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A Geographical Study of Education and Empowerment of Weaker Section in Latehar District, Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT:

India is a fast growing country in the world and it is often being said that 21st century is going to be the century of India. Despite of many development initiatives and efforts empowerment of the weaker section is still a big challenge to the development of this country. It seems more so in the context of Jharkhand a newly formed state which has been established with hope of better future. The weaker sections are a pampered lot in political circle but thereafter they are the most neglected and exploited social groups. Weaker section is an indicative term and includes people with poor socio-economic and political background. They include the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes Minorities, women and Other Backward Communities. Education is seen as a major vector in society. It is rightly recognized by Ravindranath Tagore that the widest road leading to solution of all existing problems is education. Geography is an interdisciplinary subject and study of education, empowerment and weaker section have been attractive issue in applied geography and planning and in social geography. Though it is much debatable among the realm of geographical research and development that how this kind of social issues can be oriented. The present research paper is basically based on observational study with the purpose of giving holistic view of educational status of weaker section, ongoing policies and schemes related to education and empowerment, challenges of empowerment and educational development of the study area and to find out suggestions for betterment.

KEY WORDS: Geographical Study, Education, Empowerment and Weaker Section.

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Introduction:

Empowerment has been the subject of widespread and often thoughtful and careful theorizing, study, and application in the fields of social work, community psychology, health promotion, and organizational studies. Unfortunately, it also became an overused buzz-word in consulting, self help, and policy circles. To many, its frequently vague, meaningless usage (sometimes, ironically, for the purpose of co-opting or placating people) has given empowerment a bad name. ¹

The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources.²

Education is directly related to the development of an individual and the community. It is the most important single factor for economic development as well as social emancipation. For the weaker sections of society, education is most powerful instrument of empowerment.³ A primary role of education is to equip people with the knowledge and confidence to make a difference in the transformation of society.⁴ In addition to providing students with content knowledge, education helps instil values, attitudes and behaviours that align with those expected in a society. Education prepares young people for the demands of work life and mitigates the risks of poverty. Educated people also recognize the importance of social justice and sustainability and are more to apply their knowledge and skills beyond their job roles. Increased education plays a role in a person's social mobility and likelihood to remain in good health.⁴

Geographical study of education and empowerment is a very significant problem in the contemporary geographical research and development. It gives a holistic approach in investigating such issues in the geographical theory and practices that how geographical understanding of the issue of education and empowerment can play crucial role in managing such problems. Geographical understanding of region, regional characteristics, resources, its distribution and allocation, delineation of target group on spatial basis, identification of

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geographical factors which influences the policy and planning for education and empowerment of weaker section can be very applicable in tackling and managing of such issues.

Study Area

Latehar district has been created on 4th April 2001. Previously, it was a subdivision of old Palamau district of Jharkhand State. Latehar district is situated between 23°45'0" N latitude and 84°30'0" E Longitude. The geographical area of the district is 3,622.50 sq. Km. Latehar has been named after the village of the same name on Ranchi Daltonganj Road. It is 100 km. away by road from Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand. Latehar is famous for its rich natural beauty, flora and fauna, forest products and huge mineral deposits. Historically the Latehar district is remained an integral part of Palamau District as a sub division since 1924. It got elevated from sub divisional status to a district on 4th April 2001 vides Jharkhand Govt. Notification No 946 dated 04.04.2001.⁵

It is located on the north-west corner of Jharkhand in the Palamau Commissionerary. It is surrounded by Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, Palamau and Chatra district apart from Chhattisgarh state. As per the census 2011 total population of Latehar is 7,26,978 and It's a predominantly tribal district with almost 40% of the population belonging to the schedule tribes and more than 66 % of total population comprises SCs and STs.⁶ There are nine Community Development Blocks in the district within which distantly located villages are scattered amidst the dense forest, hilly terrains and agricultural fields. The number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is predominantly high here and Latehar comes under Tribal Sub Plan Area. The district of Latehar lies in the north-west part of the state of Jharkhand. It possesses a one sub-

