

Exploring the Role of Theatre in Influencing Awareness on Women Empowerment: A Study in Two Villages of Purulia, West Bengal, India

Debkalpa BasuDas

Research Scholar, Women's Studies Research Centre, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India
Corresponding Author Email: debkalpabd@gmail.com

Abstract— Women Empowerment is a process facilitated in making them powerful and capable of deciding for themselves. Women throughout centuries have been oppressed and are still in the process of being oppressed in this patriarchal society. This process involves different elements including building their self esteem, efficiency, strengthening them with all the rights and facilities in the society so that they can live freely without any fear and restrictions. Development of any country is directly connected to women empowerment. It is also very important for the development of families, communities and country socially and health wise. Women can bloom to their optimum capacity if they are able to live a secure, contented and prolific life- which in return will result in their best contribution in the labour force.

In this proposed research two tribal villages of Purulia District of West Bengal, named 'Baragora' and Metal Sahar has been chosen. The research has been conducted to understand and measure the level of empowerment of women by assessing how far women are being controlled by men in the family structure, how women of the families decide upon different issues, and awareness about physical abuse faced by them within the family domain. A field survey was done with 205 villagers mainly belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community. The purpose of choosing these two villages and mainly the tribal community was also to probe whether the scenario of empowerment and the level of self-autonomy of women are better among the women of these communities in comparison to mainstream women as there is a preconceived notion that women in tribal communities are more self-reliant and enjoy more freedom.

According to the survey, both female and male respondents were of the opinion that men have more controlling power in the family. It also came out that mostly, decision is taken jointly in the family. They were asked whether they identify physical abuse as a form of violence. To this question majority of respondents, mainly the women responded in affirmation and identified it as a form of violence.

The present study also investigates how far theatre is an effective medium of communication and spreading awareness on gender issues, empowerment of women and violence against women. The general notion that theatre is one of the most effective and direct way of communication and making awareness amongst masses, was reiterated by their positive response. The study shows that a notably higher proportion of respondents agreed upon theatre being most preferred way of raising public awareness in comparison to other medium.

Here I am going to present a brief performance in line with the theme of the theatre that was used to influence the awareness of the respondents.

Keywords: Theatre; Women Empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Both men and women in our country as in all over the world play a crucial role in nation building as well as maintaining the social fabric. However, women throughout centuries have been oppressed and are still in the process of being oppressed in this patriarchal society and still women are accorded lower status than men both within and outside the family. A country's development is directly linked to the empowerment of women. It is also necessary for the development of families, communities and country socially and health wise. Women can obtain their maximum skill if they are able to live a secure, contented and prolific life- which in return will result in their best contribution in the labour force.

Empowerment is measurable with the help of different components like their self confidence, decision making power, access to choices and expression of self opinion, the power of self regulation- both in private and public domain.

Parallely, by efficiency building, strengthening them with all the rights and facilities in the society will lead in living a life freely without any fear, violence and restrictions.

Women in most of the tribal societies have freedom of expressing themselves although this society is male dominated. It is noticed that women and men are affected separately by the process of any kind of advancement. Even if India is characterised by sharp gender disparities, women's status varies significantly from region to region. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate the status of women in any particular society. It is always culture (concept that encompasses the social behaviour, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups.) with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the complex process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the status of women in a society. Gender roles are socially constructed. The family structure in India is patriarchal,

patrilocal and patrilineal. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation. It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures women play but a submissive role in social life) (Bhasin, 2017).

It is portrayed generally that women's status is higher in the tribal communities in comparison to the women's position in the non-tribal community. The perception, that in North East part of India, amongst the large number of tribal inhabitants, women uphold a higher position compared to that of the status of women in all India average. Ira Das, in her paper 'Status of Tribal Women in North East India' mentioned that "It is found from the analysis that the status of women in the region is comparatively better than the rest of the country only in some selected indicators. The indicators reveal that women have a very low degree of freedom of movement and low level of control over themselves in North Eastern Region"(Buongpui, 2013). "Even though the discriminatory social practices seem to be absent, yet in reality there is strong discrimination against women mainly in the light of tradition and customary practices" (Buongpui, 2013).

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Through this study, we have tried to analyse women's position in the tribal areas of two villages, Baragora and Metyal Sahar in Purulia district of West Bengal, India. The objective is to understand how idea of empowerment of women is perceived by the socially disadvantaged people, both male and female of Purulia, West Bengal.

- The study aims to find out The main objective of the study is to examine and measure empowerment status of women in the above-mentioned tribal areas of Purulia through certain indicators and find out the difference of opinion on the basis of gender.

The indicators that have been taken into consideration are as follows:

- Opinion of both the genders – male and female on Male's Controlling Power over Females
- Important Decision-Making Power within Family
- Physical Abuse of Women by Her Husband
- Another objective is to explore the views of local people, both men and women, regarding the role of theatre as a medium of influencing people and creating awareness on women's empowerment issues.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Women Empowerment

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society,

a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure (Shettar, 2015). The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is a highly important end in itself. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development (UNFPA, 1994).

