CHAPTER - I

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Introduction

The present work on empowerment of tribal women is based on an intensive field work of six villages in Raigarh and Jashpur Nagar districts of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh was earlier a part of Madhya Pradesh and then Madhya Pradesh had the largest tribal population in India. Chhattisgarh became a new state in the year of 2000 and even today it is a predominantly a tribal state. In this study an attempt has been made to understand the tribal situation in general and empowerment of tribal women in the area in particular. Empowerment has been a buzz word since about two decades. In fact it is a creation of modernity and subsequently of globalization. All of us know that globalization is an extension of modernization project of the west (Giddens, 1992). Modernization always aims at equality of sexes, egalitarian values and providing justice to the weaker section of the society. Women have been put under the weaker section of the society in most of the countries because of the structured gender inequality.

When we say structured we imply gender relations as an essential part of the social structure. Inequality persists in the structure. It may be based on income, property or power and social relationships. Most of the tribal societies are marked with patriarchy, patriliny, patrinymy and patrilocality. A tribe marked with the above four factors is said to have extreme patriarchy. It leads to violence against women and results in destitute women and women in precarious conditions. Hence, today the major efforts to bring in gender equality are found through empowerment of such women. For empowerment of tribal women various agencies, both
government and non-government, are working together. The main objective of this research is to understand and evaluate the outcome of these agencies. The thesis has five chapters. Chapter I is introduction, chapter II is area and the people, chapter III is socio-economic profile of tribal women, chapter IV is empowerment of tribal women and chapter V is conclusion. Chapter I introduces the topic and deals with the theoretical background through which the study is undertaken and the data has been interpreted. Besides this it also mentions the objectives of the study and about past research work. Further, in the last section describes the research methods and techniques employed in the field work, as well as the nuances of field work which explains both difficult and pleasant situations of field work.

**Tribal Community: A Perspective**

Tribes in India constitute 8.2% of the population of the country. They are integral part of the Indian civilization in the sense they have been living with their neighboring castes since time immemorial (Bose, 1971). Bose said that Indian tribes cannot be compared with African tribes or Australian tribes. Therefore, he almost rejected the characteristics of the tribe given by British anthropologists. People of India project say there are 462 tribes with 168 segments. Schedule V and VI Scheduled Tribe list of Government of India has more than 900 tribes because the same tribe is found in different states and the state lists are added to aggregate more than 900 tribes. The standardized anthropological and sociological definitions include the following features of tribes (for details see Chaudhury and Patnaik 2008; Beteille):

(I) Habitat: They live in hilly or hill clad and forest or forest clad areas. Thus, they live in isolated and relatively isolated areas. They also live in
difficult terrain having less communication, transportation and road facilities.

(II) Economy: They are engaged in both settled and shifting cultivation. They are also engaged in art and craft including snake charming profession and in varieties of tribal dress material weaving, knitting, and matting. They are having substantive economy and there is no surplus, no division of labour, hence, mechanical solidarity is found in their society.

(III) Religion: They have their own religion. They have their own god, goddess, mythology, and hymn. They believe in animism (belief in soul), animatism, naturism, totemism and magic.

(IV) Language: They have their own language, but most of them have no script, and have only dialect.

(V) Social structure: In their society kinship dominates hence, they are known as simple society with simple social structure.

(VI) Social stratification: In tribal society there is no stratification as there is no caste and class.

(VII) Political system: They have their own political system; earlier stateless societies were found where there was no tribal chief.

(VIII) Belongingness: They have a sense of belongingness to their society.

Bose almost did not agree with these features of tribes. He said that there has been a continuous relationship between the tribes and the castes in India. If the caste people are literate and civilized then the tribals were not away from the above two factors. Hence they cannot be called
uncivilized. Therefore Indian tribes need to have distinct characteristics other than African and Australian tribes.

Describing Bose’s idea, Beteille (1975) said that Bose provided a comparison between Indian tribes and non-Indian tribes. For Bose the situation in Africa and in India are completely different. In Africa tribes are found in isolation, living in forest and not having any civilization and not having any contact with outsiders. On the other hand, Indian tribes were never found in isolation and they were a part of Indian civilization, they have been directly or indirectly related to their ancient kingdoms. But the African tribes were not having any kingdom and they are totally isolated. Chaudhury and Srivastava (2009) said that Bose provided a civilizational perspective for the Indian society, in which Bose pointed out mainly to how tribes have been interacting with the Hindu communities since long. Bose tried to compare Indian civilization with that of the Europian. Comparing to Indian civilization with that of the west, Bose says that the Indian social or economic condition is predominantly an organization of peace. It encourages the co-existence of many culture, many separateness’s, but it does not make a large community strong enough to wage war. Thus the main idea is that tribes in India were never isolated completely. Further, they were not uncivilized like tribes of Africa, Australia, North America and Melanesia. Bose gave the concept of tribe-caste continuum. He gave the examples of Juangs of Mayurbhanj, Orissa. The Juangs were shifting cultivators. The Britishers had put a ban on shifting cultivation. The Juangs started looking for some alternative occupations. They left their villages and shifted to neighboring caste villages. They became a part of jajmani system and became a part of pure & impure hierarchy. However, fowl sacrifice in various Hindu worships went on. Gradually they became a part of the wider caste system. Further, today when we discuss
the features of a tribe we must include the factors of change and transformation in it. Here, the five criteria for declaring a particular community as a Scheduled Tribe given by Lokur committee (c.f. Srivastava, 2008) become pertinent. They are: (i) an ensemble of primitive traits, (ii) distinctive culture, (iii) geographical isolation, (iv) shyness of contact with the outside world, and (v) backwardness. However, Srivastava (2008) said that such traits are no more found in any tribal communities today.

Moreover, today is the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). In LPG era how can one imagine any community without mobile phone or roads or for that matter some government agency working for tribal development/planned development in any tribal areas. Hence the concepts of primitiveness, isolation, shyness etc. are no more relevant today. However, economic backwardness, poverty, health problem etc. may be the phenomena today. Chaudhury (2008) who studied the Kondhs of Odisha has succinctly put the present scenario among the tribes in the following manner:

(a) Mechanization of agriculture has resulted in decrease in wage rates, increased landlessness, more dependency on moneylenders, farmers having little income. Further it also leads to widening the gap between rich and poor.

(b) Withdrawal of credit facilities and subsidies to non-farm sector created many problems for tribals.

(c) The factor of super specialization in jobs made the semi-skilled or unskilled tribals jobless.
(d) Market economy played havoc in their lives because they did not know the market dynamics besides not having substantial capital required for the market.

(e) It has also resulted in the process of assimilation leading to a loss of cultural traits like myths, folk songs and tribal dances, food habits, dress pattern, language, etc. Today one finds packed food and junk food in small towns and also in some village shops in Kondh area. It includes soft drinks, noodles, chocolates, wafers, etc. People in villages have already started using kin terms like uncle, aunty, niece, and cousin. The traditional dresses have been replaced by western outfits like trousers, shirts, bush-shirts, T-shirts for men and women among a few, jeans and T-shirts and use of undergarments. Such a change is noticed in those families where at least one member is working in a town or city.

(f) Maddening consumerism has resulted in a loss of natural resources because of deforestation, stone mining, etc. Everyone is interested in purchasing new household gadgets at any cost without any material context. Such kind of consumerism has led to the practice of dowry among Kondhs, which was not there earlier.

