

Changing Socio-economic Status of Kavar Tribal Women in Chhattisgarh: An Empirical Finding

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ABSTRACT: Gender disparities in Indian societies are determined by its socio-cultural and socialization processes. The socio-cultural factors validate the status of women in a particular society. Therefore, it is commonly said that the gender roles are socially constructed. The socio-cultural factors validate the status of women in a particular society. Therefore, it is commonly said that the gender roles are socially constructed. Women's status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities, while their position is low where food collection is entirely based on men's job like hunting, herding and intensive agriculture etc. The gender relations in a tribal society seem to be relatively egalitarian with women enjoying quite a high social status and economic value as compared to their non-tribal counterparts. Role of tribal women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. They work very hard, in some cases even more than their male counterpart. The tribal women have a freedom, and a self-expression. The review of literature clearly indicates the changing status of women in the tribal society. Keeping this in mind the authors purposively planned to present the status of economic empowerment of the Kavar tribal women and their contribution to the household economy primarily in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the few countries in the world with large concentration of tribal population. Tribes inhabit almost in every region of the world, but in India their concentration is largest which constitutes about 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population (Census of India, 2011). The tribal population in India is heterogeneous by nature. The characteristics of heterogeneity are reflected in their various lives and living like demographic, socio-economic, cultural, ecological and developmental. The tribes are the oldest settlers of our country. Since time immemorial they have remained perceptively more backward in

their living standard than the non-tribal populations. Illiteracy, technological backwardness, socio-economic exploitation, strong faith in religion, magic, lack of high aspirations and low aptitude to innovate are some of the major reasons of their backwardness which have drawn the attention of the administrators, missionaries, social reformers and anthropologists since the British regime.

Ethnographic documents on tribal communities in India published over the time by the British administrators, missionaries, social reformers and anthropologists at large have tried to reflect the ground realities of tribal communities by over viewing these societies basically with the help of qualitative assessment tools. In the early part of the post-British India, the ethnographic approach to study tribal

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societies has been largely ignored due to the inbuilt quantitative focus of the development processes promoted by the nation in which economists played an important role and determined the pattern of development adopted. However, since 1970s the ethnographic and qualitative research methods have dominated the social sciences research in India. This has created a growing acceptance of qualitative methods which in fact created a dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative tools. With the incorporation of new scientific values within ethnography, the New Ethnography still maintains the use value and functional efficiency of qualitative methods (Whitehead, 2004). In social researches it is commonly observed that the quantitative components still dominate with the plea that the qualitative methods are time taking, not bias free and not cost effective, while compared with the outcomes. In this process focus group discussion one of the qualitative methods is chosen and popularly adopted by the social scientists as the quick and easy method in social science research.

The classical ethnographical methods like carrying out field work by way of staying in living communities, observing activities of interest, recording through field notes and observations, and also participating in different social context, taking up physical mapping of the study setting, conducting household census, assessing network ties, using photography helps the researchers to understand cultural processes in more intensive and accurate manner. Similarly, ethno-semantic method is used as an example of non-classical method to study the cultural domains of the society (Spradley, '79). The use of structured interview, free listening, pile sorting, paired and triadic comparisons and computer assessed technologies like Geographic Information System (GIS) (Bennardo, 2003); application of Focus Group Discussion (FGD), facilitates traditional mapping approach (Agar and Mac Donald, '95), and Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Appraisal (Rist, '80; Beebe, '95, 2001) made the ethnographic method more scientific and popularly used by the researchers across the disciplines. Over the past few years institutions such as the World Bank, The Ford Foundation, and other international bodies have used various ethnographic methods for cultural explanations while

undertaking reflexive inquiries or complex theoretical articulations about the transnational and global studies (Paine, '96). The present study used various tools and techniques in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. However, adoption of tools and techniques were based on ontological and epistemological orientations of the research rather than differentiating the use of various tools.

Statement of the Problem

Gender disparities in Indian societies are determined by its socio-cultural and socialization processes (Vidyarthi and Rai, '76). The socio-cultural factors validate the status of women in a particular society. Therefore, it is commonly said that the gender roles are socially constructed. United Nations has defined the status of women as the 'conjunction of position a woman occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother.....of the power and prestige attached to these positions, and of the rights and duties she is expected to exercise' (United Nations, '75). However, in India women are discriminated due to several historical, religious and other reasons. Women's status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities, while their position is low where food collection is entirely based on men's job like hunting, herding and intensive agriculture (Bhasin, '97). In India the low status of women is derived from a lack of control over material and non-material resources by the women and their lack of choice.