3.2 Patriarchy

- The word Patriarchy relates to the tenet of "pater" or father in a family. This is a construct which signifies a male-headed society, dominated by and favouring men. It also project women as subordinate to men. Sylvia Walby in "Theorizing Patriarchy" calls it "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is a system essentially developed on hierarchical and asymmetrical power distribution. In this system men are in control of women's production, reproduction and sexuality.. Eighteenth century onwards, at least, across the globe, and in diverse contexts, women were engaged in a relentless examination of gender roles, privileged, and gendered social and economic arrangements. But today, it is clear that at all times there were protesting women who possessed their own sense of patriarchy (Geetha, 2009).

3.3 Controlling power within family

Study found that women used to enjoy some sort of freedom in their private sphere and they had the freedom of self-expression (Basin, 2017). The changes brought by modernization affect men and women differently. Gender disparity is visible all over India. The status of women varies region-wise. In any specific society, women's position is determined by the socio-cultural factors. Culture, which is a combination of customs, facts, ethics, philosophy and experiences of the mass connected with the process of socialization, that defines gender roles demarcates women's societal status. Roles defined and assigned on the basis of gender by society are always unequal and patriarchal. This culture, which is an amalgamation of patriarchal norms and values are transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, gender roles are socially constructed, which is patriarchal in nature and consequently, the family structure in India is also patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Patriarchy signifies a structure of power, where men dominate over others and particularly over women. Patriarchal power, hierarchy and control are expressed through various institutions and structures and family is the primary institution that carries patriarchal norms and values (Basin, 2017). Indian families discriminate on the basis of sex and everything is determined on male standard. So, women in every respect play a secondary and submissive role. Identities of women are judged in respect of their fathers, brothers and husbands.

Women are still lagging behind in spite of social, political and economic changes and progress. It has been found that domination by male members over womenfolk is not there in tribal societies as in the tribal culture, women and men both work and earn for their family and both of them are economically self-dependent. The scenario of tribal society in Koraput reflects the picture of a stable society which is non-discriminatory and humane and where people belonging to both the genders are tolerant and cooperative to each-other (Mohapatra, 2009). Unlike the non-tribal people, they are found to be much sensible and respectful in their attitude towards their women folk. Whereas people in non-tribal areas are struggling to achieve gender equality, the people in these hilly areas are natural feminists and any incident of discrimination based on gender is rarely found in these communities.

3.4 Decision making Power in family

Women's role in the ethnic communities are very important. In these communities, women act as an important player in the social, economic, religious sphere of their lives. Level of education, health, employment condition and household decision making power are some of the indicators through which the status of women is measured and it is found that in tribal society women are in a better position than the non-tribal women. Decision-making power is another important component and indicator of empowerment and status of women and it came out that so far as decision making in the private and public domain is concerned, women go shoulder to shoulder with men. In this regard also they enjoy higher status than the non-tribal women (Binjha, 2020). In the economic sphere the tribal women contribute a lot and enjoy equal status with their male counterparts and consequently come across lesser discrimination than women of non-tribal community.

Gender-wise difference of opinion about household work is found in an article, where 60 married couples were interviewed (Shaw, 1988). Their experiences associated with household activities were recorded in diary to know their perception about the activities how much work is done by them and how much leisure is enjoyed by them and what is their perception about that. Majority of the women were able to describe household chores and actions as work unlike their male counterparts. The analysis of situational contexts was also more negative for females. It was also found that the employment condition of female respondents had minimum result on their meaning and acuity of household works. This is a matter of concern and the issue of division of responsibility for household works to be taken into consideration seriously. It has been observed that tribal women in India work harder than their male counterparts and make significant contributions in family income. Due to integration and assimilation process the tribal community has also been influenced by dominant culture and possibility of equal access of women over natural resources have reduced. Women's role in society has gone through transformation

due to change in gender relations. Gender relations in tribal societies are more or less egalitarian compared to mainstream society and in certain areas women enjoy better social standing compared to men in society. Tribal women have the freedom of speech and expressions. However, the patriarchal elements prevail in the tribal societies. There is a clear distinction public and private arena (Paray, 2019). Men represent the family in society, whereas women enjoy greater autonomy inside family and women are the main decision-makers in case of family economic matters. On the other hand, the arena of production and social interactions are handled by men. Tribal women enjoy higher social status compared to non-tribal women in the matters of resource control and as a consequence they also actively participate in decision-making regarding land utilization, agriculture, and the control of cash flow in a tribal economy (Paray, 2019).

3.5 Violence against Women

The most widely used definition of violence against women (VAW) is:

The Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines Violence Against Women as "any act of gender-based violence against women that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private spaces".

