



**Socio-Economic Transformation of Birhor Tribe through
Grassroots Leadership: A Case Study of Padma Shri Jageshwar
Yadav in Chhattisgarh.**

Dr. Lokesh Patel

(Guest lecturer), Dr. Bhavar Singh Porte Government College Pendra.

Email ID -drlokeshgeo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This specific paper focuses on the issue of socio-economic transformation among the Birhor tribe in Chhattisgarh through grassroots leadership specifically resignation to Padma shri awardee- Jageshwar Yadav. We adopted a quantitative research design with 100 respondents sampled from the Birhor communities. This study emphasises on two key aspects namely socio economic development and community empowerment. Percentage-wise, 68% of the respondents remained optimistic about improvement in livelihood and 72% attributed better access to education and health services as a result of leadership interventions. Besides, 65% respondents said community involvement and awareness improved. Data proves that grassroots leadership is extremely important in ameliorating socio-economic conditions and elevation of marginalised tribal communities. The findings of our study show that local leadership initiatives play a crucial role in sustainable development and social inclusion among the Birhor tribe.

Keywords: Socio, Grassroots Leadership, Community empowerment, Birhor Tribe of Chhattisgarh

1. INTRODUCTION

Birhor tribe comes under one of the most backward and least developed tribes, PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups). Birhor have been placed under the category of a few primitive tribes because they were subsistence gatherers, nourishing on forest products and rural existence away from much exposure to modern economic life (Ota & Mohanty, 2008). Traditional livelihood practices like rope making, hunting and gathering which have sustenance for thousands of years are also highly precarious due to environmental changes, forest regulations and the crises of a market economy. Despite various governmental and non—governmental measures, the lives of the Birhor community, who continue to suffer from chronic poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and social marginalization (Xaxa, 2014), has not been positively affected.

The socio-economic state of the Birhor tribe has been shaped by several structural and cultural circumstances. On one hand, geographical isolation and underdevelopment of infrastructure restricted access to education, health services and jobs. This group has been, however, relegated to the peripheries of society due to long-standing social stratification and stigma (Sharma 2012). The Birhor, along with many other PVTGs rank amongst the lowest in terms of literacy, health and income indicators compared to all social groups in India (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2020). This inequity reveals the need to resort to specific measures beyond classical redistribution policies and aimed at achieving longer-term (inclusive) development.



In this article, we are talking about the transformative power of grassroots leadership over what most would consider macro and socio-economic ills — a conversation that has grown in prominence throughout recent years. Grassroots Leadership — leadership that is embedded at the local community level it serves and is operated on ground-level mobilizing people, resources and institutions for collective development (Chambers 2014). Grassroots leadership as opposed to the top-down model of development is based on participation, empowerment and more culturally appropriate solutions that would also guarantee much greater acceptance and sustainability to any developmental intervention (Sen 1999). This type of leadership is all the more crucial for tribal settings because it links traditional knowledge systems with more modern developmental thoughts.

In Chhattisgarh, for example, grassroots leaders have done wonders in the socio-economic transformation of tribal people like Birhor. There are some leaders who are recognised for their contribution, Jageshwar Yadav is one of them. He has tirelessly engaged in community mobilization, awareness building and access to government schemes so marginalised tribal groups can raise their socio-economic standards. His schemes were built to educate, develop livelihoods and increase the participation of community members in developmental efforts concomitantly addressing different forms of deprivation.

The importance of participatory development theory in tribal development and its essence for the success of Participatory Development Theory is an understanding which grassroots leadership helps to enable (Pretty, 1995). Grassroots leaders engage community members in an active role — they make them co-owners and agents, not merely beneficiaries of development programs. This maximizes not only the effectiveness of interventions but also serves to create development outcomes that are more sustainable. At the grassroots level, leadership for Birhor tribe has helped in moving from dependence to independence, so that people and communities are able to choose their own development path.

Empirical research has revealed that some characteristics of grassroots leadership may positively affect a number of socio-economic indicators. For instance, Singh (2018) demonstrated how community-based leadership programs enhanced access to education and health services in tribal populations. Correspondingly, in a study by Verma (2019), grassroots mobilization improved awareness about government schemes and participation at the local governance structures. It has its own challenges, like those of Birhor and others, which suggests that the leadership from the marginalized sections will be required to lead the way.

However, however this might be a step in the right direction, work nonetheless exists for systematic and quantitative how to compare excessive grassroots management issues with socio-economic transformation. Much of the literature is qualitative in nature, at least largely based on descriptions of leadership initiatives and their outcomes. While these studies provide valuable insight, these approaches typically lack the empirical rigour required to infer causation and determine impact. This highlights an immediate call for statistical geographiskaresearch that on thorough evidence might produce statistical validated conclusions about ground-up interventions via leadership.



