

Impact of Different Development Programmes on the Scheduled Tribe People In West Bengal: A Case Study on Birhor Community

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Abstract

In West Bengal, the tribal communities are distributed in varied ecological environment. Despite, the tribal population of W.B. are engaged themselves in various sectors in economy. Yet 80.44% are engaged in agricultural sectors of which 29.47% are cultivators and 50.70% are agricultural labourers. Another important source of livelihood of the tribal people is forests. They collect minor forest products along with various plants, roots, tubers, small animal for their own consumption and also for medical use. Most of the people in Birhor communities are illiterate or semi literate. Females are mostly (59%) illiterate than male (41%). Recently the children of this community are going to primary school (28%), but at higher education level the progress is very poor.

Keywords: Tribal, Per Capita Income

Introduction

In India more than fifty percent of the people belong to weaker sections (i. e. annual income of the family less than 19,654 for rural and for urban less than 27,247). In rural areas these are the landless labourers, small and marginal farmers, rural artisans including fishermen, and backward classless and backward tribes. The urban poor, quite many of them immigrants from villages live in slums and on pavements. Most of them are in unorganized sector doing petty jobs. The problem of poverty is thus mostly of the weaker sections. The scheduled tribe people possess an extensive area of weaker sections.

In West Bengal, the tribal communities are distributed in varied ecological environment. Ecological environment has a wide meaning and it covers nature of land, soil composition, rainfall distribution, climate variation etc. There is a hilly region, plateaus, plain and forests of different types along with this there are areas having heavy rainfall and also scanty rainfall, apart from the Drought Prone Areas. The economy of the scheduled tribe people has been greatly influenced by the variable ecological environment. Despite, the tribal population of W.B. are engaged themselves in various sectors in economy. Yet 80.44% are engaged in agricultural sectors of which 29.47% are cultivators and 50.70% are agricultural labourers.

Table – 1

	Main Workers	Cultivator	Agricultural Labourer	Household Industry	Other Service
1	2	3	4	5	6
India	4,98,74,651	1,26,70,657 (25.44%)	2,44,70,657 (49.06%)	12,01,682 (2.41%)	1,15,12,864 (23.08%)
West Bengal	49,96,179	13,72,616 (27.41%)	20,54,552 (41.12%)	1,61,964 (3.24%)	14,07,047 (28.16%)

Source:- Bulletin of Cultural Research Institute, Vol.- XXII, No. 1 2004, Published - Director CRI on behalf of Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of W. B.

Another important source of livelihood of the tribal people is forests. They collect minor forest products along with various plants, roots, tubers, small animal for their own consumption and also for medical use. Very often they collect firewoods and sale it to the nearby market or to the local other communities people.

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Sample Design

Two stage sampling procedure has been followed for identifying the sample households in rural areas of Balarampur, Bagmundi and Jhalda-I blocks of Purulia district. Selecting sample village is the first stage of sampling and selecting sample households is the second stage of sampling.

Three villages from three blocks of Purulia district viz. Bagmundi, Balarampur and Jhalda-1 have been selected for sample study for Birhor tribal community, these three villages have high concentration of Birhor community.

From each village requisite numbers of households have been selected randomly which constitute the sample for study of the socio-economic condition of this scheduled tribe community.

Sources of Data

The data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

The primary data on the socio economic conditions of the Birhor have been collected through personal interview at the field study.

Secondary Sources

The secondary data have been collected from various publication and report of the Government organization like census report published by Bureau of applied economics and development statistics of the Govt. of India, Reports on SC & ST development if any, bulletin published by Cultural Research Institute, Backward classes welfare Department of W.B. Govt. etc.

Methodolog

Average value of each parameter has calculated.

Objectives of the study:

1. To examine the impact of different development programmes taken by both the Govt. and Non-Govt. on the educational development of the Birhor.
2. To examine the impact of different development programmes taken by both the Govt. and Non-Govt. on the per capita income development of the Birhor.

Hypothesis

To fulfill the above objectives the following hypothesis are fitted

1. H₀₁: No educational development of the Birhor community inspite of different development programmes taken by both the Govt. and Non-Govt.

