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Impact of Development Programmes upon Tribal People through Grass-Root Democracy in the District of Birbhum – A Study of Ballabhpur Village

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Abstract:

The term 'Panchayati Raj' in India represents the system of rural local self-government and it has been entrenched in all states of India by Acts of state legislatures to build democracy at the grass-roots level. Development is a procedure that changes human life. Successful community development largely consists of selecting those projects where the balance between asperity and change is almost even and then trying to moderate the forces against interchange or increase the components making for change. The Panchayati Raj has been introduced to decentralize scattering of state powers in order to solve the local problems by local leaders. The present paper seeks to establish socio-political identity of the tribal people in general and Ballabhpur village in particular as well as the impact of developmental programs on tribal people through grass-roots democracy. The main motto of this paper is to explain how the local-self-government is changing the status of tribal people and how the developmental programs work through grassroots democracy.

Key words: Panchayati Raj, Grass- root-democracy, Development, Decentralize, Projects

Introduction: In India, tribal people play a pivotal role in constructing the cultural heritage of the country. They encompass a significant part of Indian history as they are depicted as true habitants of the land. They try to protect themselves, both mentally and spiritually by building up a world of their own by means of art and belief. Modernization denotes a model of radical transition from a pre-modern or traditional to a modern society. This model of progressive or liberal transition is related to tribal development. Tribal development efforts has been launched from the perspective of survival issues to acquire significant developmental gains through prolificity enhancement, differentiation in occupation, and less migration, which would lead to higher economic success.

As per the 2011 Census, the tribal population is 104.3 crores, comprising about 8.6 % of the total population of the country. They live in different ecological settings and have

different cultural patterns, a marked differentiation in their economy, social-political organizations and systems of social control can be observed.

Modernizing tradition and its rational approach to social problems, industrial and technological aspects, has its influence on these aboriginal communities too. Employment opportunities and scope of diverse source of income has have made them conscious of modernism, especially in spheres of education and social way of life. Tribal economy basically depends on agriculture. They are also engaged in collecting, hunting, fishing etc. The tribals were mainly dependent on these activities, but at present they have been transformed to a subsidiary occupation. Animal husbandry is not unknown to these people but it plays a minor role now in maintaining the food supply. The higher population density, the loss of land, the need for cash, and exploitation of money lenders forced large number of tribals to abandon their place of origin. Social and political changes resulted in elevation of political and social awareness amongst the tribals, at present they have adopted themselves to a new way of life.

A new series of changes has begun to affect tribal life after vast political and economic improvement especially from and after 1947. They have been constantly affected by the policy initiatives undertaken by the Government of India to help the tribal communities to develop in accordance with their own creative productivity. At present tribal communities are in close contact with non-tribals, especially in the economic sphere.

The objectives of the present study is -

- 1) To explain the Socio-Political identity of the tribal people in general and Ballabhpur village in particular.
- 2) The impact of developmental programmes upon the tribal people through grass-root democracy.
- 3) To study the effect of developmental programmes upon the tribal communities.

Methodology: The present study is exploratory and analytical which is based on intensive field work. Both structured and unstructured method of questionnaire format has been applied and the ontological philosophy and deductive method has been promoted in this study. In the present work Ballabhpur village under Ruppur gram panchayat of Bolpur-Sriniketan block in the district of Birbhum has been selected with regard to specific concentration of tribals in this area.

Primary sources:

- 1) Sample Survey based on random sampling has used to collect the samples from tribal people.
- 2) Unstructured interview Schedules adopted for tribal people.
- 3) Government publications.
- 4) Content analysis of speeches also to be used when and where necessary.

Secondary sources:

- 1) Content analyses of books, journals, periodicals, statistical techniques have been used in the research work.

- 2) Secondary data also collected from internet sources.
- 3) The application of these methods depends upon age, sex, education, religion, rituals, ideas, beliefs, behaviour and practice of the interviewers.

