagpur. Roy thus, presents an exhaustive picture of the life, culture and culture-change among these tribes. He also made an attempt to examine the antiquity of tribes in terms of certain archeological evidence.

D.M. Majumdar (1924) undertook field researches among the Hos and in 1937, he published his first book on the Ho tribe and after twelve years, he published the re-study “Affairs of a Tribe” (1950), P.C Biswas (1956) prepared a monograph on the Santhals of Santhal-Pargana.

L.P. Vidyarthi (1963) in his study of the Maler tribes of Rajmahal hills describes the Maler culture in term of nature-man-spirit complex He also developed the typology of the tribes of Bihar considering ecology, economy and socio-cultural aspects (1966). Sometimes latter he studies the process and pattern of change in the modern tribal societies of Chotanagpur (1968).
D.P Sinha’s (1968) study of tribal markets throws light on the significance of the inter-tribal market as an economic, socio-religious and political centre of the region.

In the same period Sachidananda (1964) has presented a general account of the social and cultural life of seven tribes- the Mudas, the Oraons, the Hos, the Santals, the Kharia, the Saoria, the Dharia and the Birhor. Sachidananda also studied the culture change among the Mudas and the Oraons of Ranchi district.

L.P. Vidyarthi (1966) also attempted to examine the impact of urbanisation on tribal culture. He did this by examining the impact of the emergence of a heavy engineering complex in the tribal belt of Chotanagpur and by analyzing the pattern of socio-economic changes that occurred in this region owing to large scale industrialisation. Sometimes latter he made a systematic study of changes in the pattern of tribal leadership in the six selected tribes of different cultural types (1973).

The tribal research Institute of Bihar has undertaken some welfare oriented research projects and has published a few books like “Land and people of tribal Bihar” edited by N. Prasad (1964) and “Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan” highlighting the tribal religion by Sinha (1964).

G.S. Ghurye (1943) has examined the status of tribals in the total Indian social structure. In his latter work he deals with the problem of integration of the tribals in the light of the latest political and constitutional provisions (1959).

Iravati Karve (1969) has made a number of studies on the tribes of Maharashtra and she has given a clear picture of the geographical distribution, demographic setting and contemporary tribal situation in Maharashtra.
W.H.R. Rivers (1906), described the customs, religion and language of the Todas. Mandelbaum in a series of studies has dealt with life style of the Kotas especially their interaction with the neighboring tribes.

So, we find that there exists a rich tradition of tribal studies in our country. There are a large number of studies on tribal communities but only a few are focused on the tribal women. The existing literature on tribal women, basically have two assumptions about the status of the tribal women. The popular image and perception of the tribal women is that of being better off than their non-tribal counterparts. There is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood. She enjoys the right to decide about her marriage etc. Instead of dowry, there is bride price indicating high social status of the tribal women. A tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily. She earns and is therefore to a great extent economically independent.

A higher social status of women was reported by the ethnologist and earlier anthropologist who have studied the tribal kinship system, marriage, youth dormitories etc, and they have focused on tribal social organisation. This period is also known as the conservative period. Furer Haimendorf, S.C Roy, Varrior Elwin and G.S. Ghurye were among the main anthropologist of this period.

Then came the analytical period, in which many sociologist have studied the low status and problems faced by the tribal women. For example, she does not have property rights except in a matrilineal society which has a small proportion of the tribal population. She is paid fewer wages than her male counterpart for the same work. There are several taboos discriminating against tribal women. The tribal women can not hold the office of a priest and also many a times cannot attend ceremonial workshop. A tribal woman
cannot be a member of tribal Panchayat which is one of the major decision-making bodies in the tribal social organisation.

Rivers (1973), Dalton (1972) and Grigson (1938) have reported low status of women among Todas, Kharia and Mariya Gond with references to certain Taboos during certain period and ceremonies.

Majumdar (1973) has reported a high status of tribal women on some indication while lower on others, while Dr. S.S Shashi (1975) has concluded that the status of tribal women varies from tribe to tribe.

