



Livelihood of Tribal Population and Associated Problems in Koch Bihar District of West Bengal

KANKAN ROY

Assistant Professor,

Department of Geography, Kalinagar
Mahavidyalaya, North 24 Parganas.

DR. BIPUL CHANDRA SARKAR

Assistant Professor,

Dept of Geography,
A.C. College, Jalpaiguri

Abstract:

The paper is an attempt to study the livelihood patterns through the factors related to socio-economic condition of tribal people in the district of Koch Bihar. In view of the gaps in available literature of selected communities in the study area, this paper focuses on various issues related to the livelihood of the tribal people in the district. It was found that the tribal people in the district are socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Regional variation in every aspect of their livelihood regarding their residence, demography, literacy, gender, economy has been a major issue for their balanced and proper development in various parts of the district. Hence attempt has been made to study the regional variations in different aspects by selecting development blocks as unit of study. This study basically based on secondary sources of data, review of related literature and observation. The study also includes problems of livelihood of tribal people in the district on available background and concludes with recommended policy prescription.

Keywords: Tribal People, Livelihood, Development, Socioeconomic Condition, Occupational Patterns, Regional Variation

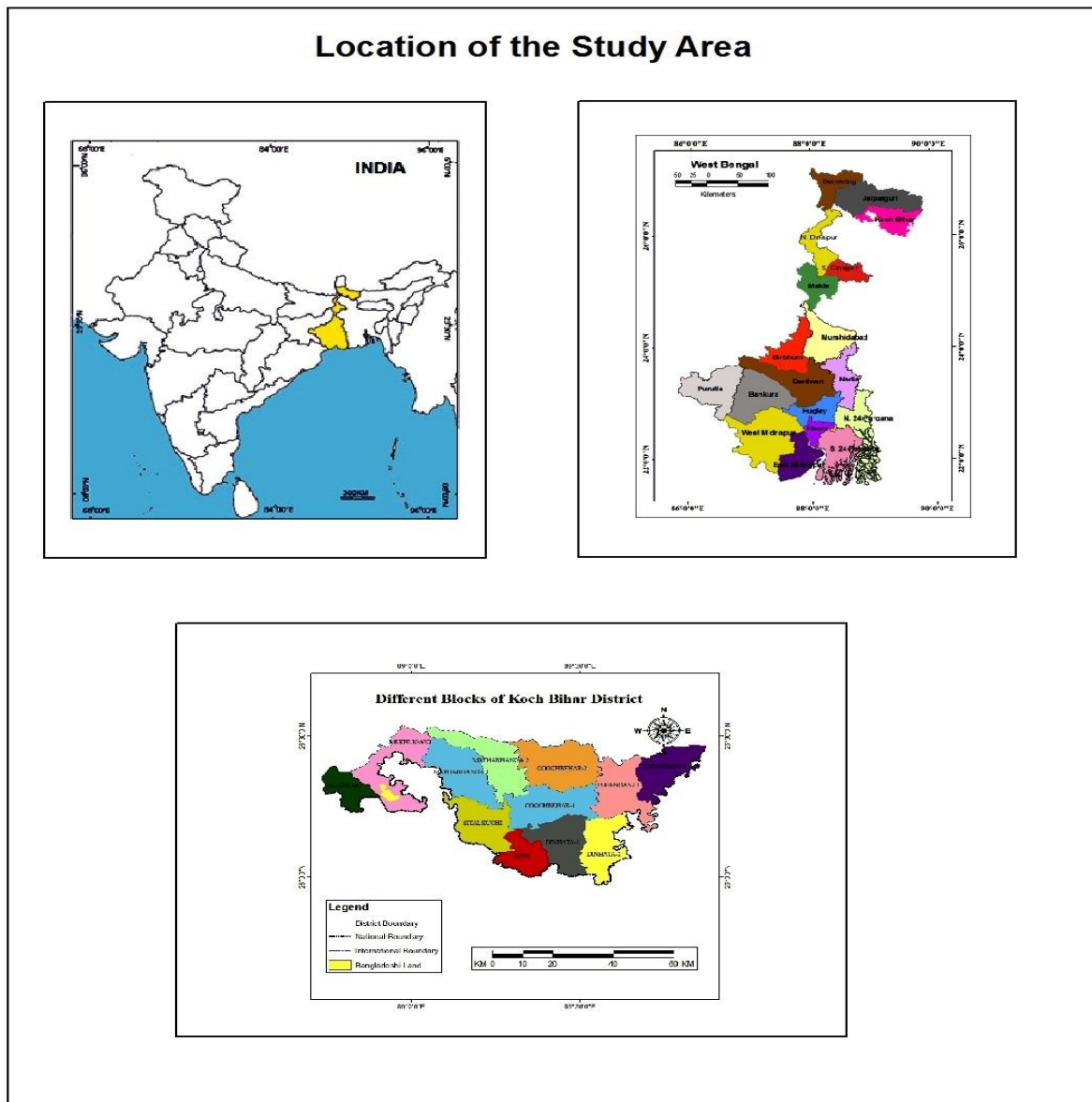
1. Introduction

Tribes are the ethnic group of primitive people or earliest inhabitants. It is a caste having distinct socio-cultural and economic characteristics. In India the tribes are known to be the autochthonous people of the land. They are often referred to as Adivasi, Vanyajati, Vanvasi, Pahari, Adimjati and Anusuchit Jan Jati. India is home to tribal population of about 10.3 crore, with 705 groups each with their distinct cultures, social practices, religions, dialects, and occupations and are scattered in all States and Union Territories in India. Tribal population in India constitutes 8.6% of the total population. 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas. The decadal population growth of the tribal population from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the entire population. The sex ratio for the overall population is 940 females per 1000 males and that of Scheduled Tribes 990 females per thousand males.

