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Impact of Education in Tribal Woman Empowerment: A Case Study of Tribal Woman of Chaupahari Jangal Village in Illambazar Block of Birbhum District, West Bengal

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Abstract

Education is a crucial requirement for the sustained growth of a developing society and lack of it is largely responsible for the backwardness and exploitation of the weaker section of the society. Tribal people are most backward section of our country. Social and locational isolation is one of the root causes behind their backwardness. In tribal society women are more important than any other social group because of their strong participation in earnings and household activities, yet their conditions are pitiable. Generally, woman faced inequality and discourage in all sectors- economic, social, education, political, nutrition etc. In order to fight against all odds woman needs strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment. Empowerment of tribal woman means to generate awareness, consciousness and confidence in them in order to gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their own rights at all levels of society at the national, local and household levels. Education is one of the prime indicators of social as well as cultural development. Education can be act as an instrument in bringing empowerment. The present paper discusses about the role of education in improving the situation of woman, and compare viewpoint of same generation of literate and illiterate tribal woman.

Key Words: Empowerment, Tribal, Backward Section, Inequality, Education.

I. Introduction: Empowerment has become one of the most widely used development terms. Yet it is one of the least understood in terms of how it is to be measured or observed. According to the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus the word “Empowerment” means “give power” or “Authorize”. According to the Cambridge International Dictionary, the “Empowerment” means to give (someone) the official legal authority or freedom to do something.

There are always a number of segments in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these segments lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such elements from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. In tribal society women are more important than in other social group because of their strong participation in earnings and household activities. The importance of woman is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to various fields like economic, social, education, political etc. Women constitute almost half of world’s total population. According to 2011 census, India constitutes 48.27% of woman population. Most disappointing fact is that, country having such a high ratio of women section still lack behind in their status and

empowerment. The situation is more severe among the tribal or primitive societies, which constitute approximately 8.9% of the total population of the country numbering 104.30 million. Schedule Tribes are one of the most backward, exploited and marginalized groups with respect to education. The literacy rate of ST remains well below the general population, only 58.96% compared to 74%. The percentage of literacy of tribes was only 8.54 % in 1961 which has increased to 58.96 % in 2011. But female literacy among tribes is only 49.40 % compared to male literacy of 68.50%.

In recent times, the growing tendency of underestimating women forced them to occupy a secondary position in society and to deprive them of their basic rights; the need for empowering women was felt. Education gives them power of expression and ability to solve problems through their views and ideas.

II. Defining Woman Empowerment: Though concept of empowerment is not specific to women, yet it is unique in that and it cuts across all types of class and caste and also within families and households (Malhotra et al, 2002). Women empowerment is also defined as a process in which woman gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their own rights at all levels of society at the national, local and household levels. "Self-empowerment means that woman gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and are fully involved in the economic, political and social decision-making process" (Namtip Aksornkool, 1983).

It is clear from the above discussion that empowerment can be observed at different levels.

1) At the level of the individual woman and her household: At the individual level empowerment depends on:

- Participation in crucial decision-making processes;
- Extent of sharing of domestic work by men;
- Her control on her reproductive functions and decisions on family size;
- Her ability to decide where the income which she has earned will be channelled;
- Feeling self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Her ability to prevent violence.