Socio-Political identity of the tribals at Ballabhpur village: Ballabhpur is a large village located in Bolpur Sriniketan block of the Birbhum district, West Bengal. The latitude 23.7672169 and longitude 87.7098723 are the geocoordinates of the village. According to Census 2011, there are 590 families residing in this village. The Ballabhpur village has a population of 2525, of which 1236 are male and 1289 are female. In this village, the population of children aged 0-6 is 253, which covers 10.02 % of the total population of the village. The average sex ratio of the village is 1043, which is higher than the state average of 950. The child sex ratio for Ballabhpur as per census is 977, higher than the state average of 956. Ballabhpur village has a higher literacy rate compared to West Bengal. The literacy rate of Ballabhpur village is 77.68 % compared to 76.26 % in West Bengal. In Ballabhpur, male literacy stands at 86.91 % while female literacy rate is 68.90%. In Ballabhpur village, out of the total population, 1,127 are engaged in work activities. 95.5% of workers describes their work as main work (Employment or earning more than 6 months) while 4.5% are involved in marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 1,127 workers engaged in the main work, 55 are cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 636 are agricultural laborers. As per the constitution of India and Panchyati Raj Act, Ballabhpur village is administrated by a Sarpanch (Head of the village) who is elected representative of the village.

Table No.1
Demographic profile of the tribal majority village Ballabhpur

Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total No. of Houses	590	-	-
Population	2525	1236	1289
Child(0-6)	253	128	125
Literacy	77.68%	86.91%	68.90%
Schedule Caste	514	270	244
Scheduled Tribe	1318	626	692
Illiterate	760	273	487
Total Worker	1127	682	445
Main Worker	1076	661	415
Cultivators	56	42	13
Agriculture	636	330	306

Labourer			
Household Industries	14	12	2
Other Workers	371	277	94
Marginal worker	51	21	30
Non-Working	1398	554	844

Source: Census Report 2011

Article 46 of the Constitution clearly mentions that the state shall take care to protect the educational and financial interests of the weaker sections. It is the responsibility of the state to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. The government has made some progress in this direction. The administration of the country endeavors to protect the interests of the scheduled tribes by effectively implementing the provisions under Article 15 and 16 of the Constitution. Understanding the importance of protecting these marginalized communities, the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act was passed in 1989. Parliament has given the “green signal” to the Act to ensure the rehabilitation and relief of the oppressed members of this community. Various projects and policies have been undertaken based on the concept of inclusion.

Central Government or Centrally Aided Schemes for Tribal Welfare:

- 1) Special Central Assistance to States ‘Tribal Sub-Plans or Central assistance to Projects’: This is the initiative of the Center to support various schemes of the States for the development of tribal people's human resources, standard of living, widening of opportunities, and poverty alleviation.
- 2) Grant-in-aid under Section 275 (1): Grant-in-aid is given by the Center to certain states from the Consolidated Fund of India. The aim is to bring administrative activities of tribal-dominated areas under respective states as par with the administrative management of other areas of the state. This grant is to be used strengthening measures undertaken by the state.
- 3) Scholarship or Fellowship Scheme: The central government has scholarship resources for the tribal students of the country. This scholarship is available in pre-secondary and post-secondary phases. One such scholarship scheme is called “Top Class Education”.
- 4) Special Fund for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG): Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are those people whose level of technical skill in their society is equivalent to pre-agrarian period, whose population growth is stagnant or declining, enrollment rate is virtually zero and their economic activities are limited to consumption only.⁷⁵ such PVTGs have been identified in 18 states. Improving the quality of social indicators including their livelihood, health, nutrition and education is one of the priorities of the Government of India.
- 5) Protection of the Girl Child: Women empowerment and education for the girl child are top priorities of the Central Government. The government is trying to implement this policy in case of tribal girls too. The center allocates funds for these programs. In case of Jharkhand, the scheme is particularly important.

6) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation: This state-owned organization under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides loans on easy terms to eligible beneficiaries belonging to tribal groups to undertake self-employment related activities.

The government is working in 'Mission Mode' to spread education among the tribal population. Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) projects have been implemented on a priority basis to meet the educational deficiency of tribal children.

To commemorate the contribution and sacrifice of tribal freedom fighters, the central government has declared 15th November as 'Janjatiya Gourav Divas'. This day is the birth anniversary of legendary tribal leader Birsa Munda. The day is dedicated as a tribute to the brave tribal freedom fighters. The Government of India has also emphasized on micro-scale industries based on agriculture, forestry and natural resources for those tribes who are dependent on forests for their livelihood. 'Bon Dhan Bikas Program' has been undertaken to develop a dynamic supply chain in the marketing of minor forest products. This program is based on the principle of 'Minimum Subsidy Price'. The related programmes include resources for training tribals on marketing of forest products – to create an effective value chain.