Livelihood is defined as a set of activities essential to everyday life. It involves the capacity to acquire necessities of food, water, shelter, clothing etc. thus livelihood depends on the social and economic condition of any individual. Aspects like demography, literacy and educational attainment, health and workforce and occupational structures, income and expenditure etc plays vital role in determining the livelihood of any household or any community in any place. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic, and educational development. Some tribal communities have adopted modern way of life availing themselves with modern agricultural practices along with other economic activities, attaining education and health awareness, political participation etc whereas there are ethnic groups who still characterized by pre-agriculture level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy, and subsistence level of economy.

2. Study Area

The District Koch Bihar lies in the North Eastern part of the state of West Bengal. Geographically, Koch Bihar district is surrounded by Jalpaiguri district to the North and West, State of Assam (Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts) to the East and International Boundary with Bangladesh towards South, South-East and South-West. The location of the district is spread over from 26°10'N to 26°30' N Latitude & 88°50' E to 89°40' E Longitude. The district Koch Bihar in its present statute was formed by an agreement dated 28th August, 1948 declaring cessation of full and extensive authority, transfer of jurisdiction and power from the previous princely rulers of feudatory Cooch Behar State to the Dominion of India. The Transfer of administration from the monarchal rulers to that of Indian



Union took place on 12th September, 1949 and few months later in 19th January, 1950 the present district Koch Bihar of the State of West Bengal was officially formed. The total geographical area of the district is 3387 sq. Km. According to 2011 census, the total population of the district is 2,819,086 having population density of 832 persons/ sq km. Number of tribal population in the district as per census of India 2011 is 18,125. The whole district is divided into five numbers of sub-divisions and further 12 community development blocks. Urban areas of the districts include 12 census towns in different blocks and six municipalities.

3. Importance of the Study

Since a long time, the study area has been deprived of different angles due to geographic as well as socio-economic reasons. The infrastructural facilities have been facing different problems. After a careful review of literatures it was found that there was no systematic study regarding social and economic development of the tribal people. The present study thus will help in understanding the major social and economic issues of the tribal people in the district and thereby their various aspects of livelihood.

4. Objectives

Basic objective of the study is to reflect various dimensions of the tribal population of the district of Koch Bihar. These are;

1. To study the growth and distribution of tribal population in the district.
2. To analyse the demographic characteristics of tribal population.
3. To study the literacy and educational status of tribal population.
4. To study the workforce and occupational status of tribal population.
5. To look into the problems of their livelihood and to suggest remedial measures to solve those problems.

5. Materials and Methods

The study is extensively based on secondary sources of data. The data were collected from different sources like census of India- 2011, West Bengal statistical handbook (Coochbehar district-2011) and district Census Handbook 2011. After having been collected the data were analysed and presented with the help of some cartographic techniques like maps, diagrams, tables etc. To fulfil the objectives many parametric measures have been used. These are as follows.

6. Location Quotient

When the proportion of any characteristics in an area is studied in relation to its proportion in the region, the ratio is known as location quotient. This formula was used to assess the concentration of tribal population in relation to total population in each block of the district. The formula is

$$LQ = \frac{P_i \div P(\sum P_i)}{T_i \div T(\sum T_i)}$$

Where, LQ is Location Quotient

P_i = the Number of Total Population of the Block, P = Total Population of the District

T_i = Number of tribal population in the block, T = Total Tribal Population in the District

7. Effective Literacy Rate

Effective literacy rate has been defined as the percentage of literate population in respect of total population having age more than 7 years. The formula is

$$ELR = \frac{\text{Number of literate people above 7 years of age} * 100}{\text{Number of total population of above 7 years of age}}$$

7.1 Gender disparity index

In order to explain the disparity level in literacy among male and female, modified form of Sopher's Index of Disparity (by Kundu and Rao) has been used to calculate the male-female disparity of tribal population by using the following formula:-

$$\text{Disparity Index (Ds)} = \log (X_2/X_1) + \log ((200-X_1) / (200-X_2))$$

Where, X_2 = percentage of male literates

X_1 = percentage of female literates

7.2 Work Participation Rate

Work participation rate has been measured for both male and female population as well as for total tribal population. It has been calculated as the number of people engaged in economically gainful activities out of total population.