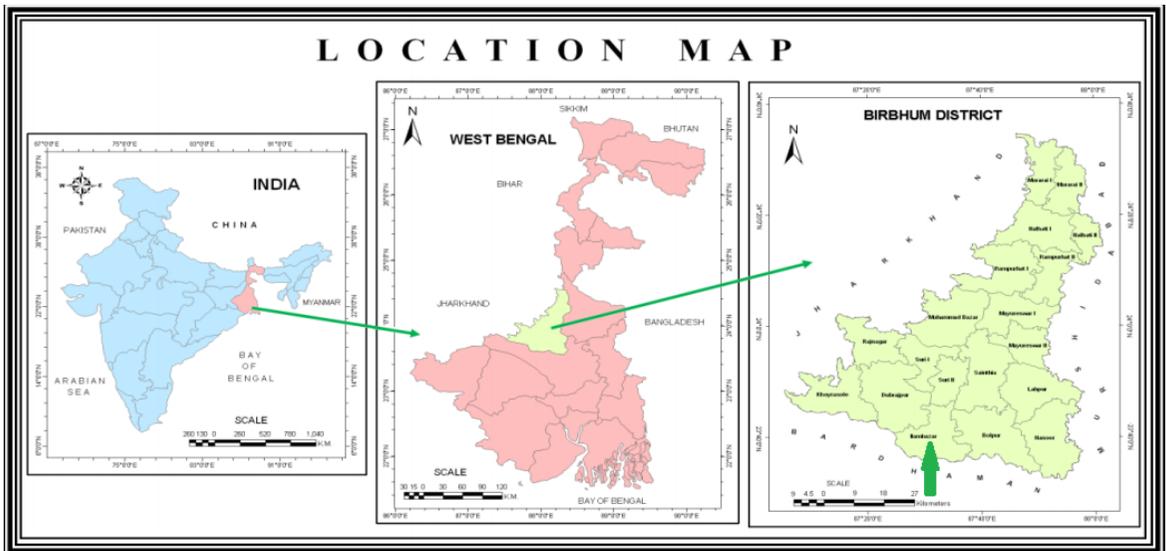
2) At the community level: At the community level empowerment depends on:

- Existence as well formation of women's organisations;
- Planning as well as allocation of funds to women's developmental projects;
- Involvement of women leaders at village, district, state and national levels;
- More and more participation in community programmes, politics and arts;
- Increased vocational training programmes for women and involvement of women in non-traditional tasks;
- Fully aware and exercising her legal rights when necessary.

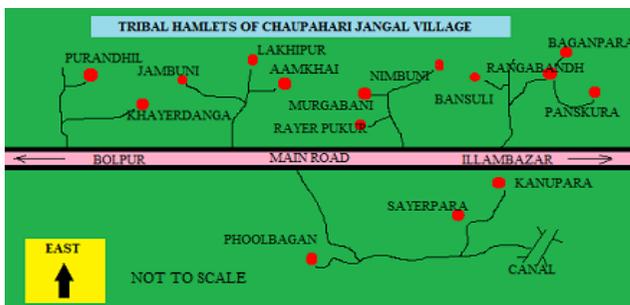
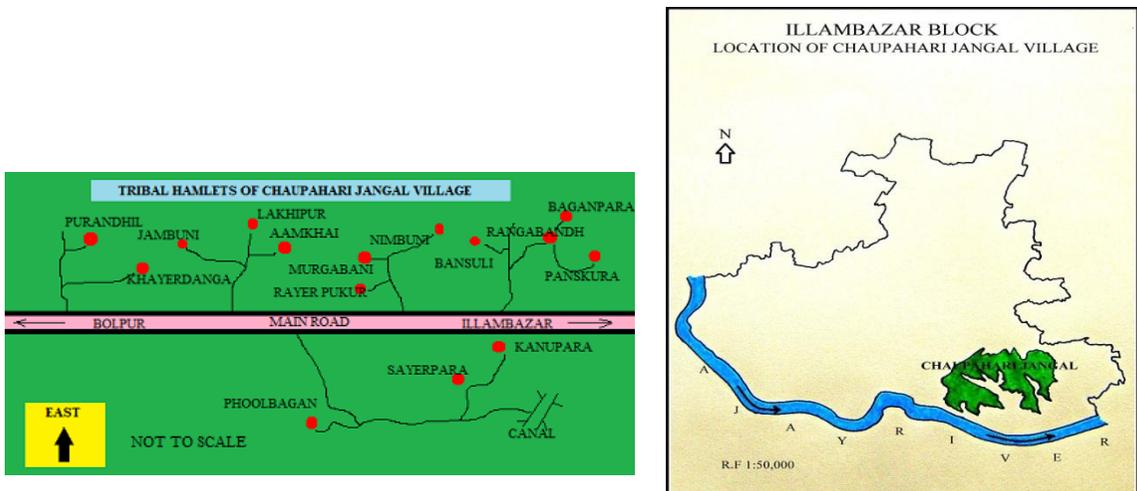
3) At the national level: At national level empowerment depends on:

- Awareness of her social, educational and political rights given by the Constitution of India;
- Integration of women in the general national development plan;
- Existence of strong Women's Organisation ;
- Existence of women at different official level;
- Degree to which the media take heed of Issues related to crime against woman; and
- Success and contribution of woman are recognised by the society.