(g) The issue of conversion leads to a definite loss of identity. The recent riot among them has been the result of large scale and multiple conversions, lead to frustration, dejection and alienation. Imagine a Kondh household having three brothers living with their sisters and children, two of them are converted and one of them remains a Kondh. It has led to structural problem. When the Kondh brother practises Kondh rituals the other two try to participate in it, but the vice-versa does not happen.
The modern communication forces have helped in reinforcing the ritual practices and conflicting tendencies. Earlier they had traditional communication system, i.e. the Pana messenger used to assist in communication. Today Kondh villages have post and telegraph offices, having public phone booths, and people having personal cell phones. The conflicting tendencies like hatred and intolerance for other religions have been spread quickly. One of the major ethnic riots took place in 1994 on a small issue. A Pana youth entered in a Shiva Temple and then Kondhs tried to purify the temple. This led to violence between both the communities. The Kondh did not practice untouchability but they looked down upon the Panas. The Panas were given shelter in the outskirts of the village and where also jobs of guard, messenger, drum beater, etc. The Kondhs always took them as tricky and clever people probably did not trust them fully. Under this backdrop the ethnic riot of 1994 was not a strange phenomenon: The Hindu organizations always took the Kondhs as their members. Hence there was a continuous tension brewing up in the area since long. In December 2007, on the eve of Christmas, large scale riots took place in the area. One of the Hindu organizations' seer was killed by miscreants leading to burning of churches and houses of Christians. The Kondhs were attacked leading to loss of lives, homes, and jobs. They were put in to rehabilitation colonies and shelter homes. The trauma continues even today.

Due to the forces of modernization several changes have occurred in the tribal society in India. Today they are no more isolated and they cannot said to be relatively isolated. The situation has improved due to communication and transportation facilities (Chaudhury, 2004).
The Issue of Empowerment

Empowerment is not a very old idea rather it is a creation of post-modernity and subsequently globalization. Almost all societies in the world are having patriarchy, patriliny, patrilocality and patrinymy. Patriarchy signifies male dominance, son preference and inordinate power of the male. Weber spoke about patrimonial bureaucracy which signifies powerful men controlling the society. Henry Maine is the only thinker who said that there was no matriarchy ever in the history of the societies, it was throughout patriarchy. On the other hand E.B. Tylor, McLenan, Bachofen and others favoured matriarchy first and said patriarchy came later. However, today most of the societies are patriarchal in nature.

In light of this, the modern society assumes significance. Modernity is not of Indian origin; rather it came from the west. The main idea is to bring in equality of sexes. Truly women have faced lot of exploitation and humiliation in the male dominated world. Therefore, the issue of equality has been given a priority.

The stage of human civilization can be judged by the status women in the society. India is one of the most unequal and rigid patriarchal society, negating thereby successful representation of equality and democratic normative order. The establishment of democratic regime in India has produced different scenario. Democratic value system, modernization, rising level of literacy among women have contributed positively towards establishment of little more equal and humane society. Reformist and freedom struggles in 19th century, feminist movement, globalization, liberalization, consumerism in the end of 20th and beginning of 21st century, all have some share, for and against, in the process of empowerment and emancipation of women in India.
Women, constitute nearly half of the population play vital role in shaping the social system, and have not been given due position since centuries in India. Women's inability to control over productive assets and process is the major factor for their low status in the society and lack of power within the family. The disadvantage of women starts with her birth and continues through childhood to adulthood and finally until death.

Status of women kept on changing with the historical epoch. During Rig-Vedic civilization women enjoyed equal status with their male counterparts. Women were relatively more independent, thus, they were free to participate in religious, economic, social and cultural activities during that time. They had optimum freedom of thought and action (Chaturvedi, 1988).

During Buddhist period they had an access to education. The position of women started deteriorating during Gupta period between 7\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Female infanticide, child marriage, purdah system, sati, slavery etc. emerged as major social evils affecting the status of women in India. During 19\textsuperscript{th} century several efforts were made by social reformers to bring about changes in the socio-economic conditions of women, which forced the British government to enact some laws to improve their status (Singh and Jha, 1992).

In 20\textsuperscript{th} century, women quest for equality with man has become universal. This gave birth to the women's movement and feminist activities like International women's Day, International women's year, Conferences and Seminars on women's problems, women's studies have been started since the late 1960s and 1970s. The 21\textsuperscript{st} century has been witnessing the role reversal of the women. But all the socio-economic changes in the status of women have been largely confined to educated
Sixty nine years have gone after independence, yet women in general and the tribal women in particular are the most neglected, underprivileged and down trodden section of the society. Srinath(1992) says that the women in every country are like a lamp, that burns itself to light the whole world, get its own lower part is ever sunk in darkness. The tribal world of women is in this lower part that remained in darkness since centuries. The year 2001 was declared as the women's empowerment year by the Government of India to combat the century old backwardness. In this regard this study analyzes the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of tribal women of Chhattisgarh, which is related to their empowerment. Women's empowerment means gaining autonomy and control over one's life by realizing and making best use of one's capabilities and potentialities and having the confidence to the take action in one's life. It extends to self perception of the role of women in society, decision making, economic independence, innovativeness, desire to improve present living conditions and attitude towards group actions and community behaviors (Srinath, 1992). Women's empowerment is an active, multidimensional process, which should enable them to realize their full identity and power in all sphere of life. Centuries after centuries, women suffered exploitation, negligence and apathy, which strangled the spirit in them.

**Status of Tribal Women**

The status of any social group is determined by its level of health-nutrition, literary-education and employment-income (Bhasin, 2007). The tribal women constitute as in any other social group, about half of the total population. However, the significance of women in the tribal
society is more important, because of the fact that they work hard and the family economy and management depend on her.

Status of tribal women is little better than non-tribal women. They are equal partners with their male folk in the production process as well as decision making within the family. Along with domestic work, they perform many other activities, contributing towards general well being of their families. The tribal women enjoy more freedom in various walks of life. Traditional and customary tribal norms are comparatively more liberal to women (Dhebar, 1961). However, the tribal women ought to have a rightful place in the changing socio-economic milieu, but due to seclusion from general masses, they remained backward even today. Their involvement is essential in all programmes of change and development. At the level of health, education, decision-making, etc. they are lagging behind. In order to bring them close to modern world, government launched and implemented many programmes for their development. But, due to illiteracy, economic backwardness and lack of communication, most of them remained unaware of these schemes.

The present study examined the factors like education, health, legal rights, technological innovations, that help in developing the potential of tribal women by creating a level of confidence and self–image. Further the study tried to examine the role of tribal women in the decision-making process. Anthropologists have long been interested in the study of women in tribal society (Srinivas, 1977). Different views have been expressed about the status of tribal women. Some scholars have pointed that primitive societies generally assign high status to women, whereas, the other view point proposes that in tribal world women are generally a suppressed group, have low status and are under subjugation, oppression or under male dominance. Louie (1953) however, felt that any general
A statement concerning tribal women's position may not be strictly valid. There can be many intermediate statuses. Majumdar (1978) contended that discussion on women's status should be held by assessing their roles in relation to men, the extent of control enjoyed by women over their own lives and the extent to which they have access to decision making process and how effective are they in position of power and authority.

Tribal society is also a patriarchal society, the domination of male members over their female counterparts is as obvious as in the non-tribal society. Sikligar (2006) says that condition of tribal women is relatively better, so far male-female relationship is concerned, largely because the women in the tribal society play significant role in the production process and are equal economic partners with their male members.