The formula is; Work Participation Rate (WPR).- Number of population engaged in economic activities/total population*100

8. Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Distribution of Tribal Population

Tribal communities present in Koch Bihar have been accumulated from different country or region mostly after independence. Now Koch Bihar is the home to about 40 tribal communities spread in all developmental blocks and municipalities of the district. According to census of India 2011, West Bengal has 5.80% of total population belonging to scheduled tribe, whereas in Koch Bihar district the contribution of tribal population to total population is 0.64%.

Table 1: Distribution of ST Population in the Development Blocks in Koch Bihar

Block/ Town	Total Population	ST Population	% of ST Population to Total Population	% of ST Population to Total ST Population	LQ Value
Haldibari	1,18,373	448	0.38	2.47	0.60
Mekhliganj	1,64,377	2,027	1.23	11.18	1.93
Mathabhanga-I	2,42,081	200	0.08	1.10	0.13
Mathabhanga-II	2,27,397	2,974	1.31	16.26	2.02
Koch Bihar-I	4,04,493	1,663	0.41	9.18	0.64
Koch Bihar-II	3,43,901	3,429	1.00	18.92	1.55
Tufanganj-I	2,69,593	464	0.17	2.56	0.27
Tufanganj-II	1,86,726	3,966	2.12	21.88	3.32
Dinhata-I	3,22,393	1,273	0.39	7.02	0.61
Dinhata-II	2,44,066	1,237	0.51	6.82	0.78
Sitai	1,10,333	215	0.19	1.19	0.31
Sitalkuchi	1,85,353	259	0.14	1.43	0.21
Total	26,36,608	17,225	0.65	100	0

Source: Calculated from DCHB, 2011.

Tribal population is unevenly distributed in Koch Bihar in its various developmental blocks and urban centres. Total population including all tribal communities in the district as reflected in census of India 2011, is 18,125 among which only 900 is inhabited in 6 urban centres of Koch Bihar. Among the community development blocks, Tufanganj-2 (3966) has the maximum number of tribal population followed by Koch Bihar-2 (3429), Mathabhanga-2 (2974) and Mekhliganj (1918). On the other hand among the urban centres of the district maximum population was found in Coochbehar (408) followed by Haldibari (135) and Mekhliganj (109). Similarly the concentration of tribal population in the district is high in Coochbehar-2, Tufanganj-2, Mathabhanga-2 and Mekhliganj than the other blocks of Koch Bihar. Among the urban centres Mekhliganj, Haldibari and Koch Bihar Municipality have high concentration of scheduled tribe population.

Table 2: Distribution of ST population in the urban centres in Koch Bihar

Town	Total Population	ST Population	% of ST Population to Total Population	% of ST Population to Total ST Population
Haldibari	14404	135	0.94	15
Mekhliganj	9127	109	1.19	12.11
Mathabhanga	23890	60	0.25	6.67
Koch Bihar	77935	408	0.52	45.33
Tufanganj	20998	86	0.41	9.56
Dinhata	36124	102	0.28	11.33
Total	182478	900	0.49	100

Source: Calculated from DCHB, 2011.

8.2 Major Tribal Communities in Koch Bihar

Koch Bihar district has a rich cultural diversity. Peoples of different communities had come from different parts of the country to form a cultural heterogeneity. Similarly tribal population of this district is also diverse in nature. As per census 2011, Koch Bihar district has 40 tribal communities. Among them, oraon has maximum population consisting more than 37% of total tribal population in the district. Rabha is the second largest community with more than 20% of population. Munda and Santal (more than 7% each), Bediya, Garo, Gond, Asur, Lodha, Mech communities are also dominant tribal group in Koch Bihar.

Table 3: Major Tribes in Koch Bihar

	Total Population	Percentage to Total Tribal Population	Tribal Community	Total Population	Percentage to Total Tribal Population
Oraon	6,722	37.09	Gond	388	02.14
Rabha	3,801	20.97	Asur	354	01.95
Munda	1,439	07.94	Lodha	346	01.91
Santal	1,375	07.59	Mech	287	01.58
Bediya	742	04.09	Others	2,118	11.69
Garo	553	03.05	Total	18,125	100

Source: Census of India, 2011.

8.3 Growth of Tribal Population in Koch Bihar

Number of tribal population in the district of Koch Bihar has been continuously changing since independence. In the year of 1951, total tribal population in Koch Bihar was recorded as 3457 and it has reached 18125 in 2011. The growth rate of tribal population (1540.81%) in the district was found maximum during 1951-1961. Negative growth rate (-4.77%) was also experienced during 1971-1981. During 1981-1991 and 2001-2011, growth rate of tribal population was more than the growth rate of total population of the district. It was found that this changing nature of tribal population in the district was due to the push and pull factors of traditional migration of tribes.