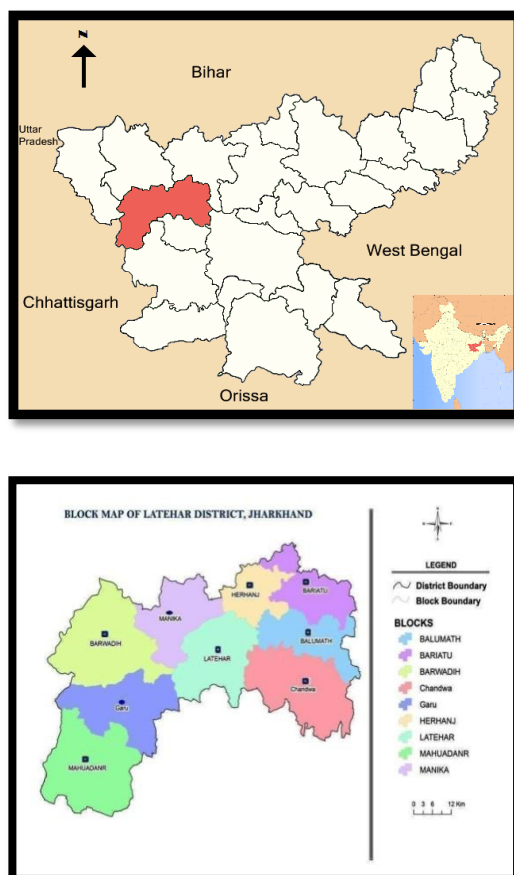


Fig: Location Map of Study Area

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division, Latehar and there are 9 (nine) Development Blocks, namely Latehar, Chandwa, Balumath, Bariyatu, Herhanj, Manika, Barwadih, Garu and Mahuadar and one statutory town Latehar and three census towns are Chandwa, Alaudia and Barwadih. There are 769 villages in the district including 20 un-inhabited villages.⁷

Educational Status of Weaker Section in Latehar District

- **Infrastructure and basic amenities in the district:** The details of the infrastructure and basic amenities accessible to people are presented below in Table 1.1 The district has 773 villages which are characterized as inhabited villages. The district has nearly 1250 primary and upper primary schools, 01 degree college and one Inter College. There are 06 community health centres, 01 primary health centres and 97 sub health centers. Nearly all the villages have access to safe drinking water facilities but only 2 percent of the households have access to piped water facility. One third of the villages have electricity connection. The situation of individual household toilets is poor in the district. Nearly all the boys and the girls are in the primary age group are attending schools.(Sources Latehar District official Website)⁸

Educational Amenities	
Inhabited Villages (Revenue Villages)	773 villages
Primary and Upper primary School	1250
College	02
Primary Health Centre	01
Community Health Centre	06
Primary Health Sub-Centre	97
Percent girls (age 6-11) attending Schools	99.5
Percent boys (age 6-11) attending Schools	99.6
Have Access to toilet facility (%)	8.0

Table 1.1: Educational Amenities and Infrastructure facilities

- **Literacy among Weaker Section:** Average literacy rate of Latehar in 2011 were 59.51 compared to 40.69 of 2001. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy were 69.97 and 48.68 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures

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stood at 54.13 and 26.52 in Latehar District. Total literate in Latehar District were 350,682 of which male and female were 209,706 and 140,976 respectively. In 2001, Latehar District had 179,937 in its district. The average literacy rate in Latehar for urban regions was 78.33 percent in which males were 84.77% literate while female literacy stood at 71.26%. The total literate population of Latehar was 350,682. Similarly in rural areas of Latehar, the average literacy rate was 57.99 percent. Out of which literacy rate of males and females stood at 68.74% and 46.92% respectively. Total literates in rural areas of Latehar were 316,158. Literacy rate among ST & SC in Latehar district is below average literacy rate of Latehar district that is all ready below national average. Educational status of women is very poor in all community block of this district.

Table 1.2: Literacy among Weaker Section

Block Wise Literacy Rates in Latehar										
S.N.	Block	Total Population	Literate				Illiterate			
			Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Latehar	1,17,514	33,221	21,907	55,128	57.92	26,060	36,326	62,386	42.08
	Latehar NAC	26,981	10,124	7,754	17,878	77.85	4,028	5,075	9,103	22.15
2	Chandwa	1,06,653	30,119	20,443	50,562	58.47	24,049	32,042	56,091	41.53
3	Balumath	89,012	25,189	16,906	42,095	58.22	20,124	26,793	46,917	41.78
4	Manika	88,095	25,294	16,297	41,591	59.24	19,629	26,875	46,504	40.76
5	Garu	30,274	8,474	5,335	13,809	57.60	6,753	9,712	16,465	42.40
6	Barwadih	98,992	27,028	17,700	44,728	55.99	23,528	30,736	54,264	44.01
7	Mahuadanr	74,732	24,929	18,776	43,705	69.62	12,986	18,041	31,027	30.38
8	Bariyatu	60,095	15,991	10,191	26,182	54.49	14,368	19,545	33,913	45.51
9	Herhanj	34,630	9,337	5,667	15,004	54.62	8,435	11,191	19,626	45.38
Total		7,26,978	2,09,706	1,40,976	3,50,682	59.51	1,59,960	2,16,336	3,76,296	40.49