Domestic violence refers to violence committed on women within home by close relatives, mainly after marriage. This is one of the crimes committed against women and affects women disproportionately and responsible for disadvantageous position of women in society. Domestic violence takes many forms: physical, emotional, economic and sexual. Threat of such abuse is also counted as violence. Patriarchal socio-cultural set up of our society is the root cause of this violence (Heise et al. 1999). Domestic violence is a major public health issue. It directly or indirectly influences the physical and mental health of women to a great extent and thus it creates a significant barrier in the way of empowerment of women. Some studies have been done to understand and find out the perception and attitude of married women of reproductive age group in India regarding wife-beating. The studies revealed that wife-beating is largely condoned and justified in our society, especially by women belonging to lower socio-economic category (Heise et al. 1999). Domestic violence also takes place more upon women belonging to lower socio-economic rung of the society.

A study among Pardhi and the Gond Tribes of Chhattisgarh found that almost all tribal women belonging to this community experienced violence from time to time. Some women even faced violence everyday including physical violence. In cases of this domestic violence, the husbands of the Pardhi and the Gond women were the main perpetrators (Premi, 2016). The main reason for such

violence inflicted on them as narrated by the respondents were trivial issues like performance of household works not reaching the satisfactory level of their husbands.

3.6 Feminist Consciousness

Conover and Sapiro define feminist consciousness as “an awareness of and sensitivity to the unequal and gendered nature of society and a commitment to ending the inequalities” (1993, 1084). Cook’s (1989) study of feminist consciousness, while confining itself to female respondents, found that those who were young, college educated, professionally employed, high income, urban, liberal, and those showing less religiosity, were likely to exhibit feminist consciousness. Scholars, such as Klein (1984), Manjusha Gupte (Jha, 1998) has argued that feminist consciousness is based on personal experience. Thus, only women could possess or experience feminist consciousness, while men could only feel feminist sympathy (Klein 1984). However, Reingold and Foust’s study (1998) shows that both men’s and women’s feminist consciousness is rooted in their ideological beliefs

3.7 Theatre as a medium of Awareness

Theatre, compared to different other mediums has always been found to be most suitable and popular medium for generating awareness on different issues as it involves direct contact with masses and can easily establish connection and stimulate the feelings of people. That is why the government in our country and different other countries as well as different organizations working on rights-based issues use theatre as a tool to spread awareness on different issues and preventing social menaces like HIV AIDS, early marriage, dowry, caste system, gender inequality, socio-economic inequality and violence, the plight of Santhal communities etc. Theatre has also been used as a medium to raise voices against injustice and discrimination and for propaganda. Many studies have been done on the efficacy of theatre as a medium to reach out to people and influence public opinion.

According to Christa Blackmon, an American human rights researcher and educator, “Human rights activism relies on an ability to tell stories to diverse audiences that will inspire action toward justice. Distributing information through journalism, whether it is traditional or new media, is the standard method of raising awareness” (Blackmon, 2017). Christa Blackmon preferred theatre over other mass Medias as she believed that live theatrical performance has the ability to engage diverse audience in an exceptional and meaningful manner and can generate activism as through this medium, spectator can relate whatever they go through or witness in their real lives. Therefore, theatre is the most preferred medium of raising voice and building public opinion used by the human rights organizations. A study on the effectiveness of theatre as a means to create awareness about VAW “...reveals that the theatre processes... develops cultural values and awareness in communities” (Khan 2017).

Several studies have been done on effectiveness of theatre, which revealed that theatre played an important role in

raising awareness about Violence against Women, developing cultural values and awareness in communities. Jana Sanskriti, a West Bengal based organization of theatre activism, has adapted ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ to bring about social change at the grass root through community-led action. Women empowerment, here became a major focus, as various forms of patriarchal oppression in these areas has curbed their basic human rights. This article studies whether and how social theatre empowers the rural marginalized women of the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal to organize themselves through theatre based activism and negotiate for their rights (Dutta 2015). Augusto Boal who is a prominent personality in the area of participatory theatre, observed that the participatory theatre is a very potential medium and played a very effective role in promoting positive changes in the mindset of people towards the LGBT community. “...participatory theatre has the potential to promote positive change in attitudes toward LGBT individuals” (Logie *et al.* 2018). Some of the renowned theatre groups have done remarkable works in this area, for example, The Delhi-based group named ‘Aatish’ has addressed the issues of women’s empowerment, child education, child labour, child rights, the need to vote etc. through street plays.

The Bengal-based group ‘Bahurupée’, through their world-famous play Doll House (PutulKhela) brought the issue of women seduction, eco-feminism etc. in forefront. This play touched on such topics as women seduction and deprivation by patriarchal society (Gangopadhyay 1996). The famous playwright and the pioneer of Third Theatre, Badal Sircar through his presentations focused on the plight of the Santhals and the women belonging to their community (Anuradha 2019). Under the direction of Partha Gupta, the Santhali theatre produced a few outstanding plays viz. Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Red Oleanders’ and ‘Hnasa Ora Ria Sereng’ (The song of the Earthen Cottage) which brilliantly depicted the Bengali and Santhali traditions of theatre, rituals and language (Riaz 2019).

