

CHAPTER-IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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9.1 Summary

The present research work attempts to study the socio-economic condition of the tribal people of Dakshin Dinajpur. Basically, Dakshin Dinajpur is one of the small and marginal districts of West Bengal and the marginalised section of this district is the Scheduled Tribe population which accounts for about 16.43% of district's total population. The framers of our Constitution aimed to develop the tribal people so that they can join the larger section of the society within a definite period. Hence, different developmental programmes have been taken for their development since independence. Besides, there are several Constitutional provisions and facilities especially meant to support the tribal people. In spite of all this supports and assistance, are the tribal people developed? Is the target achieved in this district? There is no definite answer as proper idea about the present condition of this huge population of this district is lacking because no systematic study on their socio-economic condition has been conducted. Here, lies the relevance of this study. The present research work aims to study the socio-economic condition of the tribal population as well as to assess their level of overall development. It also attempts to highlight the inter-tribal disparity, if any, in their social, economic and health condition.

The present study is based on seven tribal communities i.e. Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bedia, Mahali, Mal Pahariya and Lohara. Before entering into the main discussion, the study first represents a brief introduction about the racial characteristics, language, religion, traditional homeland, occupation, rules of inheritance of property of the seven tribal groups and the geographical characteristics of the district of Dakshin Dinajpur.

The present research work attempts to assess the social condition of the tribal people of Dakshin Dinajpur, which is discussed here considering their language, religion, use of traditional dresses & jewelries, food habits, housing condition, basic amenities, educational attainment and experience to social discrimination. It is observed that presently the tribal people have started to shift from their traditional mother tongue to the regional non-tribal language. Likewise, the use of traditional dresses and jewelries has been reduced drastically. The majority of the respondents recognise them either as Hindu or as Christian

and only 30.52% profess the tribal religion. All these actually indicate that the tribal people are losing their identity by losing their cultural distinctiveness. However, the cultural distinctiveness is selected as one of the criteria for defining the tribe. Their tribal identity is very much essential for their own existence. The study reveals that the tribal people are moving away from their tradition and they are imitating the non-tribes. They are adopting the practice of early marriage, dowry system which actually lowers the position of the tribal women. Earlier, there was no preference for male child among the selected tribal groups. But, now many of them have expressed their son preference. The tribes of this district are also backward in educational attainment. Education is considered as the key to the development for the backward community. At present, the tribal students are availing different facilities in school. Besides scholarship, books, copies, school dress, bi-cycle etc. are distributed at free of cost. Mid-day-meal is provided in schools so that not a single child remains hungry. Yet their educational attainment is poor and dropout is still continuing. The tribal students mostly drop their education due to lack of interest. This reveals that providing mere monetary and material incentives is not sufficient for the tribal children rather attention should be paid to provide quality education from the very beginning and in this respect the primary education is the most crucial. Unfortunately it is most often neglected in India.

Majority of the tribal people is living in the *kancha* house which does not provide protection from bitter cold in winter or scorching heat in summer. Only 35.64% tribal families have separate kitchen and the rest cook either in veranda or in open space. 67.77% families have sanitation facility and the rest defecate in open space. Till now a major part of the tribal people is not availing the basic amenities like water within premises, purified drinking water, proper drainage facility, safe source of fuel etc. Electricity is reached in almost 81.90% households but that is not enough to lighten this backward segment of this district. Immediate steps must be taken so that the other essential amenities will be provided to them which will help to improve the level of living of this people.

It is evident from the present research work that the economic condition of the tribal people of this district is very poor. Though the work participation rate is higher among them and majority of the households have at least two earning members yet their monthly income is much lower. The monthly income of about 80% families is not above Rs. 10,000. So, they face extreme difficulties to bear the household expenditure with this scanty income.

Actually, majority of the workers work as wage labourers who do not have any fixed income. They are mostly marginal workers and remain unemployed for half of the year. The traditional occupation of majority of the selected groups is cultivation which is their area of expertise. It is observed that those who are working as cultivators are also not in much better condition as more than 1/3rd of the total sample households have no agricultural land and those who have land, majority of them have small landholdings. They have started to apply the modern techniques in agriculture but are still not acquainted with the large-sized machines, store house etc. In Dakshin Dinajpur, there is no large-scale industry which limits the scope of employment. The cattle rearing and poultry farming are very common among the tribes which support the tribal families to some extent. However, it does not reduce their dependence on debts as majority of the tribal people incur loan even to bear the daily expenditure. So, their poor economic condition adversely affects their overall level of living. Hence, it is high time to provide economic support not only in the form of monetary incentives but also the certainty of work and standard wage to this tribal people.