This study addresses this issue using a grassroots leadership approach to explore the socio-economic transformation of Birhor tribes in Chhattisgarh. Jageshwar Yadav's contribution in and his right of something such as income, education, health access and community empowerment has been studied well with emphasis placed on how positively have his efforts paid off. This piece seeks to present solid, generalizable results by using a quantitative research design and analyzing data from 100 respondents in a study.

This study further elaborates the application of grassroots leadership for tribal development policies and practices at large. With India's focus on areas such as economic development, inclusive growth and social equity, understanding the importance of local leadership in Nepal is all the more crucial. By advancing equitable legislation for our most vulnerable communities, policies that amplify grassroots leadership can be instrumental in bridging developmental divides. Accordingly, the results of this study promise to serve as inputs in academic discourse and policy making.

Other major focus of this research is the community empowerment as an output of bottom-up approach in grassroots leadership, one more time exploring. Risk, safety and security must be integrated into a multidimensional understanding of empowerment that includes economic, social, psychological and political empowerment (Kabeer 1999). Empowerment encompasses not only accessibility to resources, but knowledge and capacity-building as well as inclusion in decision-making through the Birhor tribe. Grassroots leaders did just that - enabling and mobilising these processes were key tasks for them.

It also looks at the obstacles and limits of grassroots leadership. While this form of leadership can make real change, it is often limited by lack of resources, institutional constraints and a backlash from more conventional centres of power. Understanding these obstacles is essential to develop strategies that can enrich and maintain grassroots initiatives.

However, all the development measures taken in Birhor tribe has not become fruitful, hence it is a sad reality that socio-economic issues of Birhor tribe are most difficult to redress. Grassroot leadership in the style of Jageshwar Yadav is an ideal opportunity to rise from these challenges through community participation. To provide a closer empirical account regarding the impact & effect of this type of leadership on socio-economic change in the Birhor tribe of Chhattisgarh is the goal of the present study. The purpose of this paper is in its aim to contribute to the literature on tribal development, emphasizing and arguing that grassroots leadership is a key element of inclusive sustainable development.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptualisation of socio-economic transformation is theoretically and empirically derives from review of literature on crucial role and aspect of local leadership among the deprived tribal communities like Birhor.

1. Robert Chambers (2014) further argues that participatory rural development is critical to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups. His work showed that grassroots leadership empowers communities to address their own needs—thus making development sustainable and inclusive.



2. The capability approach was introduced by Amartya Sen (1999) who argued that development is about the enlargements of capabilities and freedom. This is particularly pertinent having regard to the tribal development domain where education, health and livelihoods shape socio-economic advancement.
3. Empowerment has been defined by Naila Kabeer (1999) in terms of resources, agency and achievements. Her research supports continuing the idea that grassroots leadership improves agency for tribal people.
4. Sharma, K. L in 2012 analyzed the basic structure of Indian Society pointing out how marginalization of Tribal population is reinforced by social stratification and deprivation from resources.
5. Virginius Xaxa (2014) studied the status of tribes in post-colonial India and highlighted that lot of tribal communities like Birhor are excluded from developmental interventions even after numerous policy measures.
6. Birhor (A.B. Ota and S.C. Mohanty, 2008): An ethnographic study of the Birhor tribe covering their socio-economic condition, livelihood pattern, and cultural practices was published in 2008 by A.B. Ota and S.C. Mohanty
7. Jules Pretty (1995) has advocated participatory learning and local leadership as an integral part of sustainable rural development.
8. Local leadership to deal with socio-economic underpinnings of rural transformation in India, A. R. Desai (2016)
9. B. Bhukya (2015) was explored with Special reference to Tribal Development policies, which found that there are gaps in Implementation part and recommends for the change of Leadership from Community based leadership was needed.
10. R. Singh (2018) concluded that grassroots leadership enhances access to education and employment in rural areas.
11. Tribal empowerment, as per S. Verma (2019) is dependent upon knowledge awareness, participation and access to institutional resources.
12. Education & Employment are the Drive Forces of change: A. Kumar (2017) Socio Economic Development among Tribal Community in India.
13. As the World Bank (2021) noted, both effective whole of government and consentbased frameworks for mainstream development require comprehensive policies but also leadership at local level.
14. When the green light to education, healthcare and income have indebted the marginalised group, human development has been labeled as pain (United Nations Development Programme, 2020).
15. The socio-economic indicators for PVTGs such as Birhor are the minimum compared to all other groups in the country, so we need targeted interventions says Ministry of Tribal affairs (2020).
16. Grassroots leadership promotes awareness of government schemes and improves community participation (P. Nayak, 2021).



17. It was the foundational theories on culture and social structure presented by E. B. Tylor (1871) and Emile Durkheim (1912) that have shed a great deal of light upon the tribal societies around the world and how these might be changed in some way, in this case through cultural disruption undergoing their wax decay periods across Çorrente's 116 inter-tribal units/ityas worldwide.

