

Dynamics of Tribal Economy: A Study on a Primitive Tribal Group (Birhor) of West Bengal

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Abstract

During Fifth Plan period Birhor has been identified as a Primitive Tribal Group. Birhor, particularly their economy is still in transitional mode. Their transformation in educational achievements since last few decades lead their transformation in economic activities (occupational pattern). These transformations has been gradually strengthening their economic power also. As a result, steadily but gradually their communicational network has been widening and they are being able to scattered themselves in different occupations for earning their livelihood which has been leading towards the continuous change in the economic life of this Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (Primitive Tribal Group). Accordingly, their willingness to invest more effort in education is in increasing trend. Thus, the economic strength, literacy attainment and occupational proficiency of the Bihors have been moving in cyclic order with the same direction. The all concerned should take special care of this Primitive Tribal Group during this transitional phase.

Key Words: *Education brings economic power and in turns economic power accelerates education*

1. Introduction

There are 38 scheduled tribes as recorded in the 2001 census of the state (West Bengal). Among them, only three tribes have been considered as Primitive Tribal Group. They are Birhor, Lodha and Toto.

The Shilu Ao committee had constituted by the Planning Commission in 1969 for reviewing the tribal situation in India. They had observed that a large number of

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tribal communities continued to be extremely backward and some of them were still in primitive food gathering stage. These tribal groups are given a name of “Primitive Tribal Groups”. Initially, the following three criteria have been followed for identification of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).

- (i) Pre- agricultural level of technology.
- (ii) Low level of literacy.
- (iii) A stagnant or diminishing population.

On the basis of these three criteria, state Government identified and proposed the names of tribal groups to the Government of India and by examining these proposals Government of India identified 52 scheduled Tribe communities of 13 states and one Union Territory as Primitive Tribal Groups. During the Sixth Plan period additional 20 scheduled tribe communities were identified as Primitive Tribal Groups. Later, some more tribal groups are identified as Primitive Tribal Groups. At present seventy five tribal groups are identified as Primitive Tribal Groups. Though, presently they are renamed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

It is suggested that as the problems and needs of these Primitive Tribal Groups are quite different from other scheduled tribes and are the most vulnerable among tribal groups, they are in great need of priority to be accorded to their protection and development. As these tribal groups are in a very poor state of economy, a separate special Central Assistance is provided to the states for their development.

In West Bengal, the Totos are concentrated in North Bengal and other two tribes viz. Birhor and Lodha are concentrated in western part of West Bengal, popularly the tracts are known as JungleMahal. This account is an attempted to assess the socio-economic changes of the Birhors inhabiting in the forest and hill fringe areas of West Bengal during last few decades.

2. Socio- Economic and Cultural Profile of Birhor

The name ‘Birhor’ includes the word ‘Bir’ which means jungle and ‘Hor’ which indicates man .So the word meant jungle man. Birhors, jungle men or foresters, woodman or chop cutters as he name signifies are found to live in the hilly areas of central and eastern India, namely Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar (Jharkhand) and West Bengal. They are known as “Birhut” in Madhya Pradesh and “Birhor” in Bihar (Jharkhand) “Mankari” in Orissa and in West Bengal, they are known as ‘Sikari’. The distinct traits of nomadism are quite evident today particularly amongst ‘the Uthulu’ section. The other sections, have accepted settled life called them ‘Jhanghi’. In the Purulia district of West Bengal they are settled in different blocks. It has also been learnt that they generally have close contact with Birhor living in Ranchi, Hazaribag, Chandil, district of Jharkhand.

The earlier scholars presented much information about the Birhor. Of them E.T.Dalton (1872), L.R. Forbes (1872), H.H. Risley (1891), S.C. Roy (1925) may specially be mentioned. Col. Dalton wrote that “the Birhors are generally found in the hilly and jungle areas and they are supposed to be allied to the Kharias”.

L.R. Fobes wrote "The Birhors are the earlier settlers in the hilly and jungle areas in Chhotonagpur. They are numerous in number at Palamou. Birhor are foresters but they are very gentle and timid in nature. They do not have any knowledge in cultivation. They are food gatherers and hunters". Risely described Birhor as 'Woodman'. He wrote "the Birhors prefer to live in leaf made hut and depend upon hunting and gathering activities." S.C. Roy in the year 1925 published a complete Monograph about the Birhor of Ranchi.