The health status of the tribal people of this district is comparatively better than their social and economic condition. Though the occurrences of illness are still higher among the tribes yet they have started to accept the modern health care facilities. It is observed that the Government health care facilities if available in nearby are accepted by the respondents. Otherwise they depend on the quacks and their traditional healers. But, there are 13.84% respondents who have started to depend solely on the doctors leaving their traditional health care system. Similarly, the maternal health care facilities like Antenatal check-up, IFA supplements distributed by the Government are accepted by a large number of respondents. But, the other important aspects of reproductive health like the Postnatal check-up, provision of nutritious diet for the pregnant women, institutional delivery are not arranged by most of the families. The probable reason is their unawareness or poor economic condition. That is why they fail to arrange proper health facilities for their family. For the development of the health status of these people, the Government health care delivery system should be improved so that the doctors are made available in the nearby health centre as well as the awareness campaigns should be conducted so that they feel encouraged to avail the benefit of modern health care facilities leaving their traditional one.

The social, economic and health condition are the three pillars for assessing the level of development of the tribal people. To know the level of overall development of the tribal

people of this district, a Development Index is prepared combining the three separate indices of social, economic and health. The Development Index shows that about 70.24% tribal people of this district are still at the lower level of development considering the selected social, economic and health indicators.

The result of Social and Economic Indices shows that there is significant differences among the seven selected tribal communities regarding their social and economic condition but the Health Index shows that there is no significant difference among the seven tribal groups in their health condition. Finally, the Development Index reveals significant difference among the seven selected tribal communities regarding their level of overall development.

The study, thus, makes it clear that even after several decades of independence, 70.24% of the tribal people of this district still remain at the lower step of development. The remaining 27.30% have reached at the moderate level of development and only 2.46% have attained the status of high level of development. So, the district is far away from the target of development of all the tribal people. Hence, the tribes of this district require more support not only from the Government but also from all sections of society until the whole segment attains the high status of development.

9.2 Test of Hypothesis

The first hypothesis of the present research work is that *the housing condition of the tribal population of the study area is very poor.*

The construction of Index of Housing condition helps to test this hypothesis. The higher is the index value, the better is the housing condition and vice-versa. This index is developed considering seven important variables (Table 7.1) which helps to determine the housing condition of a family. The index values ranging between 0-0.400 refer to low level of housing condition while 0.401-0.600 refer to moderate level of housing condition and values ranging between 0.601-1 refer to high level of housing condition. The index value (Table 9.1) shows that 59.91% families belong to the category of low level of housing condition and only 11.56% families presently avail high level of housing condition. Thus, it can be concluded that the housing condition of majority of the tribal population is very poor.

Table 9.1 Result of Index of Housing Condition

Tribal Groups	Percentage Distribution			Total
	0-0.400	0.401-0.600	0.601-1	
Santal	61.67	27.38	10.95	420
Oraon	64.90	24.83	10.26	302
Munda	48.89	33.33	17.78	90
Bedia	48.04	37.25	14.71	102
Mahali	41.46	39.02	19.51	41
Mal Pahariya	56.25	37.50	6.25	48
Lohara	76.92	17.31	5.77	52
Total	59.91	28.53	11.56	1055

Computed by researcher

The second hypothesis is that *the tribal people of the study area are backward in educational achievements*.

To test this hypothesis, the Education Index is developed where the categories of educational attainment are scored (Table 7.1) and considering the educational qualification of all the family members, the index is prepared. Based on the values of Educational Index, the sample households are divided into three categories (Table 9.2). The values again ranging from 0-0.400 refer to the low level of educational development, 0.401-0.600 refer to the moderate level of educational development and 0.601-1 refer to the high level of educational development. Unfortunately, 90.24% of the total sample families belong to the category of low level of educational development and only 1.14% families belong to the high level of educational development. Thus, it can be concluded that the tribal people of this district are backward in educational achievements.

Table 9.2 Result of Index of Education

Tribal Groups	Percentage Distribution			Total
	0-0.400	0.401-0.600	0.601-1	
Santal	91.19	7.62	1.19	420
Oraon	87.09	11.26	1.66	302
Munda	90.00	8.89	1.11	90
Bedia	87.25	11.76	0.98	102
Mahali	92.68	7.32	0.00	41
Mal Pahariya	100.00	0.00	0.00	48
Lohara	96.15	3.85	0.00	52
Total	90.24	8.63	1.14	1055

Computed by researcher

The third hypothesis proposes that *the economic condition of the tribal population indicates their poor status though the work participation rate is more among them.*

The economic index is prepared considering six variables related to economic condition of tribal people to test this hypothesis. The result of Economic Index (Table 7.4) shows that 82.18% families belong to the lower category of economic development and only 2.18% families have reached to the level of high economic development. It is already discussed before that the work participation rate is highest among the tribal people compared to the work participation rate of the Scheduled Caste population and the General population of the district (Table 5.2). Yet, it is observed that 82.18% out of the total sample households belong to the category of lower economic development which indicates the poor economic status of the tribal people of this district and thus proves the third hypothesis.