The developmental projects have adversely affected the tribal women. With deforestation they have to travel a longer distance to gather forest products. Due to high degree of industrialisation tribal have to migrate to other places in the search of livelihood. There are evidences of sexual exploitation of tribal women by forest and mining contractors. The incidences of sexual assaults on tribal women have increased.

In a paper on social structure, status and mobility pattern, among tribal women, Sachidanand (1978) has shown that the status of women is not a function of their economic role in a particular society, but it is determined by the social structure on which the society is based.

Sushma Sahay Prasad (1988) in her book “Tribal Women Labourers” discusses the aspects of economic and physical exploitation faced by the women workers.

Anjali Widge (1995) in her book “Women in informal sector” discusses the disadvantages of tribal women who have been migrated to Delhi and are working as domestic workers.

Jaynti Alam (1998) in her book “Urban migration among tribal women” describes the problems faced by the tribal women working as a domestic worker in Delhi and also their physical, economical and
psychological exploitation. She also examines the changing pattern among these tribal young women due to urban life-style.

Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan (1991) in their book “Gender and Tribe” have pointed out the transformation that occurs within tribal society. Like the establishment of patriarch rules which are quite similar to the caste society. Patriarchy which is not simply control over women’s labour in the sphere of reproduction, rather it is control over their total labour, both in the labour process and in consumption. So, all the aspects of social existence such as marriage and freedom of movement come under the male control.

V.K. Durga and D.L. Prasada Rao (1994) in their article “Gender Ideology” made a comparative analysis of tribal and non-tribal women. According to them the position of women is same everywhere. In both societies the decision to mortgage property or acquire new property rests on men, although, women contributes much to the family income. Major decision of the family affairs rests with men. An extension of patrilineal ideology is that women is important only to perpetuate the line of descent, thus the role of mother is more valued in both the societies. It is made up by raising the mother to the position of god and enjoying courtesy to the wife and indulgence towards the daughter. However, the women do not have any say in the household. It is men who decide the major issues in the family.

Vinita Damodaran (2002) in her article “Gender, forest and famine in the 19th century Chotanagpur India” attempts to address the central question of changing relationship between gender and environment, in the context of scarcity and famine in the 19th century Chotanagpur. She tries to establish the link between gender, forest and famine. This paper attempts to understand the phenomenon famine as gendered one and explore the cultural
and gendered meaning of hunger. In doing so, it looks at the symbolism of landscape and gendering of it by local communities in Chotanagpur.

G. Menon and W. Fernades (1987) in their book “Tribal women and Forest Economy” studied the impact of migration on tribal women’s work and status in Orissa. Their study reveals that the Saoras were going under severe economic stress, due to the destruction of the forest. According to them, change has been brought through outside intervention. The Saoras’ economy was a women’s economy. Since the activities which could be dependent upon for sustained and regular supply of food, fell within the purview of women’s economic responsibility.

T. Nongbri (2001) in her article “Timber Ban in North East India: Effects on Livelihood and Gender” has tried to explain the state action as Supreme Court ban on timber logging and its implication on tribal women. She points out how this ban has resulted in an increase in women’s already overburdened work responsibilities. They have to work more to meet the economic needs of the family and domestic chores has increased manifold. She points out how it threatens women’s traditional rights to land and forest, and also enforces their marginalization from management of their natural productive resources.

Famous writer and social activist Mahasweta Devi in her various work which include novels, collections of short stories and journalistic writing has written about the tribal life in the whole Chotanagpur region. If one were to sum up in a word the recurring theme of the Mahasweta’s works and the motive force of her life, it invariably would be fight against women. Tribal explanation and women’s exploitation are the different layers of the running theme. Her works on tribal women have specially concentrated on a few types of bondage- the contractor’s bondage and women’s exploitation.
Tribal women are subjected to two-tier exploitation – as a labourer and also as instrument of sexual gratification to the temporary landlord. As extreme case of this abuse and assault is the transformation of the bonded female into a bonded prostitute. Even, prior to independence, women were subjected to sexual abuse and assault, but only occasionally and exceptionally, certainly not systematically and calculatedly as now with the advent of the contract system and forced displacement of the work force-recently liberated from bondage, yet condemned to be trapped in another bondage-apparently quite attractive and even glamorous, but essentially offering a wretched and humiliating existence. Mahasweta Devi has depicted not only the torture of tribal women but also presented a new correlation of forces: elected members and govt. officials offering support and patronage to the newly emerging phenomena of mafia group that are responsible for this saddening and maddening state of affairs of tribal women.