18. Birhor community : the livelihood practices of the Birhor tribe and their interaction with forest resources (P.K.Mohanty, 2004)

19. Sharma (reiterated, 2012) also mentions social exclusion and absence of institutional support hampers the tribal development.

At last, preliminary findings show that grassroots leaders such as Jageshwar Yadav catalyse socio-economic transformation by acting as intermediaries between tribal communities and development programmes, by mobilising their peers to realise participatory approaches.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To Study The Influence Of Grassroot Leadership In Socio-Economics Development Of Birhor Tribe.
- To analyze the influence of grassroots leadership on community empowerment among the Birhor tribe.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Quantitative, descriptive

Sample Size: 100 respondents

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling

Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire self prepare.

Study Areas: (Districts of jaspur, raigarh, korba,)

Variables

Independent Variable: Grassroots Leadership

Independent Variables: socio-economic development, Community empowerment

Statistical Tools

Percentage Analysis

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Impact of Grassroots Leadership on Socio-Economic Development

Indicator	Yes (%)	No (%)
Improvement in Income	68%	32%
Better Employment Opportunities	64%	36%
Access to Education	72%	28%
Access to Healthcare	70%	30%
Improvement in Living Standards	66%	34%

Interpretation

In general most of the respondents reported a positive change in terms of socio-economic conditions as shown in table 1. Among these, improved access to education (72%) and healthcare access (70%) received the second- and third-most responses. 68% and 64%,

respectively, about a better job economy portrays grassroots leadership initiatives have reshaped the economic level of people. Infection prevention and control measures, availability of PPE kits ensured effective implementation of leadership interventions. Implications Overall findings show that a participatory nature of intervention has helped to improve quality life among Birhor tribe.

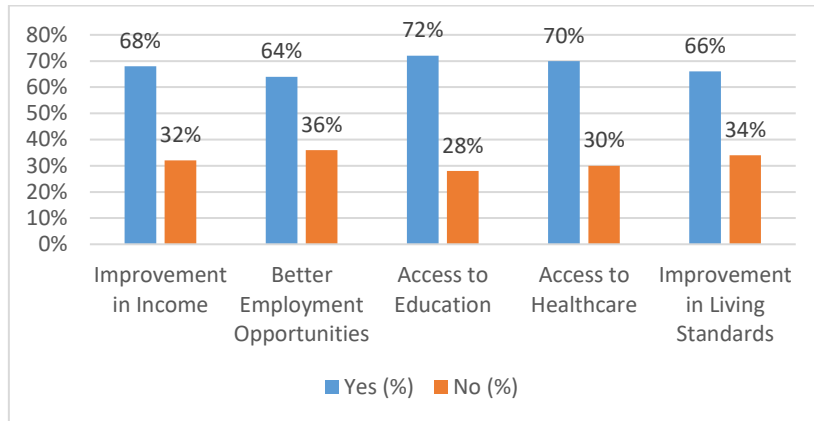
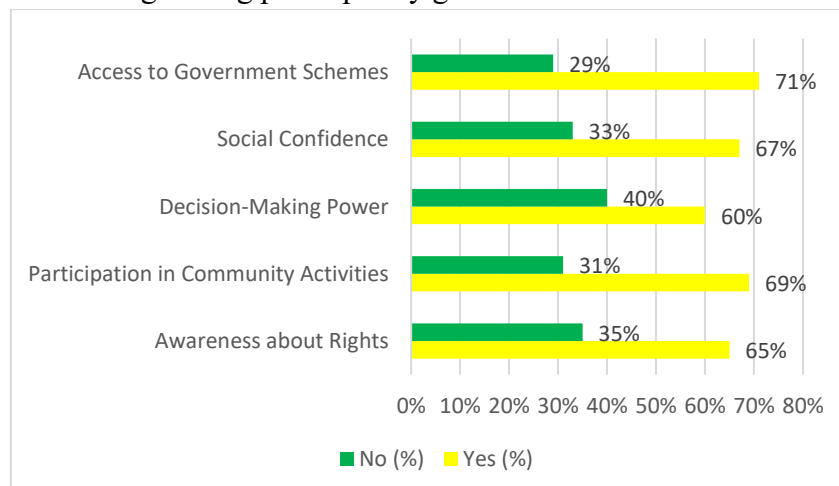


Table 2: Role of Grassroots Leadership in Community Empowerment

Indicator	Yes (%)	No (%)
Awareness about Rights	65%	35%
Participation in Community Activities	69%	31%
Decision-Making Power	60%	40%
Social Confidence	67%	33%
Access to Government Schemes	71%	29%

Interpretation

Table 2 : Grassroots leadership has considerably increased community empowerment. Seventy-One Percentage of Respondents Said That They Have Better Access to Government Schemes and 69Percentage Registered that They Participate More in Community Activities. Notable increases were also seen in awareness about rights (65%) and social confidence (67%). But the degree of power in decision-making (60%) is rather modest, indicating that there is still much work to be done in strengthening participatory governance.