The fourth hypothesis proposes that *the occurrences of illness are more among the tribal population of the study area.*

To test this hypothesis, the Index of occurrences of illness is constructed. The tribal people of this district is suffering from different diseases, ranging from fever, cough and cold to chronic diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, leprosy etc. Each member of a family is scored on the basis of the type of diseases (Table 7.1) they have suffered in the last two years and finally, considering the occurrences of illness among all the members of a family, this index is constructed. The lower is the value of index, higher is the occurrences of illness among the sample families. The table 9.3 shows that 52.99% families belong to the lower category of the index which supports that the occurrences of illness is more among the tribal people of the study area.

Table 9.3 Result of Index of Occurrences of Illness

Tribal Groups	Percentage Distribution			Total
	0-0.400	0.401-0.600	0.601-1	
Santal	48.10	38.57	13.33	420
Oraon	55.30	34.44	10.26	302
Munda	57.78	31.11	11.11	90
Bedia	47.06	44.12	8.82	102
Mahali	63.41	29.27	7.32	41
Mal Pahariya	72.92	22.92	4.17	48
Lohara	55.77	30.77	13.46	52
Total	52.99	35.83	11.18	1055

Computed by researcher

The fifth hypothesis assumes that *there is little variation in the socio-economic condition of the tribal communities of the study area* and the sixth hypothesis proposes that the *achievement of tribal development is poor in the study area as they are still backward*. The construction of Development Index (DI) helps to test the sixth hypothesis and further application of ANOVA considering the values of DI tests the fifth hypothesis.

The Development Index is constructed combining the Social, Economic and Health Indices by giving them equal weightage. This index rightly expresses the level of tribal development in this district. The higher DI value refers to the higher tribal development and vice-versa. It is evident from the table 7.8 that majority (70.24%) of the tribal people belongs to the category of low level of development which indicates that they are still in backward condition as well as reflects the poor achievement of the tribal development in this district. Thus, it supports the sixth hypothesis of this research work.

The application of ANOVA considering the DI value helps to test the fifth hypothesis. It is already stated that the Development Index helps to assess the overall socio-economic development of the tribal people of this district. The result of ANOVA (Table 7.9) rejects the null hypothesis and thus accepts the alternative hypothesis of significant difference in the socio-economic condition of the seven tribal communities of this district.

The seventh hypothesis assumes that the *number of beneficiaries of different government facilities and schemes is less among the tribal population of the study area*.

Table 5.52 represents the percentage of beneficiaries of different Government schemes and facilities among the seven selected tribal communities of this district. It is observed that Government assistance for construction of latrine is received by 45.50% families while only 18.86% families have received the assistance for construction of house and 25.31% families have received the vest land distributed by Government. Among the different educational facilities, stipend is received by at least one member of 53.09% families while the hostel facilities for tribal student is received by at least one member of 26.01% families and seat reservation in higher education is received by at least one member of 13.86% families. Among the economic assistance, it is observed that job through MGNREGA is received by at least one worker of 44.09% families and reservation facility in Government job is received by at least one member of only 5.78% families. Thus, it is evident from the above discussion that the number of beneficiaries of different Government schemes and facilities is less among the tribal people of the study area.

9.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that a large segment of the tribal people of Dakshin Dinajpur is still leading a backward life. The present study has assessed the socio-economic condition of the tribal people of this district and it is found that 70.24% out of the total sample households remain at the lower level of development and only 2.46% families have reached at the high level of development while the rest of the families belong to the moderate level of development. It is really upsetting that the different Government schemes, Constitutional provisions and facilities meant for the Scheduled Tribe population have not succeeded to improve the status of all the tribal people of this district. So, it is high time to take the issue of tribal development seriously. The study clearly indicates that mere Constitutional provisions and safeguards are not enough for the development of tribal people, otherwise after several decades of getting such facilities, this people will surely be developed. So, time has come to focus on the implementation of these policies. There are lots of Governmental facilities and provisions for the tribe. But, it is observed that they lack the awareness about these facilities. So, most of the time, they cannot avail those facilities. Hence, awareness should be spread about these facilities through regular publicity campaign. Besides, the steps of availing different Governmental facilities should be simplified so that they can access those facilities easily without being puzzled with the complex steps of Government schemes. Besides, the study strongly recommends that the Government assistance for the tribal people should not be in quantitative term only, rather focus should be laid on qualitative supports. It should be remembered that providing scholarship and material supports are not enough for the educational development of the tribal people, rather focus should also be laid on providing quality education; similarly, seat reservation in education or job is not enough, rather steps should be taken to increase their efficiency so that they can avail these provisions. It is the moral duty of the Government as well as the larger society to provide quality supports to the tribal people so that this people may really develop in the true sense of the term and join the mainstream to participate in the country's journey towards development. Only then the all-round development of the country will be possible.