



## **Schemes and Policies for Marginalised Communities in Bihar: A Study of Nitish Government Tenure**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research paper looks into a thorough assessment of the schemes and policies targeting marginalised populations during the time of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's government. Focusing on Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), women, and minority groups, the study aims to comprehensively study the schemes of marginalised classes of society. Bihar, a state characterised by diverse socio-economic challenges, has witnessed significant efforts directed towards the upliftment of its marginalised populations under the leadership of Nitish Kumar. This research employs a systematic study of governmental initiatives, spanning from educational programmes to economic development schemes.*

**Keywords:** Bihar, Nitish Kumar, Marginalised Communities, Schemes, Policies,

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### **Introduction**

Marginalisation in Bihar spans a continuum of historical oppression and persisting contemporary challenges faced by various socio-economic segments, predominantly impacting Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), women, and minority groups. Historically, Bihar bore witness to entrenched societal hierarchies deeply rooted in the caste system. The region was entrenched in a societal framework characterized by rigid caste-based stratification. These divisions perpetuated ascending privileges for certain groups while subjecting others to descending layers of societal disadvantage, particularly affecting the SCs and STs. Such systemic structures of discrimination and exclusion limited access to resources, opportunities, and socio-political representation.

Post-independence, while strides were made toward social equality and inclusive development, Bihar grappled with multifaceted challenges. Economic disparity, lack of educational access and gender-based inequities persisted. These challenges extended beyond mere historical legacies, evolving into complex contemporary issues deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric.

Moreover, Bihar encountered hurdles in ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities across various communities. Marginalised communities continue to confront disparities in education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. The persistence of these disparities underscores the need for comprehensive policy interventions tailored to address the diverse and intersectional needs of marginalised groups. Understanding the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of marginalization in Bihar is crucial in devising effective and inclusive policies. It necessitates a multifaceted approach that addresses the intersectionality of socio-economic disparities and empowers marginalised communities, striving for a more equitable and just society.

In the socio-political landscape of Bihar, a state marked by its rich cultural heritage and diverse demographic tapestry, the efficacy and impact of government schemes and policies targeted towards marginalised communities stand as a pivotal determinant of equitable development. The tenure of Nitish Kumar's government, a stalwart in Bihar's political arena, has been characterized by a plethora of initiatives aimed at addressing the socio-economic disparities faced by marginalised groups. Against the backdrop of historical inequities and developmental challenges faced by marginalised groups in Bihar, the need for targeted interventions becomes imperative. Nitish Kumar's tenure has witnessed a concerted effort to bridge these gaps through a spectrum of welfare programmes, affirmative action policies, and community-centric initiatives. This research paper delves into the nuanced exploration of the schemes and policies implemented during Nitish Kumar's government, for the marginalised communities.

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### **Top of Form**

#### **The Ban of Liquor Policy in Bihar**

The harmful impact of liquor on human health, notably the unregulated production of country liquor, is associated with a spectrum of health hazards, ranging from immediate illnesses to fatal outcomes. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, during his election campaign in Bihar, committed to enforcing a

prohibition on liquor in the state. One of the main arguments in favour of this policy's implementation is the claim that alcohol use is a significant trigger for violence against women. The proposed prohibition not only aims to mitigate health risks associated with liquor but also addresses the societal concern of violence against women exacerbated by alcohol consumption.<sup>i</sup>

Furthermore, upon receiving cabinet approval, a prohibition on country-made spiced liquor was officially enforced on April 1, 2016. The Excise and Prohibition Department issued a notification specifically targeting the ban on country-made spiced liquor in rural areas. However, by April 5, 2016, a more comprehensive prohibition came into effect. This extended to the complete restriction of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and country liquor, encompassing their manufacture, sale, transport, and consumption, with immediate implementation.<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, a series of measures have been adopted to achieve a total prohibition of liquor in Bihar, including the establishment of checkpoints at various locations throughout the state and heightened vigilance instructions issued to the police force. Additionally, the state government has formally approached the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation to curb the trafficking of liquor into Bihar.<sup>iii</sup>

The commitment to alcohol prohibition emerged as a pivotal electoral pledge from Nitish Kumar, the incumbent Chief Minister of Bihar, during the 2015 assembly elections. Kumar promised to eradicate alcoholism from the state, responding to a surge in domestic violence complaints and a pressing demand for prohibition voiced by female voters. This decision not only contributed to augmented popularity among women within the state but also fortified Nitish Kumar's electoral standing, reflecting a strategic move in the realm of Bihar's political environment.<sup>iv</sup>