The gender relations in a tribal society seem to be relatively egalitarian with women enjoying quite a high social status and economic value compared to their non-tribal counterparts. Role of tribal women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. They work very hard, in some cases even more than their male counterpart. The tribal women have a freedom, and a self-expression. With the onset of development programmes economic changes are taking place, which have affected men and women differently. This inequality arising from the development process calls for a detailed scrutiny because it has resulted in not only inequality between tribals and non-tribals but also among tribals on gender basis. Majority of the tribal societies are

patriarchal. Tribal women are not equal to men as such, but had higher status vis-a-vis non-tribal women. Men represent the family in the society and women as the main decision maker in the family economy, production, and social relations. Tribal women enjoy a greater social status with regard to control over resources. This ensures their active participation and decision-making with regard to land utilization, agriculture and powers over cash flow in a tribal economy. The fact that women control the family economy was the main reason why her status is relatively high. Much of the changes have been made during the decades of planned development. Modernization tends to be more and more individual land ownership oriented, and as a result it became destructive of the woman's status (Fernandes and Barbra, 2002). These tribal women who sustained themselves on the natural resources had to face economic impoverishment, followed by loss of social status.

Tribal society is very egalitarian by nature. Discriminations against women, occupational differentiation, and emphasis on status and hierarchical social order of the Hindu society is absent among the tribal societies. The status of the tribal people in the society can be judged mainly by the roles they play in the society. The status of a person quite often depends on the system of authority he/she enjoys in the community. Since women in the tribal communities toil hard, they are considered as the assets to the family. The status of tribal women depends on the economic roles they play. The tribals in the past usually forest dwellers and their livelihood to a great extent depended on food gathering economy. The sale proceeds of the domesticated animals are retained by the housewives. Again it is women who are engaged in weeding, harvesting, preserving seeds at home and take decisions about the crops to be cultivated, sold and preserved. In the tribal societies where market is yet to have inroads, the business of everyday living is usually carried out on gender division of labour (Elwin, '56). Role of tribal women is not only of importance in the economic activities, but her role in the non-economic activities is equally important. The tribal women were never represented in the traditional panchayats in tribal regions till the implementation of Panchayati Raj Act more

particularly the implementation of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA). Mostly the tribal women did not have a place in the village political processes, until the recent days when the village panchayat system is introduced by the State. Even then in many situations the tribal women are override by their male counterparts.

There has been a growing interest in studying the status of women which in subsequent period known as gender study among both management researchers and practitioners (Bhasin, '97). The gender relations in certain societies are still guided by primordial characteristics, as a result, the relationships between male and female in such societies are considered as complimentary and obligatory then exploitative and depriving. In many cases scholars have assumed that status of women is the same as delegating or shading power with subordinates and hence the concept requires no further conceptual analysis beyond the power concept (Krishna, 2005). The Merriam Webster's Dictionary describes the term empower as 'to authorize or delegate give legal power to save one'. In the management literature this idea of delegation and the decentralization of decision making power is central to the study on gender notion (World Bank, 2000).

The Oxford dictionary defines the verb, empower, as "to enable", in contrast to the earlier definition of empowerment as delegation (of authority and resource sharing) enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy. Gurung ('98) research on empowerment is also viewed as an enabling rather than a delegating process. Delegating or resource sharing is only one set of conditions that may (but not necessarily) enable or empower subordinates (Gurung, '98)). For the first time the status of women was analysed from the perspective of empowerment by the World Bank in its *World Development Report, 2000-2001* (World Bank, 2000) as one of the three pillars of poverty reduction strategy.

There are a large number of processes through which tribals have lost access to land and forests which are essential for their survival and livelihoods. This include alienation of land which is operationally owned by the tribals through debt mortgaging and sale, but also loss of access to land through reservation of forests, loss of shifting cultivation land through

Survey and Settlement, displacement, unsuitable and unimplemented land reform laws etc. Over a period of time, all these processes have led to loss of control and access to livelihood support systems vital to their existence, marginalization and destitution of tribal communities. Influx of non-tribals during last two centuries, who were capable of negotiating state enforced legal and tenure systems, have pushed tribal communities to the bottom of the local power hierarchies, even in areas where they are in majorities. In areas where tribals are in minorities, their conditions, along with that of dalits, are even more miserable and powerless.

