

Government's initiative for the advancement of Indigenous Ethnic Group in India: A case study of 'Birhor' – A Primitive Tribe in Purulia District, West Bengal, India.

Dr Nabamita Barman¹

¹Department of Political Science, Durgapur Government College, India

ABSTRACT: India contains a plethora of tribal communities or aboriginal groups who are considerably distinct from each other in varied manners. Disadvancement or backward condition of these groups, especially of the primitive type is the reflection of uneven development in which objective of inclusive growth strategy has not been obtained. Attention has been always paid from the Government's end for their overall development but still unable to eradicate the unevenness. This condition of tribal groups in India is one of the major challenges regarding development. The researcher here selected Purulia District's Birhors for study which is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group of India and the condition of this type of tribal group in one of the most backward districts of India is worse. This paper is going to intervene the nature of their problem indeed. Analysis of the degree of backwardness is bases on primary data, collected from field survey and the raw data have been computed and represented using various statistical techniques. There is huge dispersion between the policies taken for them and achievement of these policies after implementation. The desired goals are not being achieved. This paper prescribes some methods which can accelerate achievement of policy goals.

Keywords - Backwardness, Birhor, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, Policy achievement, unevenness.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is incredible and unique for her unprecedented natural beauty, variety of wild ecology as well as human communities with different cultures. India's 'indigenous' population hold their prolonged tradition till today. The range of indigenous population in India varies not only in size but also in their culture, dialects and livelihood. They are characterized by aloofness, low level of literacy, low level of economic activity, geographical isolation, maintenance of group identity, low population density, predominance of prejudice. [1] India is having the second largest concentration of tribal population next only to the African continent. There are 642 tribal communities, out of which 428 communities have been reported to be existing. [2] It is presently universally accepted that the indigenous people are not advanced but distressed. The indigenous people are the poorest among the poor. [3] After Independence the need and problems of indigenous people were recognized and tried to be comprehended properly. The Constitution itself contains several protective provisions. The indigenous people, listed in the Indian Constitution inter alia goes through Article 15(4), 16(4), 19(5), 23, 29, 46, 164, 275(I), 330, 332, 334, 335, 338, 339(1), 339(2), 371(A), 371(B), 371(C), the 5th Schedule and 6th Schedule. The legal framework of India has also provided reservation in respect of geographical location, forest products and employment in political and educational institutions. There are also several committees and commissions for their welfare. [4] The Government of West Bengal too have been legislating various protective measures for them. Tribes or indigenous people in India have already experienced five decades of development

programmes and planning. In spite, they still continue to keep themselves isolated. They are still in the lowest strata of our society in respect of prosperity, social prestige and attainments. The situation is gloomier in case of Primitive Tribal Group which has been known particularly vulnerable tribal group since the year 2006.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. Exploration of socio-economic status of the Birhors in Purulia – one of the most backward districts of India;
2. Identification of significant causes behind their backwardness and alienation;
3. Peep into the level of overall policy and programme's achievement
4. Policy prescription to overcome such situation of non-achievement of desired goals.

III. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present day situation of the Birhors, which depicts more of a “non-advanced and non-attained strata in all spheres”, is exposed here on the basis of extensive field survey and collection of data with a definite questionnaire. Following methods have been employed to fulfill the objectives of the present study:-

1. Collection of Secondary Data: The researcher had met the Block Development Officer and Inspector of Backward Classes Welfare of the concerned Administrative Block for collecting the details of running special schemes for the development of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group of this district. Focussed group interviews were also carried out with the people who are actually implementing the programmes in those areas.
2. Sample Size: On the basis of the questionnaire and direct interview in four villages under three separate Blocks of Purulia district, the work has been done.
3. Sample Design: Data collection has been done by door to door visit of each Birhor family in four villages by systematic questionnaire.
4. The data were interpreted by tabulation, calculation, analysis by various statistical techniques and qualitative data analysis techniques.

IV. STUDY AREA

The selected study areas are the villages where the Birhors concentrated in West Bengal. They settled in four villages under three Community Development Blocks of Purulia district of West Bengal, viz. Barariya and Bhupatipally under Bagmundi Block, Chotabakad under Jhalda-I Block and Bersa under Balarapur Block. The Bersa village is situated at 23°8'56.4"N and 86°11'34.8"E, Barariya is situated at 23°11'18.5"N and 86°04'47.8"E and the village Bhupatipalli is situated at 23°09'40.68"N and 86°03'05.8"E.

In Bersa village there are 10 households of Birhors, in Barariya, there are 19 households, in Bhupatipally, there are 77 households and in Chotabakad, there are only 02 households.