The use of theatre other than entertainment-as a participatory development communication tool emerged in the 1960s in parallel with alternative and post-development theories. Social theatre, where social development is given more importance than aesthetics, evolved into a strategy for community empowerment. ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ using Forum Theatre, designed by Augusto Boal, one of the pioneers of social theatre, has been adapted by Jana Sanskriti, a West Bengal based organization of theatre activism, to bring about community-led action for social change at the grass roots. The empowerment of women has been a major focus, as severe patriarchal exploitation in these areas has curtailed their basic human right (Dutta, 2015)

Thus, it is established that one of the most potent and popular means of spreading consciousness is theatre. One more important fact about using this medium is that not always the high budget stage crafts are required, low budget

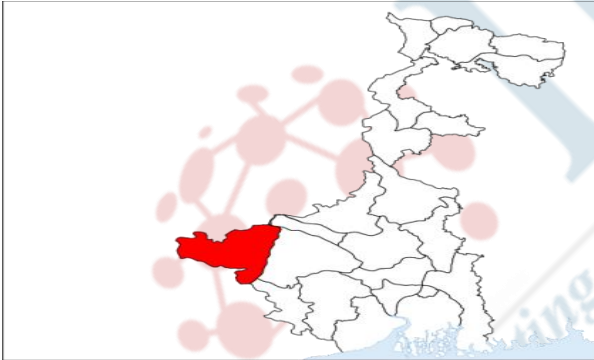
street plays, dramas, summer theatres can also be staged to spread the message through entertainment. Women have a very low degree of freedom of movement and low level of control over themselves in North Eastern Region (Das, 2013).

IV. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data

Primary Data is the basis of this research .Samples have been gathered from two villages Baragora and Metyal Sahar. As the present study focuses on the socially backward people, in Metyal Sahar, only people who belonged to the Scheduled Castes were surveyed and in Baragora, only people who belonged to the Scheduled Tribes were surveyed. To ensure that the respondents are mature enough to understand the question, only people aging 18 years or above were surveyed. Samples are drawn by Convenience Sampling. In these two villages, people were not sufficiently free to engage in interacting with someone unknown from the modernized conurbation like Kolkata. Women were asked for answering survey questions to the surveyors and their families reflected reservation. This is why the research had to depend up on Convenience Sampling rather than other non-probability sampling methods or stronger variations of probability sampling methods.

Diagram 1: Purulia District in the Map of West Bengal



Source: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purulia_district

Metyal Sahar

This village is located in the Raghunathpur-I Block. This village is 53.5 kms from the district headquarter also named Purulia. According to Govt. of India 2011 Population Census, the population is 2,105. Nearest Railway Station is Metyal Sahar. 105 villagers, belonging to Scheduled Castes were brought under survey.

Baragora

This village is located in the Kashipur Block. This village is about 3 kms. from the village Metyal Sahar. According to Govt. of India 2011 Population Census, the population is 222. Nearest Railway Station is Metyal Sahar. 100 villagers, were brought under survey, all belonging to the section of

Scheduled Tribes. So, in this study, 205 people were surveyed altogether. As this study is not interested in inter-village comparison, separate profiling of the two villages will not be carried out.

4.2 Methodology

There are four key questions addressed by this research. But, before searching answers to these questions, this study will investigate the sample obtained. The study will investigate the frequency distribution of the respondents as per gender by tables and graphs. The gender will be Male, Female & Transgender. If no transgender is found among the respondents, this category will be dropped. The respondents were approached, in context of this research, with four questions.

- 1) “Gender Differential of Controlling Power in Family”
- 2) “Gender Differential of Important Decision-Making Power within Family”
- 3) “Gender Differential of Opinion about Physical Abuse of Women by her Husband”
- 4) “Gender Differential of Opinions about the Most Powerful Mediums to Solve This Problem Cross tabulation”

The respondents were either Bengalee or Santhali. The question was asked in Bengali to those who could understand Bengali well. To ask the question to the Santhali people and to record their responses, help of a local interpreter was taken. The answer was multiple-choice.

For question number 1 there were five choices –

1. Do not agree
2. Slightly Disagree
3. Not sure
4. Slightly agree
5. Agree

For question number 2 there were four choices –

1. Don't Know
2. Important role of men in family
3. Equal role of women and men in family
4. Important role of women in family

For question number 3 there were four choices –

1. It is not violence
2. Don't Know
3. It is violence
4. Others

For question number 4 there were six choices –

1. Drama
2. Dance
3. Song
4. Cinema
5. Others
6. Mix Medium

All the tables will be prepared in SPSS (v.19) and the graphs will be prepared using SPSS (v.19) and MS Excel.

