

Chapter-I

Introduction

Social science affirms that a woman's place in the society marks the level of its civilization. Every civilized society accepting the equality of sexes has therefore made affirmative provisions against gender discrimination. But in spite of enactment of these provisions equality between men and women continues to be an eluded goal. The wide gap between the ideal and the practical is not only due to historical reasons but also because of attitude of inferiority and bondage towards women.

Going back to the founding fathers of sociology, Durkheim's classic study suicide shows very little thought about women, but a good deal of repetition of unthinking myths about them (Johnson, 1972). Durkheim has not given any thought related to sex and gender. The Marxian theory though in many respect is different from that of the traditional approaches of Tiger and Fox (1972), Murdock (1949) and Bowlby (1953) who never examined social reality in relation to culturally ordained differences between men and women, it basically recognizes the existence of gender inequalities in society even though it traced its origin to class based divisions. Haralambos stated that the Marxian perspective fails to provide an adequate explanation to sexual inequality (Haralambos, 1980: 397).

Feminist ideology as expressed in the works of Mitchell (1971), Ali (1980), Chetlapalli (1991), Chauhan (1999), Das, A. (2001), Srivastava (2001), Valentine (2002) stirs round the debate on the gender questions. They draw the attention of the academic world in a big way to the existence of gender-based differences and also the forces that operate to maintain and reinforce these differences.

Though women studies had some place in the sociological/social anthropological literature of the past, only in the last two decades it has been a prime concern for sociological analysis. In a discussion of women's status in any society the general convention has been to assess their role in relation to men. In recent times two other dimensions have been introduced to facilitate such assessment, particularly in a period of change; the first being the nature and type of control employed by women over their own earnings and the second one is the extent to which they have access to decision making process and are effective in position of power and authority.

A clear understanding of a social system is obtained only when the discussion revolves round both men and women. Women's status in a society is better understood if it is discussed in relation to that of men in the same society (Indira and Shanti, 1997: 168).

From before the cradle to beyond the grave, a person is supposed to be inextricably forever male or female. A distribution of traits of both sexes within one individual does not appear natural. Indeed, we refer to the sexes as opposite rather than different (Walum, 1977). Many people regard this opposition as "natural", a word that can be used to mean "biological", "God-given" or "morally correct", or all three. Sociologists and social anthropologists suggest that most of the things we associate with being male or female are cultural, that is, they are socially determined and highly changeable throughout history and across the world.

Writing about her research on Pakistani families in Lahore and Bristol, Jeffery quoted a woman who said that the first question asked when a child is

born is whether it is a boy or it is a girl, and if it is a girl the relatives want to know is she fair (Jeffery, 1976: 97).

Human society in most part of the world is patriarchal. Historically in almost all societies the father and not the mother had headed the family, taken decision and governed the members and the property of the family. Patriarchy acts as a severe constraint to the establishment of a gender equal social order. That is why many feminists, trace the roots of female oppression to patriarchy.

Equalization of the sexes was impossible so long as women were excluded from the productive work of society and remained restricted to private household work (Burns, 1936). Notwithstanding the structural differences in and between different countries, regions and classes issues of common concern to women are relegation of women to child rearing, household management and kinship maintenance. These tasks are not even recognized as productive.

An effort to understand woman's social position is a recent trend all over the world. Coming to the Indian situation women have always been treated as a lesser sex because of the country's traditional social structure. But in the last two decades a vast body of knowledge has grown in the area of women concern. Like elsewhere in the world, the years following 1975 saw a spurt not only in academic but also activist concerns about gender based inequalities (Indira and Shanti, 1997: 170).

At all stages of life an Indian woman is under the control of a man: father, husband or son (Jovita, 1997: 58-68). A good number of research

studies in India conclude that only sons have the right to inherit property and daughters have to depend on the goodwill of the men folk. The role of a girl in Indian societies is predetermined. She has to be a good mother and a good wife. Her primary role lies in child bearing and child rearing. Child rearing is the work that usually starts from a very early age. Her virtues lie only in the services she can render as wife, mother and sometimes as daughter-in-law. This indicates the existence of glaring gender inequalities in Indian societies.