For over a decade-and-a-half the government has been pushing the agenda of the corporate sector, resulting in unprecedented trauma to the tribal people depending on land and natural resources for survival. Labour roles are changing with the transition from traditional land- and forest- based livelihoods to mining and wage labour based. With this shift in labour roles and traditional livelihoods, gender roles are shifting as well. Women are staying at home to carry out only household duties with the degradation and alienation of lands. With the individual patta becoming the norm of land ownership, power has been transferred to man and from him to his son. Now tribal women are prohibited from owning land without the support of their father, husband, son or brother, so that if a woman is married to a non-indigenous person, the land can stay with the male relative and with the tribal community. Livelihoods of forest dependent people, especially women, are adversely affected by forced evictions. Non-timber forest produce forms a major source of income for many tribal communities. Women are almost exclusively involved in collection, storage, processing and marketing of minor forest products such as fodder, thatching, and medicinal herbs. However, increased government control over forests and minor forest products have adversely affected the livelihood choices of Tribal and forest dependent women. The woman seizes to be the main decision maker in the family economy and becomes dependent on man (Thekkekara, '93). Krishna (2005) says that the swift transformation of production systems, land use and livelihoods in recent decades has affected gender relations leading in many cases to marginalization of tribal women. Further, with the

establishment of industries and various development projects by the Government, each member of the family was to be given a job whereby married women were never considered. Jobs were normally given to men, considering him as the heads of family which were often temporary or daily wagers. Thus, in comparison to women, the men folk among tribals forged ahead in acquiring the modern privileges.

Bose ('73) in his work '*Some Indian Tribes*', a monographic study of nine tribes in India, namely, the *Birhors, Juangs, Saora, Apa Tani, Gaddi, Kinnauras, Oraons and Khasis* gave an account of the tribal societies culture, habitat, rites and rituals where he has also shown the status of tribal women in various fronts of their life. Menon ('92) reveals that the impact and the loss of common property resources are multi-dimensional on tribal women. She shows that the hardships of the tribal women have been increasing. Thus, tribal women are the major victims of the deprivation of the traditional rights of the tribals in common property resources. Gurnug ('98) viewed that the social and economic status of tribal women is low because of social hierarchy and economic deprivation. The difference in land holding, food security, allocation of resources and role in decision making affects and determines their socio economic status. Bhasin (2007) has carried out study on tribal women in different geographical regions i.e. Ladhak, North Eastern Region of India, Rajasthan and her findings show that the tribal women possess a lot of importance in tribal communities. Singh (2008) in his book '*People of India, West Bengal*' analysed almost all of the communities living in West Bengal covering their social structure, social positioning that helps to identify the role of tribal women in each community separately. Awias *et al.* (2009) stated that tribal women have major role in co-management of their natural, social and economic resources, but still they suffer a lot; they are backward due to a traditional outlook, illiteracy, superstition, and submissive role in decision making, social evils and many other cultural factors. Dasgupta *et al.* (2009) studied 320 households and the effects of socio-economic parameters like age, sex, education, family education, on the health status of the Toto, Santal, Sabar, and Lodha tribes of West Bengal, India. The review of literature clearly indicates that various researchers

have highlighted the changing status of women in the tribal society. Keeping this in mind the present study purposively planned to study the following objectives.

The objectives of the present paper are as follows:

- a) To study the socio-cultural life of Kavar tribal women and their status in the socio-cultural activities;
- b) to examine the status of economic empowerment of the Kavar tribal women and their contribution to the household economy;
- c) to find out the status of political empowerment of the Kavar tribal women;
- d) to identify various constraints and opportunities the Kavar tribal women interface which can be taken into account for their empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Umeriadadar village of Kotta Vikash Khand of Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh State during the month of April and June 2016. The study adopted a purposive random sampling to select Kavar tribal households having either adult and/or young Kavar women. The study covered all the 26 Kavar households in the village for in-depth data collection. Primary data were collected from the Kavar tribal households and Kavar women through individual in-depth interviews. Structured interview schedule seeking relevant information about the study village, households of Kavar tribal women, her family status, socio economic status and other aspects were served to collect household data. FGDs were also carried out in the village to understand the dynamics of the socio economic status of the Kavar tribal women.

