

Socio-Economic Condition's of Tribal People in West Bengal in Context of Purulia District

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Key Word: socio-economic, West Bengal, Scheduled Tribes, backward, poverty, government.

The term 'class' signifies a form of social stratification. It is defined as stratum of people who share a similar socio-economic status or position. Schedule Castes (SCs) are those estates which were placed at the bottom. In the traditional caste system, usually, they used to perform unclean occupations. So, they were treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made untouchable. There are around 461 Scheduled Tribes in our country. Among them, 75 most backward communities have been identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Most of the Scheduled Tribes today are followers of tribal region, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. As per census of 2011, 40 types of Scheduled Tribe reside in West Bengal and Purulia is the second highest tribal populated district in the state after Jalpaiguri. Tribal societies in Purulia have unique characteristics of their own. They basically live in forested mountainous areas and plateau areas of the district. They have distinct culture, tradition, religion, festival, language and strong ethnic identity. Most of the tribals of Purulia district being of Proto-Australoid group, speak in Santhali, Gond and Kheria language. Five major tribal communities in Purulia are Santhal (60%), Bhumi (18%), Sabar (7%), Munda (6%), Bihor (1%). On the basis of ecology, occupational pattern and lifestyle, tribes of this district can be classified into 4 categories –

1. Primitive tribe: - These tribal groups completely depend on nature for their survival, main occupation of these groups being hunting, fishing, gathering, collecting woods from forest. These tribal groups prefer to keep themselves isolated from modern civilized world.

2. Semi-tribal: - These tribal community has settled down in a small villages and agriculture is their main occupation to sustain.

3. Semi integrated: - This group is found in rural and semi-urban areas and is engaged in small and cottage industries.

4. Completely integrated: - This group of tribal people live in urban areas and had adopted the modern culture and values in their life.

Purulia is the most backward and underdeveloped district in West Bengal. Basic feature of the tribal people of this district is poverty. Poverty is not the sole enemy of the tribal people, they are exploited in various ways by the non-tribals. They always live under a constant threat of violence, torture, oppression, molestation, atrocity and aggression. Moreover, they are exploited by money lenders, contractors and government officials. Purulia is one of the most backward district of West Bengal in terms of poverty, education and health. Poverty is a common feature of this dry land. Agriculture production is very low in Purlia because of shortage of rainfall and industry is not flourished properly. Maoist insurgency is one of the most important factors for under development of this region. For more than a decade Maoist activities were extremely in operation in this region and due this entire district of Purulia is suffered and deprived of economic and education. The imperialist intervention in peripheral zone of the tribal people has made a drastic change in self-reliance tribal economic system. Tribal - literacy rate in West Bengal in 2011, total 57.92%, male 68.16% and female 47.71%. In Purulia district tribal literacy rate in 2011, total 53.86%, male 67.84% and female 39.77%. The socio-cultural ignorant attitudes have burdened the people with poverty which proves to be great hindrance to the development of education in the district. It is considered to be luxurious for the parents

to send their children to school rather they send to work, so they can support their family to counter their poverty. Lack of adequate schools in tribal areas affects educational enhancement in Purulia. In the name of development thousands of trees are being cut down, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation resulting in deforestation. The indigenous people have not been benefited from the developmental projects, while main stream societies have prospered at their expense, pushing them deeper in poverty trap. Deforestation, rapid urbanisation and over exploitation of nature have greatly influenced tribal socio economic lives and compelled them to find out other sources of employment other than their traditional forest based economy. They are engaged in construction, industries, daily workers, domestic workers in house- holds, driver, daily labourer, cook for mid-day meal etc. Now with the introduction of the project of MGNREGA they have got an opportunity to get guaranteed work with good remuneration. Neo imperial intervention has slowly but steadily not only influenced the tribal socio-economic status but forced them to adopt modern culture and technology and depend on capitalism.