Table 4: Decadal Growth Rate of population in Koch Bihar

Census Year	Total Population	Growth Rate	ST Population	Growth Rate
1951	6,71,158	-----	3,457	-----
1961	10,19,806	52.4	8,809	1540.81
1971	14,14,183	38.70	10,611	16.98
1981	17,71,643	25.30	10,105	-4.77
1991	21,71,145	22.50	13,203	30.66
2001	24,79,155	14.20	14,246	7.89
2011	28,19,086	13.70	18,125	27.22

Source: Census of India 1951-2011

8.4 Sex Ratio and Rural-Urban Composition

Sex ratio is an important indicator of progress of society. Better sex ratio reflects in equal status of women and thereby improved social and economic condition in any society. It is seen that the upper caste society has always a better sex ration in compare to the backward classes in the society. In case of the district of Koch Bihar sex ratio remain below the national and state average. It is more serious for the tribal population in the district. As per Census of India 2011, total sex ratio in the district is 942 females per thousand males whereas sex ration among the scheduled tribe population is only 932 females per thousand males. Urban sex ratio is very less among ST population than the total urban sex ratio because of unemployment in the rural areas and male dominant migration to the urban centres.

Table 5: Rural-Urban Composition of ST Population

Category	Persons		Male		Female		Sex Ratio
	NO	%	No	%	No	%	
District Total							
Rural	25,29,652	89.73	13,04,916	89.90	12,24,736	89.56	939
Urban	2,89,434	10.27	1,46,626	10.10	1,42,808	10.44	974
Total	28,19,086	100	14,51,542	100	13,67,544	100	942
Among ST							
Rural	16,872	93.09	8,735	93.04	8,137	93.13	932
Urban	1,253	06.91	653	06.96	600	06.87	919
Total	18,125	100	9,388	100	8,737	100	932

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Tribal people throughout the world live mostly in rural areas. Tribes in Koch Bihar are not aboriginal. They have migrated from different places at different times for their means of living. Most of them are now engaged in settled agriculture. As a whole 93.09 percent of total tribal population of the district are of rural and rest only 6.91 percent reside throughout six urban areas of the district. Sectional distribution in respect of male-female also appears to be almost same as the general distribution of tribal population. The table shows that 93.04% of total male is residing in rural areas whereas among the female it is 93.13%.

Table 6: Distribution of Sex Ratio in Koch Bihar

Block/town	Sex Ratio		Block/town	Sex Ratio	
	Overall	ST		Overall	ST
Haldibari	967	909	Sitai	970	1,172
Mekhliganj	938	908	Sitalkuchi	966	1,123
Mathabhanga 1	940	1,188	Haldibari (M)	972	800
Mathabhanga 2	942	1,022	Mekhliganj (M)	957	1,019
Cooch Behar 1	938	868	Mathabhanga (M)	981	935
Cooch Behar 2	908	767	Koch Bihar (M)	998	863
Tufanganj 1	936	824	Tufanganj (M)	965	1,324
Tufanganj 2	940	989	Dinhata (M)	969	962
Dinhata 1	940	975	District Total	942	932
Dinhata 2	927	1,015	Total urban	974	919
			Total rural	939	932

Source: Calculated from DCHB, 2011.

9. Literacy and Education

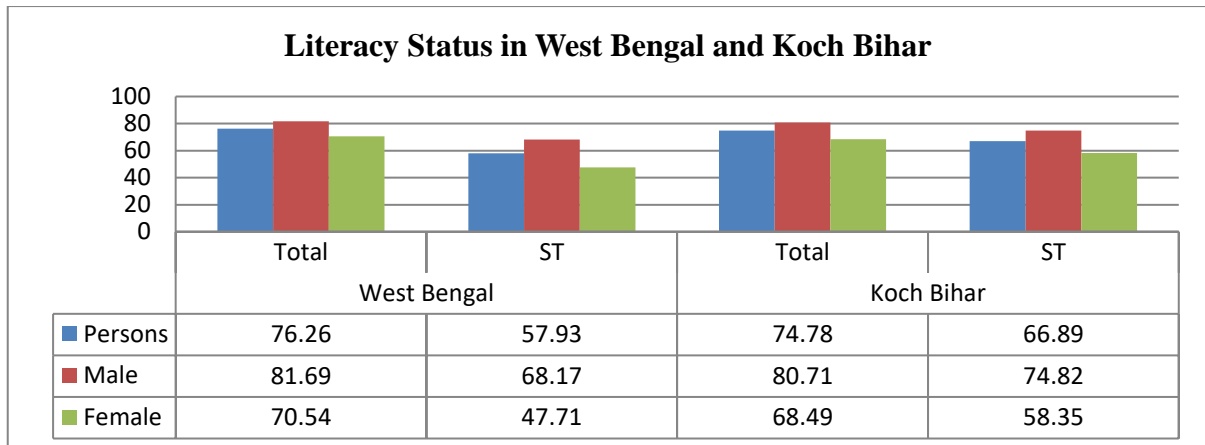
Literacy and educational status is key indicators of social and economic development of any society. Literacy is essential for social reconstruction, improvement in quality of life and preparation for manpower for rapid development. It is also essential for eradicating poverty and mental isolation. Schedule tribes form the most socially and economically backward section of society. Hence literacy rate among them has been lower than the other society since long time. Comparing the literacy status of Koch Bihar with West Bengal it is observed that Koch Bihar falls in the districts of lower literacy

rate. But the literacy status among the tribal population in the district is more than the state average. Following figure shows the literacy status for both the total and the scheduled tribe population in the state and in the district of Koch Bihar. It was found as usual in both the cases that the literacy rate is much lower among the tribal population for the state (57.93%) and for Koch Bihar (66.89%) than the total population for the state (76.26%) and for Koch Bihar (74.78%).