**Studies on tribal social stratification in India**

A number of studies have been conducted on tribal stratification in different parts of the country. Sem Topno discusses stratification among the Mundas in terms of the impact of Hinduism and Christianity on the choice on the names of children. He has classified the names of children into three categories, i.e., Indigenous, Hinduised and Christianised. Topno observes that religion appears to be the largest single factor in the choice of names.

R.K. Prasad discusses some aspects of stratification and interaction among the Pahariya of Palamau. The Pahariyas have developed a kind of caste like social stratification because of the familiarity with the Hindus. Prasad points out that the tribal groups have also adopted the Jajmani system.
G.S. Aurora has discussed the life and culture of the Bhilala of Alirajpur in the Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. He describes the regional community, the kinship axis and extension of political, economical and cultural frontiers. The study points out how tribe, caste and class encounters have led to changes among the Bhilala.

A study of the Chaudhri tribe in Surat district has been conducted by Ghanshyam Shah (1986). He observed that among the Chaudhri tribe four economic strata have emerged on the basis of occupation and ownership of land. These strata are: (i) agricultural labourers and poor cultivators, (ii) middle cultivators (iii) rich cultivators and, (iv) White-collar employees. Such a system of stratification in a tribal community resemble with socio-economic differentiations found in the non-tribal communities and castes.

While analysing the emerging stratification in tribal Gujrat, Pradip Kumar Bose (1985) identifies four distinct classes of peasants among the tribals, i.e., (i) rich peasant, (ii) middle peasant, (iii) poor peasant and, (iv) agricultural labourer. Such a hierarchy is reflected in all aspects of life including education and political power. Bose reports that tribes in Gujrat today are equally affected like non tribals by the processes of planned and unplanned change and by continuous structural and institutional shifts in rural India.

K.S. Singh (1990) observes that the economic and political processes of tribal transformation get reflected in social stratification. Social stratification among the tribes has always existed in various forms such as social and physical distance, notion of pollution-purity, prestige and status etc.

A. R. Desai (1977) while commenting on the emerging pattern of stratification among the tribals argued that the processes released right from
the British period to the aftermath of the independence have created two major classes: (i) the privileged class, and (ii) the exploited class. A small group of tribals who have benefited from the privileges have occupied a higher status.

Jaganath Pathy (1984) has conducted studies in few tribal villages of Gujrat. He argued that the tribals are peasantry. He applies Marxian framework and identifies five agrarian classes: (i) rich peasant, (ii) middle peasant, (iii) small peasant, (iv) landless, and (v) farm-worker.

F.G. Bailey’s (1960) work on the Konds of Orrisa reveals that the process of social differentiation among the tribes is unilinear characterizing the change from tribe to caste and to class.

S.P. Punalekar (1988) has conducted a study of migration and social stratification among the Dhodias of Surat city. He points out the migrant Dhodias are divided into two distinct social strata: (i) upper social strata of white-collar employees, and (ii) lower social strata of factory workers, casual labourers and the self employed. He argued that Dhodias who are in the lower social strata in Surat city are those who belong to the families of the landless or poor farmers.

S.D. Badgaiyan (1986) discusses the interplay between class and ethnicity among the Mundas of Chotanagpur. He says it is wrong to believe that “Only tribals live in a tribal area”. In fact in many tribal areas it is the non-tribal who forms a dominant majority. He observed that the tribal groups are internally differentiated on class line.

S.L. Doshi (1990) has also raised the problems relating to the identity of the Bhils and their class differentiation. He argued that the segments of traditional Bhil society, which migrated to the plains, got stratified into three ranked strata, i.e., Palvi or Bhils of forests and hills, Bhagat Bhils and
Christian Bhils. Doshi argued that the three Bhils status groups have taken to class character.