2. H₀₂: No change in per capita income of the Birhor community inspite of different development programmes taken by both the Govt. and Non-Govt.

Study on Birhor Community

The name Birhor includes the word Bir' means jungle and 'Hor' indicate man i.e. Jungleman. It has been learnt from various sources that a large proportion Birhors of Purulia migrated from Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad of Jharkhand state more than 150 years ago and wandering here and there in hilly and jungle areas in the Purulia district and lastly settled in different blocks like Bagmundi, Jhalda-I and Balarampur. Presently, they are found to live in Bareria, Baredi and Bhupatipally village in Bagmundi block, Chhota Bhagat in Jhalda -I and Bersa village in Balarampur block.

A study conducted on 80 Birhor households in Bareriya and Bhupatipally villages of Bagmundi block, Chhota Bhagat of Jhalda-I block and Bersa village of Balarampur block under Purulia district. The number of families have been increased presently. In the year 1990 - 91, the no. of Birhor families was 61 and total population was 217 in Purulia district. Barerria ia a village which is on lap of the Ajoydha hill of Purulia district, Bhupatipally is adjacent to Ajoydha hill.

Bersa which is under Balaramput block, their (the Birhor) residential houses are very adjacent to hills and nearabout one and half k.m. Away from local well known hill named Kana pahar (Kana hill).

The forests and hill areas are spreaded nearby all above mentioned villages. The following table reflects the occupational distribution of Birhors in our study area.

It is well known that hunting, gathering and collection were the prime sources of their occupation. Rope making was their main occupation. They used to collect "Chihor Lata" from which they are making rope. The local name of other "Creepers" are Chikakurul, Kumbhi, Buruj etc. By which they also prepare ropes. Birhors in our study areas have been collecting "Chihor Lata" and other creepers from nearby forests. Besides, they have also been collecting honey, tuber, wood and small creatures from the forests. They are also preparing ropes with Babui grass, Jute which the state government supplied to them and they are also used nylon as creepers because the availability of Chihor Lata has been depleting gradually in the nearby forest areas. The following table presents the occupational pattern of the Birhors in our study areas.

Table – 2
Occupational Distribution of The Birhors In The Study Areas

Occupation	% On Total Male	% On Tootal Female	%On Total Population
Forest produce collection-Rope making-Agri. labour-Wage labour	22.92	5.88	14.14
Housewife- Rope making	-	25.49	13.13
Wage labour	18.75	-	9.09
Forestproduce collection- Ropemaking	16.67	15.68	16.16

Craftsman	2.08	-	1.01
Unemployed	14.59	7.84	11.12
Casual worker in govt. school-	2.08	-	1.01
Agriculture			
Casual worker in school	-	3.92	2.02
Student	20.83	21.58	21.21
Ropemaking	-	19.61	10.10
SHG motivator	2.08	-	1.01

Source: Field Study

It is observed from the above table that a large number of Birhors are engaged themselves in various economic activities through out the years to subsist. Most of the Birhors still wrapped themselves in their traditional occupation i.e. Forest produces collection and produces rope from —Chihorlatall and other creepers. Along with these traditional activities, they also performed agriculture work as agricultural day labour in neighbourhood areas. Particularly, in Bengali calender month viz. Asar, Shraban, Aghrahan, Pous, Magh they envolved themselves in agricultural work as a day labour and rest of the month they envolved themselves in labouring job as day wage labour in local or neighbouring areas in different types of job as per opportunities available to them.

A large number of females involved themselves in agricultural work as a day labour and rest of the month they envolved themselves in labouring job as day

wage labour in local or neighbouring areas in different types of job as per opportunities available to them.

A large number of females involved themselves in rope making activity and day to day domestic work at home. The old aged Birhor females are only made rope, they usually not involved in other works.

It is observed a remarkable proportion Birhors collect forest produces like honey, tuber, wood and also creeper from nearby forests. They also prepared rope from creeper, jute, babui grass and nylon at home. They sell these forest produces in men and in local market also.

It is also observed from the above table that a few proportion Birhors of my study are as engaged in occupation like craftsman, casual worker in school along with agriculture and self-help group motivator with rope making.