In the year 1971, Nirmal Kumar Basu in his book (in Bengali) "Bharater upajati jiban" wrote that Birhor is a nomadic tribe who lives in the hilly areas of Chhotonagpur. Some Birhor are also found in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar areas of Orissa. In Orissa they are called "Makharkhiya Kulha". They prefer to eat monkey and use to sell their skins, which are generally used as covering of Drum or Tom-Tom (Madal) i.e. Musical instrument of the tribes. L.R. Forbes wrote (1872) that though the Birhor are wild, they are very harmless race. They are to be found living only on the tops and spurs of the hills, cultivating absolutely nothing and living exclusively on monkeys, birds, jungle roots and herbs. These people are very clever at monkey catching.

Sarat Chandra Roy wrote in the year 1925 in his book "The Birhors" -The hills and Jungles that fringe the Chhotanagpur plateau on its east and north-east, form the principal home of the Birhors. This line of hills runs from the Ramgarh Thana in the Hazaribagh district on the north along the Ormanjhi, Angara, Ranchi, and Bundu thanas on the east of the Ranchi plateau up to beyond the Tamar Thana which marks the south-eastern limit of the Ranchi district. Here and there in these hills and jungles extending roughly over an area of over seventy miles in length and twenty miles in breadth, the Birhors move about either in small scattered communities snaring monkeys, tracking hare, deer or other game and collecting rope fibers, honey and bees wax, or camp in tiny leaf-huts making rude wooden vessels and plaiting ropes and weaving them into hunting-nets and carrying nets. Several groups of Birhors are also met with beyond the north-eastern margin of the plateau into the jungles and hills further north in the Hazaribagh district north of the Damodar, where they muster strong, and a few scattered groups have strayed into the Manbhum district (Now Purulia W.B.) on the east and in to the Singhbhum district on the South.

In the Purulia district Birhor speak among themselves in their own language. They have no script. They can understand Bengali well. They can speak with the Santals in a mixed language of Santali and Birhorsi. It has also been learnt that many Munda words and some Santali words are infused in their dialect 'Birhors'.

The principal deities of the Birhors besides Singbonga are the Creator, and Devi Mai or the Earth goddess. For the supreme God Sing bonga, there is no special season or special ritual for sacrificing to him. When some serious calamity threatens or visits to a family, the head of the family with his face turned to the east and offers a white fowl or white goat to him and prays for the restoration of peace and happiness of the

family. A white fowl is also offered to him by the Naya on the Occasion of the annual sangi-puja for the protection of the tanda (Tanda means local group of Birhor families and Naya means the headman of this group) from harm. Devi ma and others Mother-Goddesses also received sacrifices at the sangi- puja besides special offerings to avert some special calamity.

Consumption of liquor is the traditional habit of the tribal people and the Birhors are of no exception.

In earlier days, the marital age of the Birhors was 16 years to 18 years for male and 11 years for female. Birhors marriage, monogamy is always preferred but there is no taboo for polygamy. Widows are permitted for remarriage.

3. Data Base and Methodology

The Birhors are the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and their socio-economic status is not so advanced in compare to the Santal and Munda etc. communities. The Birhors, they are only concentrated in three adjacent blocks of Purulia district viz. Balarampur, Bagmundi and Jhalda-I. The study had been conducted in the block areas of Bagmundi, Jhalda -I and Balarampur in Purulia district.

3.1. Sample Design: Five villages from three blocks of Purulia district viz. Bagmundi, Balarampur and Jhalda-1 have been selected for sample study for Birhor tribal community. These five villages have high concentration of Birhors. From each village almost all households have been selected for constitution the sample for the study of the socio-economic condition of this scheduled tribe.

Table-1: The Brief Sketch of the Study Area

Purulia District		
Bagmundi Block	Balarampur Block	Jhalda -I Block
Village	Village	Village
Bhupatipally Baredi Bareria	Bersa	Chhota Bhagat

3.2. Sources of Data: The data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources.

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

3.2.2. 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 , Government of West Bengal.