Adityendra Rao (1988) has made a study of Bhils of a tribal sub-plan area of southern Rajasthan in the context of social stratification. Rao argues that the tribal social stratification is based on class rather than the caste system.

Sachchidananda (1990) reports that even in the pre-colonial and colonial India, stratification among tribes had emerged in the form of quasi-feudal agrarian exploitative system. The main classes were: (i) the upper classes and (ii) commoners. The upper class controlled more land, occupied leadership position and enjoyed higher status.

S. L. Sharma (1996) on his study of Bhils in Rajastan reports that the beginning of social stratification among Bhils started during the colonial period when the tribals came into contact with the outside world. After independence, the constitutional safeguard, protective discrimination, reservation in service and provision for economic purpose development blocks, tribal sub-plan areas and number of special schemes were implemented. The policies of protective discrimination programmes have a multi-dimensional character. The essence of all these programmes and policies is modernisation. Today, the Bhils are face to face with the members of non-Bhils. This has on the one hand, integrated the Bhils with the wider society and the other development has created status distinction and inequalities among the Bhils.

Gaps in the research themes

While scanning through the available literature on the status of tribal women in India, it was observed that comprehensive area specific
gender studies were limited, most of the available studies on tribal women were isolated, fragmentary and did not cover the various dimensions of sex-ratio, gender stratification, marriage practices, female literacy, traditional status and expected roles, health status, empowerment of women etc.

Most of the literature on tribal women is substantially romantic and grim economic realities have been completely ignored. The foregoing review reveals a number of significant gaps. The review of the above studies on tribal social stratification reveals that most of the researches have given emphasis on class, power and ethnicity as the basis of stratification and gender has been completely ignored. Moreover, very few researches have tried to study the impact of modernisation, education, employment, conversion etc., on the status of tribal women. But the relationship between education, conversion, employment, gender stratification, empowerment and political participation has not been adequately researched. Similarly, the changes in the traditional values and attitudes which ultimately reflect social change in the structure of the society have received scant attention.

Most of the studies were limited in objective and scope. Most of the work done, so far deals with some narrative accounts of the projects, programmes, agencies and personal experiences. All these studies though useful lacked in methodological sophistication. So experimental, correlational, evaluative and follow-up studies, especially at the micro level are required.

Reviewing the studies on tribal women, K.S. Singh (1998) reiterated that there are materials on tribals in general but the existing literature specifically on tribal women is limited. Health statistics also does not gives an overall picture and the data on gender differentiation of longevity, level of health, extent of mortality, infant mortality, nutrition etc.,
are not available. Emphasizing the need for baseline data on at least certain basic parameters relating to tribal women, he states that data on various tribes are needed as they differ from one another.

K.S. Singh (1998) concluded that “There is a need for generating studies which can fill the information gap about variation that exist and about the status and role of tribal women from one region to another and one community to another.”

A Framework for the Study of Gender-Stratification in the Tribal Social Structure

Tribal do not constitute a single social system. Each tribal community is a complete society in itself, with its own economic, political, kinship and cultural system. Similarly, each tribal group may be differentiated in its own way. Although, in Indian constitution all tribal groups are collectively designated as scheduled tribes and their oneness exists in theory only. In real terms each tribe remains a separate social entity. The benefits of scheduling it self are restricted by state boundaries. For example, a tribe which may have the status of a scheduled tribe in one state may not be recognised as such in another. The autonomous character of tribes makes the study of stratification in their society a complex issue. That is why in the study of tribal stratification one has to adapt a set of perspectives that are different from those used in caste.

According to Adityendra Rao (1988), in caste stratification one looks for the properties of group (Jati) and ranks it in relation to the caste system. In tribal stratification one looks for the properties of the individuals and ranks them in relation to others. In the caste stratification we have a
hierarchy of groups within the system of caste. In tribal stratification, we have no system as such but only a hierarchy of positions acquired by individual members. There are several factors which determine tribal stratification political, ideological, economic etc. Although these factors may collectively determine tribal stratification at times, some of them appeared to be more prominent than others. It is interesting to note the interplay of these various factors in determining the direction and course of tribal stratification. For example, among the Khasi the pattern of stratification changed from the political to the economic and among the Bhils it changes from occupational to ideological. Like wise the social stratification does not take the same form in every society. Different society uses different criteria for organizing their members in a stratified order.