While law has removed practically every hurdle to the establishment of gender equality, in practice, gender continues to be a stumbling block for women's development. There can be no better indication for the situation of Indian women than the following lines: "a declining sex-ratio which stands at 929/1000, a literacy rate at 39.42 per cent, a maternal mortality rate at 500 per 10,000 women. Death of young girls exceed those of young boys by almost one-third of a million every year and six infant death is specifically due to gender discrimination" (Gender and Poverty in India, 1991: 123).

Women's economic participation has slowly dwindled with increasing marginalization of women. As many as 90 per cent of India's women workforce is in the unorganized sector of economy and their work is lowly paid. Gender differentials are practiced and reinforced by almost all social institutions in India. While on the one hand awareness of gender equality grows, on the other, gender inequality gets more firmly embedded in the social fabric.

The Orissan tale is not much different from the overall Indian scenario. The 1991 Census indicates the sex ratio at 971 female per 1000 male (Primary

Census Abstract, 1971-91). With 64 per cent of the population living below poverty line, 34.68 per cent of the women are literate in Orissa.

Feminist movement for liberation and equality of women against age-old sexual discrimination have started and gathered momentum in this country following the international trends and an awakening has been started in this state. But this movement has remained more or less parochial and confined among the educated and conscious women of middle class and upper class while the vast majority of disadvantaged women living in the rural and tribal areas have been least benefited by this.

Orissa is one of the most backward states in the country. The state which accounts for 4.7 per cent of the country's population and 3.8 per cent of its area comes off poorly in any meaningful comparison with most of the other states and union territories. The axe of economic backwardness mostly falls on women and other vulnerable sections of population like children, SC, ST, etc. thereby affecting their growth and development.

Undernourishment among the population particularly among the women is extensive. The impact of poverty is well felt by these disadvantaged groups in large measure than the others on account of lack of ownership of resources, skill and education.

The tribal population of India (67.6 million, 1991 census) is larger than that of any other country in the world. In fact it is almost equal to the tribal population of nineteen countries with substantial tribal population. Despite the protection given to the tribal population by the constitution of India (1950), it remains the most backward ethnic group in India on three most

important indicators, viz. health, education and income. The pace of commercial exploitation of the resources of tribal land that accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the country's space with 8 per cent of its population living on it has assumed a disturbing dimension. The tribal's rights in basic resources such as land, forest and water in fact in the entire environment have been seriously eroded, as non-tribal peasants, traders, businessmen and other categories of aliens have moved into tribal land, with the exposure of tribal areas to various forces of modernization (Singh, 1993: 7).

In tribal societies age and sex are the prime categories that determine the division of labour enforcing and legitimizing specific norms that ensure gender identity. Gender based work legitimizes the unequal distribution of the products of labour in the household. It is here that the issue of women and development is invariably connected with the dynamics of capital and the nature of female participation in the labour market. Precisely the penetration of capital in the tribal regions has created new forms of female exploitation and subordination. Under pre-capitalism the domestic labour was distinguishable from the subsistence production (Pathy, 1999: 142). Researchers state the differential class relations dictate the terms of domestic labour. In absolute terms, gender sub-ordination is related with politico-economic asymmetric, and thus varies according to historical specificities.

Traditionally the tribal woman, in many societies exercises, a firm hand in family matters (Dhebar Commission Report, 1961). Tribal women in matriarchal and matrilineal societies are undoubtedly better off in comparison to tribal women in patriarchal or patrilineal societies. Studies on the status of tribal women have always placed them better off in comparison to the caste

Hindu women when the aspect of freedom is concerned. Divorce and widowhood is not taken as a stigma in tribal society. The bride price itself is considered a mark of respect and value for tribal women. Still among the patriarchal tribal communities, a woman customarily cannot become a religious or political head. Similarly she is ineligible for family headship. She cannot participate in many religious rituals, cannot make important decisions, so on and so forth. Thus when we analyze some of the noted works concerned to tribal women by researchers we get the knowledge of the situation of them in different communities.

