

Vol III Issue IX March 2014

ISSN No :2231-5063

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# International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

## *Golden Research Thoughts*

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**RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595**

**ISSN No.2231-5063**

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## **GRT** “ROLE OF BAIGA WOMEN IN FAMILY DECISION MAKING: A CASE STUDY OF TWO TRIBAL VILLAGES OF CENTRAL INDIA”

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**Abstract:-**The present paper examined that the decision making role of tribal women and also to study the baiga women economic contribution in the family. The concept “Decision Making” refers to an act or opinion of choice. It can be regarded as mental process (cognitive process) resulting in selection of course of action among alternative scenario. Here, meaning of decision making in terms of income, expenditures and other social spheres like education & health were studied. Qualitative and Quantitative research method has been followed by utilizing observation and interview techniques to collect the primary data from the field. The present study revealed that baiga women have the power to take the decision up to 46% in their family.

**Keywords:**Baiga Women, Decision Making.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

'Baiga' women plays very substantial role in decision making in terms of income, expenditures and other social spheres like education and health within the family. Tribal women work hard day in and day out and earn the money to improve the economic condition of the family. They work as a daily wage earner in different sectors such as agricultural labour, industrial labour, construction labour, MNRGA labour etc. In tribal society, tribal women come forward to participate and work with the men in all agricultural activities like transplanting, harvesting and sowing, etc. Each of the Tribal women have greater economic contribution for running the family well. Bhatt and Ela, (1984), stated that in a country like India this becomes doubly essential as India traditionally has been a country which worships its women only in temples, but its women are completely marginalized in all other sectors. Vasistha, (1976), said that the socio-economic status of Hindu women were very much low, lack of education, early marriage, non existence of employment opportunities, absence of absolute property rights were considered as main reason of inequality of sex in the socio-economic field. The assumption of superiority of males has built up the ideas of male dominance and female dependence. Most of the major decision making roles are thus in the domain of males in most cases. The concept “Decision Making” refers to an act or opinion of choice. It can be regarded as mental process (cognitive process) resulting in selection of course of action among alternative scenario. Here, decision making means in terms of income, expenditure, education in the family. According to Sethi (1998) and Shyamalie and Saini (2011), showed that decision of daily family expenses and personal needs were independently taken by women but the major financial decision relating to investment, savings, borrowings are mostly taken by mutual consent. Lena and Das (1993), concluded that husband and wife jointly decided to take decision in major financial matters. Bala and Moonga (2004,) stated that women play passive role of decision making in economic affairs. Gargi Das(2012), pointed out decision making power of tribal women is extremely important to discuss and it should not be keep aside because the real development can't be taken place without active participation of women. According to the 2001 Census data, 80% tribal work in the primary sector against 53% of the general population and at the same time 45% are cultivators against 32.5% of the general population, but the cultivator's number decreased from 68%to 45%, whereas the agricultural labourers had increased from about 20% to 37% .It means that the tribal are losing their land. In comparison to the general population and the Scheduled castes, the Scheduled tribes are the most backward community in India. The present study examined that decision making power of baiga women in the economic and social spheres were studied.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of studies have been done on the socio economic status of women in tribal society. The present review of literature related to the community participation and decision making are being discussed. Arun Kumar (2003) stated that even if government is undertaking various development programmes, it fails to reach its goal. Lack of awareness, control of economic resources, family problems, traditional values are various factor hindering the women empowerment. Pesses (2000) revealed that international women rights has led to increase women participation in community development but has not promoted women's role in community development decision making process. Mangathai's (2001), in his study pointed out that reservation policy of seventy third amendments have created favourable environment for women. The husbands motivate and support their counter parts but still they play a vital role in influencing women. Most of their decision was influenced by their husbands. Awias, Aslam and Asif (2009) showed 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. Sudan K Failendra (2007), has