Studies show that, women in tribal society enjoy little better status. There is no child marriage, no restrictions of widow remarriage, women have the right to decide her life partner, instead of dowry, and there is bride price in most of the tribes. She is economically independent to some extent. A higher social status of women was reported by Hutton (1921) and Hunter (1973) among Nagas and Garos of the North-East. Majumdar (1944) has also reported a higher status of tribal women particularly among the Tharus of Uttar Pradesh.

However, there are many socio-economic factors which indicate lower status of tribal women for example, she does not have property right in the patrilineal society, they do have these rights in matrilineal society, but proportion of such society is quite low, as compared to the total tribal population in India.

Rivers (1973), Dalton (1872) and Grigson (1938) have reported low status of women among Toda, Kharia and Muriya Gond. Shashi (1978) has concluded that the status of tribal women varies from tribe to tribe.
The tribal women share abundant responsibilities and perform multiple duties in running the family and maintaining the household, attending to farm labour, tending domestic animals and poultry birds. But to discharge all these activities she is an unpaid servant to man whose labour is never measured in economic term. In agriculture, tribal women perform a number of significant roles. They participate in harvesting of crops, weeding, planting, rising, seedling, manuring and threshing and storage of grains. They also help in rearing of live stock, poultry keeping. Besides, they manage the house and bring up the children. Thus, tribal women like their other counterpart perform a multiplicity of roles providing economic support to the family and also maintaining the household (Lodha, 2003).

As said earlier then tribal women work harder and the family economy and management depends on her. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role (Awais, Alam, Asif, 2009)

The tribal women in general and in comparison with higher caste women enjoy more freedom in various walks of life. Traditional and customary tribal norms are comparatively more liberal to women (Dhebar Commission Report, 1961). However, the tribal women ought to have a rightful place in the changing socio-economic milieu. Their involvement is essential in all programmes of change and development. At the level of decision making they are, in general, lagging behind men. The favorable sex ratio for tribal women is also declining (Census, 2001).

The development projects have adversely affected the tribal women. With deforestation they have to travel a longer distance to gather forest produce and fuel. A large proportion of tribal women are engaged in collecting forest products, agricultural and non-agricultural activities.
Most of them are agricultural labourers and industrial labourers, their participation in service sector is very low. They are paid less wages for the same work, than their male counter parts. Tribal women cannot hold an office of priest, are some of the major factors affecting their status in the society. They are very often sexually exploited by forest and mining contractors. The incidences of sexual assaults on tribal women have increased in recent years. In the remote areas, the rate of literacy among the tribal women is alarmingly low. It is a social fact that educated society needs educated women. But the reality is different in tribal societies.

Sanskritization and acculturation has introduced various upper caste practices in tribal society like child marriage, dowry instead of bride-price, dislike for girl child, male land ownership and male dominance resulting in deterioration of women's status and also an increase in their workload (Vyas, 1970; Jain, 1985; Mann, 1987; Singh, 1988; Singh et al., 1988; Alam, 1994, Jogdand, 1995; Roy, 1995).

However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. The strategy for tribal development and specially women needs improvement, betterment, development and upliftment to effect their empowerment. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources. Undoubtedly, the programmes oriented towards the empowerment of tribals, particularly women, have improved their socio economic conditions and status (Awais, Alam, Asif, 2009).

Hence in consonance with the above concern the current research was taken up to examine the factors like education, health, legal rights, technological innovations that help in developing the potential of tribal
women by creating a level of confidence and self image. Various aspects which directly or indirectly determine the role of tribal women in the decision-making process were considered for the study.

**Theoretical Background**

The present study has been undertaken with many theoretical stand points. They are the concepts of structure, function, social organization, development and change. Further, for understanding empowerment and status of women, feminist theories have also been used. The above theories are briefly described here.

The structure – functional theory tells us that every society has some structural features. That social structure consists of many interrelated and inter dependent parts. Change in one part will lead to change in other parts. Radcliffe Brown says that social structure is the complex network of social relations. For him structure is the reality which is found in the field, whereas, structural form is the construction of reality by the researcher. While structure may change slowly or on a low key, structural form does not change (Chaudhury, 2004).

Radcliffe–Brown almost gave an equilibrium model of the society. Edmond leach (1954, cf. Chaudhury 2004) and Levi-Strauss (1963, cf. Chaudhury 2004) gave a dynamic view of structure. For Levi-Strauss, structure is a model and has nothing to do with reality because the reality consists of social relationships. The researcher uses the reality as raw materials to construct the model. The model has four characteristics.

1. It should exhibit like a system i.e., it consists of many interrelated and inter dependent parts; change in one part will lead to change in other parts.
2. The model should be constructed in such a manner that it can be easily transformed.

3. The model should be constructed in such a manner that it should be predictable, it means by looking at the nature of one pair of relationships one can predict the nature of other pairs of relationships.

4. The model should be constructed in such a manner that it should be intelligible.

Levi–Strauss spoke of four different types of models- Conscious, Unconscious, Mechanical and Statistical Model.

Social Organization

Raymond Firth (1954 cf. Chaudhury 2004) spoke about the theory of social organization. He was a student of Radcliffe-Brown and was much influenced by him. He said that structure is ideal in nature and people do not want any change in it. However, ideal elements are not always found in reality. Therefore, people use choices and alternatives. Firth said this in the context of maintenance of critical relationships. For Firth, theory of social organization is not a distinct theory. It is a concept found within concept of social structure; that is to say social organization consists of the critical relationship found within social structure. Critical relationships are those relationships which are of utmost importance. Any change in such relationships would change the structure which people do not wish e.g., father-son relationship in a patrilineal society or mother’s brother and sister’s son in a matrilineal society are very important, which people do not want to change.

Thus, people use choices to maintain the ideal structure. Firth gave the example of importance of mother's brother in sister's son's life in
African tribes. In a family where there is no mother’s brother, mother's brother's son performs the role of mother's brother. Thus, it is not the ideal element. It is a choice. Social organization has two elements (1) element of responsibility: it means the person using choice should be responsible enough so that by using the choice he is not changing the structure. (2) element of representation: the person using the choice should be representing the whole community, i.e., the community's nod is required for use of choice. In this manner the theoretical perspective of structure function and social organization are very useful to understand empowerment among tribal women.

**Social change**

The theory of social change has also been used. Social change is an essential process of every society. Leach said that every society is a process in time and every society is found in a flux.

Change is a succession of difference in time in a persistent identity. Unless one is struck by differences of condition or appearances one cannot speak of change. Therefore, observation of differences is the beginning of all awareness of change. Change is inseparable from dimension of time. There must be a particular place for change. Change should be distinguished from interaction, motion and variety (Dube, 1992). There are many dimensions of social change:

a. Unit of change,

b. Specification of determinate relationships,

c. Magnitude and intensity of change,

d. Time span of change,

e. Sources of change (exterior or indigenous),
f. Direction of change (positive or negative), and

g. Nature of change. It is of 2 types:

(i) Change in structure. It means some change is within the structure where structure remains intact. It is also called continuity and change where continuity is emphasized upon.

(ii) Change of structure. It means the whole structure is changed. In traditional societies like India the former takes place.

In this manner the present study will be carried out using the above concepts.

Feminist Ideologies

It is relevant to understand the feminist standpoint in order to analyze empowerment of tribal women objectively. The feminist theories would answer many questions like the existence of the women in the world, how women can get social justice and how women’s contribution to society can be recognized.

Historically feminist activity has paralleled liberation events including the American and French Revolutions, the abolitionist movement in the 1930s, the mobilization for sufferage in early 1900s and the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Although, the idea of gender equality originated in the west and the west provided many ideologies in this regard these ideologies are now influencing India as well. Principally there are four such ideologies (Kachuk, 1995).