The enforcement of this policy proved to be advantageous in garnering women's electoral support for Nitish Kumar during the election. Stringent legal provisions have been established to address any violations of the act. For instance, the death penalty is prescribed for manufacturers and suppliers of illicit liquor in cases where fatalities result from the consumption of adulterated wines. Moreover, consuming alcohol in public spaces is subject to punishment, entailing a prison term of 5–10 years and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh. Similarly, drinking at home while causing a disturbance may lead to sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment. The public is actively encouraged to report instances of alcohol consumption and disturbances to the police through a toll-free number prominently displayed on city walls.<sup>v</sup>

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## Schemes for Marginalised Community

The Bihar government has implemented various schemes and initiatives to promote marginalised communities in the state. Some of the significant schemes related to the reservation in Bihar are:

### (a) Vikash Mitra

The Vikas Mitras were envisioned as “agents of change” and “links in the chain that brought government programmes to Mahadalit families.” Bihar Mahadalit Vikas Mission was tasked with appointing Vikas Mitras by the recommendations of the Bihar State Mahadalit Commission. Every Gram Panchayat in rural areas would employ a Vikas Mitra. In urban areas, however, a single Vikas Mitra would be appointed for a cluster of up to four divisions, depending on the size of the constituent Mahadalit population. The Vikas Mitra must be from a Mahadalit family and a resident of the panchayat (rural) or ward cluster (urban) to which he or she is appointed. The Vikas Mitra must be a member of the Mahadalit caste, the largest in this panchayat or ward cluster. Women were to occupy fifty per cent of Vikas Mitra’s positions. The applicant’s age range was restricted to between 18 and 50 years old.<sup>vi</sup>

### (b) Mukhyamantri Balak/Balika Protsahan yojana

Under the Chief Minister Intermediate Scheme, all unmarried girls and boys who complete Class 10 in the first division would get a stipend of Rs. 10,000. The government would grant an incentive of Rs 8,000 to students from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who complete the second division under this initiative. This initiative emphasizes the government's commitment to fostering educational inclusivity and providing financial support to students, with a particular focus on marginalised communities, thereby promoting equitable opportunities in the pursuit of higher education.<sup>vii</sup>

### (c) Mukhyamantri Atyant Pichhda Varg Civil Seva Protsahan Yojana (EBC Students)

Within the framework of this initiative, financial support is extended to marginalised individuals, particularly those from the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), who successfully pass the preliminary round of civil service examinations conducted by either the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) or the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). A grant of Rs 50,000 is allocated for individuals clearing the preliminary round of civil service examinations conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), while a more substantial amount of Rs. 1 lakh is designated for those who succeed in the preliminary round of civil service examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). This programme accentuates a commitment to equitable opportunities, aiming to support and empower marginalised students in pursuing a career in the civil service through targeted financial aid.<sup>viii</sup>

### (d) Mukhyamantri Anusuchit Jati Evam Anusuchit Janjati Civil Seva Protsahan Yojana

This programme provides financial aid to underprivileged individuals, with a particular focus on students belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories who pass the civil services preliminary examinations administered by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC). To promote equitable possibilities, the Bihar government offers financial assistance to SC and ST students who pass the civil services preliminary exams. The amount of the help is Rs 50,000 for SC students and Rs 1 lakh for ST students. This programme demonstrates the government's commitment to promoting fairness and providing targeted financial help to underprivileged areas so they can pursue careers in the civil service.<sup>ix</sup>

**(e) Mukhyamantri Anusuchit Jati Evam Janjati Chhatravas Anudan Yojana (SCs And STs)**

This scheme assists Rs. 1000 to all the boys and girls studying and living in the hostels meant for SCs / STs. They were enrolled and living in hostels operated under the SC-ST Welfare Department. Along with the stipend, students of SC-ST groups studying in hostels are provided with cots, mattresses, sheets, table chairs for reading, cooking utensils, and kitchens.<sup>x</sup>

**(f) Alpasankhyak Kalyan Chhatravas Bihar Udyamai Yojana**

Students belonging to minorities studying in classes IX to XII staying in minority hostels will get a monthly stipend of Rs.1000. They are also provided with cots, mattresses, bed sheets, desk chairs for reading, cooking utensils, and kitchens. Monthly, nine kg of rice and six kg of wheat will also be provided to the students.<sup>xi</sup>

**(g) Bihar Udyamai Yojana**

This programme is designed with the primary objective of fostering self-employment opportunities for educated youth belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Under the auspices of this scheme, eligible individuals in Bihar can access interest-free loans, with a cap set at five lakhs, aimed at facilitating enhanced employment prospects. The initiative represents a concerted effort to empower and uplift marginalised communities by offering financial support to the youth, thereby fostering entrepreneurship and contributing to the economic development of the region.<sup>xii</sup>