Table 7: Literacy Rate in West Bengal and Koch Bihar

Category	West Bengal		Koch Bihar	
	Total	ST	Total	ST
Persons	76.26	57.93	74.78	66.89
Male	81.69	68.17	80.71	74.82
Female	70.54	47.71	68.49	58.35

Source: State Statistical Handbook 2014.



10. Spatial distribution of literacy rate in Koch Bihar

Literacy status in our country is varied with respect to caste, gender, economic condition, occupation, social status and so many other factors. Caste has been an important factor for determining the educational status of various section of society. Almost every part of the country exhibit the impact of caste factor on education and literacy status. Thus tribal population has been lacking behind or marginalised in this respect. The case is same for this study area so far census data is concerned. Literacy rate of total population in the district varies from 62.79% in Sitai block to 80.48% in Cooch Behar II while literacy rate among the tribal population ranges between only 50.50% in Mekhliganj to 78.45% in Cooch Behar I. From the figure it is also found that the gender gap in literacy rate is very high among the tribal's than the total population in every blocks of the district.

Table 8: Spatial distribution of literacy rate in Koch Bihar

Blocks	Total literacy rate			Literacy rate among S.T.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Haldibari	69.22	75.69	62.54	59.71	63.51	55.38
Mekhliganj	69.03	76.55	61.02	50.50	59.19	40.90
Mathabhanga I	71.51	78.83	63.71	55.17	61.54	50.00
Mathabhanga II	72.68	79.40	65.55	58.71	69.38	48.44
Cooch Behar I	75.44	81.38	69.11	78.45	83.75	72.27
Cooch Behar II	80.48	85.86	74.50	70.62	78.56	60.13
Tufanganj I	73.64	79.74	67.12	76.00	81.36	69.59
Tufanganj II	75.56	81.97	68.72	67.58	75.95	59.10
Dinhata I	73.05	78.62	67.12	73.65	79.34	67.86
Dinhata II	72.33	78.09	66.10	63.61	71.64	55.58
Sitai	62.79	69.17	56.21	56.48	56.52	56.44
Sitalkuchi	70.34	77.03	63.41	70.75	80.00	61.68

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011.

Urban centres have always shows a higher literacy rate as compared to the rural areas in the district. But still, in every six municipalities of the district, there is huge variation in literacy in total and among tribal population. Mekhliganj has lowest rate of literacy among total population and Haldibari has lowest tribal literacy rate. Gender gap in literacy is similarly more among the ST population than the total population in each of those municipalities.

Table 9: Urban literacy rate among the tribes in Koch Bihar

Municipality	Total literacy rate			ST literacy rate		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Haldibari	83.96	87.57	80.27	39.81	42.11	37.25
Mekhliganj	74.84	80.27	69.21	72.34	78.72	65.96
Mathabhanga	90.09	93.40	86.70	94.55	96.67	92.00
Koch Bihar	92.20	94.55	89.86	93.95	98.99	88.46
Tufanganj	91.48	94.60	88.25	94.81	100	90.24
Dinhata	91.61	94.53	88.62	97.75	100	95.35

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011.

11. Gender Gap and Disparity in Literacy

The literacy level varies across the study area as well as among the various social groups. Schedule Tribes are the most disadvantaged group in the country. In the education of STs, there are large numbers of structural constraints due to which progress in literacy and education has not been found with that of general population in Koch Bihar. The gender gap in literacy can be understood only in the wider context of female disadvantage. Gender bias prevailed in all sphere of life. The problem is exacerbated further when gender disadvantage is compounded by class, cast and religious discrimination. While analyzing the literacy and education we have gone into the problem of gender equity. The universal trend is lower female literacy in relation to male. We have attempted to analyse through gender disparity index (GDI) which is the ratio of female to male level of literacy and education within the scale of 0 to 1.000. Higher scores indicate lower gender disparity and vice versa.

Table 10: Literacy gap and disparity index of schedule tribe

Name of Blocks / Municipality	Person % of literacy	Male % of literacy	Female % of literacy	Gender gap	GDI
Haldibari	59.71	63.51	55.38	8.13	0.872
Mekhliganj	51.38	59.19	40.90	18.29	0.690
Mathabhanga-I	55.17	61.54	50.00	11.54	0.812
Mathabhanga-II	58.71	69.38	48.44	20.94	0.698
Koch Bihar-I	79.86	83.75	72.27	11.48	0.863
Koch Bihar-II	71.13	78.56	60.13	18.43	0.765
Tufanganj-I	76.43	81.36	69.59	11.77	0.855
Tufanganj-II	67.63	75.95	59.10	16.85	0.778
Dinhata-I	73.60	79.34	67.86	11.48	0.855
Dinhata-II	63.61	71.64	55.58	16.06	0.776
Sitai	56.48	56.52	56.44	0.08	0.998
Sitalkuchi	70.75	80.00	61.68	18.32	0.771
Haldibari (M)	39.81	42.11	37.25	4.86	0.884
Mekhliganj (M)	72.34	78.72	65.96	12.76	0.838
Mathabhanga (M)	94.55	96.67	92.00	4.67	0.952
Koch Bihar (M)	93.95	98.99	88.46	10.53	0.894
Tufanganj (M)	94.81	100	90.24	9.76	0.902
Dinhata (M)	97.75	100	95.35	4.65	0.953

Source: Calculated from DCHB, 2011.