'Growth with social Justice' has been the basic objective of the development planning in India since independence. At the beginning of the First Five Year Plan, half of the Indian population was living below the poverty line, 80% of which lived in the rural areas. This problem was further aggravated by disparities that existed among the states, between men and women and among various social groups. The magnitude of poverty and disparities that existed between different social groups necessitated planned state intervention to provide succour and relief to millions reeling under poverty, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised social groups, such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes, women, children, the physically handicraft and the disabled. To deal with this problem of poverty in the country, there have been sustained efforts through government intervention over the plan period. No doubt the country has made a significant stride in many areas including improvement on a range of human development indicators and noticeable achievements in the area of poverty alleviation. The point of concern however it that, over a quarter of the world's poor are still concentrated in India. The first such initiative is the community development

programme started in 1952. The programme aimed at integrated development at the local level through cooperation of people and convergence of technical knowledge in various fields. The 1970's is a significant decade in this context. Many new programmes including the Rural Works Programme (RWP), the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), the Dessert Development Programme (DDP), the Food for Work Programme (FWP) etc. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was the first major self-employment programme which started operating during 1978-79. The IRDP there were few allied/sub-programmes namely TRYSEM, DWCRA, Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY). Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) stated as the single self-employment programme for the rural poor.

- To find out the socioeconomic conditions of tribal people, it has been observed that workforce participation rate among the tribal is 43.2%, which is higher than non-tribal people (39.7%). The concentration of the cultivators and agricultural labourers are maximum in southern part of the study area. In contrast, the north-eastern parts have a higher concentration household industrial workers and other services. As a whole the maximum number of working populations in the district belongs agricultural labourers and other workers.
- Nowadays, the tribal people are approaching non-firm-based livelihood strategies, particularly construction, factory and agricultural labourers. Remarkably the share Christian tribals in 'self-employed' and 'other sources' for earning a livelihood shows a little higher compared to non-Christian tribals.
- A land is regarded as a vital asset to every household. Landless or a small quantity of land (26%) make tribal people insecure for their livelihood. Those households who possess a good number and greater combination of livestock are in a better position in the context of livelihood security.
- From the district's southern and northern blocks, the amount of land area under moderate and dense forest has been decreased remarkably. Most of the inhabitants in the villages including the tribal community are depended on firewood for cooking purposes instead of LPG or coal due to lack of their buying capacity. The commercial extraction

of natural resources has both negatively and positively impacted the tribal livelihood, but negative impact is considered more pervasive. Bandwan Gp, Dighi GP, Kumari GP have benefited from the commercialization of cultivation a lot of owing to good irrigation, using chemical fertilizer and HYV seeds. Moreover, because of lack of education and awareness tribals are exploited in the whole process of commercialization by the hands of private and government agents most of the time.

- One of the major problems with tribal people is low standard lifestyle. Because most of the tribal people depends on agriculture and hunting for their livelihood and their agriculture system is most primitive mainly subsistence farming. Further, less fertile soil, scarcity of water and harsh temperature have obstructed the progress of agriculture in the district. Primitive occupational structure, superstitious belief and conservative society add to their backwardness. But globalization has vastly impacted in the development tribal people in Purulia district. The study reviews the socioeconomic conditions of the backward segment of the population of the district where 18.45 percent of its total population belongs to schedule tribe. The outcome of this study will help the central and state governments to formulate definite policies and to design effective strategies to address the needs of the tribal people.

CONCLUSION

There are lots of governmental facilities and provisions for the tribe. But it is observed that they lack the awareness about these facilities. Besides, the steps of availing different governmental facilities should be simplified so that they can access those facilities easily without being puzzled with the complex steps of government schemes. The government assistance for the tribal people should not be in quantitative term only, rather focus should be laid on qualitative supports. Providing scholarship and material supports are not enough for educational development of them, rather focus should be laid on providing quality education, similarly seat reservation in education in education or job is not enough, rather

steps should be taken to increase their efficiency so that they can avail these provisions.

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