Feminist Liberalism

This is most prominent feminist strand in the U.S. and also most prevalent in India. This is the most widely diffused approach within the
contemporary women's movement in America. Feminist liberals argue that women evolved equally with men and participate in the Cartesian ontological dualism in at least its normative form. They view human beings as especially valuable for their mental capacity for rationality (Jaggar 1983, c.f. Kachuk 1995). They argue that women's minds are formed in nature like that of men-free to find truth.

Liberal feminism's explanation of gender inequality begins with an identification of the sexual division of labour, existence of separate public and private spheres of social activity, men's primary location in the former and women's in the latter and the systematic socialization of children. Liberal feminists see nothing of particular value about the private sphere except that it permits emotional openness. Instead the private sphere consists of endless round of demanding mindless unpaid and undervalued tasks associated with housework, child care and the emotional, practical and sexual servicing of adult men. The true rewards of social life-money, power status, opportunities for growth and self work are to be found in the public sphere. The system that restricts women's access to that sphere, burdens them with private sphere responsibilities isolates them in individual households and excuses their mates from any sharing of private sphere drudgeries is the system that produces gender inequality. Liberal feminists point to sexism as key force in this system. Because of sexism, females are from childhood on limited and maimed so that they can move into their adult roles and in those role 'dwindle' from full humanness into the mindless dependent, subconsciously depressed beings created by the constraints and requirements of their gender specified roles.

In Indian feminists claim women's rights as individuals to e.g. education (Chanana 1988, c.f. Kachuk 1995) pay equity (Gadhi and Shah 1991, c.f. Kachuk 1995) and land control (Agarwal 1994, c.f. Kachuk
1995). But the legitimacy of personal authority goes against the conception of individuals within family and kinship networks where they have to consider other's expectations and meet responsibilities to them (Karlekar 1988, c.f. Kachuk 1995). Within those networks rights have been understood in association with status positions generally privileging men over women – some men over other men and some women over other women.

The liberal feminists’ solution is to improve women's access to the public realm. They demand state protection of women's right as individuals to determine their lives there by becoming the equals of men. Liberal feminists demand equality for men and women in all phases of society, equal economic opportunities, education, child care centres and sharing of income production and housework in marriage.

**Feminist Essentialism**

Another school of feminist thought rejects the liberal's claim that women posses the same epistemological resources, the transcendent mind. Instead this school of thought locates an aspect of females which makes them essentially different from males. They project her to show that her rational mind is embodied, has feelings and is engaged with, not in opposition to, other persons and things. These feminists celebrate aspects of the human being which have been deprecated and ascribed to women. The theme of essential womanhood emerges in various forms prominent among those being few that originate in the U.S., one in France and one in India. Gilligan (1982, c.f. Kachuk 1995) in the U.S. valorizes women's morality. She targets Freud, Praget, and Kohlberg for claiming that women do not attain men's level of moral reasoning. Kohlberg has identified women's deficiencies after establishing norms based on interviews with males Gilligan reversed the procedure by developing norms by studying
women and investigating females and males moral reasoning. According to her women's moral developments is not deficient but different from men's. Women possess an ethic of care which peaks when they consider their own needs as well as others.

Ruddick (1989, c.f. Kachuk 1995) attributes women's caring to their maternal experience which generates maternal thinking. Anyone who does what mothers do, care for young ones, is involved in their socialization develops maternal thinking and in that sense everyone is a potential maternal thinker. She feels that men can become maternal thinkers by showing child care with women leading to world peace.

Chodorow (1989, c.f. Kachuk 1995) recommends shared parenting. This would free women to experience the external world, lessen dependency on relationships teach men to appreciate intimacy and make everyone in society value caring.

However, while, the above feminists assume women's attachment to men, Mary Daly's (1978, c.f. Kachuk 1995) vision of emancipation involves an escape from being domesticated and cosmetized caged birds to realize their inherent creative energy.

In India, Shiva (1988, c.f. Kachuk 1995) develops an eco-feminist account of women's caring, associating their tendency to preserve life with their use of natural products. More commonly Indian feminists deplore assumptions of women's inherent caring function as an ideology that impedes their full human development. The ideas of female self-denial assumed to create boundaries for women in both traditional and modern sectors in India are shown to be harmful and changeable norms.

This variety of feminism has, however, been criticized for universalizing women assuming that all experience gender alike and
confusing natural phenomena and women's strategies for coping with patriarchal demands.

**Feminist Socialism**

Feminist socialists accept and use the basic principles of Marxism but have tried to enrich and extend it by working on areas like gender which they believe were neglected by conventional Marxist theory. They are of the opinion that any analysis of society should include sexuality and gender relations. Both socialist and marxist feminists agree that humans are defined by their production of the means of their existence. Work is considered the essence of humanness changing in form as people perceive new needs, devise ways to satisfy them and develop appropriate social relations.

Feminists’ socialists bring together two broadest and most valuable feminist traditions, Marxian and radical feminist thought. Out of this synthesis have flowed two sub varieties of socialist feminism. The first focuses exclusively on women's oppression and on understanding it in a way that brings together knowledge (from Marxism) of class oppression and from radical feminism of gender oppression. The term used for this system is capitalist patriarchy.

The second variant of socialist feminism explains all forms of social oppression centering not only on class and gender but also on race, ethnicity, age, location with the global hierarchy of nations. This system is termed as domination. Women remain central to this theoretical approach in two ways. First the oppression of women remains a primary topic for analysis. Second women's location and experience of the world serve as the essential vantage point on domination in all its forms. These theorists are concerned with all experiences of oppression either by women or by
men. They even explore how some women themselves oppressed may actively participate in the oppression of other women.

Both the focus on capitalist patriarchy and that on domination are linked to a commitment, to historical materialism. The historical materialism that is a hallmark of socialist feminism shows clearly its indebtedness to Marxian thought but socialist feminists more beyond the Marxian in these ways – first they broaden the meaning of material conditions of human life. Whereas Marxians locate the roots of class inequality and class conflict socialist feminists includes economic dynamics and other conditions that create and sustain human life in their analysis-like the human body, etz sexuality, involvement in procreation and child bearing, home maintenance with its unpaid drudgery of domestic work. In all these life sustaining activities exploitative arrangements profit some and impoverish others. The second point where socialist feminist part ways with Marxian thought is their re-evaluation of significance of ideology Socialist feminists feel that factors like consciousness motivation, ideas, social definitions of the situation, knowledge, will to act in one's interest deeply affect human personality, action and the structures of domination that realized through the action. These aspects of human subjectivity are produced by social structures as elaborate and powerful as those that produce economic goods. Within all these structures too exploitative arrangements exist. The third difference between Socialist feminists and Marxians is that the object of analysis for socialist feminists is not primarily class inequality but a wide range of social inequalities. Socialist feminists develop a portrait of social organization in which the public structures of economy, polity and ideology interact with private processes of human reproduction, domesticity, sexuality and subjectivity to sustain a multifaceted system of domination.
Feminist Post Modernism

Whereas, all the other feminist theories position women as subjects postmodernism contests this location. Its theoretical variations converge on a view that such positioning necessarily subjective, presupposes the self’s objectivity. Assuming a subject position constructs a centre of power and margins occupied by someone.

Postmodernism's main features as propounded by a feminist proponent Flax (1990, c.f. Kachuk 1995) enables a comparison with other feminist Views. Postmodernism denies that science and its philosophy can provide an objective, reliable foundation for knowledge. It disputes contentions which hold that conflicts between truth, knowledge and power can be overcome on the grounds of reasons. No truth is seen as neutral capable of serving power without distortion and leading to freedom.