Looking into the gender gap and disparity, it is seen that Mekhliganj with the lowest literacy of 51.38 have the highest disparity of 0.690. Disparity is also high in the CD blocks of Mathabhanga-II, Koch Bihar-II, Sitalkuchi, Dinhat-II and Tufanganj-II. In comparison to blocks it is very low in Sitai block though the average literacy is one of the lowest in the district. In case of municipalities Dinhat with highest percentage of literacy (97.75%) have the very low level of disparity (0.953), Mathabhanga municipality is also follow the same condition with the disparity value of 0.952. Lowest literacy is found in Haldibari municipality with also low level of disparity (0.884). The main factors of low level of literacy among the primitive tribes are their location and inadequate facilities for education in these areas. Gender disparity among most of the tribes is tending to increase at higher levels of school education. It is a general phenomenon that there is a sharp decline in the percentage of people who have attained beyond primary level of education with higher gender disparities. There are a significant percentage of dropouts of both males and females at the higher level of education. During agricultural operations children assist their family members in sowing, weeding, plantation and harvesting. This leads to irregularities in attending classes. The long periods of absence from classes leads to drop out. A substantially higher proportion of tribal children including girls are engaged in survival tasks, such as collection of firewood and water and tending livestock as compared to the average rural child. Sibling care and other household core duties are important factors for drop out among the girls. Indifference to studies is often cited as a reason for drop out. The non availability of schools within easy access for more than half of the predominantly tribal habitation poses a serious impediment to enrolment of children particularly girls.

12. Educational attainment of tribal population

Government has implemented many programmes to educate to the tribal people to bring them into the mainstream of the society. But, tribes are still lacking behind than the other section of population in every corner of the country. Illiteracy is still a course to them. 42.07% population is still not literate among the tribal population of the district. Among the literate population, a lions part is literate up to primary level i.e. 34.15% is below primary and 27.06% is primary. Interests in education in the present times are growing among the present generations who are participating in the higher studies. Among the literate population, 19.44% have schooling up to middle i.e. 8th standard. Middle and the secondary are the crucial time for the school going Children. At this stage economic and social problem of the family determines the fate of their further study. Many boys left study at this stage and compelled to engage in economic activities to support their family. Girls are often get married in this stage and left studies. Hence this is the ultimate of the level of education among the tribal population. Education above this stage is very rare to see among the tribal population. In Koch Bihar it is 8% and 3.16% have completed their higher secondary level and have become Graduate respectively.

Table 11: Level of educational attainment among the tribal population

Level	Total		Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Below Primary	3,634	34.15	2,055	33.30	1,579	35.32
Primary	2,880	27.06	1,642	26.61	1,238	27.69
Middle	2,069	19.44	1,184	19.19	885	19.79
Secondary	872	08.19	527	08.54	345	07.72
Higher Secondary	851	08.00	549	08.90	302	06.75
Graduation and Above	336	03.16	214	03.47	122	02.73
Total	10,642	100.00	6,171	100.00	4,471	100.00

Source: Census of India, 2011.

13. Workforce Participation Rate

Working force refers to the participation of masses in economically productive activities. The issue of livelihood security is closely linked to employment status of the people (Jana and Ghosh, 2015).

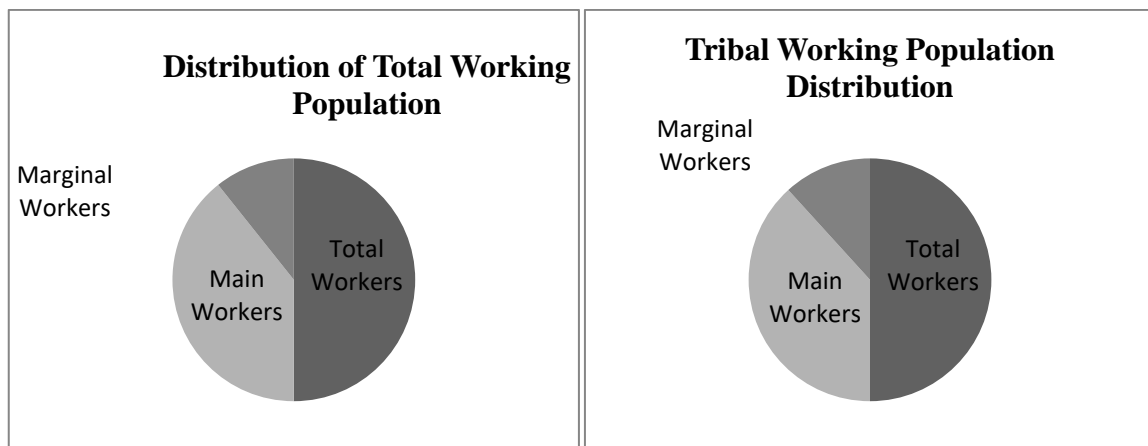
Census of India measures the rate as total workers which have been divided into main and marginal workers. The size of working force, its division into different economic activities and their nature of work are the fair indicators of the social status of regional population.

