

THE CASE OF SAURIA PAHARIA IN JHARKHAND: SOME DISCOMFORTING FACTS ABOUT PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUPS ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION.....



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(Key issues: Declining population, Abysmally Low Literacy, Ineffective Public Delivery System, Lack of Medical Facilities, Deforestation, Mining, Minimal Reach of Social Sector Programs)

The Forgotten Land and Bitter Truth of Development

There are eight types of Primitive Tribal Group in Jharkhand. As per census of India 2001 total population of Primitive Tribal Groups in Jharkhand were 61,121. But Census 2011 has come up with a figure of 46,222. Within a decade their population got reduced by 14,899.

Government is satisfied by classifying them as 'Endangered'. But, going by the experience of local civil society and Social activists efforts to save the endangered are far from what



required bringing in a sustainable impact. While this matter was very clear from census 2011, there have been minimal ripples in Administrative and Political front.

It is in this context out that our team took up an exploratory survey covering 8 Sauria Paharia villages in Sundarpahari Block of Jharkhand. At one point of time this clan (Sauriya Paharia) used to rule Santhal Pargana. They were the First to challenge Britishers. When Britishers could not win them, they took help of Santhal Tribe to push them up the hills from battle fields. Their Fighting continues. To our amazement, they are now probably fighting an unequal battle against



EXTINCTION.

Schemes don't ride Hills:

Paharia took shelter up in the lap of the hills of Santhal Pargana to save their life. They are living in these hills and Jungle for

the last 200 years. They are living and dying there. Billions of Rupees have been spent on schemes to save them since independence.

However, it appears that these money and Schemes could not travel the slope. Badlao Foundation, a Civil Society organization is working in Santhal Pargana Region for last thirty years. A study was commenced by Social Research wing of Foundation, Badlao institute of Training and Management (BITM) in Paharia Villages of Godda District has come up with these findings. The study was led by well known sociologist Prof. Manohar Lal from A N Sinha Institute, Patna.

Jharkhand is a State dominated by Tribal Groups. Underdevelopment of Tribal Group was a long standing political issue since Independence



that ultimately led to creation of Separate Jharkhand State. On 15th of November, 2000 Jharkhand was declared as a new state by the then NDA Government. Since

then Chief Minister from tribal Groups led the state continuously for Fourteen Years. Representatives of Tribal Groups occupied important positions of Tribal Welfare Minister, Departmental Secretary and Director on regular basis. Every year an amount of Rs. 5.00 Crore is allocated in annual budget to save these Primitive Tribal Groups. However it appears that this



investment failed to make desirable impact to the targeted community.

While officials and elected representatives sustained and prospered, situation of the Primitive Tribal groups continued to decline. Pre Election Asset declaration by the political representatives belonging to the area would show that individuals with net worth less than thousand

have overnight turned into Multi Millionaire and Billionaire in a period of Five years. And, thanks to the development intervention number of Sabars got attenuated by 261 while those for Sauriya Paharia got attenuated by 14899. And even after three years of Census, there has been no effort from the Government to investigate the truth.

Talking About Exploitation:

We need to also keep in mind that serial exploitation of huge natural resources including Hills, Forest and minerals belonging to primitive tribal groups by Miners, traders and business community adds to the wound. One can easily observe that incidence of Mal Nutrition, Under-Weight, Under Height and anaemic patients are highest in this community. Falling Trees, Dried up water Sources and productive lands being taken the community finds it difficult to manage their life and livelihood.

Secretary of Badlao Foundation and BITM, Mr. Bajrang Singh in of the opinion that while in most of electoral speech tribal Groups finds majority of time share, there is no practice of participation and Demand Generation in scheduled budget making exercise of the state. In majority of the cases Role of Gram Sabha is far more ritualistic than practical. As a result, either scheme does not reach to the intended community.

Even and Odds of Development:

Few Key Indicators	Country Average For India	State Average For Jharkhand	Average For PTGs
Literacy Percentage (2011)	74.04	67.63	16.87
Population Growth Percentage	17.64	22.34	-24.38
Sex Ratio	940	947	1016 (Studied Villages only)
Individual Household Latrine	32.70(Rural)	8.3	0.00 (Studied Villages only)

We remember that First Government led by Mr. Babulal Marandi, declared a policy to appoint PTGs in Government job on the basis of production of certificate of Matriculation and above only in line of Shri Lalu Prasad Yadav. However, this declaration did not reach to the Hills for years. Since the time few of them came to know about it, they are tired of visiting offices. We mention a recent incident.

During the last October (2015), Honourable minister of Labour and Employment visited Chaibasa. A Highly qualified youth belonging to PTGs urged Honourable Minister for a suitable job, else he would join Naxalites. This represents a dominant and evolving trend. While proven cases of people joining extremist factions are still very low, certainly there is a section of educated youth who are explore options with extremist factions once rejected by the mainstream employment options due to inert and inept behaviour officials.

Our study highlights the acute crisis of potable water in the villages. Families living in these villages use to fetch water from a stream located at a distance of three Kilo Meter. There is very limited connectivity. So, attendance of School teacher and Medical Staffs remains low. There is high incidence of Kalajar and Malaria. Similarly, higher incidence of New borne Child death and lower life expectancy is reported. Literacy rate of Male and female belonging to the villages are 3% and 5% respectively. It takes a complete day for the households to bring 35 KG Food Grains available through the Antodaya Scheme to their village.

Political Democracy and the Way ahead:

The case of primitive Tribal Groups and their exploitation has never become an issue. They are too low in number to influence electoral politics. There is possibility that even with best of intentions at the policy level, service delivery through Democratic institutions would really succeed in near future.

It is in this respect that noted Social Activists and Scholars like Govind Jee Sharma and Harishwar Dayal from Institute of Human

Development opined that Government should immediately come up with a detailed status report cum special economic package to be delivered in close consultation with active and long standing Civil Society organizations engaged with Primitive Tribal Groups in their respective locations.

The interventions shall be built around reinvention of Local Governance Institutions and provisioning of Drinking Water, Sanitation, Medical Services, Alternative Energy, Quality Education, Land Settlement, Public Distribution System, Farm and Forest based Livelihood Systems through qualified and sensitive human resource support who wish to stand up personally and professionally for the cause.

We request National and State Government to take immediate Note of the Situation and place a specialized team of experts to prepare a comprehensive development plan for Sauria Paharia and other Primitive Tribal Group on the Verge of extinction.

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