Among Indian feminist, postmodernism may be perceived equivocally. Its rejection of a dominant centre is consistent with their own rejection of the idea of negotiating a space for Indians within feminism, which presumers that feminism is 'Western' (Kumar 1993, c.f. Kachuk 1995). Kumar claims for Indian feminists a kind of universalism, of which Western feminism is one stream and India feminism another, a claim discredited by postmodernism. Many US feminists see postmodernism as a threat not only to feminists but also to her previously silenced groups now redefining themselves as subjects (Hartsock 1990, c.f. Kachuk 1995). Postmodern critiques of science are shared by feminists. Harding (1986, c.f. Kachuk 1995) denounces the andocentric bias in science's context of discovery of problems, to study hierarchical production systems, definitions of concepts collection and interpretation of data. None the less she accepts feminist empiricism. Harding prefers a feminist standpoint to produce knowledge. It is grounded in women's subjugated position,
mediated by analyses of masculine domination and a search for a successor to Enlightenment science. Researchers treat women as subjects not objects of enquiry as in empiricist methodology. She proposes a third epistemological route, feminist postmodernism. It accepts women's hyphenated identities: Black, Asian, Native American, working class, lesbian. She prefers ambivalence, a stance she considers preferable to theorizing an incoherent world to make it seem more coherent.

Foucault’s (1979, c.f. Kachuk 1995) theory argues that power seems inescapable and that unmasking power can only destabilize it not transform it. Hartsock (1990, cf. Kachuk 1995) perceives a colonizer's perspective. She argues that what women need is a theory of power that will help them and subjugated men change relations of domination instead of the total coerciveness portrayed by Foucault. She calls for attention to women's strengths and abilities.

Of all the theories of feminism, though feminist liberalism identifies women as a class, entitled to rights as women, it leaves economic and social structures intact with no way to redress in equitable distributions of social goods among men and women. The essentialists’ attention to unappreciated qualities of women is gravely flawed by failing to notice artifacts of their status in a patriarchal society. The post modernist provides important cautions against privileging some women at the expense of others. Feminist socialism, however, overcomes the limitations of the others.

**Review of Literature**

Singh and Ohri (1993) on their study of Educational Backwardness among Tribal Women of Himachal Pradesh have suggested that the educational programmes in the development scheme under the tribal sub-plans need to be oriented more towards people’s participation.
Awareness campaigns need to be launched to make the tribal population gain from literacy and become sensitized to the cause of education of the girl child. Ambasht (1993) in his paper discussed the educational status of tribal women and its implications. He has analyzed that the literacy among tribal women has been lagging behind all other sections - urban males, urban females, rural males, rural females, SC males (urban and rural), SC females (urban and rural) and tribal males. It is at the lowest rung. He has found out that the tribal girls’ enrolment and drop-out cases from the school are higher than the other sections. He has stressed on the tribal girls’ education and suggested that a remedial action with regard to a complete overhauling of households in the tribal areas is needed. He has also analyzed that the tribal women’s participation and contribution in labour is very high but not in education. Singh and Ohri (1993) in their paper on ‘Educational status of Tribal Women in India’ reviewed the educational status of tribal women in India and suggested measures for their improvement. They observed that tribal education cannot achieve its objectives unless it is based on the identification of educational needs and problems of tribal communities. They also stated that there has been a wide gap in enrolment of girl child in tribal society for universalization of elementary education as well as school education. It is also reported that drop-out rate at primary stage of education is more among girls than boys and it is higher in rural girls and the highest in tribal girls.

Pandey (1993) in his paper on ‘Education of SC and ST girls in Orissa’ discussed the status of education among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe girls in Orissa. He has reported that the educational status of SC/ST girls is much lower than the educational status of the boys. It is also found to be lower than that of the girls in general population. Though there has been an increase in the enrolment of girls, it is still less than that of boys. He has also mentioned poverty, lack of literacy among parents,
ignorance, lack of motivation, social stigma attached to girls, low weightage to female life and lack of proper infrastructural facilities in schools are the reasons for low enrolment and high drop-outs of these girls. Further, he also pointed out that these girls played the mother’s role in their homes when they themselves were in need of love and affection of the mother. He has suggested in his paper for improving the educational levels of the SC and ST population in general and girls in particular, it was necessary to review the programmes in the light of physical, sociological, cultural, economical and religious factors, which were impending the progress of education and progress should be planned very seriously and cautiously keeping in mind the local needs. Oraon (1993) conducted a study on different tribal groups in Chotanagpur to study the education among the tribals and the attitudes and aspirations of tribal women regarding the education of their children. He has found out that many of the tribals were still illiterate. The socio-economic status was related to their educational level and with their aspirations for the educational achievements of their children. He has also identified the reasons for irregular attendance and non-enrolment were lack of interest and the necessity for girls to do the household work.

Kar (1993) in his paper on ‘Reproductive Health Behaviour of the Nocte Women in Arunachal Pradesh’ has revealed that the reproductive health behaviour of the Nocte women is intimately related to their value system and cultural tradition. Cultural values and practices have a deep influence on health behaviour in general and productive health in particular. Chatterjee (1993) in his paper discussed the health of the tribal women in three eco-zones, namely, forest based areas, denuded forest areas and industrially polluted areas and pointed their major problems. He has observed that the incidence of disease is found to be lowest in the forest areas and highest in the industrial areas. It is also pointed out that the
health of the tribal women also pointed out that the health of the tribal women is intricately related to their occupation. Ray and Banerjee (1993) in their paper argued that the very little work has been done on the health status of tribal women. Status of women among the tribals is slightly deviated from that in the urban communities. They have mentioned that the tribal people are an important section of our population and a proper planning should be done with the help of social scientists in their society. They have also suggested that the Government has to establish health centres in many remote areas and focus on the trained women workers to work among the tribal women. Arora and Choudhary (1993) conducted a study on Health Modernity in Rural Tribal Women of Chhotanagpur and Santal Pargana stated that the health modernity scale has seven dimensions, namely, PH, MH, DN, FP, BF, CC, HH and consists of attitudinal as well as behavioural items. They found that the extent of health modernity on these dimensions varied from 0 to 3 per cent and the health modernity was very low in the entire sample of the study. They identified that area of ignorance and misconceptions related to the aware dimensions of health modernity. Singh and Rajyalakshmi (1993) have highlighted the status of tribal women in terms of their demography, health, education and employment. They revealed that despite constitutional protection and assurance, even after four and a half decades, the status 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, high malnutrition and near absence of modern health care facilities. They suggested that to improve the status of the tribal women the focus has to be on the tribal girls.
Basu (1993) has stressed on the health status of the tribal women in relation to sex ratio, age at marriage, fertility, mortality, life expectancy, nutritional status, maternal and child health care practices, sexually transmitted diseases, genetic disorders, etc. He found that the health status of tribal women is to be lower than that of the Indian women in general on most of these aspects. In this study the gaps in knowledge regarding the health of tribal women have been identified and a plan of action has been suggested for improving their health. Karmarkar, Sampath Kumar, Jayalakshmi and Abel (1995) in their study have highlighted the reasons for under-nutrition among tribal women that could be poor diet intake, ignorance, early marriage and high morbidity due to unhygienic practices and surroundings. They suggested by their study that there is a need to provide special attention to this group in improving their nutritional status by intervening appropriate health and nutrition programmes like nutrition, education, iron supplementation and deforming both during adolescence and during adulthood.