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. The steps which the Commission is empowered to take that are conferred by the Constitution are as follows:

- i. To investigate and monitor the protection afforded to Scheduled Tribes
- ii. Investigate any allegations of violation of Scheduled Tribe rights
- iii. -socio Participation and consultation in the planning process for economic development of Scheduled Tribe communities and evaluation of their development under the Central Government or any State Government
- iv. economic development -Information on protection, welfare and socio ing measures to be of Scheduled Tribe communities. Recommend taken by the Central and State Governments to implement various safeguards and other measures provided to these communities
- v. To submit a report to the President once a year, and at other times if eguards are being properly deemed necessary, as to whether these saf provided. The Central and each state government has to consult with this commission while formulating policies on matters that may affect Scheduled Tribe communities

Policy formulation and investigation, the NCST has raised concerns over ten issues that have particularly affected the lives of Scheduled Tribes. Such as – Forest Rights (CFR and PESA), Relief and Rehabilitation, Mining Matters (DMF and MMDRR), Financial Matters and implementation of various developmental projects, Torture, Grievances, Inclusion and

Exclusion, Health and Nutrition, Educational, Legal and Constitutional Matters, Schedule of various welfare schemes for Tribal section.

Recently the NCST has emerged as a key player in protecting the rights of Scheduled Tribes across the country. The commission receives complaints from individuals and civil society voluntary organizations about the injustices being meted out to these marginalized people. Such incidents of human torture, exploitation and social injustice are repeatedly reported in print and electronic media. The Commission tries to redress all the grievances as soon as it receives information about it. The state governments are expected to cooperate with the Commission in this venture. When the field level staff of the Commission visits different parts of the country to reach out to the people, the tribal people get an opportunity to express their grievances to them. The Commission has launched a portal named www.ncstgrams.gov.in where the marginalized people can express their complaints online.

The Commission has been mandated to be involved in the planning process for the proper implementation of various developmental projects so that the tribal people can develop their potentials. Various studies by anthropologists have revealed that the lifestyle of tribal people have changed a lot in the context of cultural adaptation, modernization and globalization. Yet, their life and culture revolves around several value systems which are as follows:

1. .A sense of unity in body, mind and spirit with the environment
2. .Coexistence, friendship and sympathy with other living things
3. Communal living, sharing food, land, forest resources, seeds as well as happiness, sorrow, toil, suffering with everyone. Also share the risks of living in remote mountainous areas and forests
4. .Simple living. They do not believe in any personal wealth
5. f They usually don't get involved in trouble. They do not usurp the property of others and also give up their own claims to avoid trouble

Various schemes of the West Bengal government specially for the tribal people are as follows:-

- i. Education Scheme
- ii. Special Education Scheme
- iii. Sikshashree Scholarship Scheme
- iv. Old Age Pension
- v. SCA to TSP
- vi. Article 275 (1)
- vii. Infrastructure Development Scheme
- viii. Bi-cycles for Tribal Girls
- ix. PVTG
- x. West Bengal Kendu Leaves Collectors' Social Security Scheme, 2015

Apart from these other general developmental Schemes of the West Bengal government are:

Matriyan Project

Inception – 2011

Objective – Ambulance service for pregnant women to reach hospital for delivery.

Kanyashree Project

Inception – 2013

Objective – The objective of this project is to prevent child marriage and provide financial support to girls student. Rupees1000/- annually till 13-18 years of age and 25 thousand taka once after 18 years of age. The project has received international recognition from the United Nations Department for International Development and UNICEF.

Yuvashri Project

Inception – 2013

Payment of allowance of Rs 1500 per month to those enrolled in Employment Bank under State Labor Department .

Madhur Sneha Project

Inception – 2013

Purpose – Human Milk Bank

Sishu Sathi Project

Inception – 2013

Objective – To provide free heart surgery for children below 12 years of age from poor families.

Gatidhara Project

Inception – 2014

Objective – To provide financial assistance up to 1 lakh rupees to unemployed youth to purchase commercial vehicles for livelihood.