III. Study Area: The district of Birbhum lies between the latitudes of 23°23'30"N and 24°35'00"N and occupies the western parts of the state of West Bengal. The eastern most extremity of the district is marked by 88°01'40"E longitude and its western most extremity by 87°05'25"E longitude. The study area, *Chaupahari Jangal* village is located in the southern portion of Birbhum District of West Bengal in India and it comprises fifteen small tribal hamlets. All the fifteen hamlets i.e. Purandhil, Jambuni, Khayerpara, Lakhipur, Aamkhai, Murgabuni, Nimbuni, Rayer Pukur, Bansuli, Rangabandh, Baganpara, Panskura, Phoobagan, Sayerpara and Kanupara have similar socio-economic backgrounds. Here tribal communities mostly belong to the Santal tribe. Total population of the study area is 4445, among them 2240 are male and 2205 are female and it comprises 990 household. 33% of the whole population are from general caste, 13% are from schedule caste and 54% are schedule tribes.



According to the census report of 2011, the village covered a total area of 17.4 sq. km. and it is the biggest village by area in the Illambazar block. The total schedule tribe population is 2400 of which 1191 were male and 1209 were females. Schedule tribe population has



increased by 16.8% since last census. The literacy rate of the village is 71%, out of which the male literacy rate is 78% and that for the female is 63%. The literacy rate of the schedule tribe population is 44%, among them 53% are boys and 35 % are girls (Field Study).

IV. Importance of Education in Woman's' Empowerment: Education is one of the prime indicators of social as well as cultural development. Education can be act as an instrument in bringing empowerment. It is through education that one realizes what is good and what is bad, what is proper and what is not. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. The educational achievement of women can have deep and prolonged effect within the family and across generation. Empowerment is a very broad and dynamic term encompassing all types of empowerment such as economic, social, political, legal, psychological and cultural empowerment of woman. Education is the key factor in the process of woman empowerment as it helps in building self-reliance, self-confidence, raising awareness and to achieve equality with men or at least, to reduce gender gap considerably. Education would enable tribal woman to perform certain social roles which they cannot perform without it. The basis objectives of education to empower woman are:

- to educate woman and eliminate illiteracy;
- to develop self-reliance and self-confidence;
- to increase awareness about their bodies and sexuality;
- to capable women to make their own decisions and negotiate;
- to raise the woman's awareness of their constitutional rights;
- to provide skills and proper training for income generation; and
- to prepare them to be good woman leaders and more and more participation in social activities.

V. Objectives of the Study:

- i. To evaluate the importance for empowerment of tribal woman.
- ii. To clarify the concept of empowerment of tribal woman.
- iii. Comparative study of respondents from educated and uneducated tribal woman.

VI. Methodology: This research paper is based on primary data. Data have been collected mainly through field survey. Data were also collected from secondary sources like Census 2011. A questionnaire of several inquiries were presented by investigator and presented to the age group 30-35 years women of different families of Chaupahari Jangal village. Here respondents are selected for survey and total of 40 respondents answered the inquiries. Out of total 40 women respondents 20 were belongs to illiterate tribal woman aged between 30-35 years and 20 respondents belong to educated (completed school level) tribal woman aged between 30-35 years category. Data were analysed by the percentage of respondents. In this regards, different cartographic techniques to elucidate the patterns and trend have been made for completion of the work.

VII. Limitation of the Study:

Following are the main limitations of this research work:

- Due to the vastness of the topic, it is not possible to cover all the aspect within a limited period.
- The comparative study is restricted within educated and uneducated tribal woman (Aged between 30-35 Years) of Chaupahari Jangal village of Illambazar block.
- The study will cover only the tribal women.