shown in his study that women have great potential and provided with assistance with micro financing, giving full autonomy in their work, has resulted in increased income and improved livelihood. Khan (2001), pointed out that women's role in decision making process is an important factor and needs to be considered for woman empowerment. Mainstreaming of women through gender specific policies is a necessary precondition for meaningful development. There is a lacuna between gender specific policies and reform agenda. He pointed out that government policies like reservation of seats, can promote empowerment and women access to development projects numerically but not practically. The main reason behind low participation and decision making process are illiteracy, patriarchy, lack of clarity in government policies for empowerment. The meaningful participation can be ensured through awareness; monitoring of woman status on regular basis; research activities on woman participation in social sphere, their voting right. Importance should be given to qualitative participation rather than quantitative representation. Mitra (2007), has examined that the status of women among schedule tribes in India with comparison to main stream Hindus, in term of social and cultural practices. The study shows that isolation from main stream population for many years have been actually helped, tribal community to provide relatively high status of tribal women and there is absolutely no gender discrimination in many tribal communities. It may have occurred due to assimilation of many tribal group with main stream Hindu culture and tradition. Asha Das (1998), revealed that women empowerment, besides discussing constitutional-legal provisions, she discussed efforts made under plan provisions and policies and their impact on women, various central government's empowering strategies, schemes and services pursued over the years along with some new special initiatives. Shanta Kohli Chandra (1997), defined that briefly the concept of women empowerment and discusses the strategy of empowerment and curtailing gender discrimination through women's participation in decision-making, development process, and governance and reinforcing it through establishing linkages between women in public life and women working elsewhere. D'Souza (1990) has examined that the effects of planned developmental intervention has not made any significant impact in improving the conditions of the tribal. This paper reflects the popular image and perception of tribal women is that of being better off than their non-tribal counterparts. There is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood, etc. She enjoys the right to decide about her marriage, etc. She earns and is therefore to a great extent economically independent. According to a IFAD (1997), studied that took place in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh found that even though tribal women contributed significantly to household income, they had little say in decision-making regarding household expenditures. The study recognizes male-female sharing of both domestic and productive work. Women work in agriculture, collect and sell non-timber forest products during certain months of the year, and engage in wage labour. The same happens with men as well. There is considerable equality in domestic work, with men and older males, as well as female children, cooking, house cleaning, child care and collecting fuel wood. But this equality is not reflected in decision-making regarding income. In general, decisions on important household expenditures are taken by the male head of the household. The same study further stated that in a joint family, the father-in-law makes the decisions. He controls household income and decides how it should be spent. However, it is surprising that in his absence it is apparently not his son, but his wife who controls the income. The daughter-in-law has no significant decision-making power. In a nuclear family, which is becoming increasingly popular, the husband is the main decision-maker. This applies even to decisions regarding the care of children and health issues, as well as to decisions on agricultural matters and the purchase of consumer goods. The woman is consulted on expenditures, but in reality this often means that she is only informed of what the man has decided. Singh & Rajyalakshmi (1993), in their article showed that Status of Tribal Women in India discuss the status of tribal women in terms of their demography, health, education and employment. Bhassin (1998), in her study pointed out “ Status of Tribal Women” gives a picture of the status of women in general in India which as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. She says that, virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits, economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official, political and religious sphere, Indian women suffer profoundly. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society. Tribal societies have been by and large characterised as egalitarian societies especially in relation to the hierarchical character of caste society. However, it cannot be said of women status as status of women varies in different societies. According to a Planning Commission Study (2010), submitted to the Government of India titled “Migration of Tribal Women: Its Socio-economic effects- An in-depth Study of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, M.P., and