While writing on Sema Naga women Hutton stated that they enjoy a high social status, still these women are restricted in possession of property (Hutton, 1921). The contribution of Kisan and Munda women to household economy is substantial. They manage to perform various household and extra-household works properly. However they are not allowed to participate in village meetings and religious rituals (Mishra, 1993, 1994).

While some researchers assign a high status to women in the primitive societies others maintain to state that among them women are a depressed group (Majumdar and Madan, 1956). It is not possible to draw up a clear picture of the situation of women in all tribes because it differs from tribe to tribe and sometimes within the same tribe. Factors like pattern of descent and residence, laws governing inheritance, marriage and divorce, degree of urbanization, levels of education and so on may have contributed to this variation. Thus, the position of women varies from society to society depending upon the dominant cultural values.

Review of Literature

One of the most striking criteria of the development in social sciences during the last decade has been the rise of gender as an important category of analysis. Though the term gender is generally used to refer to women, in reality gender means talking about both men and women. While the term “sex” has a biological connotation, “gender” has a cultural connotation. Thus in every society a woman’s status can be compared to man in different times. This fact will be borne out if we review some previous works related to tribal women by eminent sociologists and anthropologists.

Writing on the Maria Gonds, Grigson (1938) mentions that a girl in a Maria Gond community has the freedom to have premarital sex and choose husband of her own choice. As a married woman, she is fairly free to leave her husband if he ill-treats her or if she cannot beget a child. The woman, who is fond of ornaments and beads, has the right to spend her earnings on purchasing these ornaments. A husband does not interfere in her affairs. However, these women are tabooed during menstruation and are debarred from participating in some rituals.

According to Rivers (1906) traditionally Toda women have had a subordinate position in their community. Women have never the less enjoyed much freedom. Though Toda community depends on dairy farming, unlike women of other community, Toda women are prohibited from the milking and churning operation only due to impurity or pollution associated with women by community.

Similarly Hutton (1921: 10-16) reports about Sema Naga women. Though their marriages are arranged on the basis of convenience, a girl is never married against her will, and in the husband's home wife occupies a high position. However, it is interesting to note that the women in this community are not allowed to inherit property.

There are always some exceptions. For example, among the Tharus of the Nainital Tarai, Uttar Pradesh women's status is proverbially high. They are dominant over their husbands, have property rights, keep poultry, own it, do fishing, make baskets and sell the products of their labour (Furer-Haimendorf, 1943).

The polyandrous Tibetans as well as some sub-tribes of Bhotias treat their women with great consideration and henpecked husbands are in abundance. According to Majumdar (1973: 121) these women are hardy, resolute and capable of doing heavy and onerous tasks and they share with their men equal opportunities and equal rights.

In his statistical account of Assam, Hunter (1973: 12-29) has reported a very high status of women among the Garos and the important position they occupy. The status of women is remarkably high among the Naga and they are honored for their role in the family and their accomplishment. They have the same status as the men and suffer no discrimination on account of sex (Horam, 1988).

Similarly though the Minyong women are not highly respected, they are treated at par with men. In their society husbands are very considerate to their wives (Jagirdar, 1986: 1-10). The best example of higher status of tribal

women is the matrilineal Khasis. Mann (1983) reports that in this tribal group the husband's authority is negligible. Women take initiative in all family affairs. The husband is a co-earner and a partner. Further among the matrilineal tribal communities of northeast the owner of the house property is always a female as it is inherited from mother to daughter (Nath and Majumdar, 1986: 51-56).

In contrast to the above-mentioned position, women in some other tribal communities are socio-economically exploited and oppressed by their men-folk. For example, structural model of the Chenchu society appears to be biased in favour of male dominance. Male dominance is a consequence of their exclusive role in the extra domestic sphere which fetches them status and freedom to act independently (Gangadharam and Padmavathi, 1986: 10).

Despite their valuable contribution to the household economy, the Kisan women remain subservient to their male counterpart in all spheres of community life (Mishra, 1993: 41-43).

Rao (1999: 198-204) in his study on the Kudbi women finds them in a state of transition as well as turmoil. While in some sections there is an effort as ushering in changes through literacy programmes, reservation for women in political decision-making bodies, there are other traditional practices that are causing hindrance to their emancipation.