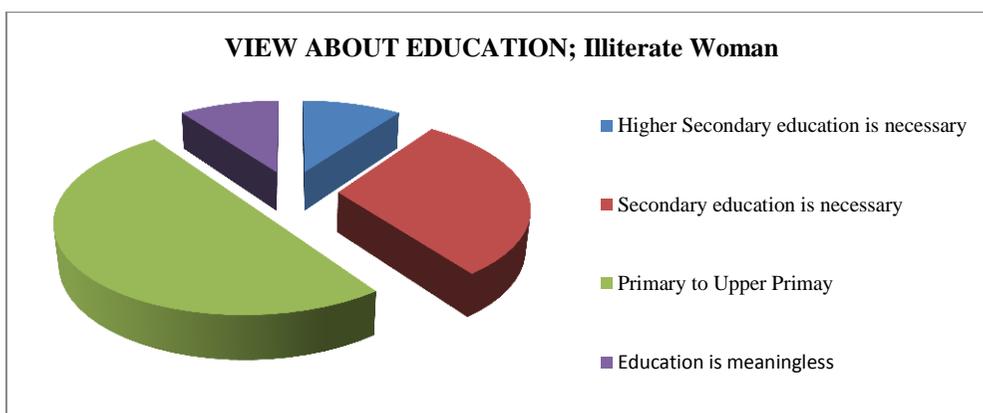
- The study will cover only Chaupahari Jangal village of the Illambazar block. Thus the results of the study are applicable only to similar kind of situation analysis.

VIII. Major Findings of the Study:

a) **Educational Awareness:** Their view about education (particularly for girl children) has examined. Table-1, shows 10 per cent illiterate tribal woman have agreed that higher education is necessary for girls whereas 30 per cent have supported for girls education in the secondary level. Most of the tribal women (50%) have responded the Primary and Upper-Primary level of education is

Table-1: View of respondents (Illiterate tribal woman aged between 30-35 years) about education of girls

Sl. No.	View about Girls' Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Higher Secondary education is necessary for Girls	2	10%
2.	Secondary education is sufficient for Girls	6	30%
3.	Primary to Upper-Primary education is sufficient for Girls	10	50%
4.	Education is meaningless	2	10%
Total		20	100%



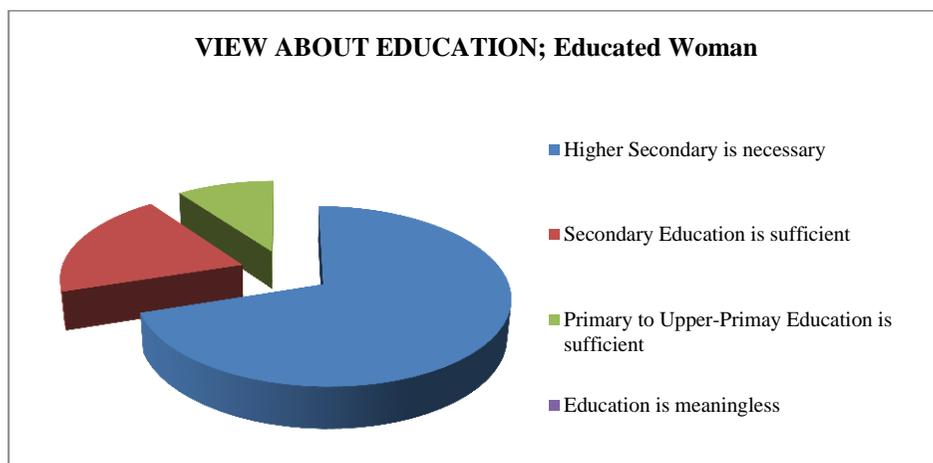
Source: Field Study

sufficient for girls. Most disappointing fact is those 10 per cent women have responded that education is meaningless for their girls.

Table-2 shows, 70 per cent educated tribal women have opined that higher secondary education is necessary for girls whereas 20 per cent woman have responded the Secondary level of education is sufficient for girls. Only 10 per cent educated woman have responded the Primary to Upper-Primary level of education is sufficient. Most interesting fact is that no one responded when the question is asked, is education meaningless?

