

Jatindra-Rajendra Mahavidyalaya



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P.O.--Amtala



Dist. – Murshidabad



Pin Code-742121

SENSITIZING STUDENTS ON TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF BAGHACHHARA SARDAR

An extension program by the NSS unit of Jatindra Rajendra Mahavidyalaya, on the Mal Paharia tribe of Baghachhara Sardar Para in Nowda Block of Murshidabad district, addresses a rich cultural heritage of the tribal people. NSS unit brings out the cultural heritage of the village and sensitizes stakeholders. People of the village belong to the Mal Paharia tribal community.

Their ancestors were residing primarily around the Rajmahal hills in the state of Jharkhand. They are known for their distinctive cultural practices, including unique traditions, rituals, and language. They speak Mal Paharia language and use Devanagari scripts for writing. The language is also known as Mal Pahoria, Malto, Malti, Paharia, Parsi, and Mal Pahariya. Due to pre-independent social and political segregation and abuses, their ancestors fled from their geographical areas for the betterment of their future generations. Baghachhara Sardar Para is the village where they found to be their new motherland. Around 175 people live here with almost 52 families. They have faced challenges such as marginalization and lack of access to basic amenities, although efforts are now being carried out by the governments to improve their living conditions and preserve their rich cultural heritage.

ASSESSMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

Community Needs Assessment

The Mal Paharia tribal village of Baghachhara Sardar Para faces a range of challenges, and their priorities and aspirations reflect their ongoing struggle for development, recognition, and cultural preservation.

We have found some of the current challenges, priorities, and aspirations as the following:

Challenges

- The Mal Paharias of Baghachhara Sardar Para often faced marginalization and discrimination.
- They depend on traditional agricultural practices and cannot afford modern farming techniques for their economic sustainability.
- Since Amtala is located in a backward area of the district, this village has limited access to healthcare facilities.
- Awareness about health issues is a significant challenge for the community.
- Community has a low literacy rate.
- Their cultural identity and language – is not promoted by the local panchayat.
- Lack of concrete roads and clean water facilities affects their daily lives and economic activities.

Priorities

- Sustainable agriculture practices and skill development.
- Promoting literacy among children and adults is crucial for their future generations.
- promoting health awareness and hygiene
- Concrete Roads within the village for better connectivity and clean water for villagers.
- Preservation of unique identity with cultural heritage, traditions, Parsi or Mal Pahari language.

Aspirations

- Aspirations of their voices to be heard in decision-making processes.
- Aspirations for holistic development in attunement with their cultural values and traditions.
- Empowering their community members through education, skill development, and leadership opportunities.
- Aspirations for quality healthcare.

Their priorities and aspirations can be realised once their challenges are addressed with a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and the community itself.

Cultural Sensitivity:

The NSS unit reached out to the village and tried to learn about the cultural norms, traditions, and values of the Mal Paharia tribe to sensitize students to be respectful towards the community. Though the Mal Paharia tribe, like many other tribal communities in India, traditionally follow their own customary laws and dispute resolution mechanisms, these tribal villagers follow the formal court systems.

- The community life, inheritance, property disputes, marriages, and social conduct of Mal Paharias are typically governed through their customary laws that have evolved over generations.
- Elders, village councils and community leaders create a harmonious community through their knowledge of customary laws, wisdom, and ability to reconcile conflicting parties.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- To sensitize students about the richness of the tribal people and their development in the field of health, education, livelihood, and culture.
- To study challenges and issues tribal communities face in their daily life.
- To aware tribal women how to improve their healthcare access, sanitation practices, and intake of nutritious food.
- To make them aware about educational opportunities, literacy programs and vocational training.
- To promote sustainable agricultural practices and ways to income-generating activities.
- To provide an Inclusive Approach to involve community members in college cultural programs to preserve their rich cultural heritage.
- Encourage continuous learning to community members
- Impart Cultural Integrity among students.

Mal Paharia community people are very rare around this area and their ethnic culture, festivals and rituals are on the brink of extinction. They mingled with the dominant Bengali culture and observed festivals like durgapuja, kalipuja, diwali etc. Their rituals of marriage and other ceremonies are closely similar to that of Bengali culture except some cases like *marupa pujo*. They regard it as showing respect to the departed soul. Mal Paharia community people are extremely poor in this village, and are conscious about the need for the education of their children. Thus, they send their children to Baghachhara Primary school, Amtala Boys school, Amtala girls school and to our college. Though the older generation wants to save their language and culture, the younger generation do not feel they can keep up their ethnic linguistic identity. Hence the young generation people have shifted to the dominant language and culture of the area.

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