4. Objectives of the Study

During 1989-90 a socio-economic survey was conducted by the Cultural Research Institute (BCW department, GOVT. of W.B.) among the Birhors of Purulia district in Bagmundi, Balarampur and Jhalda-I block areas. This institute published the findings of the study in 1991. In course of time 2000-2001 another study had been conducted on the Birhors of the same areas by the Cultural Research Institute to measure the changes of the socio-economic status of the said tribe during last decade. A parallel study has been conducted by us on the Birhors of the same areas in the year 2010 aimed at to assess the decadal changes of the socio-economic life of this Primitive Tribal Group. Here, decadal changes have been examined taking the previous studies as the base line.

5. Analysis and Interpretations

The data collected and arranged for the particular purpose hints at the following things:

5.1. Analysis of Changes in the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Birhor Community in the Study Areas

It is observed from census data that the Birhors in West Bengal is concentrated in Purulia (as per 1991 census report- 31.70%) district. It is remarkable to note from different surveys that the concentration of Birhors is noticed only in three Blocks of Purulia district. These are Bagmundi, Balarampur and Jhalda-I block. This nomadic primitive tribal folk were preferred to live in the inaccessible forest and hill areas of Purulia district and also preferred to live leaf huts. The main source of livelihood of this Primitive Tribal Group was the natural resources of forest and hill. The Government of West Bengal has been initiating various developmental programmes and welfare activities time to time to develop their socio-economic status. During 1990-91 and 2001-02 two socio-economic studies were conducted by the Cultural Research Institute (an organization of Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of West Bengal) on the Birhors of Purulia district. The studies were conducted in Bhupatipally, Bareriya and Baredi in Bagmundi Block, Bersa in Balarampur block and Chhota Bhagat of Jhalda - I Block. A study was also conducted by us on the Birhors in the same villages during 2010 to assess the socio-economic changes among this Primitive Tribal Group. The following table reflects the total households and population covered during different studies.

Table 2: Households and Total Population Covered during Three Studies

1990-91(CRI)		2001-02(CRI)		2010 (Our Study)	
Households	Total Population	Households	Total Population	Households	Total Population
61	217	71	258	80	282

Sources: (i) Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. Of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002, (ii) Field Study (2010)

5.2. Analysis of Changes in the Social Conditions (Educational Achievement) of the Birhor Community

To assess the impact of various educational schemes on Birhors three studies were conducted (two by CRI and one by us) in the Purulia District during 1990 to 2010. The following table reflects the comparative analysis on literacy rates and educational achievement of the Birhors inhabiting in Purulia district during last three decades i.e. in the course of 1990 to 2010.

Table 3: Percentage of Literate and Educational Achievements of the Birhors Inhabiting in Purulia District during Last Three Decades

year	Primary	Middle	Secondary	College (Post-Secondary -level)	Total Literacy including Informal Education	Informal Education	Total Literacy excluding Informal Education
1990-91	18.02	2.91	-	-	24.42	3.49	20.93
2001-02	23.98	-	0.90	-	32.58	7.69	24.89
Increase	5.96	-	0.90	-	8.16	4.20	3.96
2010	28.09	16.86	2.24	2.25	-	-	49.44

Sources: (i) *Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002,* (ii) *Field Study (2010).*

It is observed from the above table that the literacy rate has been increased 3.96% in the course of time 1990-91 to 2001-02 whereas this percentage has been increased by 24.55% i.e. from 24.89% to 49.44% during 2001-02 to 2010. It is also observed that their enrolment in middle school is significantly increased i.e. from 2.91% to 16.86% during 1990-91 to 2010. It also observed that a few percentages of the Birhors (2.25%) in our study area has enrolled their names for college level education (Higher Secondary Level).

5.3. Analysis on Age-Group Wise Educational Achievements of Birhors as per Our Study (2010)

The following table reflects the age-group wise educational achievements of Birhors inhabiting in our study area.