Kumar and Mitra (1975) conducted a study on Tharu women. They have found out that high infant mortality and fertility among 199 Tharu tribal women of Nainital. Despite the availability of modern facilities of treatment, Tharu had their own beliefs and concepts of diseases. They also observed that the Tharu women are not aware of the medical facilities. Murty (1987) investigated the Soliga women of Karnataka in order to find out their fertility behaviour. He has found out that the Crude Birth Rate (CBR), General Fertility Rate (GFB) and Total Fertility Rate (TFR) among the Soligas were higher in comparison to the general population of Karnataka. The unusual high fertility rate was influenced by their age at marriage that was ultimately influenced by the age at menarche. He has also pointed out that the early age of marriage and low level of family
planning acceptance seemed to be responsible for the high fertility among
the Soligas women.

Sharma and Khan (1990) on their study Fertility and Mortality Trends of the Khairawar Tribal Women of Madhya Pradesh have observed
that the average fertility rate among Khirawars of Sarguj district (Madhya
Pradesh) was 4.85. The highest reproductive wastage (9.67 per cent) was
observed in the age group of 40-44 years and the pre-reproductive
mortality was highest (6.84 per cent) among mothers in age group 35-39
years. Ray and Roth (1991) studied the fertility pattern of Juangs (Tribes)
of Orissa. It was observed that the marital age specific fertility rate was
highest (0.336 per cent) among mothers in the 20-24 years age group
whereas, it was lowest (0.75 per cent) among the 45-49 years age group.
The total marital age-specific fertility rate was 1.157 among the Juang
mothers. It was also observed that the Index of Overall Fertility and the
Index of Marital Fertility among the Juangs were 0.49 and 0.50
respectively. Prema and Thomas (1992) conducted a study on the problems
of Kanikkar women in Kerala. In their study they have notified that the
Kanikkar tribal women of Trivandrum district, Kerala faced the nutrition
and health problem in normal and physiological conditions like pregnancy
and lactation. They have highlighted that the pulses, milk and milk
products and other animal foods that were the main source of protein were
lacking in their diets. Average calorie consumption was found to be below
the recommended level for the normal, pregnant as well as lactating
women. Consumption of calcium was noticed to be highest in normal
women whereas it was poorest the lactating women. The intake of iron and
vitamin A were found to be low. Detailed clinical examination of the
Kanikkar tribal women showed that anaemia (90 per cent) and Vitamin A
deficiency (30 per cent) were prevalent among them. The morbidity status
of the tribal women revealed the prevalence of pyrexia, respiratory

(31)
complaints, gastro-intestinal diseases and rheumatic diseases. They have found out that the gynaecological complaints and deficiency diseases were common among the adult women.

Kar (1982) calculated the ratio of male to female investment in labour in shifting cultivation to be 100:136 days per year. The contribution of women was more in almost all activities like clearing (169:120), sowing (102:60), weeding (272:182) and cotton harvesting (56:6). Roy Burman (1988) has pointed out that the work participation rates among tribals are higher than those among Scheduled Castes and general population. The work participation rate among tribal women has been increasing over a period of time (1971-1991), it is lesser than that for the tribal males, but higher than that for the general female. He also revealed that the tribal women play a major role in agricultural operations and she also involved in collection of minor forest produce, its storage, processing and marketing. He brought our attention to the question of tribal women in the face of increased government control of forests. It disturbed tribal economy adversely affecting tribals’ lives, particularly that of women. Appointing of agents from outside for collecting forest produce has made the work of women more difficult. The non-tribal men socially and sexually exploit them. Dasgupta (1988) conducted a study on Kondhs and revealed that women put in an average of 14 working hours per day as compared to 9 hours put in by men. Given this additional workload, even women in advanced stages of pregnancy were required to work in the agricultural fields or walk long distance to collect fuel and minor forest produce. He also stated that the over-strain on tribal women however, was not adequately compensated due to the non-availability of minor forest produce and decrease in foodgrain production.
Mawar, Jain, Verma, Kaushik, Karmahe and Tiwari (1993) on their paper aim to understand the employment and economic status of Gond women of M.P. and its relation to their decision-making ability. They have argued that their income level can be increased by raising their literacy level and giving them training for income-generating activities. They have also highlighted that though women work for more time than men and perform both heavy and light work, they generally receive wages in kind which are encashed by males and women have no control over them. They do not have the decision-making power even in relation to basic needs. The study indicates that there is an urgent need to increase the awareness of tribal women through non-formal education and would enable the empowerment of women. They also suggested the ways to increase their decision-making capacity by establishment of women’s organization to optimally utilize the benefits of the development programme. Sharan and Dayal (1993) on their paper ‘Deprivation of female farm labourers in Jharkhand region of Bihar’ have investigated the nature, causes and consequences of the economic discrimination and deprivation of tribal women farm labourers. They also have suggested measures for removal of the discrimination against and exploitation of tribal women labourers and for empowerment of such labourers as it would remove stagnation and poverty of the tribals.

Deoghasia (1993) has revealed that the extent of work participation of the tribal women in the south Chotanagpur region. In his study the participation rate is found to vary with the occupational status. He has observed that female participation among the tribals in south Chhotanagpur was found in subsistence activity. Apart from domestic work, women from all categories were engaged in many types of subsistence and other economic activities, which were important for the existence of their families. He has also pointed out that because of lack of
sufficient work in the region these workers migrated to other regions. Chauhan (1999) has examined the contribution of Gaddi tribal women in farm and household economy and their participation in decision-making of various activities. He has revealed that the contribution of women was more than that of men in the activities performed near to their dwellings. In decision-making process the participation of women was found to be higher in activities which were to be performed near their living places and required the involvement of their family members but their participation in making decision on activities such as purchase of land, infrastructure development, financial allocation, etc. was low. Lodha (2003) has cited about the work participation of the tribal women and its impact upon their decision-making capacities. This study entails in-depth inquiry regarding applicability of cultural factors, structural variables, the process of economic and social development and the process of economic and social development and the influence of science, technology and modernization to tribal women, extent to which, tribal women make use of such technology and its impact on their decision-making status.

Mann (1987) examined the status of Bhil women within the ideological as well as the actual frame of native social structure and evaluated the parameters of change taking place therein. He also surveyed the areas of compatibility and incompatibility in the persisting and changing paradigm. Despite the adverse effect of culture contact with the caste Hindus and the process of Sanskritisation, the traditional norms of Bhil society continue to be the chief determinant of social status among Bhil women. The appalling poverty among the Bhils forces the women into involvement in various traditional economic pursuits, denying them the opportunities to benefit from the programmes introduced of late to ameliorate their condition. It also engenders a pessimistic disposition that induces apathy towards betterment and progress. Jahagirdar (1988) has
conducted a study on status and roles of the Minyong tribal women in the North-Eastern region of India. He examined their status and roles through the factors like work-participation, control over the resources and decision-making in the perspective of the society they live in. The study shows that women’s entrepreneurship and their role in the economic productivity are the positive indicators which help profusely in the process of development.