CHHATTISGARH

The new State of Chhattisgarh came into existence being separated from Madhya Pradesh on 25th August 2000. Chhattisgarh (Chattisgarh, literally 'Thirty-Six Forts') is a state in central India. It is the 10th largest state in India, with an area of 135,194 km² (52,199 sq mi). The state was formed on 1 November 2000 by partitioning 16 Chhattisgarhi-speaking southeastern districts of Madhya Pradesh. Raipur was made its capital city. Chhattisgarh borders to the states of Madhya Pradesh in the northwest, Maharashtra in the southwest, Andhra Pradesh [(East Godavari District) in the south, Telangana (which includes eastern parts of old Bhadrachalam

constituency which was part of East Godavari District prior to 1956 and later added to Khammam district and most of which was retained by Telangana after Andhra Pradesh's bifurcation in 2014)]. in the south, Odisha in the east, Jharkhand in the northeast and Uttar Pradesh in the north.

Currently the state comprises of 27 districts. With a population of 25.5 million and it is the 17th most-populated state of the nation. Chhattisgarh is one of the fastest-developing states in India. The state has 27 districts which are physiographically divided into three broad geo-physical regions. They are viz: Chhattisgarh plains, Rimlands and Bastar plateau. The state poses considerable forest wealth covering an area of 43.62 per cent of the total land area (Forest Survey of India, 1990). The total tribal population of the State shares 33.13 per cent who are distributed in a sizeable population in almost all the districts of the state except Raipur. There are 43 tribal communities concentrated in the districts of Bastar, Bilaspur and Sarguja. The Gonds are the numerically dominant tribal group of the State, followed by Kawars, Halbas, Bhataras, Oraons, Binjuars, Baigas, Sewars, Bharias and Agharias (Mandal *et al.*, 2002).

The northern and southern parts of the state are hilly, while the central part is a fertile plain. The highest point in the state is the Bailadila Range. Deciduous forests of the Eastern Highlands Forests cover roughly 44% of the state. The state animal is the *Van Bhainsa*, or wild water buffalo. The state bird is the Pahari Myna, or hill myna. The state tree is the Sal (*Sarai*) found in Bastar division.

Kavar Tribe

The Kavar tribe is primarily located in the state of Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha of central India. Kawari the language of the Kawars, is an Indo-Aryan language that is believed to be a dialect of Halbi. Today, some of the Kavar speak Chhattisgarhi and Hindi, the languages of their neighbors and have begun adopting their cultures as well. Some of the Kavar tribal people have become so absorbed by the cultures of the surrounding peoples that they are no longer considered to be true Kavar. They have completely lost their language and former culture and now speak a different dialect.

The Kavar is considered as a scheduled tribe. Although they consider military service as their traditional occupation, most have given up military life and have become farmers or wage-workers. Many of the Kavar live in the northern plains, where they have settled and possess own farms. However, most still live in the hilly areas and depend on other sources of income such as wage labour in road construction and agricultural. As a result, most of the fertile land is used for a single crop. A large portion of their farm land is mortgaged to the neighboring communities, and many Kavar work as farm servants with the mortgage holders. The Kavar farmers are being encouraged to adopt a more settled type of farming. A major source of their cash earnings comes from selling firewood that is collected from the forest. The lower classes also weave ropes and make sleeping cots to sell in the markets.

The staple food of the Kavar is rice. They do not eat beef, pork, or any other foods that are considered unclean by Hindus. However, they love to drink rice-beer and other alcoholic beverages. The Kavar have several endogamous divisions (only allow marriage within their own groups). These divisions are further divided into a number of exogamous sects called *goti*. The *goti* are 'totemistic', which means they use symbols of plants and animals to represent their group. A group totem represents their bond of unity and is often considered the ancestor or brother of the group's members. The Kavar *goti* are similar to the *gotra* of the high caste Hindus. Marriages within the same *goti* are unacceptable. A marriage begins with negotiations, usually initiated by the boy's father.