Table 4: Age-Group Wise Distribution of Educational Achievements of Birhors in the Study Area

Age Groups	Literate	Illiterate	Pre-primary & primary level	Secondary level	College level (post-secondary level)
0-5	-	-	25.00	-	-
6-15	100.00	-	100.00	-	-
16-55	47.27	52.73	27.27	16.36	3.64
56 and Above	07.70	92.30	07.70	-	-

Source: *Field Study*

From the above analysis on the educational achievement of the Birhors the following points emerges.

a) During 1900-91 to 2001-02, the literacy rate among Birhors in our study area has been increased by 3.96%, whereas 2001-02 to 2010 the literacy rate among Birhors increased by 24.55%. In above 55 years of age, a large number of Birhors (92.30%) are still remain illiterates.

b) During 1990-91, 18.02% Birhors achieved primary level education and that was increased to 23.98 % in 2001-02. From 1990-91 to 2001-02 the Primary level education among Birhors of Purulia increased by 5.96 %. But, during our study it was observed that cent percent of 6-15 years age group children of Birhor community enrolled their names in Primary level Schools. In the age group 16 to 55 years, 27.27% achieved primary level education. Above 55 years age, only 07.70 % achieved Primary level Education.

c) In course of time 1990-91, none achieved secondary level education and only 0.90% achieved secondary level education during 2001-02. In our study it was found that 16.36% enrolled or achieved secondary level education. Thus, a significant number of Birhors are now within the preview of secondary level education. The said Percentage increased by 15.46% during last decades.

d) During 1990-91 to 2001-02, none of total Birhor community had achieved college level education. But, in 2010 a very little proportion of Birhors entered in to the college campus (Higher Secondary Level). In my study it was found that a very few Birhor youth Passed madhyamik level education recently and enrolled their name for post madhyamik level education. Obviously, it is a very bright sign of the development in context to education of this Primitive Tribal Group.

e) From the above table it is found that only 25% children in the age group of 0-5 years enrolled in any Anganwadi centre (Pre-primary school). Thus, it is evident that a significant proportion i.e. 75% are still beyond the Anganwadi Centers and naturally they are still deprived from pre-primary level education and others benefits.

5.4. Analysis of Changes in the Economical Conditions of the Birhor Community

To assess the changes in economic conditions of this Primitive Tribal Group we throw light on the changes in occupational pattern and changes in income pattern.

5.4.1. Assessment of Changes in the Occupational Pattern of Birhor Community

Once the Birhors of Purulia district leads nomadic life but presently they are settled in different villages. Consequently, it is anticipated that their occupational pattern during last three decades has been changed. In this context, the CRI (Cultural Research Institute, BCW department, govt. of W.B.) conducted two studies in 1990-91 and 2001-02 to assess the impact of different developmental programmes on the

socio- economic life of this Primitive Tribal Group. It is fact that the Birhors mainly belonged to Pre-agricultural economy i.e. their economy revolves around hunting, collection and gathering of forest produces.

The two studies of Cultural Research Institute reflect their occupational pattern during 1990 to 2002. In 2010; a study was done by us to see the impact of different developmental programmes on the occupational pattern of this Primitive Tribal Group. A comparative chart on the change in occupational pattern of the Birhors is given below.

Table 5: Comparative Chart of Occupations of Birhor Community

Year	Primary Source	Secondary Source
1990-91	Rope making	Cultivation, Day labouring job, Animal Husbandry, Contract labour, Collection and Hunting of forest produces.
2001-02	Agricultural day labouring job	Cultivation ,Rope making ,Animal Husbandry ,Lac cultivation ,Contract labour+brick field worker, Collection and hunting.
2010	Daily Wage Labourer and Agricultural day labouring job	Rope making, Forest Produces collection, Craftsmanship, Casual worker in Govt. School, SHG Motivator, Agriculture.

Sources: (i) *Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002*, (ii) *Field Study (2010)*.

It is observed from the above table that the Birhors has been diversified from their traditional rope- making activity to agricultural day labouring jobs during cultivation period and rest of the year daily wage laboring jobs as primary source of income in course of time 1990-91 to 2010. It is also observed that they became gradually efficient labour for brick fields, construction works etc. during this period. At present, they are working in different organization as casual worker. They are now formed self-help group for their own economic development. It is also observed that a few of them are engaged in craftsman profession. The following table reflects the detail occupational pattern of Birhors as per our study (2010).