Table 12: Distribution of Working Population in the Koch Bihar District

	Total Workers			Main Workers			Marginal Workers		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
District	40.01	58.24	20.67	31.44	51.66	9.98	08.57	06.58	10.69
Among ST	40.61	55.46	24.65	31.07	47.15	13.80	09.54	08.31	10.85

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Work participation rate among the scheduled tribe population of Koch Bihar district is better than the total work participation rate of the district. According to census 2011, work participation rate among the tribal population in the district is 40.61 percent out of which 31.07 percent is main workers and the rest is marginal workers. The most important characteristic is higher participation of scheduled tribe women in economic activities. The table shows that 24.65 percent of total female population are economically productive whereas the correspondence figure for the district as a whole is 20.67 percent. In the district of Koch Bihar 8.57% of workers are categorised as marginal whereas among tribal population it is 9.54%.



Work participation rate in different blocks of the district ranges from 51.43% in Mathabhanga 1 to 33.00% in Mekhliganj. In the urban centres Mathabhanga municipality has the highest work participation rate and Koch Bihar municipality has the lowest.

Table 13: Block/ Town Wise Distribution of Working Population in Koch Bihar

Block/town	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non-Workers	Block/town	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non-Workers
Haldibari	28.75	10.22	61.02	Sitai	33.49	12.09	54.42
Mekhliganj	26.33	7.77	65.90	Sitalkuchi	35.14	1.93	62.93
Mathabhanga 1	34.29	17.14	48.57	Haldibari (M)	35.56	0.74	63.70
Mathabhanga 2	31.81	14.56	53.63	Mekhliganj (M)	35.78	8.26	55.96
Cooch Behar 1	29.80	5.96	64.24	Mathabhanga(M)	40.00	6.67	53.33
Cooch Behar 2	35.23	8.34	56.43	Koch Bihar (M)	31.13	1.47	67.40
Tufanganj 1	33.33	8.73	57.94	Tufanganj (M)	33.72	0	66.28
Tufanganj 2	26.07	13.69	60.24	Dinhata (M)	39.22	0.98	59.80
Dinhata 1	37.75	3.42	58.84	District Total	31.07	9.54	59.39
Dinhata 2	32.17	5.17	62.65				

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011.

14. Occupational structure of the tribal population in Koch Bihar district

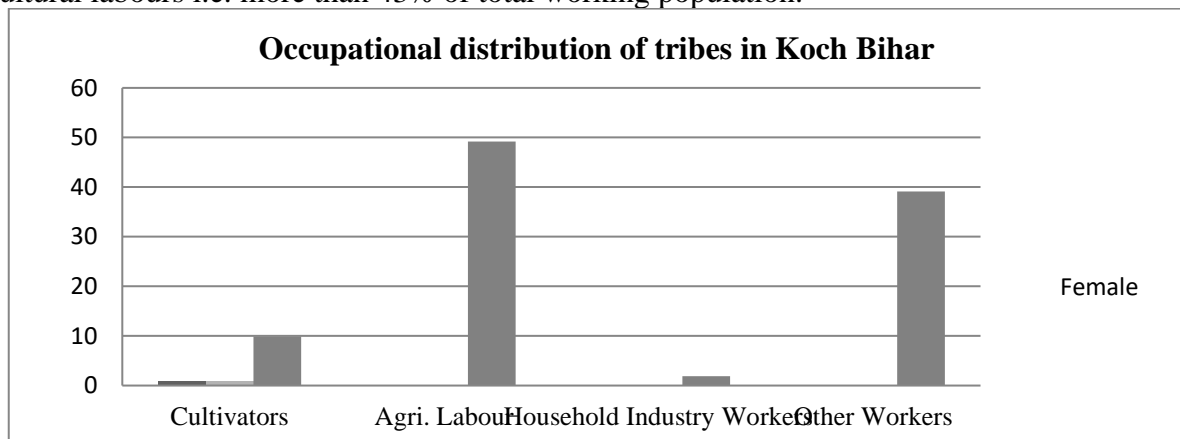
Occupational structure of any place or of any community determines the level of development of that place or community. Occupation refers to the types of works people is engaged. Types of works again determine the nature of income and expenditure. As per census of India, working population of different occupations are divided into four types i.e., cultivators, agricultural labours, household industry workers and other workers. Tribal population of this place is economically backward comparative to the other section of population. They do not have sufficient agricultural land for cultivation.

