

## **6752 Families of Forest Villages: Without Ration Card**

In some district of Uttar Pradesh the existence of people living in forest areas has been denied by the state. As even after almost 55 years of the independence, thousands of the families living in the forest villages of the state of U.P. are struggling to prove their existence in the State.

A study conducted in the 35 forest villages of 4 districts [Bahraich, Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Pilibheet] of the U.P. is clearly indicating that in spite of the historical background of their existence and active participation in the freedom struggle of India, 6752 families of forest villages are still waiting for their recognition as citizen of the country. They are not being considered as citizen of the village panchayat, hence ration cards are not being provided to them and thus their access to any of the Government welfare scheme has been denied. Their names are not included in the Kutumb( Family) Register and therefore their address and identity can not be certify and without any proof of residence they can not apply for any Government or Non-government job. Their land is now in the hands of Forest department and this state owned contractor of the forest continuously harassing and exploiting these poor communities.

It is not only the U.P. Forest Department or Corporation is exploiting them but also their rights are violated by the political system of the country. The self-interest of the political parties provided them voting rights for the election of state assembly and parliament but their voting rights in the Panchayats and local bodies are denied.

There is no legal or constitutional definition of the forest villages but these villages are settled in consent of the forest department and administration on the land, which is occupied by the forest department.

There are normally three types of the forest villages are in U.P. –

### **1. Forest Villages**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century British Government implemented permanent settlement of land for collection of more and more revenues and land holdings of the farmers gone In the control of the landlords [Jammendars] and most of the farmers became land less and large number of them became agricultural labor. The British's made announcements in the villages that those who need land can fallow them. A large number of the labors left their native places and they were provided vacant land in the forest areas where they can construct their houses and use the land for the agricultural purposes. The British Government also fixed land tax [lagan] @ 37 paisa per beegha( 0.5 acre). In return these people have to perform work like –

- Construction of roads in Jungle (Forest).
- Extinguishing the fire in Jungle (Forest).
- Plantation.
- Tree Cutting
- Help in hunting of the British officials

These villages are settled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Government at that time provided land but now the Forest Department is trying to destroy these villages.

## 2. Forest Villages – Tangia Basti ( Van Tangia Village)

The process of forest development through Tangia process was initiated during 1920 – 23 in the Gorakhpur region. The process was replication of the experiences of the forest development in the countries like Burma, Uganda, Shri Lanka, Kenya and Thailand etc.

Under the process the department provided half-acre land to every adult labor. He had to develop the land as per the prescribed process in a period of 5 years and after the development of particular forestland they were shifted to the other areas. This means they were the part of periodic displacement and settlement. Even after the independence there was no change in the position of Tangia labour they were continuously displaced after every five-year.

In the year 1980 the Tangias raised their voice for this exploitation but the forest department declared them illegal encroachers and since then the department is trying to destroy these villages. There are 17 and 5 such villages are in Maharajganj and Gorakhpur District respectively.

## 3. Forest Villages populated by the displaced due to disasters

The third of the forest villages are found during the study are those that are populated by the state or recognized agencies of the people who displaced because of the sever disasters due to flood in the different areas. There are 5 such villages are found in Bahraich, Pilibheet and Lakhimpur district.

There are around 150 such villages are in U.P. which can be defined as forest villages but information can be collected only about 35 villages. The population distributions in such villages were found as:

**Total Families – 6752**

Hindu Families – 87.4%

Muslim Families – 12.6%

**The coast wise distribution of these families are –**

**Schedule Tribe – 03.3%**

Schedule Caste – 63.8%

Backward Caste – 32.6%

General – 0.3%

***Education Level of These Families***

**Illiterate - 55.1%**

Primary - 28.6%

Jr. High School - 9.7%

High School - 4.8%

Intermediate - 2.4%

Graduate & above - 0.4%

***Women Education***

***Illiterate - 92.2%***

Primary - 4.3%

Jr. High School - 2.4%

High School - 0.8%

Intermediate - 0.3%

Graduate & above - 0.0

### ***Government Schemes in Forest Villages***

There is no government schemes are running in all these villages. This is mainly because these forest villages are on the land of forest department and Panchayat Raj system is not applicable there. There is no Government Scheme or program has been implemented in these villages. These villages normally affected by fire every year distort every year but there is no case where government provided any type of compensation to these poor people.

### ***Health Status in the Forest Villages***

Health of the people of these forest villages is in the hands of the quacks as government health facilities are not available for them. There is no question of primary health services or vaccination in these villages except the polio vaccination as these villages are covered in the pulse polio campaign.

Health status in these villages is as given below:

**Complete Vaccination [up to Measles] - 4.4%**

**Partial Vaccination  
[DPT/Polio] - 5.3%**

Deliveries by Trained Birth  
Attendant at homes - 0%

Deliveries by trained people - 1.3%

Infant Mortality Rate - 166 per 1000  
live births

Vaccination of Pregnant women -  
1.6%

[by Private Doctors]

### ***Political Status of these Villagers***

In all the 34 villages [except Chandia Hazara] this was found that eligible people of 32 villages except Hathyavahva and Baluvahia of Mithor development block of Maharajganj district are included in the voter list but they can cast their votes only for Assembly and Parliament elections but they are not eligible to exercise their voting rights in the election of local bodies.

The most unfortunate part of it is the community who develop the forest since generations for the forest department has been declared illegal encroachers by the forest department who generated huge revenue because of the rigorous efforts of these communities and revenue department do not maintain the records of these poor people.

Consequently there is no official arrangement that can certify their residence or their citizenship in the state or in the Country. In spite of historical and documented evidences and their contribution in the State their all the fundamental rights are denied. It compels these communities to struggle for their survival and existence.

There is an urgent need to address the problem of the people of the forest villages and to ensure their all the rights and entitlements for their survival so they can live like the common citizen of the country.

#### Location of Forest Villages Covered in the Study

S. No.	District	Block	Forest Village
1.	Bahraich	Mihirpurva	Bichia
2.			Bichia Bazaar
3.			Bawanipura
4.			Tedi [Kailash Nagar]
5.			Dhakia [Kailash Nagar]
6.			Nai Basti [Tedhia]
7.			Dfadar Gaudhi [Gokulpura]
8.			Murtiha
9.			Kailashpuri
10.			Nishad Nagar
11.			Katarnia Ghat
12.	Maharajganj	Laxmipur	Achalgarh
13.			Bailohidarra
14.			Kanpur Darra
15.			Tilkonia
16.		Michlaul	Campart No. 24
17.		Mithaura	Hathiyahawa

18.			Baluvahia
19.			Campart No. 26-27
20.			Campart No. 28
21.		Maharajganj	Beet
22.			Chetra
23.			Usarhawa
24.		Farenda	Khurampur
25.			Surpar
26.		Shayamdeurva	Daulatpur
27.			Bilasour
28.	Gorakhpur	Campeerganj	Bharibaisi
29.		Charganwa	Tilkonia
30.			Rajahi
31.			Chilbilwa
32.			Ramgarh
33.	Pilibheet	Puranpur	Chandia Hazara*
34.			Rahul Nagar [Majdoor Basti
35.			Rahul Nagar [Nai Basti]

[\* The Village populated by the migrants of Bangla Desh]

*[This Article written by Sanjay Vijayvergiya based on the Primary Research Conducted by Dr. Jitendra Chaturvedi, Bahraich]*