Table 6: Distribution of Sex-Wise Occupational Pattern of the Birhors

Occupations	% on Total Male	% on Total Female
1. Forest Produces Collection - Rope making - Agri. Labourer- Wage Labourer.	22.92	5.88
2. House wife - Rope making	-	25.49
3. Wage Labourer	18.75	-
4. Forest Produces Collection - Rope Marking	16.67	15.68

5. Craftsman	2.08	-
6. Casual worker in Govt.School - Agriculture	2.08	-
7. Casual worker in school	-	3.92
8. Student	20.83	21.58
9. Rope -making	-	19.61
10.SHG Motivator- Rope making	2.08	-
11.Unemployed	14.59	7.84
<i>Total</i>	100.00	100.00

Source: Our Field Study (2010)

It is observed from the above table that a large number of Birhors are engaged themselves in various economic activities throughout the years to subsist. It is evident that the tribal's economy is multi-dimensional i.e. the tribal's depends on various economic activities for subsistence. Most of the Birhors are still depend on their traditional occupation i.e. forest produce collection and produce rope from "Chihorlata" and other creepers. Along with these traditional activities, they also performed agriculture work as agricultural day labour in neighborhood areas. Particularly, in Bengali calendar month viz. Asar, Shraban, Aghrahasan, Pous, Magh they involved themselves in agricultural work as a day labour and rest of the month they involved themselves in labouring job as day wage labour in local or neighboring areas in different types of job as per opportunities available to them. It is observed that only males are engaged solely on daily labouring jobs and 18.75% Birhors in our study area are wage labourer.

A large number of females involved them in agricultural work as a day labour during paddy cultivation period and rest of the month they involved themselves in labouring job as day wage labour in local or neighboring areas in different types of job as per opportunities available to them.

A large number of females are (19.61%) involved themselves solely on rope making activity along with routine 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 (male-16.67% & female-15.68%) collect forest produces like honey, tuber, wood and also creeper from nearby forests. They also prepare rope from creeper like chihorlata, jute, babui grass and nylon at home. They sell these forest products to middlemen and neighbours through local market. It is observed that the nylon which they presently started to use as raw material to make rope most of the times supplied by the middlemen.

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

From the above table it is observed that a significant number of Birhors are unemployed. The proportion of male unemployed is double in compare to female unemployed (male-14.59% & female-7.84%).

The following findings have been emerged in context to above analysis on the occupational pattern of Bihors in our study area.

a) It is observed that the occupational pattern of Birhors in our study area has been diversified from their traditional occupation (Rope Making) to other occupations especially like agricultural labour, daily wage labour and other jobs during 1990-91 to 2010. It is observed that their skilled in different jobs has been gradually improving. In 2010, it was found that they were started to adopting other occupations like craftsmanship, SHG motivator and casual worker in govt. organization along with day labouring jobs. Though the proportion is very small those who are able to scattered themselves in these types occupation. Nevertheless, the economy of this Primitive Tribal Group is now in transitional mode i.e. from forest based economy to other economic activities.

b) From the three studies, it is observed that the Birhors has been very slowly adopting agriculture as a source of livelihood .A very few percentage of them are doing agriculture on their own agricultural land. Most of them are engaged themselves as agricultural labourer in the other communities 'agricultural field during cultivation period.

c) Still remarkable percentage of Birhor is engaged in collection of forest produces and rope- making for subsistence. Particularly a significant number of female of this community still earns money through rope making.

5.4.2. Assessment of Changes in the Income Pattern of Birhors Inhabiting in Our Study Area

Government has been initiating different types of developmental programmes aimed at the increase of income level of this Primitive Tribal Group. The cultural Research Institute conducted two Studies in 1990-91 and 2001-02 to assess the impacts of these programmes. Simultaneously, a study was also conducted by us in the same area in 2010 on the Birhors to account the impact of different developmental programmes. The following table reflects the annual income in 1990-91 and 2001-02 of Birhors families as per CRI studies.

Table 7: Distribution of Annual Income of Birhor Families in 1990-91

Annual Income (Rs.)	No of Families`
1000-2000	32 (51.61%)
2001-3000	24(38.71%)
3001-4000	06 (9.68%)
<i>Total</i>	62 (100%)

Sources: Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. Of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002

Table 8: Distribution of Annual Income of Birhor Families in 2001-02

Annual Income (Rs.)	No. of Families`
Below 5000	17 (23.94%)
5000-10,000	42(59.61%)
10,000-15,000	11 (15.49%)
Above 15,000	01 (1.41%)
Total	71 (100%)

Sources: Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002

From the above tables some important findings emerge. These are:

- a) The number of families under lower income range had been decreased in 2001-02 as compared with the number of families in 1990-91.
- b) During 1990-91, the number of families under middle income ranges was 48.39%; whereas the said proportion increased to 75% in the year 2001-02. It may easily be said that the economic conditions of these Bihors has been gradually improving in the course of 1990-91 to 2001-02.
- c) From the above analysis of these two studies of Cultural Research Institute, it is observed that a significant number of Bihors of the study area except one Bihor of Bhupatipally are ceaselessly struggling with poverty.