Gangwar, Kandekar, Mandal and Kandekar (2004) have pointed out that the membership of a dairy cooperative helped woman to become economically independent and self-confident with improved prestige in the community and the formal social participation and group actions increased and hence the overall empowerment of cooperative members was more. They suggested that the women’s participation should be ensured in cooperatives, training institutions, credit institutions, agricultural labour institutions, etc. so that they can be able to organize themselves, identify their needs build positive image and be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Nath (2005) conducted a study on “Status and Empowerment of Tribal Women in Tripura” and stated that the status and empowerment of tribal women of Tripura, though much better in comparison with other tribal women of India, is on the line of slow but steady progress. This study analyzed the social, economic and marital status of tribal women of Tripura and attempted to answer the multifarious facts and the obstacles that come in the way of their empowerment. Sikligar (2006) has mentioned that the women in tribal society play significant role and are equal economic partners. He examined that the Wavli is a traditional system for empowering women, under which tribal women have been involving in vegetable cultivation, selling of calf, goats, hens and cock, etc. The income derived by women through Wavli is their own and men have no claim over it. This study concluded that the Wavli
system ultimately promotes women empowerment through income generation, role of institution in promoting income generating activities for tribal women.

Tekhre (1989) evaluated the impact of the family welfare programme on tribal women through a study on 300 tribal women of Tamean Development Block of Chindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. He has observed that tribal women gave more attention to child welfare and child development programmes rather than mother care or family planning programme. This may be because of their inherent maternal instinct and protectiveness towards their children. He pointed out that they contacted doctors more for antenatal care than postnatal care because of their concern with the welfare of the foetus in the womb and preparing for a safe labour.

Brandon and Dixit (1983) conducted a sericulture project for tribal women in Udaipur and they highlighted the impact of development programmes on tribal women. They revealed that the impact of development programmes has been different on different sections of tribal women. A small number of tribal women have taken advantage of education, new opportunities for employment and self-fulfillment. In the study of Udaipur (Rajasthan) a remarkable change in the quality of life of the tribal women was reported. Besides economic benefits they had more leisure, self-reliance, innovativeness, adaptability and a more aware social outlook. They also mentioned some negative effects of development programmes. Ramalingaswami (1986) conducted a study on 372 tribal women in 15-45 age group living in Paderu Black of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh, to understand the impact of government programmes on women from economically weaker sections. She has revealed that although these tribal women were illiterate and were living in a remote place away from urban influence they showed awareness about
these programmes, especially the health and developmental programmes, unfortunately the programmes have not reached them nor benefited them. Menon (1987) in her paper on “Tribal Women: Victims of the Development Process” has focused on the impact of deforestation on tribal women. She has argued that the management of the natural resources particularly forests, has resulted in inequalities, which are reflected in economic and social position of tribal women who have became victims of cumulative inequalities, i.e., economic impoverishment, deterioration of social status and sex discrimination. Chauhan (1993) has analyzed the position of tribal women of Madhya Pradesh amidst the process of continuity and change by focusing on the various aspects of their life – social, religious, economic and political. This study reflects Saharia women’s struggle, their confrontation, survival and adjustment that occur silently. She has also emphasized the need for formulation and implementation of gender specific and contextually relevant programme for tribal women’s development.

A study on Kondh tribe of Orissa by Chaudhury (2004) suggests that the development schemes given by government agencies to the Kondh women have created economic assets among them. But women could not be empowered specially in decision making for using the money earned by them because Kondh is a patrilineal and patriarchal society. Element of power could never be transferred to women. Undoubtedly they have a better position than the non Kondh women concerning divorce.

Srinivas (2002) says that positions of Indian women are gradually changing. In rural areas women of agricultural families are supposed to be economic assets to their families. For example, weeding and transplanting are exclusively women's work, while harvesting involves a more complicated division of labour between the sexes. During the post-harvest
season, landless labourers, both men and women, are employed by contractors on road and canal repair work, and occasionally also hired for special task by a rich patron (Srinivas, 2002: 285). Further, these women are engaged in household chores since 4 a.m. in the morning till late evening.

Mehrotra (2008) says that there is substantial presence of tribal women in the Indian work force. Women are engaged in different types of seasonal and plantation work. They are also engaged in industrial sector.

However, all these tribal women face a lot of exploitation both in material and sexual terms. Such stratifications based on wealth, status and class have been developing in the most tribal groups due to migration, urbanization and the availed opportunities of employment and education. Like other urban elites, educated tribal women in the north-eastern part of India have been freed from the erstwhile backbreaking agricultural work, deinking drudgery from women's work. Many of them now have taken to white-collar employment and their poor counterparts serve them as housemaids.

Maithreyi Krishna Raj (2008) in her paper 'women's work in Indian census: Beginnings of change' says that Indian women are engaged in two kinds of work: one that produces an income and the other that does not. The former in turn has home-based work and work outside the home, whereas, the later only does not have domestic work but also include unpaid family labour.

Mehrotra (2008:115) said that tribal women's access to resources largely depends on their cultural and historical context and to the regions they belong. Even within the regions issues like status and class cannot be ignored. Many studies tend to ignore the heterogeneity among tribal
groups with reference to land ownership, education, access to and utilization of resources.

According to Geetha (2002) the “Conceptual and theoretical understanding of the two concepts-‘women’ and ‘gender’ – differed in a meaningful way, though, both of them found expression in many writings.” The usefulness of ‘gender’ as an important category of analysis for ‘women’s studies’ was seen in understanding have women are situated in society, how they experience structures of oppression and how they respond to these, i.e., in the context of women’s subjectivity and agency of the patriarchal system that controls not only gender relations but also economic and class power, political and religious authority, and a combination of these (Geetha 2002, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 303). Beteille (1999) says that in studies where the family was held responsible for reproducing inequality- an inequality embedded in the oppressive structures of family ideology based on age and gender hierarchy – was overlooked (Beteille 1999, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 317). Uberoi (1999: 36, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 317) said that “the studies on family went beyond analysing women’s status, roles, and relationships within households”. Palriwala (1996, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 319) says that “in the rural areas of Rajasthan, where women live under a triple authority structure (head of the household, their husbands, and a senior woman), food consumption and control comprises a metaphor for intra-household distribution and authority”.

Coming over to matrilineal societies, things are not much different. Sardamoni (1999, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 322) discussing the Nayars of Kerala said that matriliney supported features which strengthened the social and economic position of women and offered a sense of security as well as autonomy to women, linked in the last instance to their right of permanent
residence in their natal homes which is no longer the position. Further Nongbri (1999: 178 & 2003; 184 c.f. Chauhan 2009: 323) complete equality does not exist even in matrilineral society like Khasi of Meghalaya. It is observed that the ideas and norms concerning kinship and gender roles which favored women are not found in reality. Chako (1998, c.f. Chauhan 2009) “the process of change in the matrilineal communities of the North-East brings its own contradiction and highlights the trauma of a community caught in the midst of transition and the way in which gender is constituted in the face of modernization and change”.

According to Dube (2001) the “socialization of the girl child embedded in the patrilineal kinship and caste ideology is associated with the belief that the ultimate destiny for girls is marriage and relocation to the husband’s house. The rituals and ceremonies are important in making girls aware of their fragile purity and play a crucial role in the very process of growing as women” (Dube 2001, c.f. Chauhan 2009: 318). According to Xaxa (2008: 478) “the division of labour in tribal society is based more on gender and age than on hierarchy and occupation. Division of labour has been both fluid and rigid. It is however not clear as to at what stage and on what principle the division of labour could be said to have assumed the form of inequality of rank and status between sexes in tribal societies”. Further, taboo and women touching and using the plough in tribal societies have been seen as a way of denying women control over the means of production viz. land (Kishwar 1987, 1996; Nathan 1997, c.f. Xaxa 2008: 478). Xaxa says that “this lack of access and control over land is however already denied in their societies by existing customary laws. For instance Oraon and Ho women, who are forbidden to hold the plough, are denied access to land by customary laws existing in their societies.
According to Nongbri (2008) “Khasi women married to outsiders are the primary site of contestation. Women as a category are the property of the community, hence, their sexuality, their children and their overall deportment and conduct are the concern of men who are its unchallenged protectors and custodians. Women themselves have little say in the matter, but are reduced to object on which the laws and regulations are to applied and enforced. Women’s subordination is implied not only by their very absence from the official centres of decision-making but also their by their inability to resist even at the level of civil society” (Nongbri 2008: 490-91).