Umariadadar: The Study village

The study village Umariadadar is declared as Gram Panchayat headquarter, is situated 17km away from Ratanpur the temple town of Bilaspur. The village is linked by a black top road from the main road. The village internal connecting roads are cemented. The village is composed of different habitations named as Khalepada, Matachoura, Godi Chawck, Pachara and Dugu Pada. The study village has a total household of around 343 families who are distributed into 9 wards. The total population is around 1656 of which male consists of 842 and female accounts 814 (GPOffice, 2009). The children account

93 only. Umariadadar is also one of the tribal dominated villages in the region carrying 84.00 per cent households belonging to ST communities. It has been clear from the data that of the total tribal communities of Umariadadar village has majority of Gond (35.0%) tribes, followed by Kavar (22.0%) tribe and Birhor tribe (26.0%), and the Panika (17.0%).

The educational institutions of the village include Primary school, Middle school and one High school. However, all these schools have the shortage of teachers which affects the regularity and quality of teaching. The mid-day meal provided in primary and middle schools are regular by nature, but the quality of the food is not as per the menu decided by the state. The village water bodies include ponds (8), dug well (15), hand pump (6), river, *nala* and main canal. Paddy is the major component of the cropping pattern of the village. The animal husbandry stock of the village includes cow, buffalo and goats.

The major sources of income for the people of Umariadadar include agriculture, forest products, particularly *mahua*, *tenduleaf* and animal husbandry. The village is largely depending on forest fuel collected by almost all the households. The first electricity supply to the village was made during 1986. In the past Dukhi Singh a Kavar by community was the Gountia (traditional village political head) of the village. The present Gontia also belong to Kavar tribe. The village has three grocery shops one each owned by a Kavar, Yadav and a Gond family. The first shop was opened by a Kavar 55 years ago. The village has 20 government employees working as teacher, driver, police, doctor, engineer, extension officer etc. The village does not have a landless household because government during the period from 1990 to 2010 have distributed one acre of land minimum to each landless household. The village has two tractors, 20 motorbikes, one auto, 60 TV sets, 12 water cooler and 28 pucca houses. From all accounts the village is well off.

STATUS OF KAVAR TRIBAL WOMEN

Political Status

The awareness and the knowledge level of the respondents were assessed with respect to certain

political indicators. The awareness level of the Kavar women was assessed on few indicators like their knowledge on different political parties, political leaders at local and of national level and the functioning of Gram Sabha. The study observed that around 26.66 per cent Kavar women have knowledge on the name of India's present Prime Minister, 13.33 per cent have knowledge on the name of national level political parties, while 13.33 per cent have knowledge on Chief Minister's name of Chhattisgarh, and only 20 per cent have knowledge on State level parties and 20 per cent have knowledge on the name of the President of India. Many Kavar women who do not have any knowledge on political parties (89.53%) and political leaders (85.00%) justified saying that such knowledge are not required for them in their day to day life and living. They have certain knowledge which is concerned to their immediate world of village political system. Therefore, they are ignorant of political parties and political leaders. Few questions were asked to know the level of awareness of the Kavar women about the possession of voter identity card, casting of vote in last assembly election, and casting of vote in last parliament election. The above data reflect that every Kavar woman possess voter card and all of them have attended last assembly and parliament election held in the village. The reasons put forwarded by few Kavar women shows that during election they were motivated to cast their vote by their own people. The knowledge level of the Kavar women about the existence of Gram Sabha in their village and whether they have attended the meeting in the Gram Sabha was also explored. It was reported that all the Kavar women have the knowledge of gram panchayat, gram sabha, and the issues discussed in the gram sabha.

Economic Status

The economic status of the Kavar tribal women is very important since traditionally they have been enjoying certain privileges and rights over certain economic arenas of the family. Many studies in tribal societies have established this fact. However, over the time a lot might have changed in their role performance both inside the house and outside. Keeping this in mind the study attempted to find out the changing status of tribal women with respect to

certain indicators of their role performance particularly relating to possession of agricultural land and homestead land in their name and if not possession of joint patta holding both in their and husband's name. The responses reflect that only 20.00 per cent Kavar women possess ownership over both agriculture and homestead land while a large share of these women do not have any legal ownership rights over both agriculture and homestead lands.

Possession of bank account and subsequent transaction in it by Kavar women seems to be one of the important indicators of change in their economic status. Keeping this in mind the study tried to find out the status of owning bank account by the Kavar women. The responses reflect that around 40.00 per cent Kavar women have bank account in their name, while only 6.66 per cent have joint account with their husbands. While coming to the operational status of these bank accounts the data indicate that only 16.66 per cent account holders are regularly operating the pass book. All have admitted the fact that the opening of pass book account is made recently since it is a requirement of for the payment of wage remuneration under MGNREGA. The knowledge level of the Kavar women on different welfare programmes were assessed. It is informed that all the Kavar women who have been interviewed could tell about the functioning of and purposes of various welfare programmes like Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs), Mid-Day Meal (MDM), role of ASHA worker, ward member and Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDS).