Orissa” analyses on the field of education and says that education in the interior tribal areas is still a major problem in the selected states inspite of the ongoing national mission of Sarva Shikshya Abhiyaan. Tribal families still have to go to far off place for the source of drinking water. The national mission programme of NREGA, SGRY etc. are not a great contribution to their annual income. The tribal families opinion on the public officials and representative was asked so as to know the difficulties if being faced by the tribal families. The tribal women of Madhya Pradesh are engaged in daily wage employment.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the status of baiga women in the family.  
To study the economic contribution of the baiga women in the family.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study has been conducted in two tribal villages of Central Region of India, 'Sarahakona' & 'Baikhodra' which comes under 'Bijouri Gram Panchayat' and 'Dharauli Gram Panchayat', located between the border of 'Madhya Pradesh' and 'Chattisgarh'. These two villages are located 12 kms away from 'Indira Gandhi National Tribal University', 'Amarkantak' and 10 km away from Pendra Road. In Baikhodra village 11 families are living and more or less 15 to 16 families are living in the village of Sarahakona. These tribes belong to 'Bhumi Baiga' and 'Dhanwa Baiga'. This study has been chosen in because of the baiga tribes are one of the most ancient tribes in the Central region of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh They are basically living separately and excluded from the mainstream. We have followed ethnography research among the baiga tribes by taking observation and interview as a techniques to collect the primary data from the field. The secondary data was collected basically from books, articles, journals, e-journals and other published work. Structured Interview schedule was used for data collection. A total of 12 samples were collected in which six samples have been taken from each village for the fulfillment of this research study. In this research study we tried to find out the proportion rate of decision making in terms of income, expenditures and other social sphere like education & health. We picked up the data from the middle aged baiga women during the time field study by taking Personal and face to face interview.

#### DATAANALYSIS

The 'Baiga' women family decision making contains proportion of income and expenditures in the family.

**Table No – 1**  
**Income Statement of Households, Sarahakona Village**

<b>Baikhodra Village, Dharauli Panchayat, Block Pendra Dist, Chattisgarh</b>				
<b>SL.No</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>Proportion of Woman Decision</b>
<b>1</b>	4000	2200	1800	0.45
<b>2</b>	6200	1200	5000	0.80
<b>3</b>	2200	1300	900	0.40
<b>4</b>	3000	3000	0	0.00
<b>5</b>	5000	2000	3000	0.60
<b>6</b>	3500	2700	800	0.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>23900</b>	<b>12400</b>	<b>11500</b>	<b>2.48/6 = 0.41</b>

Table No.-1:- It shows the evidence relating to tribal household's economic contribution i.e., income and expenditures which leads to Surplus/Deficit ( Located at Sarahakona Village, Bijouri Panchayat, Annupur District, Madhya Pradesh). All of the above households have  $(13150 / 24200 = 0.5433)$  54% of on and average savings from their income. The proportion of tribal women have the power to make decision in the family is  $(3.06 / 6 = 0.51)$  up to 51% in this Village.

**Chart -1**  
**Income and Expenditures Statement of Baikhodra Village**

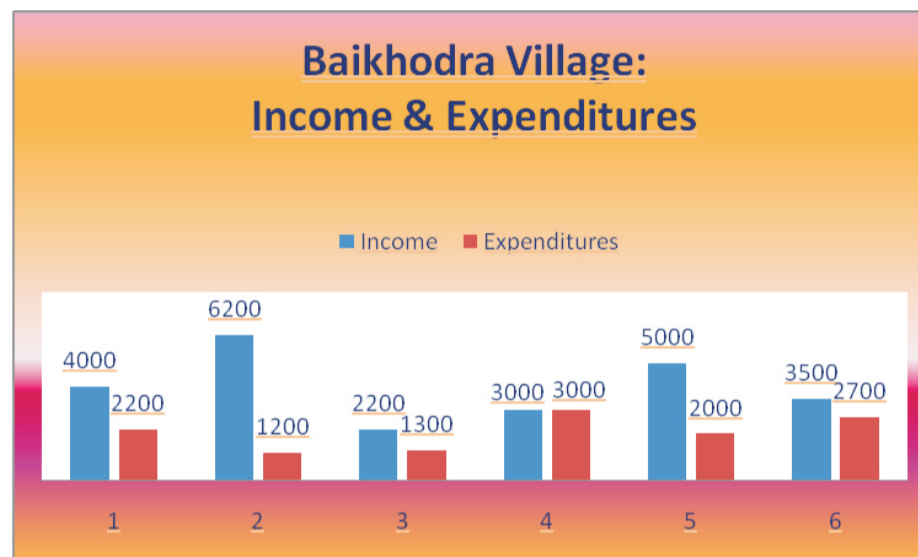


Chart-1. It shows the proportion of income and expenditures of baiga women of 'Baikhodra' Village, which contains the tribal women economic contribution in the family.