The constitution of India (1950) in its Article 46, promises special care for the educational and economic interests of the scheduled tribes and protection from social injustice and economic exploitation, but still the status of tribal women is characterized by over- work, invasion of sexually exploitive market forces in tribal society, illiteracy, sub-human physical living conditions, high fertility, high malnutrition and near absence of modern healthcare facilities. The tribal woman is a working woman and works harder than tribal men and women in any if the social groups. But the status of tribal women is lower than that of the tribal men. A tribal women’s lot may seen to be better than that of her non-tribal counter part because there is no child marriage, no stigma attached to widows and she has the right to decide about her marriage, customs of bride price instead of dowry etc, but she has the no right to property (except in matrilineal societies). She gets fewer wages than her male counter part and there are several discriminatory taboos against her.
Methodology: (Data Collection, Sources and Techniques.)

Since, the tribal women are highly stratified lot in terms of their family background, education, employment, rural-urban origins, religions etc. Different technique of data collection has been used. The most commonly used approaches in this study are both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods produce numerical data and qualitative methods produce information. The present study has relied heavily on qualitative and quantitative method including long informal interviews and focused group discussions, observations and interview schedule. Data was collected both from primary and secondary sources.

These include:-

➢ Structured interview schedule/ questionnaire for educated tribal women.
➢ Structured interviews schedule/ questionnaire for various official and functionaries of concerned department, NGOs and women’s organisation.
➢ Informal interviews and group-discussions for the illiterate tribal women.
➢ Unstructured interviews of the functionaries at the state and district level.
➢ Certain specific case studies from different strata of women were also included.
➢ Observation made during several visits to the fields.

The sources of secondary data were mainly, the district welfare office, women’s organisation, NGOs and Tribal research institute.

The project appraisals (both at the state and district levels) and the study of material and relevant literature, documents, reports and personal
collection of individuals and organisation were collected, examined and analysed to supplement the survey data and also to substantiate the empirical analysis. District gazetteers and district hand book and district census survey also provided these secondary data. Analysis of data derived from these secondary sources was used as collateral evidence to holster the conclusions derived from the primary field surveys undertaken in selected localities.

Given the objective of the study: two set of samples were drawn, One of those are from the upper strata of tribal society and the others those who are from the lower strata. A comparative analysis was also drawn between them. The effects and consequences of education, development, conversion, deforestation, industrialisation, migration and political affiliation on tribal women belong to different social group was statistically tested with the help of data. And correlation analysis was used to analyze relationship between gender stratification in tribal society and host of variables. The statistical analysis of the data was done by computing average and percentage with a view to understand the impact of these variables on the gender relation in urban setting.

Various statistical tests, measured techniques were used in the analysis. The data was analysed from the quantitative and qualitative perspective. This includes qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data by using frequencies, percentage besides analytical interpretation of the qualitative primary data.

Data regarding social and individual awareness, women empowerment, social and economic independence, gender discrimination, impact of development, education and conversion were mainly analysed through qualitative method. Data regarding family background, social,
economic demographic and religious characteristics of respondents, their rural-urban origins were analysed using quantitative method. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators were considered for measuring the extent of gender stratification in tribal social structure. Other measure for direct indirect measurement based on individual responses are new skills acquired, level of individual participation in community affair, power of decision making both at home as well as in the society, social and economic independence, aspiration for their children specifically girls, increased self-esteem, health and social awareness individual self-assessment etc.

Objectives of the Study

The importance and significance of the present study will be, not only unfolding and unraveling and the socio-political dimensions of the tribal women but also to suggest the remedial measures for improving the socio-economics conditions of tribal women.

The study aims at a comprehensive and critical study of the status of tribal women in Ranchi town. While attempting this, I will keep in mind the social, economic and power dimensions in context of gender stratification. The basic objective of the study is to look at the position of women from a sociological perspective in regard to their traditionally defined roles and the actualization of the role-expectations.