Oikyasree Project

Inception – 2014

Objective – To provide scholarships to minority students.

Karma Thirtha Project

Inception – 2014

Objective – To sell the products produced by the members of self-help groups to people of the village.

Samajik Suraksha Scheme

Inception – 2014

Purpose – To pay 6 lakh rupees to the family members who have died in a accident and 1 lakh rupees to the injured.

SufolBangla Project

Inception – 2014

Objective – To procure agricultural products directly from farmers at remunerative prices and deliver them to people at reasonable prices.

Sabuj Sathi Project

Inception – 2015

Objective – To provide bicycles to the students of class ix to xii.

Muktir Alo Project

Inception – 2015

Objective – To rehabilitate sex workers, abused women and girls through financial grants and make them self-reliant through special training.

Khadya Sathi Project

Inception – 2016

Objective – To provide rice and wheat at the rate of Rs.2 per kg to project beneficiaries.

Sabujshree Project

Inception – 2016

OBJECTIVE – Through this scheme every child is given a valuable sapling immediately after birth.

Samabyathi Project

Inception – 2016

Purpose – To pay 2 thousand rupees for funeral of poor people's family.

Sasthyasathi Project

Inception – 2016

Purpose – To provide health insurance up to 10 lakh rupees.

Utkarsha Bangla Project

Inception – 2016

Objective – To impart vocational education to students.

Safe Drive Save Life

Inception – 2016

Purpose – To prevent road accidents.

Rupshree Project

Inception – 2018

Purpose – One time payment of Rs. 25 thousand for marriage of girls after 18 years of age.

Manabik Pension Scheme

Inception – 2018

Purpose – Monthly payment of 2 thousand rupees to disabled people.

Krishak Bandhu Scheme

Inception – 2019

Objective – Financial assistance to farmers and life insurance of Rs.2 lakhs.

Jago Project

Inception – 2019

Objective – To provide 1000 rupees annually to self-help groups.

Karmasathi Project

Inception – 2020

Objective – Providing financial loans to unemployed youth to make them economically self-reliant.

Pathashree Project

Inception – 2020

Purpose – Repair of old roads

Duare Sarkar Project

Inception – 2020

Objective – To bring all developmental schemes of the State Government to people.

Snehalay Project

Inception – 2020

Purpose - To provide 1 lakh 20 thousand rupees for building houses for economically backward people.

Sneher Parash Project

Inception – 2020

Purpose – Payment of 1 thousand rupees for migrant workers.

Joyjohar Project

Inception – 2020

Objective - To provide old age allowance of Rs.1000/- per month to scheduled tribe people above 60 years of age.

Banglasree Project

Inception – 2020

Objective – To encourage small and medium industries.

Cha Sundari Project

Inception – 2020

Objective – To provide accommodation to homeless workers of the tea plantations.

Hasir Alo Project

Inception – 2020

Objective – To provide free electricity to very poor in rural and urban areas who consume up to 75 units of electricity per quarter.

Student Credit Card Scheme

Inception – 2021

Purpose – To provide loans up to 10 lakh rupees for education.

Lakshmir Bhandar Project

Inception – 2021

Objective – To provide financial assistance to women to become self-reliant.

Maa Project

Inception – 2021

Purpose – To provide eggs and rice for poor people for 5 rupees.

Nijo Griha Nijo Bhoomi Scheme

Inception – 2021

Objective – To improve the quality of life and livelihood of the landless people of the state through permanent shelter and shelter.

Sabla Project

Objective – To increase the empowerment of adolescent girls by improving their health and employability.

Gitanjali Project

Objective – Provision of secure shelter for every human being.

Pathsathi Project

Purpose – Provision of toilets, food and overnight accommodation under one roof for the convenience of pedestrians.