4.3 Data Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study has captured both male and female members of selected families from Baragora and Metyal Sahar villages of Purulia district of West Bengal.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Baragora and Metyal Sahar (n=205)
1. Gender	
Male	121(59.0)
Female	84(41.0)
2. Age Groups	
Adulthood (18 - 35)	98(47.8)
Middle Age (36 - 55)	92(44.9)
Older adulthood (>56)	15(7.3)
3. Education	
Post Graduate	1(5)
Graduate	5(2.4)
Higher Secondary	12(5.9)
Madhyamik	90(43.9)
Primary	34(16.6)
Illiterate	63(30.7)
4. Occupation	
Farmer	90 (43.9)
Business Man and Women	1(5)
Others	114(55.6)
5. Monthly Family Income	
Higher Income(Rs 301-500)	6(10.3)
Middle Income(Rs.100-300)	197(88.7)
Lower Income(Below100 rupees)	2(1)

Table 2: Gender Differential in Opinion on Male's Controlling Power over Females in Family Gender Differential of Controlling Power in Family

			Gender Differential of Controlling Power in Family				Total
			Mildly Disagree	Unsure	Mildly Agree	Agree	
Gender	Female	Count	1	19	29	35	84
		% within Gender	1.2%	22.6%	34.5%	41.7%	100.0%
	Male	Count	2	19	63	37	121
		% within Gender	1.7%	15.7%	52.1%	30.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	38	92	72	205
		% within Gender	1.5%	18.5%	44.9%	35.1%	100.0%

Authors own calculations based on primary data 2021. Source: Survey data

- Table 2 reveals that, most of the interviewees (80%), female and male both opined that male have more controlling power over women in the family.
- Males in a marginally larger proportion (82.7%)

express this opinion compared to females (76.2%). This is perhaps due to a larger proportion of women (22.6%) who are "unsure" on this issue compared to men (15.7%).

Figures (in parentheses) indicates percentage

Analysis

Above table shows the Socio-Economic Profile of 205 respondents. Distributions of Respondents according to Gender: There were 84 female and 121 male respondents. The inhabitants of the two villages were taciturn towards an unknown person belonging to modern conurbation of Kolkata. They reflected certain lack of motivation when the women of the family were asked to speak to the surveyor. That is the reason behind the bias in gender of the respondents.

Distributions of Respondents according to Age: Participants were divided into 3 age groups. Adulthood (18-35), Middle Age (36-55) and Older adulthood (>56). There were 98 participants belonging to the group Adulthood, 92 to the group Middle Age and only 15 people were older than 56 years hence belonging to the group Older adulthood.

Distributions of Respondents according to Educational level: The educational qualifications of the participants vary from illiteracy to post-graduation, however, the modal category being Madhyamik. Distributions of Respondents according to Occupation: Respondents were from different occupational backgrounds. The most number of respondents were associated with different types of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled works.

Distributions of Respondents according to Monthly Family Income: Respondents are divided into 3 different levels of monthly income category namely - Lower, Middle and Upper income group. Most of the respondents belong to the middle income group.

Analysis of Findings

Thus, it reflects that tribal societies and the areas inhabited mainly by scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are also patriarchal in nature, where the patriarchal norms are manifested through men’s domination in both public and private sphere and through their controlling behaviour and attitude, particularly within family. Whereas studies also reveal the facts that the tribal society of Koraput presents a picture of a stable, tolerant, gender-cooperative, gender-non-discriminatory and humane society, their attitude

toward their women folk, they are found to be much ahead of the non-hill people (Mohapatra, 2009). Similar study found that some tribal societies were patriarchal in nature, where men dominated particularly in public sphere. Women, on the other hand, used to enjoy some sort of freedom in their private sphere and they had the freedom of self-expression (Bhasin, 2017).

Table 3: Gender Differential in Opinion on Important Decision Making Power within Family Gender Differential of Important Decision Making Power Within Family

			Gender Differential of Important Decision Making Power Within Family				Total
			Don't Know	Important role of men in family	Equal role of women and men in family	Important role of women in family	
Gender	Female	Count	9	24	48	3	84
		% within Gender	10.7%	28.6%	57.1%	3.6%	100.0%
	Male	Count	6	34	73	8	121
		% within Gender	5.0%	28.1%	60.3%	6.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	15	58	121	11	205
		% within Gender	7.3%	28.3%	59.0%	5.4%	100.0%

Authors own calculations based on primary data 2021. Source: Survey data

- Table 3 shows that there is a trend of joint decision making within the family. Altogether, 59% respondents opined about joint decision making within the family.
- A marginal gender difference, however, is also notable here. While about 60 percent males support the issue of joint decision making in important family matters, such proportion for females is about 57 percent.