In another study on the Kutia and Dongria Khonds of Orissa, Pathy (1999: 148-164) notes that the social organization of production in Khond society is not just replaced by market economy but is articulated to the wider commercial network. The changes in property relations with current

commercialization of land and labour and the penetration of capital have altered the traditional relations. The women in the Khond society do not create the impression of being subordinated as they participate actively in the organization of production along with men. However, there can be variation vis-à-vis their economic position and corresponding power in domestic and public spheres.

The women in the Mishing society are deprived of educational, occupational, social, religious and political rights. At a time when the women of non-tribal communities have achieved high position in bureaucracy, politics and economic enterprise, it is surprising to see the pitiable condition of the Mishing women (Borthakur, 1997: 143-148).

While concluding on the Saharia tribal women, Chauhan (1999: 165-180) notes that various modernizing forces have influenced them. There has been substantial reduction in their importance in the new economic order.

Divergent views caution us against accepting sweeping statements regarding women's place in tribal society (Lowie, 1953). Lowie further makes a distinction between the legal status of a woman and the treatment meted out to her in social sphere. These two aspects of her life may not necessarily be same.

When we examine some of the monographic studies on tribal India, we hardly come across with ethnographic account of their women folk. Also in the so-called classic ethnographic work of Verrer Elwin (1947) on the Muria, Orans (1965) work on the Santals, Evans-Pritchard on the Azande; tribal women have not received due coverage. Similarly though the works of

McDougal (1963), Nayak (1993), Patnaik, N. (1989), Patnaik, M. (1999), Dalton (1872), Sharma (1986), Rout (1969-70) furnish us with some ethnographic data on the Juang, yet those do not provide us much information on the place of women in Juang social structure.

There are a large number of studies on tribal communities but only a few are focused on tribal women. Reviewing the studies of tribal women, Singh (1988) has concluded that there is "need for generating studies which can fill the information gap about variations that exist and about the role and status of tribal women from one region to another and one community to another". Singh (1993) has also reiterated that there are materials on tribals in general but the existing literature specifically on tribal women is limited. Data on gender differentiation of longevity, level of health, extent of mortality, infant mortality, nutrition, etc. is not available. Emphasizing the need for base-line data on at least certain basic parameters relating to tribal women, he states that data on various tribes are needed as they differ from one another.

Objectives

Realizing this limitation, the present study makes an attempt to provide an ethnographic account of the Juang women of Banspal block of Keonjhar district.

The study has the following objectives:

- To find out the place of the girl-child in the Juang community;

- to study the place of women in family organization;
- to find out the contribution of women to household economy;
- to analyze the position and participation of women in the religious and political spheres;
- to access the leisure-time activities of the women; and
- to study the world-view of Juang women.

Methodology

Informed by post-colonial feminist theories, scholars have explored the interrelationship between researcher and respondents during fieldwork and how those touch upon issues of identity and power (Valentine, 2002). In order to uncover the power dimensions between researcher and respondents, it has been recognized the importance of exploring the interrelationship that develop between the visiting researcher and the host population, their identity, their perceptions of self and other. In the words of feminist Pamela Moss (2002: 6) “identity, subjectivity and self have been important in understanding the relationships researchers have with themselves, research participants and research topics”. Indeed fieldwork research starts with images of self in relation to the others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 87). In doing so, details about the complex and dynamic processes that take place at the level of perceptions of each other’s identity (both in the mind of the visiting researcher and the host population) are regarded as revealing of social phenomena (Coffey, 1999). The process is far from static as our identities as

researchers, as Rose (1997: 315) maintains, are made and remade through the research process.

The earlier studies on tribal communities were largely biased in their representation of women. The new sociology of women, which began in the 1970's, was critical of biased reference in the writing of ethnographers, which was due to their lack of access to women of the society being studied and because of their preconceived notions about women of their own societies. Thus, the assumption regarding women's position in tribal society not only lead to the prejudices in the studies but also their neglect in the various policies and programmes that were introduced subsequently to bring about desirable changes in their life. Keeping in view this matter, the present study makes an attempt to provide an ethnographic account of Juang women covering aspects as detailed above. My intention has been to move between phenomenological and an objectivist approach, i.e. the experience Juang women themselves convey of their world and the outsider's knowledge of the structure of this world. My style of writing is deliberately eclectic, processual and circular to replicate the ways women in the Juang social structure place themselves and is placed by their male counterpart. All too often research remains silent about the relationships that develop between the researcher and respondents while in the field. It is only through the recognition of the personal and emotional dimensions of fieldwork that we can critically reflect upon the balance of self-analysis and academic discussion in the presentation of data conclusions. It is the personal dimension of my research, which will be the focus of attention here.