With respect to the sources of savings by the Kavar women, few questions were asked. The responses when quantified show that all are keeping their savings at home. The justifications behind keeping savings at home seems to be contextually fitting since they save only small amount to meet the contingency expenses like treatment of family members, and family food requirements. None of the bank account holders have saved much in their bank account. They are yet to understand the saving and subsequent benefits of the bank account. However, they feel secured with and more accessible to WSHGs to save their money since WSHGs are more accessible than banks in their day to day life and living.

Tribal women in general play a very important role in various stages of agriculture activities of the

house. Various studies have shown that tribal women contribute more in agriculture as compared to tribal male. Keeping this in mind the study tried to find out the status of Kavar women and their contribution in agriculture. In all agriculture activities like ploughing, *ropa* (planting), sowing seeds, weeding, harvesting, thrashing and preservation of agriculture produces Kavar women play a very significant role. With respect to various sources of earning of the Kavar households the data indicate that almost 46.66 per cent households have earned their living from wage labour, while 60.00 per cent have earned from agriculture labour. However, in all the households NTFP collection is a major source of supplementing the household economy in winter and summer seasons.

Social Status

In order to understand the social status of the Kavar women the study wanted to collect their responses on certain social issues. All the Kavar women agreed that they are educationally backward and should be educated which will determine their social status to a better extent. With education they will be able to know many things of the world. If they are educated the police and forest personnel cannot exploit them. Therefore, all the respondents replied that they are sending their daughters to schools. However, there are certain constraints at school level which does not allow their daughters to attend schools regularly. The Kavar women had stated that they are highly guided by festival and festivities. They observe different festival occasions in different seasons to perform agriculture activities and first collection of and first eating of forest produces. They shared some of the changes observed in the adoption of household articles, dresses, visit to Ratanpur and Bilaspur and eating of different good dishes. Over the time the expenses have also increased in participation of such festival occasions. However, the adherence of the Kavar women by the age-old rituals and rites on festival occasions has not changed much.

CASE STUDIES

The following two case studies presented below reflect more particularly the changes which have taken place in the life and livelihood of the Kavar family at the micro level.

Case Study 1

Bandan Kavar, a 60 years illiterate widow partially engaged in agriculture and bricks production. She has two sons named Shiv Singh and Prem Singh. The first son is married to Durga Bai who has two grandsons who are in their child hood. Two acres of agriculture land provides him a base of various agriculture assets like 2 cows, 2 ploughs, 5 poultry and 2 iron leveling equipments, while the non-agriculture related major assets include wooden basket (5), iron bucket (3), sleeping cot, chairs, TV, a few gold and silver ornaments, one bike, utensils, one cycle etc.

Regarding unmovable properties and livelihood resources, Bandan Kavar owns *patta* land in her name. All the family members work in agriculture. In addition to that the family members are also engaged in bricks production in their own backyard (only during summer and winter season) which supplements their family income basket. With respect to the agriculture production during last crop year the Bandan has produced rice (500 kg), pulses and some vegetables such as chilies (5kg), potato (20kg) and sugarcane (10 sticks), all produced for home consumption. The NTFPs collected by the family in different seasons, which supplemented the family basket includes *putu* (2kg) and other mushrooms (3kg), and varieties of green leafs during rainy seasons, *mahua* flower (100kg) and *tendu* (2kg) during summer season. Bandan raises income from agriculture, NTFPs like *mahua* flower, *tandu* leaves, bricks production, and animal husbandry. They purchase food and non-food items from Ratanpur market. For their health treatment they directly prefer to consult the allopathic doctor at Pudu government hospital. They purchase their clothes once in a year.