The power of making decision is one among the most important empowerment benchmarks. So, according to this parameter, it can be inferred that women of Baragora and Metyal Sahar enjoy equal status with their male counterparts.

Similar instances of decision-making power of womenfolk in the tribal areas of Jharkhand was found that “Women in a tribal society play a pivotal role in various sphere of social, economic, religious and economic ways of their life’ (Binjha,

2020). Tribal women enjoy higher status than the non-tribal women. They take joint decision along with the male counterparts (Buongpu, 2013). Women’s condition is measured by parameters like education, health condition, employment status and household decision making power. Women are joint decision makers with men both at private and public sphere and enjoy higher status than the non-tribal women. Gender-wise difference of opinion about household work is found in an article, where 60 married couples were interviewed and, the situational contexts were more negative for females (Shaw, 1988). Studies also found that the man represented the family in society, and the woman served as the primary decision-maker in the family's economy, production, and social interactions, with the man as the primary decision-maker (Paray, 2019).

Table 4: Gender Differential in Opinion about Physical Abuse of Women by her Husband in Family Gender Differential of Opinion about Physical Abuse of Women by her Husband

			Gender Differential of Opinion about Physical Abuse of Women by her Husband				Total
			It is not violence	Don't know	It is violence	Others	
Gender	Female	Count	11	3	69	1	84
		% within Gender	13.1%	3.6%	82.1%	1.2%	
	Male	Count	18	11	86	6	121
		% within Gender	14.9%	9.1%	71.1%	5.0%	
Total		Count	29	14	155	7	205
		% within Gender	14.1%	6.8%	75.6%	3.4%	

Authors own calculations based on primary data 2021. Source: Survey data

- Table 4 reflects opinions of all respondents about Physical Abuse of Women by her Husband. The respondents were asked whether they identify physical abuse as a form of violence in family. Both males and females consider this as violence in a significantly higher proportion (75.6%), as evident from Table 4.
- However, a greater majority of female respondents (82.1%), responded in affirmation and identified it as a form of violence. This is against a markedly lower proportion of males (around 71%) in this regard.
- Perhaps this indicates to a lower awareness of males on the issue of violence against women in the family.

It is noticeable that though a large number of women have identified physical violence by their husbands as a form of violence, wife-beating is condoned by a section of society,

especially by men folk and there is dearth of consciousness on the issue.

Research observed and narrated that in the Pardhi and Gond tribe, almost all women faced violence from time to time and some women faced physical violence almost every day and their husbands were main perpetrators (Premi, 2016).

Another study observed and came to the conclusion that violence against tribal women is not a new or recent phenomenon. Domestic violence is recognized as the significant barriers of the empowerment of women and study shows that domestic violence is more among lower autonomy and women belonging to low socio-economic status (Haseena, 2015). Women had been facing violence throughout their life time irrespective of the societies, culture, region and religion all over the world.

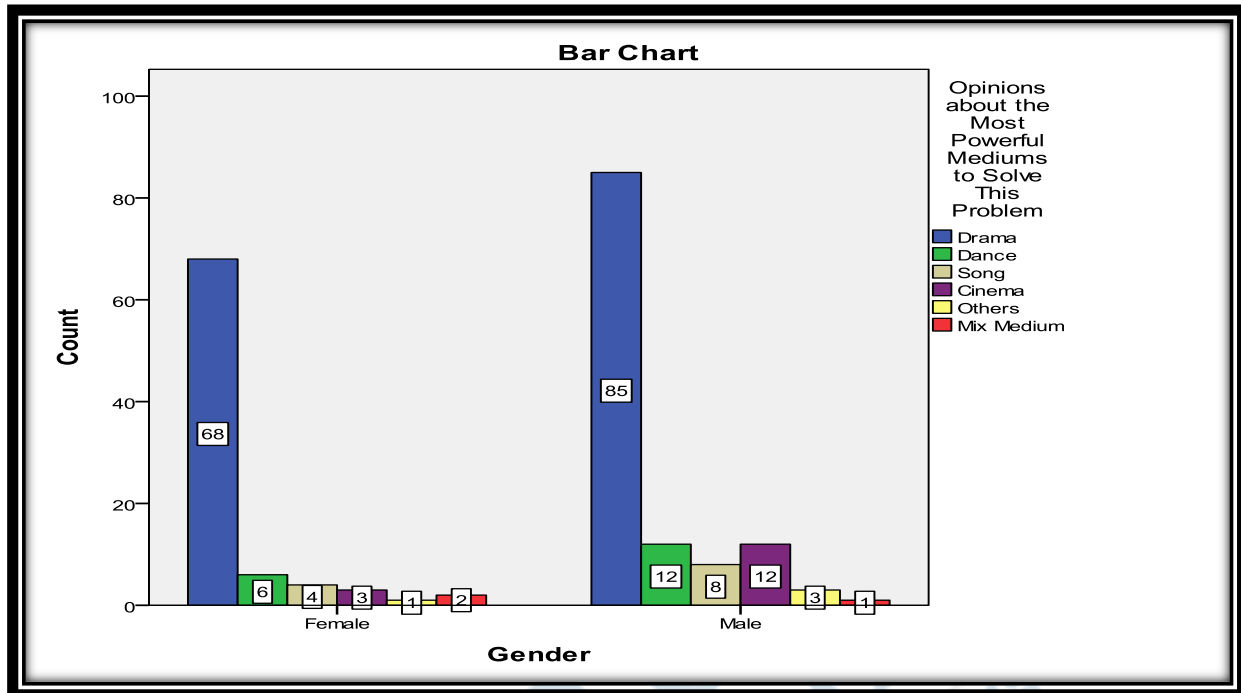
Table 5: Gender Differential of opinion on Most Preferred Medium for Generation of Awareness