Anthropological interest in the collection of ethnographic information at first had developed from an increasing critical awareness of the need for reliable accounts of other cultures to establish a true "scientific" study of man. The methods of direct observation developed in the other scientific disciplines during the nineteenth century, particularly in the natural sciences, were to play an important role in the adoption of anthropological field methods. But in America and Britain in the late nineteenth century it was men trained in such scientific methods, and who took up anthropology at a later stage in their careers, who pioneered changes in ethnographic study. But the response of these men in the contexts of British and American anthropology was quite different. The American tradition, particularly under Boas, attempted to establish a firm database, epitomized in the text, from which to develop theories. The British were interested in concrete facts, explicit in accounts of customs and society, which could either be arranged "taxonomically", into their "anatomical" parts or related to each other to explain the "physiology" of society. This tradition, strongly influenced by the natural sciences, runs directly from Haddon through Rivers to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown (Ellen, 1984: 60-61).

These new approaches to ethnographic literature raised new issues concerning methodology, through more explicitly in Britain and in America. In Britain the claims that anthropology not only studied a distinctive body of data but also that it possessed a sophisticated methodology to collect these data, was an important factor in the establishment of anthropology as an academic discipline. This was less necessary in America where, by the late nineteenth century, anthropology was already established in universities,

museums and government agencies. But in spite of claims to scientific methodology, particularly in the British tradition, there are surprisingly few details about the actual methods anthropologists used in the field. Beyond a few first principles and illustrative anecdotes. There was a wide belief among British anthropologists that fieldwork could not be taught to new recruits, but could only be experienced by individuals in the field. In the American tradition texts provided what was regarded as an objective body of data, whereas the British tradition was more a matter of subjective experience. It is a strange paradox in the history of the development of field methods that the scientific study of other cultures should have been build upon such a foundation (ibid: 61).

The real aim of the anthropologist's participation in the lives of subjects during the course of fieldwork is not to yield any research data; it is at best a means to carrying out the proper research activities, which yield such data. Whatever other research techniques the anthropologist might imply during fieldwork, the main data yielding procedure is observation. The role of the researcher involved in this kind of fieldwork could best be described as that of a participant observer.

The importance ascribed to observation as the main data yielding procedure derives directly from anthropology's ideas about the constitution of its subject matter, which, like the subject matter of natural science, should be directly observable, as well as from its insistence on empirical scholarship characteristic of science. This notion can be traced back to Malinowski's requirement of "the description of the imponderabilia of actual life"

(Malinowski, 1922: 18) as one of the three types of evidence the anthropologist should gather in the field:

“In working out the rules and regularities of native custom, and in obtaining a precise formula for them from the collection of data and native statements, we find that this very precision is foreign to real life, which never adheres rigidly to any rules. It must be supplemented by the observation of the manner in which a given custom is carried out, of the behaviour of the natives in obeying the rules so exactly formulated by the ethnographer, of the very exception which in sociological phenomena almost always occur” (Malinowski 1922: 17).

The demand for direct observation by the researcher, instead of relying on informants' reports, derives from the notion of analytical objectivity in anthropology as science. This has been clearly formulated by Van Velsen (1967: 134):

“Informants' statements... should be treated as the historian treats his sources: they are, that is to say, value judgments and should, therefore, be considered as falling within the category of data referred to ... as observed behaviour. In other words, such statements should not be used as if they are objective, analytical observations by outsiders. The sociological evaluation of actions and other behaviour is the anthropologist's job, and the sociological evaluation of the same actions, etc. may well be very different from their social evaluation by local informants. After all, one cannot expect untrained informants, be the Bemba headmen or white-collar workers in London, to present the anthropologist with sociological analyses of behaviour observed in their respective communities. To do so would be to assume, as many laymen do, that to be a member of a community is to understand it sociologically.”