Source: District Census Hand Book of Latehar⁹

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- **Disabled Population in Latehar District:** In Latehar there are total 15,348 disabled persons out of which 8,438 are males and 6,910 are females. Now let us see the disabled population in Rural and Urban areas in Latehar. In Rural areas there are total 14,035 out of which 7,709 are males and 6,326 are females. Coming to Urban areas there are total 1,313 out of which 729 are males and 584 are females.¹⁰

Table 1.3: Disabled Population in Latehar District

TRU	TOTAL DISABLED POPULATION	Males	Females
Total	15348	8438	6910
Rural	14035	7709	6326
Urban	1313	729	584

Educational Development Programmes and Schemes

Policies for schools are created at the local, state and central levels. Educational policies are rules that are intended to help schools teach students efficiently, fairly and safely. These rules determine how students are taught, what they are taught, and how schools manage students and school personnel. Educational policies can also help keep students in school. For educating children in this district many central as well as state sponsored schemes are going on for ex- i) Central assisted-Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Awasiya Vidyalaya, State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA) for TSP (80:20) and for OSP (60:40), Saraswati Vahini (Mid-Day Meal), Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Computer literacy and Computer aided learning (ICT), Establishment of Model School (75:25), Establishment of Girl's Hostel (90:10);ii)State assisted- Free distribution of Text-Books, Construction/ Strengthening/ Renovation/ Up gradation of Training colleges ,Support to un-aided Schools, Establishment of Jharkhand Council for Educational Research and Training (JCERT), Skill Development Mission and Vocational Education in +2 Schools, Strengthening of B.Ed./College for Teacher Education (CTE) and other training institutions, Grant in Aid to Vitta Rahit Vidyalayas, Scholarship to the Students Enrolled in RIMC, Deharadun and Merit cum Means Scholarship to State Government Students, Free Cycle distribution to General and OBC girls enrolled in Class -VIII, Free Education for girls up to Intermediate level, Establishment of new District Libraries and strengthening of existing district libraries (including creation of additional reading facilities), Organization of

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seminar/symposium/purchase printing of materials, Tribal sub plan for education etc.

The objectives of ongoing programme and schemes are aimed at -Controlling the dropout in elementary education, improving the quality of education through better teacher training, Reducing in access area by means of establishing new high schools, Retention of enrolled students particularly ST/SC and other weaker sections of the society, Developing schools by providing better school building/furniture/Library/Laboratories/Common rooms/Toilets etc., Delinking of at least 50% degree colleges by means of providing more +2 level schools, Strengthening of Teachers Training Institutes, Strengthening of SCERT, Strengthening and modernization of field offices, Raising the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in secondary education (Classes IX and X), Substantial reduction in gender, social and regional gaps in GER and drop-outs, ensuring 100 percent trained teachers in all schools, Bringing down pupil-teacher ratio in secondary sector from 53:1 to 30:1, Implementing ICT scheme in all Govt. and Aided Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools, extensive use of satellite based teaching methodology to provide access to Knowledge Centres, demand-driven vocational education in partnership with private partners/ employers, mobility through education streams and multiple entry/exit options etc.

Challenges to Education and Empowerment of Weaker Section:

From detail discussion on centrally and state assisted educational policies and schemes it is clear that both central as well as state government has launched many schemes and programme for strengthening educational status of marginalized people in study area Latehar and Jharkhand. But in spite of these initiatives Latehar is still socio-economically backward district of Jharkhand like many other districts in the state is confronted with many developmental challenges, For ex-

- **Development of Infrastructural Facility and Access to Infrastructure:** Impediments and Improvements Lack of access to infrastructure can be measured in terms of: (i) under-provisioning relative to the rest of India; and (ii) high unfulfilled demand in key areas such as transportation, telecommunication, power, water supply and irrigation. A growth diagnostic for Latehar reveals that poor infrastructure and lack of institutional development are two major

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constraints to growth. Infrastructural investments not only accelerate growth, but have strong linkage effects with other complementary inputs.¹¹

- **Facilitating Educational Amenities:** Facilitating Educational Amenities at geographically challenged tribal villages of Latehar is a big challenge to educational achievements. Latehar is surrounded by dense forest cover and hilly terrains. Many villages are located inside of forest area where transport and communication facilities are very poor.¹²
- **Poverty, Unemployment and labour Migration:** District has one of the highest levels of poverty in state, with a sharp contrast between rural and urban poverty. Due to extreme poverty and unemployment villagers along with their family seasonally migrates to neighbors states like-West Bengal, U. P, Bihar etc. in search of employment. Seasonal employment in the rural economy at a wage rate below subsistence level forces underprivileged labourers to migrate for survival. Brick kilns in India are a major destination for migrant labourers, who are tied to them for the production season after accepting advance wages from agents.¹³
- **Poor Social Indicators:**
The District key social indicators such as literacy, enrolment, infant mortality and child nutrition, are well below the all-India average. As per the latest data published by district statistical office latehar total registered birth and death in the month of Oct 2021 was respectively 1528 and 237 is still disappointing.¹⁴
- **Mining and Industrialization:**
Though in the mining and industrial calendar study area Latehar holds very important place in India but it is less benefiting for the state and study area as well. The high level of industrialization has not translated into high levels of income for the people, they still marginalized and even being displaced for their land and home.