In order to understand political empowerment of Kavar women the researcher asked various questions on the implementation of certain political provisions. The data reflect that the respondent could not tell a single name of any political party at both state and national level. She has no knowledge regarding the name of different political leaders functioning both at state and national level. However; she has cast her vote both in last parliament and assembly elections and also possesses voter card. With respect to her knowledge on panchayat raj she viewed that she has

attended last Gram Sabha meeting in the village. However; she did not participate in any of the discussions nor she could tell any major issues discussed in the Gram Sabha. Her knowledge on the village panchayati level functionaries is very poor. With respect to the dispute resolution methods she has adopted in last couple of years she told that the family matters are resolved within the family, while interfamily matters are resolved with the neighbors. Very rarely she takes the help of village Panch to settle the family disputes. Justifications for low level of her knowledge on various socio-political issues as mentioned by Bandan shows that any knowledge which has functional values to their day to day life is given importance.

Bandan's family members work daily without enjoying any holiday in their homestead and agriculture land. Sometime they feel unhappy for their day long work in the field which is visibly observed during their interaction. Only recently during 2016 Bandan has opened a passbook with her own name in State Bank of India looking at its necessity to get wage payment under MGNREGs. However, the passbook was yet to be issued. As a result she has never started bank transaction. However, the family is saving her income with the Women Self-Help Groups (WSHG) and at home. During 2002-2003 she becomes the member of local WSHG due to the persuasion of fellow women villagers. Every month she contributes Rs.20/- as the member fees to the WSHG and 1kg of rice. She has never taken any loan from WSHG. But has a planning to take a big loan to purchase a piece of land. Bandan has some knowledge on various welfare programmes like ICDS and MDM scheme implemented in the village. During last crop year the family has sold 200kg of rice and 50kg of *mahua* flower (*Madhuca longifolia*). The money earned was basically used for the maintenance of the family. In addition to this the family also produces brick which is the major source of income for the family. Bandan is also engaged in providing wage labour in various agriculture and household activities of others on hired basis. On an average she earns Rs. 60/- per day and gets around 20 days of wage labour per month.

With respect to the social empowerment of Kawar women during interaction it was realized that Bandan has understood the importance of education for

children; as a result, her younger daughter is continuing in 10th standard of education. Of course, her family poverty did not allow her elder daughter to continue study beyond 5th standard. Bandan viewed that her husband while he was alive was equally sharing certain household activities like collection of fuel and NTFPS, taking care of livestock etc. She strongly pointed out that distribution of work in their Kawar tribal society is based on gender line, as their society distributes different works between male and female. However, such works are complimentary by nature to each other as a part of the family management requirements. During major illness of their family members they visit to local government doctors at Pudu to prescribe medicines. Bandan also gets the benefits of some health services on payment with the premise that a healthy housewife can only contribute to the betterment of the family. Bandan admitted the fact that change is necessary with the passage of time. Accordingly, she and her family have adapted to various changes depending on the usefulness of adoption. However, such adoptions have always been subject to the functional needs of the family and the Kawar society. The market forces could not motivated her much to adopt changes as per the need of the market. She strongly demonstrated that the Kawar society has adopted changes as per their survival needs.

Case Study 2

Santal Bai, a 28 years married young Kawar women is an illiterate housewife. She is primarily engaged as a housewife, while for her the secondary engagement is agriculture. She has one son and one daughter who are in childhood stage. Her family posses land in their name. They have also hired land piece from their kith and kin for cultivation. The Agriculture related assets she posses include 2 buffalos, 2 ploughs and two poultry. The non-agriculture related major assets she posses includes almirah, table fan, sleeping cot, chairs, TV, sewing machine, some gold and silver ornaments, utensils, one cycle, one motor cycle etc.

Her family has adopted multiple sources for employment and earnings. Her husband is managing a shop, and also carrying out agriculture activities, while she is mostly engaged in household jobs,

stitching green leaves and also managing shop. During the last crop year the household has produced rice (1450 kg), pulses (*Tiwra* and *Butra* each 50 kg) and some vegetables such as chilies (10kg), and potato (30kg). In addition to that she also collected various NTFPs such as *putu* and mushrooms during rainy seasons, *mahua* during summer season. Thus the income of the family is raised from shop keeping, stitching, agriculture (rice), NTFPS and sometimes by animal husbandry. They purchase food and non-food items from market. For treatment they directly prefer to attend the doctor. They purchase clothes two to three times in a year.