Gender * Opinions about the Most Powerful Mediums to Solve This Problem Crosstabulation

			Opinions about the Most Powerful Mediums to Solve This Problem					Total	
			Drama	Dance	Song	Cinema	Others		Mix Medium
Gender	Female	Count	68	6	4	3	1	2	84
		% within Gender	81.0%	7.1%	4.8%	3.6%	1.2%	2.4%	
	Male	Count	85	12	8	12	3	1	121
		% within Gender	70.2%	9.9%	6.6%	9.9%	2.5%	.8%	
Total		Count	153	18	12	15	4	3	205
		% within Gender	74.6%	8.8%	5.9%	7.3%	2.0%	1.5%	

Authors own calculations based on primary data 2021. Source: Survey data

Theatre – The Most Preferred Medium



- Table 5 reflects opinion of all respondents on the most powerful means for the resolution of the problem of low level of consciousness on women empowerment issues.
- Overall, 153 (74.6%) aspirant were of opinion of theatre being the primary means of generating public alertness on the issue of Women Empowerment. The next preferred means was Dance [only 18 (8.8%)].
- However, a greater majority of female respondents (81.0%), identified theatre as the best medium for spreading awareness amongst masses. This is against a markedly lower proportion of males (around 70.2%) in this regard.
- Theatre was considered to be a powerful medium of creating awareness –this has been clearly reflected in their response. This table points to the salience of theatre as the best medium for creating awareness.

Study shows that whether and how social theatre empowers the rural marginalized women of the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal to organize themselves through theatre based activism and negotiates for their rights (Dutta 2015).It has further been observed that in choosing the most powerful medium for creating awareness, females prefer theatre more than their male counterparts irrespective of their pre-existing conception about the core idea of eco-feminism (BasuDas, 2021).

About the Theatrical Performance

It's a choreographic presentation. In the presentation I used audio visual method. Here I have chosen theatre as a tool of this presentation as she believes through dance and theatre we

can express our thoughts in a better way to her respected audience. The poem which I have selected for this choreographic presentation is written by favourite feminist poet Dr. Susmita Bhattacharya. The name of the poem is 'Final Encounter with the Supreme Male'.

In this presentation we can see the struggle of women since the mythological age.

As the poet wants to say in her poem – the Final Encounter is with Vishnu, the Preserver-God, the one whose names can mean the Supreme Male. According to legend, he came down to earth nine times in various forms, and will come down for one last time in the future. He manifested himself as Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, and Buddha in the past and he will reappear as Kali in the present age. In different ages he had done a number of good works for the betterment of the society. He had dedicated his life for the development of human civilisation. But as the poet says, he had also done some injustice with his nearest ones. Different types of injustice had been committed by the Supreme Man also, as son, as beloved, or as husband. Over the ages and always some kind of discrimination, some kind of injustice we the women are facing just because we do not protest. But in the present era situation has changed. Now as women we are not going to tolerate the kind of discriminations as before. We are going to protest for our right as a human being.

V. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that consciousness about women's empowerment is marginally higher within women. The gender difference among the respondents is not too prominent in selecting theatre as the most powerful medium