Table-2: View of respondents (Educated tribal woman aged between 30-35 years) about education of girls

Sl. No.	View about Girls' Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Higher Secondary education is necessary for Girls	14	70%
2.	Secondary education is sufficient for Girls	4	20%
3.	Primary to Upper-Primary education is sufficient for Girls	2	10%
4.	Education is meaningless	NIL	NIL
Total		20	100%



Source: Field Study

b) Political Awareness: In India, the woman power especially tribal woman power does not extend to political spheres. The importance of woman is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to community leadership or political field. The interesting fact is that almost every village Panchayat has a female member, elected by the people, but she never takes any active interest in decision making and working process of Panchayat. To analyse their political awareness, if we compare the respondents answers in Table 3 and 4; we find that both literate (90%) and illiterate women (80%) are interested in casting their votes. Interesting fact is that in case of

Table-3: Political awareness of Illiterate Tribal Woman (30-35 years)

Sl. No.	Political Awareness of Illiterate Tribal Woman (30-35 years)	Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Do you vote in election?	16	04	80	20
2.	Does your husband influence you to cast your vote?	15	05	75	25

3.	Do you tried to solve your local problem through Gram Panchayat?	04	16	20	80
4.	Do you know who the Prime Minister of India is?	05	15	25	75

75% illiterate women their husband influenced themselves to cast their vote while in case of literate women the percentage point is decrease (35%). It is found that 80 % illiterate women of village area never tried to solve their local problem through the MLA, BDO, Pradhan Gram Panchayat, and Head of Village. So far as the educated tribal women are concern, the percentage point is not increasing. Only 40% literate women tried to solve their local problem

Table-4: Political awareness of Literate Tribal Woman (30-35 years)

Sl. No.	Political Awareness of Literate Tribal Woman (30-35 years)	Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Do you vote in election?	18	02	90	10
2.	Does your husband influence you to cast your vote?	07	13	35	65
3.	Do you tried to solve your local problem through Gram Panchayat?	08	12	40	60
4.	Do you know who the Prime Minister of India is?	17	03	85	15

through the heads of the administrative or political organisation. To examine their general political awareness, the question was asked – who is the Prime Minister of India? Almost 75% illiterate women do not know who the present Prime Minister is. Contrary to this, 85 per cent educated women know who our Prime Minister is.

c) Involvement in Decision-making: Data from the field survey on tribal women's decision-making power shows that only about 30 percent of the women interviewed took decisions on their own (for both literate and illiterate) regarding household issues. Decision-making power about their health and children's education among literate women is higher than among uneducated women. The survey also found that decision-making power about their own expenditure among literate women is higher than the illiterate woman (Table-5 and 6).

Table-5: Illiterate Woman's (Aged 30-35 years) role in Decision making

Sl. No.	Women's Role in Decision making (Question asked to them regarding social, economic and household matter)	No. of Respondents who take decision in her own	No. of respondents whose husband take the decision	No. of respondents who take their decisions jointly
1.	Who take decision regarding their daily household expenditures?	12 (60%)	03 (15%)	05 (25%)
2.	Who take decision regarding children's education?	04 (20%)	14 (70%)	02 (10%)
3.	Who take decision regarding health care of sick family members including you?	03(15%)	13 (65%)	05(20%)
4.	Who decides about how to spend Your income?	10 (50%)	04 (20%)	06 (30%)