In order to understand political empowerment of Kawar tribal women the researcher asked various questions with respect to their awareness and knowledge of certain programmes. The data reflect that the respondent was not able to tell a single name of any political party and political leaders functioning at the state and national level. However, she has cast her vote both in the last parliament and assembly election and also posses voter identity card. With respect to her knowledge of panchayati raj she viewed that she had attended last Gram Sabha meeting in the village. However, she did not participate in any of the discussion, nor she could tell any major issues discussed in the Gram Sabha. Her knowledge on the village panchayati level functionaries was satisfactory. Santal Bai replied that the family level disputes are resolved within the family, and very rarely she had taken the help of the village Panch to settle problems.

Santal Bai's family possesses legal holdings over homestead and agriculture land. This has created the feeling of powerfulness which is visibly observed during the interaction with her. Only recently her family has opened a passbook account in both husband and wife's name in the local branch of SBI during 2015, considering its necessity now. But the family is also saving money with WSHG where she is a member. In 2012 she became the member of local WSHG due to the persuasion of fellow women villagers. Every month she contributes Rs. 20/- in cash and 1kg of rice as the member of WSHG. She has never taken any loan amount from WSHG. Santal Bai has no knowledge of various welfare programs like functioning of ASHA workers, Aaganwadi Center, and MDM Scheme in the village. During the last crop year

the family has sold 500kg of rice and 100kg of *mahua* flowers. The money earned was basically used for the maintenance of the family expences. Managing the shop is the major source of other income for the family. Santal Bai is engaged in various agriculture and household activities, like stitching and managing the shop during the absence of her husband.

With respect to the social empowerment of Kawar women few questions were asked to know various aspects of their social empowerment. During the interaction with the family members Santal Bai stated that she has felt the importance of education for their children, who are now engaged in school education. She viewed that her husband is equally sharing certain activities like house management works, looking after children and also taking care of livestock. She strongly points out that distribution of work is based on gender line since it is observed that there are some works meant for men while some are only meant for women. Santal Bai admitted the fact that change is necessary with the passage of time. Accordingly, she and her family have adopted to change depending on the usefulness of the adoption. According to her one should understand the appropriateness of the change and adoption in the context of household needs. She is very well aware of how to manage things in the household, as she is also shouldering the household responsibilities in the changed circumstances of the present days realizing the power of empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Umariadadar the study village is a multi tribal village. Kawars are one among the dominant tribes of the village both in terms of having numerical strength and maintaining ethnic boundaries. The village is accessible by road communication to outer world and the villagers frequently attend the market at Ratanpur and Bilaspur located at a distance of 10km and 50 km respectively for various purposes. The infrastructure bases of the village which influence the quality of lives of the villagers are not adequate. Water scarcity during summer is an acute problem which affects the growth of Kawar tribal households and Kawar women are the worst victim of the situation. The low level of political knowledge of the Kawar women does not influence much to their participation in voting and attending the gram sabhas in the village,

since such participations are influenced by non-secular processes at village level to which Kawar women do not find interest. Conflict between husband and wife are normally resolved within the family. Kawar women normally don't like to take familial matters beyond the home. However, conflict with the neighbours and the other households of the village may be taken to village panchayat level if it is a serious issues like elopement, land dispute issue etc. Kawar women do not enjoy legal rights over homestead and agriculture land. The empowerment processes implemented by the Government by way of providing entitlement to the women over land do not have much impact on Kawar women. With respect to access to banking institutions it was observed that only 40 per cent have opened their account since it was a requirement for the payment of wage remuneration under MGNREGA. The material culture of the Kawar households has been comparatively changed. Such change elements are reflected in the dress pattern, household articles, crockery items, food items etc. Traditionally Kawars are rice eater community. However, over the time new food dishes like roti, sogi, poha etc have become the part of morning breakfast of few households. Due to various development activities like implementation of mid-day meal, NHRM activities and MGNREGA, there is now a few additional employment opportunities have been created in the village. Kawar women have equally benefited out of modern opportunities which have not only increased their income and employment opportunities but have also broadened the scope of their knowledge. Kawar women who are having better economic condition, have adopted LPG gas as one of the sources of fuel for food preparation which has increased their family status. This has also created surplus time for many Kawar women for productive use in the family. Kawar women are very much favourable to girl education. All families are sending their daughters to schools. They consider the education as the medium of empowerment. However, linguistic barriers in the class room teaching affect the interest of their daughters. This has influenced the irregularity in attending the classes and even few drop outs. Distribution of household activities of Kawar family is not highly specific on gender line. Though certain activities are specific to women still

Kawar males do not hesitate to support their female counter part for a smooth household management.

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