for creating awareness. Here the social construct is possibly not an important point in selecting the best medium for the purpose. Several studies have been done on effectiveness of theatre, which revealed that theatre as a medium plays an important role in raising awareness about Violence against Women, developing cultural values and generate consciousness in the societies. The present facts reveal that male member in the family is a dominant member and, in turn, keeps control over the women counterpart. The study has as revealed that important family decisions are being taken jointly. Further, the study portrays that physical abuse of women by her husband has been well-considered as a form of violence in the family structure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am thankful to acknowledge the co-operation of Dr. Deba Prashad Chatterjee Associate Professor in Sociology Moulana Azad College, Kolkata, India for thorough revision of the manuscript of the paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anuradha, G. (2019). Revolting Voice of Aboriginal in Badal Sircar's Stal News. *IJRAR*, 6 (2), 79-80
- [2] BasuDas, D. (2021). The Role of Theatre with Eco-feminist Approach in Combating COVID Pandemic. *Journal of Integrated Disaster Risk Management*, 11 (2), DOI10.5595/001c.31089
- [3] Basin, V. (2017). Status of Tribal Women in India. 1-16 | Published online: 01 Sep 2017
- [4] Blackmon, C. (2016). Breaking the fourth wall: theatre as human rights activism Using theatre to raise awareness on rights issues not only educates the audience—it also creates empathy and connection. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/breaking-the-fourth-wall-theater-as-human-rights-activism/>
- [5] Binjha, P. (2020). ISSN Print: 2394-7500 ISSN Online: 2394-5869 Impact Factor: 8.4 *IJRAR*, 6(11): 32-37 www.allresearchjournal.com Dumka, Jharkhand, India.
- [6] BUONGPU, R. L. (2013). Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in Northeast India. *73 International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3(1), *The NEHU Journal*, 11(2) 73-81
- [7] Das, I. (2019). Status of Women: North Eastern Region of India Versus, India. *International journal of scientific Research and Growth*, 3(3):1-8 ISSN 2250-3153 Guwahati-09, Assam, India www.ijsrp.org,
- [8] Dutta, M. (2015). Women's Empowerment through Social Theatre: A Case Study. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 10(1) 56-70 <http://crc.sagepub.co>
- [9] Gaard, G. (1993). Living interconnections with animals and nature. In G. Gaard (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature* (pp. 4). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- [10] Gangopadhyay, R. (1996, June 17). Natta Mukhapathro, *Bengali Theatre Newspaper*, Anuli Press, pp 3-4.
- [11] Halimi, N. (2011). Women's Position and the Environment Case Study: Kosovo Master Thesis. Uppsala University,
- [12] Haseena, V. A. (2015). Tribal women as the victims of the interrelation between the empowerment and domestic violence in Kerala. *Economics, Indian Journal of Research*, Paripix Kodungallur, Kerala, 4(2)
- [13] Khan, Ahmed. (2017). Theatre media as a means of raising awareness on issues of violence against women and women rights: A case study of Bangladeshi and Indian theatre Organizations. (Fellowship with AED).
- [14] Logie, Carmen H, et al. (2019). Exploring the Potential of Participatory Theatre to Reduce Stigma and Promote Health Equity for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People in Swaziland and Lesotho. *Health Education & Behavior*. 46(1): 146-156. doi:10.1177/1090198118760682
- [15] Mathur, D. (2017). Case study on Innovative Scheme for Women's empowerment in Haryana. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences* 7(9)
- [16] Mohapatra, A. K. (2009) Theory of Feminism and Tribal Women: An Empirical Study of Koraput Mens Sana Monogr. 7(1): 80-92.
- [17] Mohd Rafi Paray, M. R. (2019). Status Of Tribal Women In India With Special Reference To The Socio-Economic And Educational Condition Status Of Tribal Women In India; Vol 18 (Issue 4): pp. 2284-2292 <http://ilkogretim-online.org>
- [18] Naess, A. (1973). The Shallow and the Deep, *Long Range Ecology Movement, Inquiry*. 16: 95-100; Bill Devall, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, pp. 299-322
- [19] Paray, M. R. (2019). Status Of Tribal Women In India With Special Reference To The Socio-Economic And Educational Condition Status Of Tribal Women In India. 18 (4): 2284-2292 <http://ilkogretim-online.org>
- [20] Plumwood, V. (2004). GENDER, ECO-FEMINISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT Val 'CONTROVERSIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY' Edited by Rob White, Cambridge University Press
- [21] Premi, J. K. (2016). Domestic Violence against Tribal Women: With Special Reference to Pardhi and Gond Tribes of Chhattisgarh Raipur. *India-492010*. 7(3).
- [22] Riaz, T. (2019) ARAH BAHU A theatre review on the Santali adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's Raktakarabi (Red Oleanders),” by Birbhumi Blossom Theatre.
- [23] Shaw, S. M. (1988). Gender Differences in the Definition and Perception of Household Labor. *National Council on Family Relations* 37(3), pp. 333-37
- [24] Salleh, A. k (1984). Deeper than Deep Ecology The Eco-Feminist Connection. 6(4), Winter 1984 PP 339-34
- [25] Shettar, R. M. (2015). A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)* e-ISSN: 2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. 17 (4), 13-19 www.iosrjournals.org
- [26] UNFPA, ICPD POA, Cairo, (1994) Women Empowerment Issue 7 (<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/issue-7-women-empowerment>)
- [27] Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Basil Blackwell Inc. Publisher: B. Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 1990.
- [28] Warren J K. (1997) *Ecofeminism, Women Culture Nature*, Indiana University Press, 22-May-1997 - Nature - 454 pages <http://environment-ecology.com/deep-ecology/74-deep-eco-logy.html>