Table 9: Average Annual Income of Birhor Family as per Studies of C.R.I. in the Year 1990-91 & 2001-02

Year	No. of Families	Total Annual Income (Rs.)	Average Annual per Family Income (Rs.)
1990-91	62	1,20,528=00	1944=00
2001-02	71	5,85,678=00	8249=00

Sources: Bulletin, Cultural Research Institute, Backward Classes Welfare Department, Govt. of W.B., Volume xxi, Special Issue: 2002

The average annual income of per family had been increased more than four times in between 1990-91 to 2001-02. It proves that the average income of Bihor had been increasing rapidly. As per our study, the Per-capita monthly incomes of the Bihors are as follows:

Table 10: Distribution of per-capita Monthly Income of Bihors in the Study Area (2010)

Per-Capita Monthly Income Groups (Rs.)	Percentage of Total Population of Bihors	
0 -333.00	Below Poverty Level	13.73
334.00-500.00	Poverty Level	22.55
501.00 - 700.00	Tolerance Level	10.78
701.00 -1500.00		50.00
1501.00-2500.00		02.94

2501.00 & above	Moderate Level	Nil
Total		100.00

Source: Field Study (2010)

In order to determine per-capita monthly income of a family, the total monthly income of a family has been divided by the total number of family members. For a fruitful analysis of economic position of individuals, four levels have been determined as the yard stick. These are below poverty level, poverty level, tolerance level and moderate level. That whose per-capita monthly income is below Rs.334.00 has been considered as living Below Poverty Level. Those who earn between Rs.334 and Rs.500 have been considered in Poverty Level. Those who earn more than Rs. 500.00 per month but less than Rs.1500 have been considered as if belonging to the Tolerance Level. Individuals earning more than Rs. 1500 come under Moderate Level.

From the above table it is observed that a remarkable proportion of Birhors i.e. 36.28% 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. 60.78% 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 2.94%. Thus, it is apparent that a very few number of Birhor in our study area are maintaining a fair standard of living.

6. Major Findings

From above discourse it is found that some findings arise above us. These are as follows:

- Near about 36% of total Birhor belongs to Poverty Level and Below Poverty Level. Thus, 64% of total Birhors are able get rid of from the clutches of Poverty. It is also observed that more than 60 % of total Population of Birhor now earns more than the average per family annual income of the year 2001-02. Perhaps, the transitional trends in their occupational pattern galvanize their income level steadily.
- It is observed that a few percent Birhor of our study area presently earn more than 18,000.00 but within Rs. 30,000.00 annually. It is also observed that they are engaged in SHG, working in government organizations (casual basis) along with their traditional occupation.

7. Conclusion

Birhor one of the most backward tribe, particularly concentrated in the hill and forest areas of Chottonagpur plateau. In West Bengal they are scattered in the hill and forest areas of Purulia district. As their low literacy rate and belongs to the hunting-gathering stage of economy they have been identified as a Primitive Tribal Group (Particularly vulnerable Tribal Group). It is observed that the Birhors was Primitive stage of economy i.e. they were solely depending on forest produces. They