Table-6: Literate Woman's (Aged 30-35 years) role in Decision making

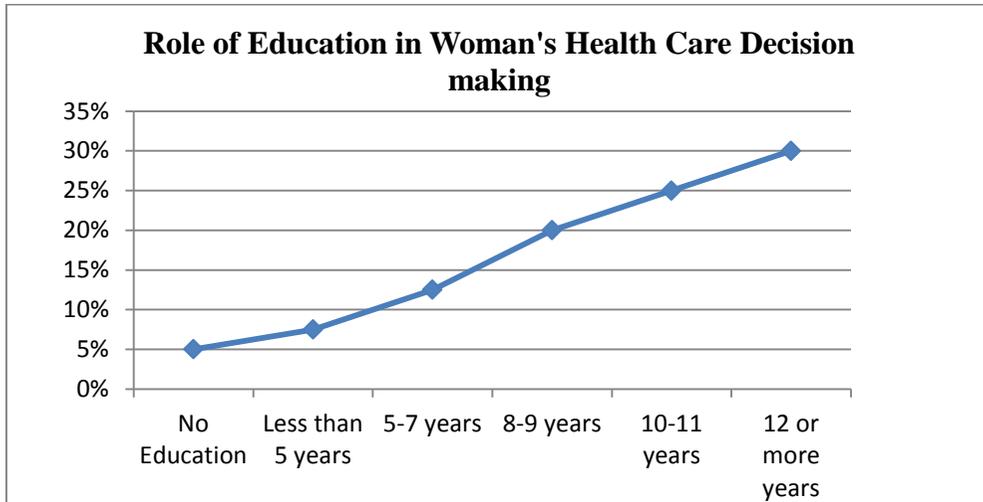
Sl. No.	Women's Role in Decision making (Question asked to them regarding social, economic and household matter)	No. of Respondents who take decision in her own	No. of respondents whose husband take the decision	No. of respondents who take their decisions jointly
1.	Who take decision regarding their daily household expenditures?	14 (70%)	02 (10%)	04 (20%)
2.	Who take decision regarding children's education?	12 (60%)	04 (20%)	04 (20%)
3.	Who take decision regarding health care of sick family members including you?	09 (45%)	01 (05%)	10 (50%)
4.	Who decides about how to spend Your income?	12 (60%)	02 (10%)	06 (30%)

d) Health Awareness

Empowerment is also examined by their awareness about health and hygiene conditions. The tribal groups' irrespective of male or female, health status is lower compared to that of the general population. They have high infant mortality rate, higher fertility rate, lack of awareness regarding diseases and health care, nutritional requirements, quality of drinking water, hygiene. In this area, the tribal population suffers from chronic infections and water-borne diseases. The incidence of infant mortality was found to be very high among the tribal population. Malnutrition is common among them and it has affected the general health of the tribal children. According to the survey, decision-making power of tribal woman about their own health care and family member's health care is increasing with the higher level of education (Table-7).

Table-7: Level of Education and Decision about their own health care

Education (No. of Years)	Decision about their own health care	Percentage
No Education	2	5%
Less than 5 years	3	7.5%
5-7 years	5	12.5%
8-9 years	8	20%
10-11 years	10	25%
12 or more years	12	30%



IX. Suggestions:

Following measures may be suggested to overcome the problems which are found in the study.

- Utmost importance should be given to the education of women. Proper care should be given to tribal girls to get enrolled in school. Guardian, teachers, NGO officials and Govt. will have to take strong steps for empowerment of women in general and tribal woman in particular.
- Launch special education initiatives in this low female literacy tribal pocket. Proper care should be given for development of women education in such rural areas.
- Teach tribal children in their mother tongue. Prepare textbook in tribal languages. Give preferences to local and tribal teachers from local Panchayats. The arrangement of special training for non-tribal teachers to work in this tribal area, including knowledge of tribal culture and dialect.
- In this tribal area, it is essential that the school schedule should be prepared as per local requirement rather than following a directive from the State. School calendars in tribal areas appropriate to local requirements and festivals.
- Hostel and residential community schools for girls at the middle and high school stages and available scholarships should be given for tribal girl students for encouraging the girls of tribal communities to school.
- Women of this areas should be trained up in different vocational courses like tribal-ornament designing, tribal art such as drawing, sculpture making, handloom and textile, poultry farms, fish farming, piggery, dairy farm, etc.
- The main stress should be given to creating awareness and to inbuilt self-reliance among tribal females. Priority must be given to continuous monitoring the improvement in their status condition.

X. Conclusion: India is moving towards 'inclusive growth' and therefore, the participation of women in the development process is of utmost necessity as they comprise of a half of the population percentage. In spite of various constitutional provisions and policies for the tribal, it is a hard reality that the tribal women still are lagging behind in many respects and they have to face

many challenges. Women play a vital role within the tribal society; empowering them to transform their lives from a high-labour, low-income lifestyle to a high-skilled position of education and cultural leadership benefits the entire community. In this research, we found there is a nexus between tribal women empowerment, education and their status in society. Only through the access of education their social, political, individual participation in the household as well as community decision making would gear up. Emphasis should be given to vocational and technical education as well as skill development program. Only through the universal access of education; poverty eradication, employment generation, increasing political involvement and all other aspects of tribal woman empowerment, as well as overall tribal development, should achieve.

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