Utsashree Project

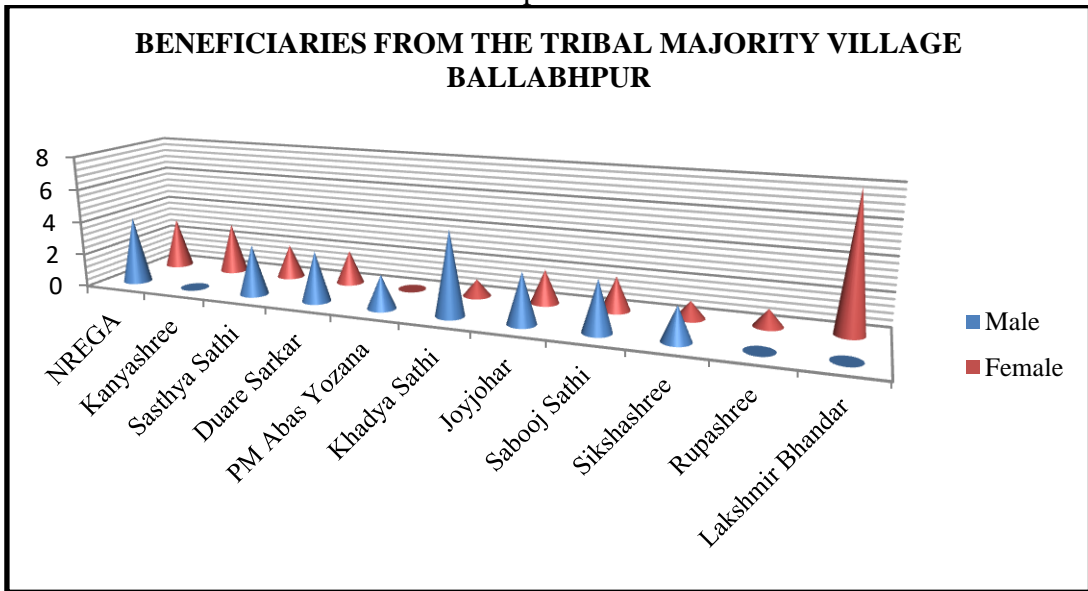
Teachers who are working in government schools away from home can apply if there is a vacancy in a school near their home.

Table No.2
Beneficiaries from the tribal majority village Ballabhpur

SI No.	Name of the various Schemes implemented here	Sample Size from the Ballabhpur village of Ruppur gram panchayat is 50 based on Random Sampling			
		Male 25	%	Female 25	%
1	NREGA	4	16	3	12
2	Kanyashree	0	0	3	12
3	Sasthya Sathi	3	12	2	8
4	Duare Sarkar	3	12	2	8
5	PM Abas Yozana	2	8	0	0
6	Khadya Sathi	5	20	1	4
7	Joyjohar	3	12	2	8
8	Sabooj Sathi	3	12	2	8
9	Sikshashree	2	8	1	4
10	Rupashree	0	0	1	4
11	Lakshmi Bhandar	0	0	8	32

Source: Field survey

Graph No.1



The sample size from the Ballabhpur village has been taken as fifty and interview has been conducted through random sampling process. As per Table 2 the percentage of tribal men who have benefitted from the **NREGA** scheme is 16% and tribal women who have benefitted from the same scheme is 12%. The demand for this project amongst tribal men and women is very high. It was noted in the survey that this scheme was very popular amongst tribal women as through it they found a means to secure their livelihood, even though it called for manual labour.

The next developmental project which was noted in the Ballabhpur village is the **Kanyashree Prakalpa**. It is an initiative adopted by the West Bengal government to improve the life and condition of girls through cash assistance especially to economically backward families so that girls are not married off at an early age. This scheme aims to promote higher education amongst girl students, especially those belonging to poor families. It was observed during the survey that near about 12% of girls were covered under this scheme from the Ballabhpur village. This scheme is identified as the most popular one in the present day.

The third project is named as **Sasthya Sathi** scheme by which every family would enjoy the opportunity to be covered by health insurance. As per the scheme each family would get basic health coverage up to Rs 1.5 lakhs. If someone under the coverage of this scheme suffers from a complex disease, the government would grant him/her health coverage up to Rs 3.5 lakhs. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee introduced this scheme and various other schemes in 2016 and the state cabinet approved it on February 17, 2016. It was decided to provide minimum health service to all common people of the state, free of charge both in government and private owned hospitals. In the survey of 50 people from the

Ballabhpur village under Ruppur gram panchayat, 12% of men and 8% of women were covered under this health care scheme.