were collecting creepers like “chihorlata” from nearby forests and making rope through these creepers. Besides, they were also collecting honey, yam etc. and sell it to the nearby market. It is observed from different studies that the dependency propensity on forest produces of the Birhors in our study area has been steadily declined. During the study (1990-1991) of Cultural Research Institute (under Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal) has been observed that the Birhors primarily depends on rope making. They are mainly depends on forest produces at that time. Besides, they have been starting day labouring jobs and cultivation as secondary sources of income. In the course of time 2001-02, the study of CRI reflects quite different picture. Their dependency on forest produces as the primary source of income steadily declined during 1990-1991 to 2000-2001. They have been transited from forest based economy to daily wage based labouring jobs as primary source of income. They were starting to engage themselves as labour to others’ agricultural fields during cultivation period. Besides, they have been transforming to scattered themselves in secondary sector of economy. Though, forest produces are still one of the sources of income of the Birhor families. During our study (2010), it is observed that the Birhors of Purulia primarily depend on labouring jobs. During cultivation period they are engaged in agricultural activities and other times they are engaged themselves in daily wage based labouring jobs. It is also observed that they have been starting to be skilled in different occupation like craftsmanship, worker in government organization etc. Perhaps; they have been standing on another economical juncture i.e. from unskilled to be skilled. It is evident that the occupational pattern of the Birhors of the study area has been transforming from forest based economy towards others jobs in secondary and tertiary sectors of economy. In that course of time, the educational achievement scenario of this Particularly Vulnerable Group (or Primitive Tribal Group) has been gradually changing. An important proportion of youths of this group have been continuing secondary level of education. Recently, a few of them are also passed Madhyamik examination and enrolled their names for college level education. Overall literacy percentage has been increased to double during last two decades in compare to the year 1990-91. Most of the children of the Birhors have been enrolled their names in primary schools. Education is the key catalyst to the development of human resources. Their transformation in educational achievement leads their transformation in economic activities (occupational pattern). These transformations have been gradually strengthening their economic power also. As a result, steadily but gradually their communicational network has been widening and they are being eager to adopt or learn about the other sources of livelihood which has been leading to a continuous transformation in the economic life of this Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (Primitive Tribal Group). Consequently, their willingness to invest more effort in education is in increasing trend. Thus, the economic strength, literacy attainment and occupational proficiency of the Birhors have been moving in cyclic order with the same direction. The all concerned should take special care of this tribal group during this transitional phase.

8. Suggestions

Economic status of a person or a group is determined by the literacy attainment and occupational proficiency. There is an element of feedback as this, in turn, better economic status assure the scope for higher investment on literacy and occupational achievement. Thus, the economic strength, literacy attainment and occupational proficiency move in cyclic order with the same direction. Any dynamic breakthrough on the any parameter out of three definite brings positive changes to others. Nevertheless, the first strike should be bringing on education. At first, motivate guardians to send their children to schools and provide them more incentives to retain them in the school for a long period. To control the dropout rates in secondary section the Government should organize “Parents Motivation Camp” in regular basis as in most of the dropout cases we observed that the parents had an important role to involved them in economic activities in schooling age. Besides formal education, vocational education must be imparted to the Birhor children. Local educated youth from this community should be recruited as teacher in the primary school. Perhaps, they can motivate the Birhor children more efficiently towards education. As they are standing on transitional mode from forest based economy to other sectors of economy, it is the mean time to impart vocational training to the Bihors to direct them towards others occupations.

There are many traditional skills and technologies practiced by scheduled tribe people for generations. The tribal people usually learn these through informal education. Bihors are also well expert in rope making. Generally they use creepers as raw material in rope making which they are collected from the local forests. But, at present they are facing a lot of problems due to scarcity of creepers in the nearby forests. The government should supply synthetic fiber and jute and provide necessary training to revamping the art and turned this traditional skill as a source of income of the Birhor families. Besides, financial support must be stretched to them to develop their traditional skill. Now, Bihors are interested to rear animals like cow, pig, hen, duck etc. The government should initiate special animal husbandry schemes according to their willingness to develop their economic status. Regular vigilance and follow up programme on the every developmental scheme which are aimed at the development of this Primitive Tribe is inevitable. The entire areas where the Bihors are concentrated covered with forests and hills. Ajoydha hill is a well-known spot to tourists is located in this area.

Despite, several places are awaiting to be explored as tourist spots. The Bihors are more familiar to the nearest tourist spots to their living area which are still unknown to tourists. The old age Bihors are illiterate but known better about forests, hills and attractive spots, the periods to tour. Tourist guides occupy an important place in tourism industry. The government may initiate proper steps to impart training to old age Bihors to improve their communicating languages so that they become tourist guides and being an important part of tourism industry. The government should using tourism industry as a strategy for rural tribal development. Lastly, the government should take care of this Primitive Tribal Group because they are in transition.

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