From the above table it is observed that a significant number of Birhors are unemployed. Though the proportion of male unemployed is double in compare to female unemployed.

The following table reflects the unemployed scenario of Birhor community in details.

Table – 3 Age-Wise Distribution Of Unemployed Of The Birhors

Age Group	0-3		4-5		6-15		16-55		56-	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Unemployed	80.0%	80%	Nil	50%	12.5%	10.71%	16.66%	4.35%	40 %	Nil

Source: Field Study

It is observed from the above table that up to 5 years of age, the proportion of unemployed is quite higher. It indicates that the Birhor children up to 5 years of age not enroll their names in any pre –primary school. Besides, a few proportion children yet not enroll their names in any primary or secondary school; they are still beyond the campus of educational institution.

In between age group 16-55, it is observed that the proportion of unemployed among Birhors of my study areas is nil that indicate no one Birhor of my study areas in working age group is whiling out their days without involvement in any economic activities.

The proportion of unemployed among old aged male is quite high whereas no one female in this category is unemployed. It is also observed that the old aged females are working at home.

Educational Status

In the study it is observed that up to 5 years of age near about 25% children have enrolled their names in any primary or pre-primary or pre-primary school.

In between age 6 and 15, about cent percent have enrolled their names in any primary or Secondary school. In this age group, 56.25% have enrolled in Primary school and the proportion those who have enrolled in Secondary school is 43.75%.

In between age 16 and 55, 52.73% are illiterates, 27.27% have completed their education within primary level, 16.36% have completed or studying in Secondary level education and 3.64% have enrolled their names in any Higher Secondary School for College level education. In this age group, the proportion of female illiterate is 58.62% where as in male category the proportion is 41.38%.

In above 55 years of age, 92.30% Birhors are illiterate. Near about cent percent female in above 55 years of age is illiterate.

Study on Economic Condition of Birhor Community

The following table reflects the per-capita monthly income of the Birhors in our study areas in details.

Table – 4
Distribution of Per-Capita Monthly Income of The Lodhas In The Study Area

Per-Capita Monthly Income Groups		Percentage Of Total Population
0 — 333.00	Below Poverty Level	25.36
334.00 — 500.00	Poverty Level	29.74
501.00 – 700.00	Tolerance Level	29.09
701.00 – 1500.00		10.28
1501.00—2500.00	Moderate Leavel	03.99
2501.00 and above		1.54
Total		100.00

Source: Field Study

From the above table it is observed that a remarkable proportion of Birhors i.e. more than fifty five percent belong to below Poverty Level and Poverty level . Thus it is evident that a significant number of Birhors have been struggling ceaselessly with the poverty.

It is also observed that most of the Birhors i.e about to forty percent in our study area belongs to Tolerance level. Those who are belong to tolerance level they are also struggling to meet up the domestic needs smoothly.

The Proportion of Birhors belong to Moderate level is significantly low i.e. just above five percent. Thus, it is apparent that a very few number of Birhor in our study area are maintaining a fair standard of living.

Conclusion

From the above discussion the following conclusion can be drawn

1. The Birhors are still significantly depending on forest produces and their traditional occupation, rope-making for subsistence.
2. A large number of Birhors are engaged themselves in various day labour jobs throughout the Bengali calendar year. The nature job varied in accordance with the rotation of Bengali calendar months.
3. The proportion of unemployed particularly in old aged male of Birhors in my study area is significantly high.
4. A very few proportion of Birhors can able to deviate their economic activities from forest based and scattered into various jobs.
5. A remarkable portion of Birhors have been chasing with clutches of poverty.
6. Most of the Birhors are struggling to meet up their domestic needs. A few number of them able to meet their domestic needs smoothly and maintain comparatively a fair standard of living.
7. A significant number old aged Birhors are getting old age pension. Though, the criterion of age to get this benefit should be relaxed for this Primitive tribal group of West Bengal.

8. Most of the people in Birhor communities are illiterate or semi literate. Females are mostly (59%) illiterate than male (41%). Recently the children of this community are going to primary school (28%), but at higher education level the progress is very poor.

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