**(h) Mukhyamantri Nishchay Swayam Sahayata Bhatta Yojana**

Within the framework of this initiative, unemployed individuals aged between 20 and 25 who are actively seeking employment opportunities are entitled to receive a monthly stipend of Rs. 1000. The duration of this support is capped at a maximum of two years. Eligibility criteria stipulate that individuals who have successfully cleared the intermediate or equivalent examination from a government-approved institution but have not pursued further studies are eligible to benefit from this scheme. The programme aims to alleviate financial challenges faced by unemployed youth, providing them with a sustained financial assistance period to facilitate their efforts in securing meaningful employment during the critical phase of transitioning from education to the workforce.<sup>xiii</sup>

**(i) Kushal Yuva Programme**

The Bihar Skill Development Mission (BSDM) has initiated a distinctive skill training programme named the "Kushal Yuva Programme" to enhance the employability skills of individuals in the age bracket of 15–28 years (with extended age limits for SC/ST: 33 years, OBC: 31 years, and PWD: 33 years) who have completed at least the 10th grade. This comprehensive programme includes soft skills training, encompassing vital components such as life skills, English and Hindi communication skills, and basic computer literacy. The integration of these skill sets is anticipated to not only augment the employability of participants but also enhance the value of Bihar's domain-specific training initiatives. This strategic approach aligns with the mission's broader goal of empowering the youth with a diverse skill set, positioning them more competitively in the evolving comprehensive approach to skill development for diverse demographics within the state.<sup>xiv</sup>

**(j) Mukhyamantri Alpasankhyak Rozgar Rin Yojana**

This scheme provides loans to minority communities belonging to families having a modest income, including OBCs, (Muslim), to start their businesses. The scheme aims to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among the minority communities.<sup>xv</sup>

**(k) Mukhyamantri Balak / Balika Bicycle Yojna**

The primary objective of this scheme is to furnish students with bicycles, recognising them as a practical and efficient mode of transportation to school. The underlying aspiration is to bolster attendance and retention rates, particularly among students in the ninth grade. As part of this initiative, a financial allocation of Rs. 2500 is earmarked for Class IX students to facilitate the procurement of bicycles. This measure is integral to the broader strategy aimed at enhancing educational access and retention rates. Additionally, this initiative operates within the framework of the Post-Matric Scholarship for Backward Class and Economically Backward Class (BC-EBC) students, underscoring the multifaceted approach undertaken to support education and socioeconomic advancement in the targeted demographic.<sup>xvi</sup>

**(l) Post Matric Scholarship For BC and EBC**

The Bihar state post-matric scholarship is provided to students from backward classes and economically backward classes. Financial assistance is hoped to fulfil the aspirations of deserving candidates by ensuring that the Fee and Maintenance allowance supported under the scheme meets basic needs such as financial assistance.<sup>xvii</sup>

**(m) Mukhyamantri Atyant Pichhada Varg Medhavriti Yojana**

The State Government has introduced the "Chief Minister Extremely Backward Classes Meritorious Scheme" as a strategic initiative to promote education awareness among students from the most backward classes and motivate them to pursue higher education. Within the framework of this scheme, a lump-sum amount of Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) is disbursed to students belonging to extremely backward classes who have successfully cleared the

first-class annual secondary examination. This programme is designed to not only provide financial assistance but also to serve as an encouraging mechanism, fostering a culture of academic excellence among students from extremely backward classes and facilitating their pursuit of advanced education.<sup>xviii</sup>

**(m) Mukhyamantri Ati Pichhda Varg Udaymi Yojana**

This programme extends financial support to members of the Economically Backward Class (EBC) community for the establishment of small enterprises. A sum of Rs 10 lakh is allocated under this scheme, with Rs 5 lakh designated as a subsidy provided by the state government and the remaining Rs 5 lakh offered as an interest-free loan. This initiative aims to empower individuals within the EBC community by facilitating the initiation and sustenance of small enterprises. The dual nature of financial assistance—subsidy and interest-free loans—further underscores the comprehensive approach taken to encourage entrepreneurial ventures and contribute to the economic upliftment of the EBC community.<sup>xix</sup>

**Mukhyamantri Pichhda Varg Evam Ati Pichda Varg Kaushal Vikash Yojna**

Chief Minister Backward Classes and Extreme Backward Classes Skill Development Scheme is run to remove unemployment and improve the standard of living of the people of these classes. The operation is being done through the Department of Labour Resources. Under this scheme, training is being started in various trends by CIPET (Central Institute of Plastics Eng. & Tech), Hajipur, and 30 other selected skill training provider centres.<sup>xx</sup>