Table 14: Occupational structure of tribal population

Category	Total		Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cultivators	1448	19.67	1235	23.72	213	09.89
Agri. Labour	3165	43.00	2106	40.44	1059	49.16
Household Industry Workers	97	01.32	57	01.09	40	01.86
Other Workers	2651	36.01	1807	34.70	842	39.09
Total	7361	100.00	5207	100.00	2154	100.00

Source: Census of India, 2011

Koch Bihar district itself has not much developed in terms of industry. Besides, they lacks in literacy and education. Hence, they have low number of participation in economically gainful activities other than primary economic activities. The table shows that the tribal population is largely engaged as agricultural labours i.e. more than 43% of total working population.



This figure shows the level of poor economic conditions of the tribal community of this district. Among the other workers group, 36% of the total working population engaged in varieties of economic activities including organised and unorganised sectors. Service in the government and private organisations, trade and commerce, transportation etc are some of those in which other workers are engaged. Third majority of the working group is the cultivators. Cultivators are less in number among the tribal communities, but important. It shows they are interested in agricultural activities but lacks in having agricultural land. Very little proportion of population is engaged in household industry workers.

15. Problems of livelihood

From the study, following problems of livelihood of tribal population in the district of Koch Bihar has been found as the constraints of their proper and balanced development to bring them into the mainstream of the society.

Lower sex ratio: Sex ratio especially in the rural areas of the district is lower among the tribal population. This reflects the lower status of women in their society which has an adverse impact in

all social, economic, and political conditions. It has been a major concern for social sustainability. Each tribe has separate perception regarding this issue hence details study needs to address the issue.

Rapid population growth rate: Census figure of last few decades shows that growth of population is increasing more than expectation. High growth rate of population has negative impact on their livelihood owing to their poor economic condition.

Low literacy rate: Literacy rate is very low among the tribal population. Low literacy rate has multiple ill impacts on social as well as economic status of population.

Poor educational facility: Tribal peoples are basically found in the most marginal villages having lacks in infrastructural as well as educational facilities.

School dropout: The study has shown that educational level is fast decreasing after the 8th standard. This indicates that dropouts among the tribal school going children is rampant.

Lower women literacy: women participation in literacy and education is an issue of major concern. Most of the tribal people still do not interest in educating their girl child rather engage them into the household works at very early age. Child marriage still prevailed in many of the tribal village which is also responsible for both dropout as well as low female literacy.

16. Dependent population

Work participation rate is not as expected. Dependent population is more because of high birth rate among the tribal population in the district. Dependent population creates poor economic condition.

16.1 Child labour

Child labour is one of the major concerns for the tribal population in many places. Low wages, lack of regular work, lack of land for cultivation have compelled many child to work outside and earn.

16.2 Unorganised economic activities

Tribal population in Koch Bihar district are mostly engaged in unorganised sector of economic activities. Migrant labourers, construction workers, daily wage labourers are the major among them. Thus, they are faces multiple economic problems like low wage, low income, lack of regular work, life risk during work etc.

17. Policy Prescription

- Majority of tribal population of the Koch Bihar district are not aware of any self occupational scheme run by the government. Most of them have never heard of any specific schemes run by the government. So, it is necessary to aware them. Little of women are coming with such schemes for making them independent, but mass awareness can help a lot to improve their economic condition.
- The government should take initiative to organise for the awareness programmes and skill development programmes on the development schemes to the tribal. Government would also be identifying the real cause for failures of the implement of the development schemes.
- The financial assistance for the Tribal's under various schemes of government's plans should also have been made to give importance to their specific needs.
- To increase the school attendance for the Tribal's, the government should take initiative through PPP model.
- NGOs and social activists can play to help in bridging the gap between traditional and modern education system.
- The tribal peoples must have the liberty to transfer their indigenous knowledge to their next generation. This is the very important for the future of mankind. Thus, it may be seen that the government are well aware of the importance of the rights of tribal peoples as to their indigenous knowledge and that they have a right to transfer to the next generation.

18. Conclusion

After comprehensive study of tribal people of district of Koch Bihar it can be say that the prevailing conditions need to be changed. They must became aware of their situation and they also need to understand the need of modern and scientific development to take place in their life. However, the situation has been changing as most of the semi urban areas have noted significant shift in professional choice. In case of health, it has been identified that the tribal peoples use both traditional and modern care facilities like health centres, hospitals etc.

The government is providing large scale financial help to the tribal people by which they are going to solve their financial difficulties. Government is doing enough for the benefit of tribal people. The tribal peoples are growing in numbers all across the Koch Bihar district as well as the state of West Bengal. It has been find out from the earlier studies that the position of the tribal peoples in Koch Bihar is in a very vulnerable state as is the position in west Bengal in areas like culture, social identification and tribal traditional knowledge. Thus, district should take up appropriate measures to address these challenges prevailing amongst the tribal peoples of Koch Bihar. It is noticed that the tribal participation in various cultural activities have increased over times, and government is supporting and organising more of such programs.

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