The study areas are foothill areas of Chotanagpur, surrounded by jungle. According to 2011 Census the total Birhor population in those four villages is 333.

V. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE “BIRHOR”

The term “Birhor” is derived from two words “bir”, meaning forest and “hor”, meaning man. Thus epistemologically they are the man of forest dweller. The Birhors are the least known jungle tribe of nomadic type of Chotanagpur plateau. From there, they migrated to the other places and were recently found in Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. The Birhors are aboriginals, wandering, simple, shy, forest-dwelling people. Earlier they lived in leaf-huts and rope-making was their traditional economic activity. The society is closed in nature. They are of very poor economy and earlier in the British period, they were often accused of cannibalism of their near relatives for food.

VI. PRESENT DAY CONDITION OF THE BIRHORS IN PURULIA, WEST BENGAL

It is a well known fact that the Government of India has been rendering various policies and programmes for the development of tribal communities to bridge the gap caused by yearlong backlog. More stress has been given on the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. The Birhor in Purulia, West Bengal belongs to this category i.e. PVTG. Many of recent research articles have come up with the conclusion that the life of Birhors has changed due to Governmental intervention.

1. Instead of leaf-hut they are living in concrete houses built under IAY;
2. They have started using sanitary toilet;
3. Kids are going to nearby schools;
4. Male members are doing the job of daily labourer instead of their traditional craft making economy and depending on selling of forest goods.
5. Vocational training is being taken by Birhor youths.
6. Birhor women are doing Self-Help Group works if available to them.
7. They are cultivating small amounts of vegetables in their premises, seeds are provided by BDO Office.
8. Though very little, still they are visiting nearby outdoor hospitals for treatment.
9. The task of electrification has been reported as complete.
10. Making and maintenance of wells for drinking water, distribution of school-bags and stationeries, clothes, seeds, awareness programmes – all these are being rendered continuously by the local administration. These steps have already been able to bring positive changes among them.

VII. GLOOMY SIDE OF THE SCENARIO

1. Electrification has been reported as completed but there is no cable connection made in their houses for household utilities.
2. There is not even *moorum*-road upto Birhor's village and public mode of communication is absent.
3. Because of their absence in the local Panchayat-body, due to low population they are deprived of many facilities from the Panchayat.
4. They are still considered as beneficiaries of various developmental programmes. The transparency regarding auditing and accounting of the fund related to their development is not being maintained by the local administration. No audit report of any particular policy implementation is being displayed in Official website, nor do Offices keep statistical data about that. Thus there is least possibility to assess the degree of Government's concern, actual utilization of fund allotted for them.
5. They are presently taking the job of daily labourer but not being a part of various Governmental schemes meant for them. This has caused their deprivation of "better wage better life" idea.

VIII. MEASURE TO OVERCOME

After this investigation on the condition of Birhors of Purulia district, the researcher comes to the conclusion with some remedies:

- ⇒ Establishment of educational institution starting from elementary to higher study in the adjacent areas of their locality to increase the literacy level.
- ⇒ System of definite job settlement after completion of certain level of education to make the, interested in taking part in formal education.
- ⇒ Setting up of legal provision to provide them the opportunity to be a part of Panchayat and other benefits from Gram Panchayat. This will further provide a scope of interaction and assimilation.
- ⇒ Maintenance of transparency regarding details of Governmental Policies, Programmes and Schemes and both Financial and Physical Audit.
- ⇒ Starting of vocational training designed according to their utility and interest.
- ⇒ Simple, soft, humble and ethical presentation of the taskforce and implementation of various Governmental schemes.

- ⇒ Engagement of Birhor people in the process of implementation of various policies and programmes instead of deploying them as labourers or workers from outside. The researcher is of the opinion that the developmental expenditure incurred in implementing various schemes in those areas should be directed towards creating employment opportunity for the community only.
- ⇒ The assessment of the utility of the policy implementation to comprehend next requirement and the degree of goal achievement.
- ⇒ Initiation of skill development programmes for this community.
- ⇒ Development of proper communication system and construction of *moorum*-road upto their village.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The indigenous groups and their distinct culture are the wealth of our nation. The development process should be continued maintaining their self-identity. Development is largely a respective phenomenon as it should be understood by the peculiarities of demand for which the developmental process has been undertaken and it should also secure an ethical implementation of all developmental programmes. Tribal groups in India are separate from each other by their culture, livelihood, dialects, customs and societal system. Thus need of each tribal group is different and policies should be made according to their specific needs. Target oriented separate policy making and policy implementation definitely would make the path for inclusive growth wider before long.

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