**Objectives of the Study**

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic condition of the tribal women.
2. To analyze the educational achievement and growth of their children.
3. To analyze the political participation of the tribal women.
4. To understand women’s role in decision-making process.
5. To analyze their awareness and participation in Government and non-Government development programmes.

**Need and Relevance of the Study**

This study intends to examine the socio – economic – politico and cultural factors for the empowerment of the tribal women of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh has been selected in view of its majority of tribal population, i.e., around 67 lakhs, constituting 31.8 per cent of state’s population. The study focuses on factors influencing the socio-economic involvement of tribal women through an analysis of role of voluntary organisations and
SHGs. It also analyses whether infrastructural and educational facilities, developmental programmes, etc., raise their level of awareness and knowledge about the above initiatives, and infuse better self-confidence among them. The present day tribal women’s situation differs from region to region and tribe to tribe. Their way of life and thinking are considerably influenced as a result of various forces of change. A section of tribal women became conscious about their rights and are important part of various movements. Hence, there is a need for more micro-level studies covering different regions of the country, to throw light on the status and role of the tribal women.

There are a large number of studies on tribal communities, but only a few are focused on tribal women. The studies on the tribal women empowerment especially in Chhattisgarh are not much. Therefore, the need arises to dive deeply to bring out the hidden pearl from its untold cover. The study analyses the variations as well as interrelationship between socio-economic factors, cultural behaviour and empowerment issues in tribal communities of Chhattisgarh. The study is of micro-level in nature, but its impact can be felt in other parts of the country as well. This study will also be a significant addition in the existing literature on women studies in India. Methods and approaches of the study may be used to readjust existing programmes for tribal women’s empowerment.

**Research Methodology, Field Methods and Experiences**

The present study attempts to focus on important aspects like educational attainment, employment status, health situation, awareness level of tribal women and is an attempt to understand the kind of factors, which affect their empowerment at the grassroots level.
Research Design

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory research design explores the new things about tribal women’s condition in Chhattisgarh. The descriptive research design describes the variables within households along with direct and indirect factors influencing tribal women’s empowerment. Analytical research design tries to study the impact of various developmental programmes on tribal women’s socio-economic status and their quality of life.

Sampling Design

A purposive sampling procedure is adopted to select the sample households and unit for the study. There are four stages in which sampling process is carried out, which are as follows:

Area of Study

Chhattisgarh, the newborn state, which was carved out of Madhya Pradesh on November 1, 2000, has fairly a large tribal population. The Scheduled Tribe population is around 67 lakhs, and it constitutes 31.8 percent of the state’s population. Almost 98.1 percent of this population lives in rural areas and only 1.9 percent lives in urban areas of Chhatisgarh. Considering such a high concentration of tribal population in Chhatisgarh, the state is selected purposively.

Selection of Districts

Out of 16 districts of Chhattisgarh, Raigarh and Jashpur Nagar districts are selected due to the fact that the districts have drawn all policy makers/planners, Governments’ attention, because of higher concentration of tribal population. Another weighty reason is that, studies so far undertaken on tribals of these districts are only confined to review the
tribal developmental programmes and tribal revolts but not many studies are undertaken on the empowerment of tribal women in these districts.

**Selection of Blocks**

In the present study, two tribal blocks - Dharamjaigarh and Patthalsaon each from one district is selected purposively. The high concentration of tribals is the main reason for selecting these blocks for the present study.

**Selection of Villages**

In the present study, three villages from each block have been selected. First village has been an advanced or developed means with better infrastructural facilities in terms of road, banks, schools, hospitals, sanitation facilities. Second village is underdeveloped, and the third village is backward and found in remote areas, with relatively poorer infrastructural facilities in these respects, keeping in mind the causal comparative component of the research design.

Therefore, Chhal(A), Miriguda(B) and Khalbora(C) villages were selected from Dharamjaigarh block. Similarly Tamta(D), Palidih(E) and Buldega(F) villages were selected from Patthalsaon block.

**Selection of Households**

In the last stage of sampling, households were chosen 50 tribal women and their households from each village are selected randomly with the help of village records.

**Sample Size**

For the present study 50 tribal women and their households will be randomly selected from each of six villages belonging to the two selected
blocks of the 2 selected districts. Thus, the sample of the study will comprise of a total of 300 tribal households or tribal women.

**Sources of Data Collection**

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources.

**Primary Data** – Primary data is collected from the respondents with the help of structured schedule, participant observation and group discussion through a field work in selected villages. A structured interview schedule was administered to 300 respondents.

**Secondary Data** - For the content analysis, data from census, different reports, documents, published and unpublished materials, etc., were studied thoroughly. Secondary data on empowerment of tribal women and related variables were compiled from various published and unpublished official and unofficial sources like government agencies, Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, Tribal Ministry and Welfare Department, Census, etc.

**Tools and Techniques**

The primary data was collected from 300 tribal women, are suitably coded, tabulated and analyzed to draw meaningful inferences with the help of statistical tools.

**Nuances of Field Work**

Initially I was very hesitant to work among the tribals of Chhattisgarh because of large scale Maoist inflicted violence in the area. However, Chhattisgarh has been very familiar area for me since I lived there with my parents in my childhood days. I started my field work in winter days. It was not so chilly, rather it was pleasant weather to work in the field. I knew earlier that I had to work in adverse circumstances and
meet strangers. I was well prepared for that. Luckily I found a contact person in Dharamjaigarh, the block headquarters through my brother, he took me to all six villages.

People were hesitant to speak to me and discussed with me. However, I sat in their verandah and started speaking the truth regarding my Ph.D. thesis. That if I would evaluate the development work and their socio-economic condition then I would be able to write the thesis, that only I can get a job. Further, they evaluated report can be made and send to various offices so that Government people may find some solutions to their problems. It can also be publicized through writing in the newspaper. Mr. T.K. got convinced and ultimately became my chief informant. I became friendly with them, gave them small gifts like earrings to the women, toffee to the children and bidi to the men. After few days my problem got over the informant became very easy with me. They started offering me tea, snacks, lunch and dinner. Initially I politely refused to have their food thinking of contamination and food poisoning. My field kit contained some dry food like biscuits, wafers, fruits, dry fruits etc. and water. It also contains medicines like Crocin, Dependal M, and Norflox Tz etc. I help people by providing them the above medicine whenever required.

Evenings were not good, few men would get drunk and become wild, so I had to avoid collecting data in the evening. I was there in the Mahua harvesting season, when the women used to go to the forest to collect data, which was a very difficult proposition. I was there in the festive season as well, like Dushhera. People would get very busy and get drunk in the day time as well. It was very difficult to discuss issues with them during the festive season. Women were very helpful but sometimes could not follow my questions. Without losing patience I tried to explain in their language. It is worth mentioning here since I lived in that area, I knew
their language up to some extent. Children were very cooperative and all the time they would be around me and moving with me. This does not mean men were not helpful, in fact they provided me useful and vital information. I took a lot of photographs, ultimately the area became second home for me. Therefore, while parting I made of lot of promises like to written to them again, provide them photographs etc. Certainly there were tears on both the sides and some hugging with restrained bye…..bye…..