The other objectives are as follows:

(1) To examine various dimensions of stratification among tribal women relating to the aspects such as freedom, economic dependence, social subjugation and cultural backwardness.
(2) To understand different hidden forms of gender stratification in the tribal society based on traditional rites and rituals.

(3) To know the empowerment of women in the light of recent development relating to education, employment and conversion.

(4) To study the impact of industrialisation, migration and culture-contact on the status of tribal women.

Hypothesis

1. The status of tribal women is not uniform among all the different communities. It varies from tribe to tribe and sometimes within the tribes. Factors like the pattern of descent and residence, law governing inheritance, marriage and divorce, degree of acculturation and urbanisation, levels of education and so on may have contributed to this variation. Women's sphere of activity and control, expected norms of behavior, the taboos, the rights and duties are quite distinct from that of a man. There is a clear-cut dichotomy between men and women's role. The status of women in this region varies along with the differences in the level of socio-economic development. There are conspicuous inequalities between the sexes in all box of life, status in inequalities of the women that are based on tradition have been pinpointed with emerging forces of changes.

2. Against the popular perception of tribal women being better off than their non-tribal counterparts. Many facts indicate that a tribal woman has a very low status in the tribal society. All the tribes of this region have patriarchal form of social structure along with patrilineal descent and
patrilocal residence in their social organisation. Tribal women contribute to economic development in a more substantial way than the tribal men. But there is invariably clear cut division of labour between a man and women. It is a fact that a tribal women works shoulder to shoulder with men but she is deprived of inheriting landed property of her father and husband. This is because land is generally held by the whole clan or community and the patriarchal social organisation greatly favours the males.

3. Traditional norms are somewhat liberal for women and most of them continue to enjoy more freedom. But several taboos discriminating against tribal women still exist in certain tribal groups implying their low status. She works like a slave for her family. But she has neither property rights nor a social status. She has absolutely no decision making power in the social sphere. The women are excluded from the traditional political organisation. In the realm of religious practices and rituals a tribal women cannot hold the office of a priest. A custom of Dark Age, the heinous practice of branding a woman as a witch and then killing her publicly still persists in the tribal region; likewise tribal women are discriminated in a very subtle way, as patriarchy is deep rooted in the tribal society as in the wider society.

4. Industrialisation, development, conversion, migration, modern education and unregulated cultural-contact with outsiders have largely affected the tribal way of life. Modernisation has both positive and negative impact on tribal women. In the recent years of more general process of modernisation and due to process of Sanskritisation usually resulted in decline of freedom of the women in movement, in pre-marital
sex-life, choice of partners, right to divorce and remarry. Now the boy is
given preference to a girl child.

5. Apart from class, ethnicity and power, gender is also an
important component of tribal stratification. And the various dimensions
of stratification among tribal women are aspects such as freedom,
economic dependence, social subjugation and cultural backwardness.
Especially, in urban setting intra-women stratification within the tribal
society can also be traced.

**Universe of the Study**

The universe of the study is limited to the tribal women of Ranchi
town in Jharkhand. The study covers the women of different tribal groups
like Oraons, Mundas, Santhali, Mahalis, Lohars, ChickBraik etc. of
Ranchi city. The target of the study is to cover 400 tribal women in the age
group of 18 to 55 years who are predominantly urban dwellers.

Urban tribals in Ranchi city number over 65 thousands, according
to 1971 census, 55% of tribal populations are in Ranchi town. Ranchi city
has tribal strength of 22.70%. Ranchi municipal area comprises 48.61 sq.
km. which includes 176 thousand people tribal for 15.54%. In fact, it has
been growing fast during the past two decades. The growth rate in Ranchi
urban agglomeration was 82.21% in 1971-81 it rose as much as 95.89%.

