

Exploitation of Santhal Tribe of Jharkhand and Problems Faced by Santhal Tribe

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Abstract

India is a vast and diverse country. There are several castes, creeds, backgrounds, customs, and civilizations represented in it. There are numerous Scheduled Tribes in India. The Indian Constitution was the first document to use the term "Scheduled Tribes." Section 366 (25) defined scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution". The Santhal Tribe of Jharkhand is the 3rd largest Scheduled Tribe in India. Since the pre-independence period, the Santhal Tribe has faced a lot of hardships. They had to face discrimination due to difference of color, culture, tradition and language. They have been exploited and have not been allowed to grow and develop as the rest of the country has been doing. Therefore, it is a necessity to understand the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe of Jharkhand and the problems faced by this tribe in order to educate the people and put pressure on individuals as well as the government to put an end to the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe of Jharkhand.

Introduction

To exploit someone is to take unfair advantage of someone or something. In general terms, it is to use someone or something that does not belong to you for your own selfish means. Exploitation is mutually beneficial or harmful however the latter of the two is most commonly seen. When it comes to India, the nation has seen several social stigmas, exploitation being one of the most impactful subjects. Exploitation in India occurs at various levels. Some of the type of exploitations in India are sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic exploitation, forced marriage and forced criminality. All these types of exploitations cover a huge domain. Despite this vast segregation, one particular type of exploitation is left unnoticed, that is, the exploitation of tribes in various parts of India.

The various tribes of India form a minority sector. Majority of them are financially unstable and weak. They have had primitive education and are as knowledgeable as their previous

generations. Due to ignorance and discrimination from modern and urban society, it is very hard for these native tribes to grow, develop and come to terms with the modern world. Such is the case of the Santhal tribe in the state of Jharkhand. This tribe has been exploited right from the time the British arrived and even now there is a certain degree of exploits being made. Since they are economically poor and live in not so modern and developed areas of the state, their voices are often unheard. They are used, their homelands and native lands are used by powerful and rich organizations for their personal gains, the culture and heritage is dying slowly and ultimately no one pays heed to their problems since they are kept in an oppressed state. Articles such as these are an opportunity to connect and listen to their problems. Understanding the way these Santhals are exploited can bring one to a realization of how important a social issue this is. Ultimately, after throwing light on this issue, the people of the state can try to resolve the issues of the tribes and discrimination, exploitation and oppression of the Santhals can be put to a permanent pause.

Literature Survey

The health comparison of tribal women vs non tribal women was also investigated by using the information from the National Family Health Survey - 2 which was conducted during 1998-99 [1]. It had been found that the non tribal women were healthier and had better environmental conditions when put next with the tribal women. This can be true in every demographic moreover. Tribal mothers were further found to possess high rates of anemia, and girl children receive but the specified general nutritional level. The full tribal community is lacking largely in consuming adequate amounts of food.

Another addition to those problems are overcrowded houses, these specifically influence the health of kids in terms of respiratory conditions, skin infections and meningitis, and possibly psychological state [1]. Low income, unemployment, rural and remote location, and legal impediments to home ownership are some challenges associated with housing that tribes face. Modernization, industrialization, developmental projects like construction of dams, mining, and forest protection legislations have dislocated tribes of their basic rights ashore, water and forest. Dislocation from their own land and forest has left minimum livelihood avenues and pushed them further underemployment, injustice and poverty and towards unemployment [2].

The Mandal Commission report advised that a system of reserved jobs in central government may be extended from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes of India to accommodate Socially and Economically Backward Classes [3]. In August 1990 V. P. Singh found it interesting to affect Mandal's suggestion that up to 49.5 percent of all jobs in central government services and public undertakings should be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. There's also a typical misconception that tribal women are less participative and contribute less towards tribal scriptures. This misconception has been slowly disintegrated

within the post-colonial era and also the tribal women are ready to find a voice for themselves. Santhal women have also been empowered by santhal writers writing in english [4].

The word development and its true meaning can be explained as the growth of what is in germ. However social developments are very hard to track and sustain and do not refer to a particular phenomenon. The growth of knowledge and human control over the environment has led to industrialisation in India [5]. This has had a positive impact on the economy of the states and India in general but a certain section has suffered in such a way that they have lost their roots. The Santhali Tribal women have been forced to migrate, leave their homes and face an unfamiliar and discriminating world.

Right from the onset of the British in India upto now, there has been linguistic politics which has affected the Adivasi Tribes and Santhal Tribe in Jharkhand in particular. Santhals constitute the most demographically in Jharkhand, while other tribes like Oraon tribes are second in number [6]. The political tussle is which language should be the dominant language of the state in general. Ultimately the economically weak tribes succumb to the money which linguistic politics brings in and the essence of the culture is lost.