Methods of Data Collection

Keeping in view method of data collections as suggested by some of the eminent ethnographers, I also used the technique of observation both in the form of participant and non-participant observation as my main technique of data collection. Data were also collected through interview and case study methods. Though married Juang women were my primary respondents, I also

interviewed some of girl-child, the divorced, separated, widow and aged women in order to make the analysis more comprehensive. Some additional data were also collected from the husbands of our primary respondents through interview method. They happened to be my secondary respondents. A total number of 280 households were found in our four sample villages, i.e. 53 (18.92%) in Phulbadi, 54 (19.28%) in Budhighar, 80 (28.57%) in Bali and the remaining 93 (33.21%) of the households in the village of Panasanasa. Of those 280 households, as many as 247 are Juang households. There are 41 (16.59%) Juang households in Phulbadi, 46 (18.62%) in Budhighar, 70 (28.34%) in Bali and 90 (36.46%) in the village of Panasanasa (Table 1). The distribution of male and female population in terms of village and age-group has been presented in Table 2 & Table 3.

Universe of the Study

Four villages namely, Budhighar, Phulbadi, Bali and Panasanasa under the traditional territorial unit of *Jharkhand pirh* (south-centrally located) in the Banspal Block of Keonjhar district in Orissa is the universe of the study. The village Budhighar comes under Bayakhmutia Gram Panchayat, whereas Bali and Phulbadi fall under Baragada Gram Panchayat. The village Panasanasa comes under Kuanar Gram Panchayat.

The state of Orissa has a geographical area of 155707 sq. km. of which the district of Keonjhar has a geographical area of 8,303 sq. kms. The Banspal block has 1191.07 sq. km. (Districts at a Glance, Orissa, 2003). It lies between $21^{\circ} 1'N$ and $21^{\circ} 10'N$ latitudes and $85^{\circ} 11'E$ longitudes and $86^{\circ} 22'E$ longitudes and comprises of two widely dissimilar tracts. The eastern

half consists of valley and low lands, and the western, mountains highlands with intensive plateau at the summit and slopes and gradient (District Statistical Gazetteer, Keonjhar, 1999). The district has 4.25 per cent of the state's population where density of population per square kilometer is 161 and a sex ratio of 977 female per 1000 male (Districts at a Glance, 2003). The tribal population of the district to the total population is 44.52 per cent (Census, 1991). The tribal population of the district that totaled 4,99,657 in 1981 census increased to 5,95,184 in 1991 census thus registering a growth of 11.90 per cent in a decade (1981-1991). As per 1991 census there were 46 Scheduled Tribes in the district. Out of these the principal tribes were Bathudi, Bhuyan, Bhumji, Gond, Ho, Juang, Kharwar, Kisan, Kolha, Kora, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Saora, Sabar and Sounti. These sixteen tribes constituted 96.12 per cent of the total population of the district (Census, 1991). Out of the 2,125 villages in the district, 24 are the Juang villages (J.D.A., 1991). Of the total population of the district the S.C and S.T population consist of 11.49 per cent and 44.52 per cent respectively. Above the age group of 6, the total literacy rate in the district is 44.73 per cent (District Statistical Hand book, 1993).

The total geographical area of the four sample villages of Phulbadi, Budhighar, Bali and Panasanasa are 405.115, 534.345, 916.020 and 1420.959 (in Hect.) respectively. Likewise the forest areas of these villages are 7.840, 6.000, 14.202, 5.760 (in Hect.), the areas under shifting cultivation are 55.000, 10.000, 8.000 and 40.360 (in Hect.), cultivable wasteland areas are 2.305, 14.590, 9.155 and 6.305 (in Hect.), the barren cultivable land areas are 115.215, 142.520, 160.780 and 134. 104 (in Hect.), permanent pasture and

grazing land areas are 2.435, 5.260, 15.237 and 6.720 respectively (J.D.A, 1991).