The fourth scheme is the **Duare Sarkar** project. The objective of this scheme is to make people aware of different governmental schemes as it was found out that common people are not aware of different developmental schemes as provided by the government and thus cannot reap benefit from it. Moreover, sometimes the facility of online application is also not available. So to solve these problems the government of West Bengal launched the Duare Sarkar scheme by setting up government camps at doorsteps (duare) of the common people from 1st December, 2020. In the year 2022 this scheme received the Digital India award from the Ministry of Information and Technology. But, as found out from the survey this project was not launched in the tribal villages under the Ruppur gram panchayat from 2020 itself. 12% male and 8% of women availed this service. As found out from the survey both tribal men and women are still not aware of the importance of this project.

The fifth scheme which is worth mentioning is the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**. Government of India launched HFA (U), as a Mission Mode Program from 25th June, 2015. It is a seven years program which aims to provide Housing facilities to all EWS and LIG category families by 2022. All the 125 ULBs and Development Authorities in the state are covered under this project from 2015-16 with the concurrence of the Government of India. By this scheme the government announced to build 25 feet concrete houses for the people living in villages by providing 1 lakh 20 thousand rupees. During the survey it was found out that near about 8% of tribal men from the Ballabhpur village of the Ruppur gram panchayat received the allotted amount to build their own concrete house. It was however noted that this amount was not allocated to the female members of the family but only restricted to the male members.

The next scheme allotted for the five tribal villages under the Ruppur gram Panchayat is the **Khadya Sathi** project. Under this welfare scheme rice would be provided in a subsidized rate i.e., Rs 2 per kg. Other commodities would also be provided at a much lower rate than the market rate. As noted from the survey this scheme proved to be very beneficial for tribal men and women, especially during the pandemic period. 20% of tribal men and 4% tribal women benefitted from this project.

The next scheme is **Jai Johar**. This is a monthly pension scheme introduced by the West Bengal government from 1st April 2020 for tribal men and women aged 60 years or above. This project is managed by the Department of Tribal Development, Government of West Bengal. The pension amount is Rs 1000 per month and generally two months of pension are deposited in the respective bank accounts. 12% of tribal men and 8% benefitted from the said scheme.

The next scheme is the **Sabuj Sathi project**. In the state Budget 2015-16 former Finance Minister, Amit Mitra announced this scheme by which bicycles would be provided to school students of Class XI and XII in government and government-aided schools. It was estimated that near about 40 lakh students would benefit from this project. From the survey

it was found out that 12% male tribal student and 8% of female tribal student benefitted from this scheme.

The next scheme is the **Shikshashree project** which is also known as West Bengal Shikshashree Yojana. Under this scheme the government aims to provide scholarship in form of financial assistance to school going students from the SC and ST communities. This scheme has been launched to cover expenses like books, school bags and school uniforms for young students, thus to provide relief to the household from the expenses incurred for this purpose. It was found out from the survey that 8% of tribal male students and 4% of tribal female students benefitted from this scheme.

The next scheme is known as **Rupashree project**. In 2018-19 state Budget Finance Minister, Amit Mitra launched this scheme by which one-time financial grant of Rs 25,000 would be provided for the marriage of a girl above the age of 18 years belonging to economically backward families. The main objective of this scheme was to prevent child marriage as the assistance would not be provided if a girl child is married off below the age of 18 years. The government has allocated Rs 1500 crores for this project. About 4% of tribal girls from the Ballabhpur village under the Ruppur gram panchayat received this financial grant.

The last project which was made available to the Ballabhpur village under the Ruppur gram panchayat is the **Lakshmi Bhandar** scheme. The West Bengal government launched this scheme to provide income support to homemakers of the family. Under this scheme housewives belonging to Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribe families would be given Rs 1000 and Rs 500 belonging to general category. Near about 32% of tribal women benefitted from this scheme in the Ballabhpur village under the Ruppur gram panchayat.

Conclusion: After the detailed discussion, we may say only this much that, despite a number of initiatives being implemented by the government, these indigenous people are still under privileged. The main reason is that the majority of these people are not aware of the rights guaranteed by the Indian constitution nor do they receive proper benefits from the schemes implemented for their improvement. Due to the lack of awareness and insensitivity of the tribal people, they cannot attract the attention of the local leaders and be deprived of the benefits of government's developmental schemes. So, effort should be undertaken to increase and escalate the light of education amongst these marginalized people which would make them conscious about their rights.

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