A variety of tribal people inhabit India, and the Santhals predominate numerically in the state of Jharkhand. Various studies were made to check the medical facilities and hygienic activities followed by the Santhals. The tribe did not follow any proper hygiene and the medical and health care facilities for the tribe was poor despite the urbanization of the state of Jharkhand [7].

The Santhal tribe of Jharkhand has had to face a lot of hardships. It has bared the false promises of the schemes proposed to them by the authorities and higher ups in the bureaucratic system. This has led to the displacement of the tribe from their land which has resulted in the loss of thousands of households and livelihood. The Santhal Pargana Tenancy Laws are there to protect the tribe but in this modern day and age, big money parties can easily bypass and bend these laws to exploit these tribes for their personal gain [8].

The Santhals were a peaceful people who placed great importance on agriculture. Forest land and the holy grove served as symbols for their guardian spirit or protector [9]. The Santhals endured excessive tyranny as a result of Colonial control and local moneylenders, which ultimately resulted in the Santhal 1855 rebellion. The Santhals had gathered in their holy forest earlier, when something happened. This is regarded as miraculous. The tale claims that a Thakur, or deity, exists and directs the Santhals to reclaim their ownership of their land by clearing it of all "diku," or outsiders.

Methodology

An extensive literature review will help us get a fair idea on how to understand the problem. The exploitation of a minority group who is not in power is not a new concept in terms of social evils of the society. Hence gaining knowledge from various literary works from the past as well as the recent past will help us gain a good idea of the situation of the Santhals in Jharkhand.

Moreover, the one on one interaction of the people by listening to various interviews and podcasts will give a better and second person perspective of the situation. Reading and going through various news articles and studies will also be conducted to gain information. Extensive research and mentioning about the previous instances of exploitation would help the people understand the topic. Case studies regarding such instances would provide an insight on how one can identify the problem and even allow one to think on how to stop and solve this. Lastly, one of the authors has lived in Jharkhand for over 15 years and hence he can provide a first hand experience and state his views on this topic.

Apart from this, a comprehensive data analysis is done which includes various research articles, online content such as newspaper reports, online non governmental organizations and their articles, publications, blogs. Various graphs and data tabulations, visualizations are taken into account and our own views and observations are stated in the subsequent sections.

Data Analysis

To understand the problem of exploitation of the Santhal Tribe in Jharkhand we need to first understand how the discrimination is so prevalent in Jharkhand. We have made a comprehensive study about the distribution of the tribes across the country. The government of India has recognised a few tribes as Scheduled Tribes. The Santhal Tribe is considered as a Scheduled Tribe of India. It is the third largest Scheduled Tribe of India and its population is concentrated majorly across the Eastern part of India. The Santhal tribe has homed in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

Looking at the distribution of the Scheduled Tribes from the pie chart [Fig. 1], we can say that a cumulative total of the three aforementioned states in terms of percentage distribution is 22%. Jharkhand has 8%, Odisha has 9% and lastly West Bengal has 5%.

Now from the above distribution it's quite clear that Santhal Tribe is the 3rd majority in Scheduled Tribes. The states in which they are present are currently developing in nature. This means that the states have more land in the rural region as compared to the suburban or urban region. For the state of Jharkhand in particular where the Santhal Tribe is mostly present, the land is distributed more into rural areas than the townships. Therefore as discussed earlier in the

literature survey, the standard of living is not good and the tribe is being pushed more and more into inhabitable land due to urbanization and industrialization in Jharkhand.

The impacts of the above mentioned circumstances are overcrowded houses, these specifically influence the children's health in terms of meningitis, skin infections, and respiratory illnesses, as well as maybe their mental health. Low income, unemployment, living in a rural or isolated area, and regulatory restrictions on property ownership are a few challenges related to housing that tribes are facing. Modernization, industrialization, developmental projects like construction of dams, mining, and forest protection legislations have dislocated tribes of their basic rights on land, water and forest. Dislocation from their own land and forest has left minimum livelihood avenues and pushed them further underemployment, injustice and poverty and towards unemployment.

In the current situation, the government and other NGOs have come across and laid importance on this. They have started to consider this as a social issue. In Jamshedpur, special employment provisions have been made for the Santhal Tribe in companies which come in to use the land of the tribe. Tata Steel has sponsored a number of cultural events, such as the pan-Indian tribal conference "Samvaad," to promote tribal dance and song. At the 2015 conclave, more than 1500 tribal artists, thinking leaders, famous people, and activists from 20 different states and more than 35 distinct tribes gathered. Panel talks on tribal languages, cultural performances from all around the nation, film screenings, paper presentations, and textiles and handmade crafts were all included in this event.