The vegetation of this area is mostly of the dry deciduous and semi-evergreen species also grow. The main species in *Sal* (*Shorea Robusta*) and the others are *Asan* (*Terminaslia Tomentosa*), *Aonla* (*Phyllanthus Ambilica*), *Bahada* (*Terminalia Belerica*), *Gambhari* (*Gomelina Aroborea*), *Harida* (*Terminalia Chefula*), *Kurum* (*Carthamus Fictoricus*), *Piasal* (*Petrocarpus Marsupium*), *Karum* (*Abina Cordifolia*), etc. A variety of lowering creepers and grasses are found in the region. The fauna comprise of tigers, leopards, common jungle cats, elephants, jackals, squirrels, wild dogs, sambars, spotted deer, mouse deer, and wild boar. There are also variety of birds and reptiles.

The annual normal rainfall in the district is 1,534.5mm (Board of Revenue, 1993). From March to May is summer in Keonjhar and May is the hottest month with maximum temperature at about 46⁰c and as minimum at 25⁰c. December is the coldest month when the daily minimum temperature is about 12⁰c but it changes occasionally. Humidity is high both during the monsoon and the post monsoon months. The Juang area contains achaeon sediments. It consists of a series of iron bearing sediments. It has also manganese, chromites and other valuable minerals.

There is no cobbler, barber, washer man, Brahmin, potter in my sample villages. Only some families of Gauda in caste are there. By the side of every Juang village live two or three Gouda families. They herd the cattle of the Juang and supply them with milk products. Their houses are in cluster on the outskirts of the Juang villages, but there are no specific demarcations between

the settlements of either. Besides herding cattle and supplying milk, the Goudas have also taken to agriculture, animal husbandry and dairy farming. In some nearby villages there has been a reversal of roles where the Goudas with the gradual rise in their economic status have given up their traditional occupation and have even begun to employ the latter as keepers of their cattle.

But multi-ethnic groups such as the Bhuinyas, the Panos, the Dombs, the Kamaras and Kumbharas, the Brahmins, the Baniyas, the Kansaris, the Goudas, the Sundhis, the Telis are seen in the nearby villages. Gonasika is a nearby village where many of these groups live with the Juang. There is only a blacksmith at a nearby village called Guptaganga a few kilometers away from my sample villages. There is not even an area called cremation ground. The area of investigation does not possess enough infrastructure facilities for developing agriculture, industry, mining and commerce. Irrigation facility is yet to be developed despite the existence of a big river Baitarani. There are no major and minor irrigation projects except as few tube wells. There is no electricity and hardly any banking facility or any financial institution. The medical facility in the area is not good. The postal and telegraph system are almost non-existent. The area lacks proper educational facility. In all the four sample villages there is a primary school, and in the village of Bali there is an alternative school called Chatasali functioning from the side of the J. D. A. The transport and communication is also in doldrums. During fieldwork I had to walk and cover all the villages because on the hilly tracks no other means of transport is possible.

Difficulties Encountered

Covered with hills and dense forest the four sample villages are located about 10 to 15 kilometers away from the main road and there is no road communication to reach these villages. So I had to walk and cover all the villages. Keeping in touch with the Panchayat office, Block office, District headquarters and the respondents from the four sample villages were sometime difficult on my part. But slowly I got used to the situation and adopted myself well.

Another major difficulty was that I could only contact my respondents early in the morning or in the evening because rest of the time they remained out of home. I even contacted them during their work time, but they were more comfortable in answering my questions when they were free. Initially there was some dialect problem but gradually I got over with it. Being a girl in a remote and inaccessible place always made me dependent on somebody to move around in the early phase of the fieldwork. There was also a constant threat of wild animals. So I had to take the help of some local boys and girls to overcome such situations.

Organization of Data

Data for the present study are organized under nine chapters. The introductory chapter gives knowledge of what the study is all about. Chapter II deals with the Juang community on whom the study concentrates. Chapter III deals with the position of girl-child in Juang community. Chapter IV tries to highlight the place of women in Juang tradition while chapter V discusses

about the position of the Juang women in family organization. Chapter VI analyzes the economic contributions of the Juang women to their respective families. Chapter VII discusses about the political participation of Juang women and their welfare activities. The last chapter presents a summary of the findings.