**Table No – 2**  
**Income Statement of Households, Baikhodra Village**

<b>Sarahakona Village, Bijouri Panchayat, Annupur Dist, Madhya Pradesh</b>				
<b>SL.No</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>Proportion of Women Decision</b>
<b>1</b>	3300	2700	600	0.18
<b>2</b>	4500	2000	2500	0.55
<b>3</b>	4200	1250	2950	0.70
<b>4</b>	5500	1300	4200	0.76
<b>5</b>	3200	1800	1400	0.44
<b>6</b>	3500	2000	1500	0.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>24200</b>	<b>11050</b>	<b>13150</b>	<b>3.06/6 = 0.51</b>

Table No. 2:- It shows the evidence relating to tribal household's economic contribution i.e., income and expenditures which leads to Surplus/Deficit (Located at Baikhodra Village, Dharauli Panchayat, Block Pendra Dist, Chattisgarh). All of the above Households have (11500 / 23900 = 0.4811) 48% of on and average savings from their income. The Proportion of tribal women have the power to make decision in the family is (2.48/6 = 0.41) up to 41% in this village .

**Chart -2**  
Income and Expenditures Statement of Sarahakona Village

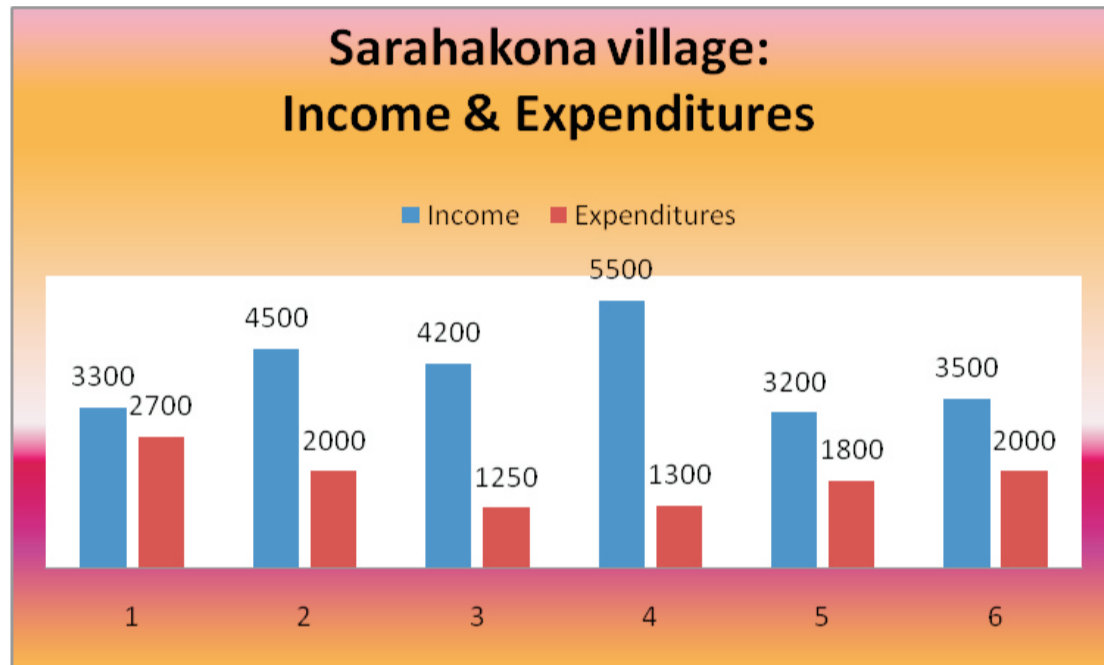
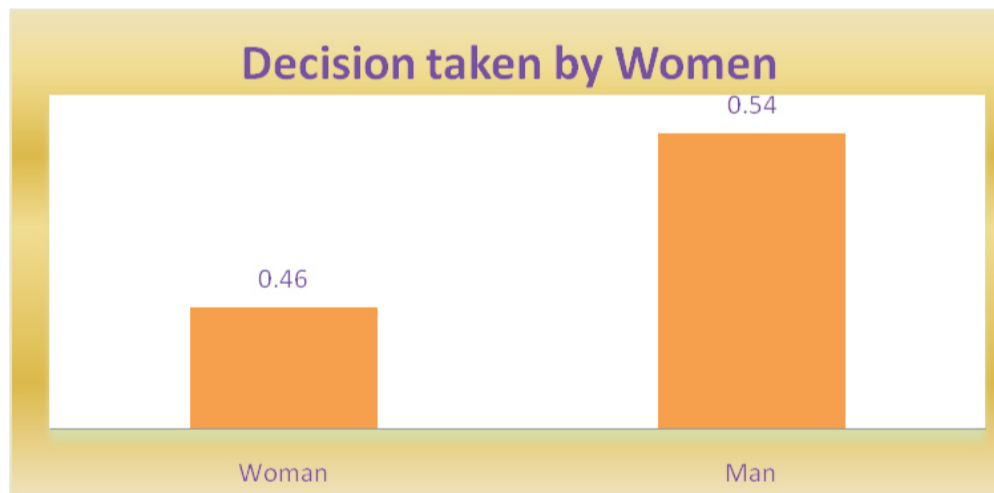