Apart from above mentioned challenges there are many other problems. As part of the problems associated with the creation of a new state, Jharkhand suffers from serious administrative and management shortcomings adversely affecting implementation effectiveness in the district and the study area faces significant challenges in overcoming the weaknesses of implementation capacity. Jharkhand faces

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unusually high micro-risks affecting private investment, and everyday security of livelihoods of people of Jharkhand as well as Latehar. Corruption and Nepotism is biggest obstacle in the process of development of this area like everywhere in the India. Today, kinship ties and caste and parochial loyalties get precedence in a public servant's mind. The first obligation of a modern administrator is to his family members, followed by close kin, lineage, or ethnic group. Such ties are more compelling than administrative rules and procedures.

Social evils like exclusion, inequality, decimation etc. are some social challenges continually being faced by marginalized segment of society. Every day violence of human rights are reported in the district and human trafficking is emerges as biggest challenge to humanity. Growth of Human Capital human capital is an important source of long-term growth. Two features are noteworthy. First, distribution of education among different segments of population for the state as a whole and Latehar district in particular does not appear to be very different from the all-India pattern. Secondly returns to education are quite modest. At least for rural areas, the incremental income enhancing effects of attaining different grades of education up to the secondary level are quite modest.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Though the study area is predominantly a tribal district and despite of many central government and state government sponsored programs and schemes characterized by low socio-economic and a backward district. Developing Educational Infrastructure, Empowering Tribal Women, Skills Development Training and creating Employment opportunities, Insuring Equality of educational opportunity, Social Security, Community Participation in development process, Quality Concerns in education, Promoting Non Formal and Informal Education, Language and culture and education are the some areas of prime importance.

As the study area is characterized with complex geographical and cultural setup development of infrastructural facility such as road, railway, and communication centre, health centre, skill development related institutions especially in marginal villages will be very helpful. In respect to population numbers of higher educational and training institutions are very less. Establishment of higher educational and training institution will be big efforts in empowering of the region.

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Goal of development both state and nation cannot be achieved without empowering women of this of especially a district featured with very poor socio-economic indicators of development. Skills Development Training and Creating Employment opportunities will be helpful in strengthening marginalized including women. Insuring Equality of educational opportunity in the area, Social Security, Community Participation, Quality Concerns in education must be reviewed.

Promoting Non Formal and Informal Education many education and training systems do not provide people with the basic skills needed to escape poverty and unemployment, even when they continue to receive formal education. Non formal education programmes seek to fill this gap by providing learning and skills development opportunities that are relevant to the context in which people live and seek their livelihoods. Often provided through youth and community based organizations, non-formal education facilitates the learning of life-relevant knowledge and skills, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

Geographically study area Latehar district is very rich in flora and fauna, Vast cultural diversity has huge potential for development of indigenous craft industry, naturally the region is rich in natural resources where ecotourism can be developed. The study area is need more serious attention then of mere implementation of modern model of development based on mining and Industry. The study are seeks such model where protection indigenous culture can be ensured, sustainable livelihood can be maintained and initiatives should taken with active involvement of inhabitants.

Conclusion:

Education is most inevitable means for overall progress of Country. Development of a country largely depends on the educated citizens but literacy rate in study area Latehar is below national average. Educational level among marginalized or weaker sections of society is very low therefore for the development process priority should be given to welfare schemes and programes meant for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and Other Backward Casts including women. India is a country where every year many welfare schemes are launched but few of them become benefiting due to implementation illnesses. Without ensuring education it is not possible to empower people belonging to any section. By empowering tribal rural woman through education and employment can thus enable them to live with dignity and self reliance cutting

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across the barriers of customary biases and prejudices, social barrier of caste, class, gender, occupation and institutional barriers that prevent them from taking actions to improve their state both at the individual and collective level. Therefore, developing infrastructure for quality education, development of skilled human resources through training programme which can enable in individuals skills for self employment, improving communication and transport facility, monitoring human right violations ,controlling corruption and nepotism ,ensuring social security and justice ,creating employment opportunities in mining and industrial work running in the area and free education for all with equal opportunity will help in strengthening all sphere of life of the weaker section of Latehar in particular and nation at large.

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