According to 1991 census, Ranchi urban area has 20.44%
scheduled tribe population, in which S.T. male population is 51.98% and
S.T. female population is 48.01%.
Sampling

Basically the rationale for deciding the objectives and selecting the sample has been determined by the fact that apart from class, power and ethnicity, gender is also an important component in understanding tribal stratification. The study may be called a case study of an urban setting Ranchi town, as it proposes to study the various dimensions of stratification among tribals relating to the aspects such as freedom, economic dependence, social subjection and cultural backwardness. And also to understand different hidden forms of gender stratification in the tribal society based on traditional rites and rituals. City wards will be the last unit of sampling and the sampling should be representative of the entire population and the sample must be random. According to the sample design is as follows:-

- The first step towards the sampling design was to obtain area-wise tribal population of Ranchi town, area-wise percentage of tribal women belonging to upper-middle class and lower-class and area-wise number of women professionals in the city as per survey in the age-group of 18-55.

- At the second stage, the operational areas of the city was divided into five zones: (i) East, (ii) west, (iii) North, (iv) South and (v) Central. The information on the names of the wards covered in five main zones.

- At the third stage, a sample of urban areas were drawn from the existing areas (covering all the zones and municipal corporation) covered by various women’s organisations, NGOs and tribal welfare organisations.
On the basis of above, the ten select localities, namely urban areas were identified representing two sub-samples from each zone. The selection of the localities was partly purposive and partly random.

The final sample of 400 hundred was selected from these ten localities on the basis of random sampling.

Scope of the Study

Since the general objective of the study is to examine gender stratification in tribal society in an urban setting, the study seeks to concentrate on ten selected localities representing all the five zones of Ranchi city. The choice of sampling is based mainly on the number of women's organisations, NGOs and tribal welfare organisations in that particular zone. A sample of 50-55 percent of total tribal women in each locality was chosen. For it was considered as neither practical nor feasible to reach out to each and every tribal woman in that area or even a given percentage in that zone.

Two wards from each zone, {two each from Hehal, Morabadi, Kadru, Purulia road and Hatia} were selected on random basis. These wards were selected representing urban areas falling within Ranchi Nagar Nigam jurisdiction.

The total sample size of the study is 400 tribal women from ten selected localities from the Ranchi town which may serve the purpose of understanding gender stratification in tribal society. The whole sets of samples are divided into mainly two sub-sample- tribal women from upper strata and tribal women from lower strata. Since these two sets of sub-sample were having variations in their socio-economic profile, the
comparison between the two is invalid. Therefore analysis has been done separately for each group and not on comparative basis.

These ten selected localities were classified into upper middle class localities and lower class localities. The sample ratio between the upper strata tribal women and lower strata tribal women corresponds to the urban population, class and occupational ratio. As the study has been conducted in an urban setting and most of the tribal population comes under the middle class and lower class category. 70 percent of respondents are from upper strata and 30 percent from the lower strata.

A sample of 400 tribal women from ten selected localities of urban areas was chosen. A purposive random sampling was adapted. While drawing sample of these classified urban areas utmost care was taken for stratification, so that the various tribal groups viz. Munda, Oraon, Lohra, Kharia, Mahali etc, religious groups, different age groups, married or unmarried, occupational groups, small and big families were covered to get their representation.

**Key Variables of the Study**

Major independent variables are age, sex, religion, tribe and strata or class. The dependent variables are: status of tribal women, gender stratification in the tribal social structure despite the popular perception of their being better off than their non-tribal counterparts, as there is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood. She enjoys the right to decide about her marriage etc. Instead of dowry, there is a bride price indicating a high status. A tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily. She earns so to a great extent economically independent.
The concept of gender stratification in this study analysis certain hidden and subtle form of gender discrimination in the tribal society based on traditional rites and rituals.

Development does not always have a positive impact on the social structure. Tribal society in general and tribal women in particular, had been adversely affected by the various development policies of government. Deforestation, mass-migration, poverty, unemployment, displacement are only few of them, with the increase of awareness and education the condition of women has improved. But tribal women still suffer from traditional handicaps, illiteracy, lack of awareness of local and other redress processes and unscrupulousness of employers adds to their miseries. So they suffer from lots of disparities and discrimination both in the hands of tribal men and also non-tribal men.

To understand the impact of an industrialisation, education, cultural-contact, conversion, employment etc on tribal women. Her overall assessment has been done at social, individual, economical and political level. But most importance has been given on the application level, like the power of decision making, choice of partners, social empowerment, political affiliation, health and social awareness.

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