Chart-2:- It shows the proportionate income and expenditures of baiga women of Sarahakona Village, which contains the tribal women economic contributions in the family .

**Chart-3**  
Proportion rate of decision making by Women



**Chart-3:-** In this research study indicates that tribal women have the power to make decision in the family related matter is up to the proportion of  $(0.51+0.41 / 2 = 0.46)$  46%, where as in the first village the Women decision making proportion rate is 51% and at the same time in the second village Women decision making proportion rate is 41%. So we can say that the tribal women are capable of taking decisions in terms of income, expenditures and other social spheres like education and health up to the proportion of 46% in an average.

**FINDINGS**

Most of the respondents were illiterate in this two villages. The level of literacy is very low. All the families have a very low standard of living that was shown in the above mentioned charts by showing income & expenditures level. The

infrastructures of these villages are very poor. These tribal villages don't even have the minimum common facilities such as electricity, proper drinking water facilities and health care facilities etc. The only mediums they are using for communication are mobiles and radio, but very few people are utilizing this sort of medium for communication. The tribal society are followed the nuclear family type. Decisions are usually shared between both men and women. It is true that in tribal society women get a space to take the decision within the family .They work as daily wage earners working in the agricultural field and providing economic contributions to the certain level for the enrichment of their family conditions. Apart from working outside, they also looking after their children, elders and cooking at home. They keep cows, bulls, goats and chickens for their own consumption. Many of the tribal women respondents said that they married at an early age, which did not give them a scope to continue their education, which resulting low literacy rate. Poverty and unavailability of schools and other infrastructures also results in their drop-out rates. Even though baiga tribes has egalitarian society and women are in every respect equal to their male counterparts, but the final decision making takes by the men.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The present paper depicted the conclusion that the baiga women basically take part in household decision making in the family. This study also reveals that despite of the low literacy among the women of baiga tribes, they have the power to take the decision within their family, regarding household income, expenditures and other social spheres like education, health etc. This study shows that the egalitarian nature of the tribal society. The final results of this research study shows women have the power to take the decision up to 46% related to as far as the household's is concerned, but we cannot completely deny the presence of male domination in the tribal society which also influence their decision making level to certain extent.

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