**(o) Mukhyamantri Pichhda Varg Evam Atyant Pichda Varg Chhatravas Anudaan Yojna**

The state government has implemented the Chief Minister Backward Class and Extremely Backward Class Hostel Grant Scheme to make students aware of higher education increase the rate of higher education and meet the hostel requirements. Under this scheme, a hostel grant at the rate of Rs 1000 per month per student is being given to the students studying in backward class and extremely backward class hostels to meet their daily hostel requirements. The amount is directly transferred to the account of the students. Apart from this, the government has also provided 15 kg of free food grains to the students studying in the hostels run by the SCs and STs Welfare Department, Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes Welfare Department, Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Welfare Department and Minorities Welfare Department in the State being given. Under this scheme, considering the student's interest, out of 15 kg, 9 kg of rice and 6 kg of wheat are being supplied.<sup>xxi</sup>

**(p) Anay Pichhda Varg Knaya Avaaseey +2 Uchay Vidyaalay**

Under this programme, classes 6 through 12 are taught in a total of 12 Other Backward Classes Girls Residential + 2 High Schools for students in Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes. For each school, 280 students are allowed. There are 2810 female students enrolled in classes right now. Funds are provided to female students in certain schools at set rates for food, books, library, oil, and soap.<sup>xxii</sup>

**(q) Aarakshit Rozgar Mahilaon Ka Adhikar**

Within the framework of this programme, a notable initiative has been undertaken to promote gender inclusivity in the state's workforce. A 35% reservation has been designated for women across all cadres and services. The allocation of roster points and the definition of a selection procedure have been outlined in Resolution No. 2342, dated February 15, 2016, by the General Administration Department. The primary objective of this decision is to foster the active and positive participation of women in various sectors, ensuring their meaningful contribution to society. This strategic move aligns with broader efforts to address gender disparities and advance the principles of gender equality within the state's administrative framework.<sup>xxiii</sup>

**(r) Jananayak Karpuri Thakur Atayan Pichhda Varg Kalyan Chhatravas**

The Government of Bihar has instituted the Jananayak Karpuri Thakur Extremely Backward Class Welfare Hostel Scheme, a proactive measure aimed at furnishing free residential facilities to students belonging to the state's Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs). This initiative is strategically designed to address the educational and residential needs of EBC students, who frequently face financial constraints, particularly in urban areas. Under the purview of this scheme, the government extends comprehensive support, offering free accommodation along with provisions for food, electricity, and water to ensure a conducive living and learning environment for EBC students. The overarching goal of the programme is to enhance accessibility to quality education for the EBC community, thereby contributing to their educational advancement and overall socio-economic development.<sup>xxiv</sup>

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**Conclusion:**

The study of schemes and policies targeting marginalised communities during Nitish Kumar's government in Bihar has provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics of socio-economic development. Through a meticulous study of the implemented initiatives, it is evident that while progress has been made, challenges persist in ensuring the desired impact on the ground. The relevance of these schemes is underscored by the pressing need to address historical inequities and uplift marginalised communities.

In the socio-political landscape of Bihar, where historical oppressions and contemporary challenges have cast a long shadow over marginalised communities, the tenure of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has been a pivotal chapter in the pursuit of inclusive development. The intricate web of disparities rooted in the caste system has posed formidable challenges to socio-economic progress, particularly affecting Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, women, and minority groups.

The implementation of the Prohibition of Liquor Policy in Bihar under Nitish Kumar's leadership stands out as a bold and impactful initiative aimed at addressing social issues like domestic violence and improving the status of women. This policy, driven by electoral promises, not only gained popularity but also contributed to the empowerment of women and showcased the potential of policy interventions in reshaping societal norms.

In tandem with the liquor prohibition policy, Nitish Kumar's tenure has seen the implementation of a myriad of schemes targeting marginalised communities. From the Vikas Mitra initiative to various scholarship programmes, skill development schemes, and financial assistance for civil service aspirants, these policies signify a concerted effort to address the complex and intersecting challenges faced by different sections of society.

The multifaceted approach, as reflected in the various schemes, acknowledges the diverse needs of marginalised communities, considering factors such as caste, gender, and socio-economic background. The emphasis on education, skill development, financial assistance, and entrepreneurship aims to break the cycle of disadvantage and empower individuals from marginalised groups to actively participate in the socio-economic fabric of the state.

The schemes and policies targeting marginalised communities during Nitish Kumar's government emphasize the importance of holistic and inclusive approaches to address historical inequities. As Bihar continues its journey towards equitable development, it is imperative for policymakers, scholars, and society at large to critically assess the impact of these initiatives, learn from their successes and challenges, and forge a path forward that embraces the principles of justice, equality, and inclusive progress. Nitish Kumar's legacy in this regard serves as a significant component in Bihar's ongoing narrative of social transformation.

### Notes and References

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