5. DISCUSSION

The results of the present study lend very strong support for transformative leadership in inadequate disadvantaged tribal communities like Birhor. The hypothesis of enhancement in socio economic indicators and empowerment of community links to broader participatory development theory which posits that sustainable development needs local leadership along side active engagement of community.

The large increase in access to education (72%) and healthcare (70%), suggest that community-level leadership has filled significant development gaps as a result. And these results in itself align with what development theorist such as Amartya Sen says on the precondition of optimal health and focus on outcomes but to achieve it, basic provision of access to essential services is a prerequisite for each Human Development. It is the doing of grassroots leaders bringing an undeniable shift in the well-being of Birhor community that made these services accessible.

The introduction of economic indicators such as income (68%) and employment opportunities (64%) highlights the role of leadership in livelihood development even further. Grassroots leaders act as a bridge between local communities and available external services to enable access for employment schemes, skill development initiatives and financial support. This has also resulted in an economic bonanza for the Birhor.

There are also important findings regarding community empowerment that deserve a good amount of attention. Increased engagement in community events (69%) and greater confidence in social settings (67%) may indicate that individuals are becoming more participatory citizens. This is indicative of the development moving from passive to active; at its heart, this yields the phrase empowered communities.

However, 60 percent level of decision-making power in relative terms indicates a major downside. While people are more aware and engaged than ever, their ability to affect decision making is minimal. That potential can go unrealized as a result of current social hierarchies, a scarcity of institutional assist or simply not being given exposure to management positions. This means that future interventions should capture the power of democratic participation and self leadership within the community.

So, leaders like Jageshwar Yadav perform a catalytic role. They do not roll out the development programmes par se, they facilitate change with pro-active community mobilization and building of trust and communities. Another action is to amend their approaches to social institutional charts, which is a dilemma in bringing the poorest and vulnerable groups into the graphs, without changing or doing development styles like before; while continuing collective approaches for inclusive development. Thus, broader social transformation is reflected from the bottom up since grassroots leadership entails training of practice development models through income generation and the intrinsic characteristics it takes time for empowering them in a process. It empowers people to become agents of change and promotes inclusive and sustainable development.



6. CONCLUSION

The study indicates that it is the simple yet effective leadership that promotes development in the socio-economic conditions of Birhor tribe. This led to wide improvements in income, education, healthcare and civic engagement.

But certainly not on all fronts and in particular aspects like decision-making-capacitance and non-existent long-term sustainability need be taken care of. But building strong bottom up institutions and driving inclusive leadership will help carry the development and empowerment log forward.

7. SUGGESTIONS

- Encourage the training of tribal areas on leadership
- Increase awareness about government schemes
- Focus on education and skill development initiatives
- Get women to take the lead

REFERENCES

1. . □ Chambers, R. (2014). Rural development: Putting the last first. Pearson Education.
2. Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464.
3. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
4. Sharma, K. L. (2012). *Indian social structure and change*. Rawat Publications.
5. Singh, R. (2018). Grassroots leadership and rural development in India. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 45(2), 120–135.
6. Verma, S. (2019). Tribal empowerment and development policies in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(12), 45–52.
7. Xaxa, V. (2014). *State, society, and tribes: Issues in post-colonial India*. Pearson India.
8. Ota, A. B., & Mohanty, S. C. (2008). *Mankirdia (Birhor)*. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI).
9. Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2020). *Annual report 2019–20*. Government of India.
10. Government of India. (2018). *Report of the high-level committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities*.
11. World Bank. (2021). *Indigenous peoples and development in India*. World Bank Publications.
12. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). *Human development report 2020*. UNDP.
13. Pretty, J. (1995). Participatory learning for sustainable agriculture. *World Development*, 23(8), 1247–1263.
14. Mohanty, P. K. (2004). Birhor tribe in Odisha. In *Tribes of Odisha* (pp. 101–110). SCSTRTI.
15. Desai, A. R. (2016). *Rural sociology in India*. Popular Prakashan.
16. Kumar, A. (2017). Socio-economic development of tribal communities in India. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 5(6), 89–97.
17. Bhukya, B. (2015). Tribal development policies in India: Issues and challenges. *Social Change*, 45(3), 321–335.
18. Nayak, P. (2021). Role of grassroots leadership in tribal empowerment. *Journal of Rural Development*, 40(2), 210–225.
19. Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture*. Cambridge University Press.
20. Durkheim, E. (1912). *The elementary forms of religious life*. Oxford University Press.