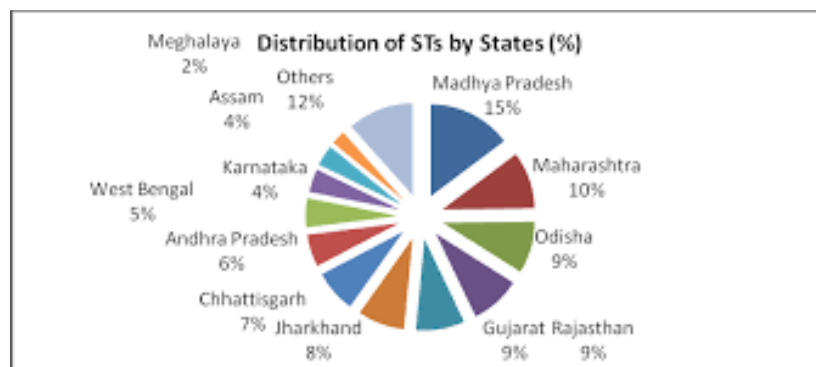
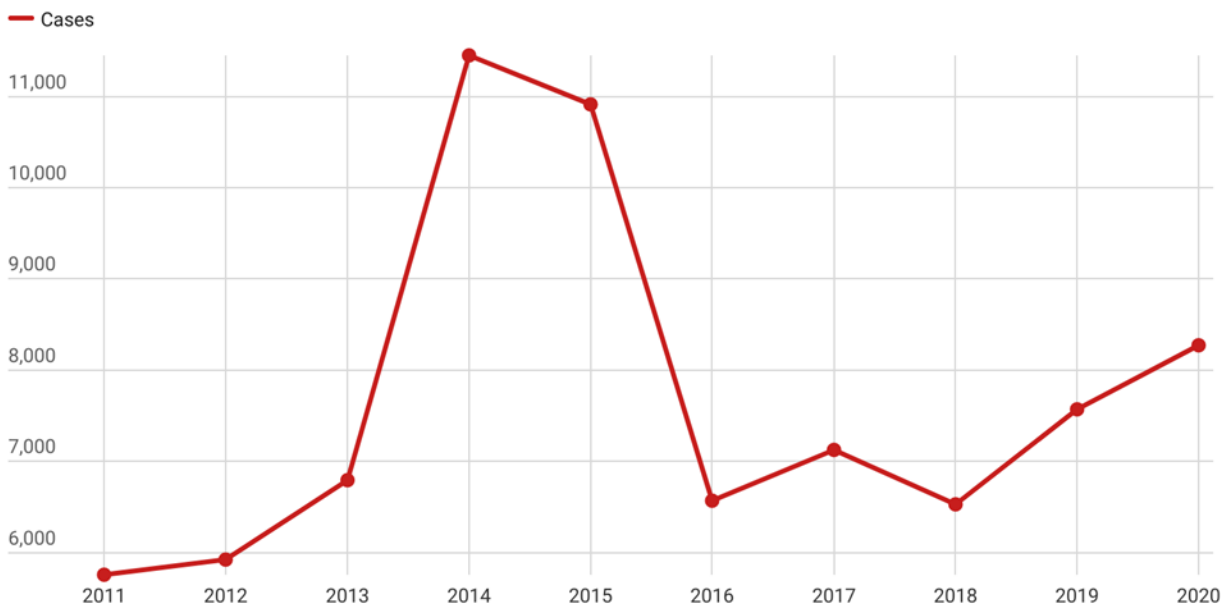


Fig 1. The Distribution of Scheduled Tribes by States [10]

Rising anti-Tribal violence in India: 2011-20

Data shows atrocities against STs have risen 2% in ten years.



Source: NCRB • Created with Datawrapper

Fig 2. Rising anti-Tribal Violence in India between 2011 - 2020

The next graph [Fig. 2] suggests the rising anti-tribal violence in India in the year of 2011 to 2020. The graph shows that the atrocities against the Scheduled Tribes of India in the time span of 10 years has increased by 2%. In the broad definition of exploitation, violence and hate crimes against these Scheduled Tribes are encapsulated. The fact that the discrimination and hatred towards these tribes arises from the difference in culture, living style and tradition from the modern culture and society leads to exploitation and the eventual use of violence to oppress any rebellion. When the oppressed and exploited tribes try to speak up and fight for their rights, the use of violence on them is often the outcome.

From the graph we can interpret that the hate crimes and violence against the tribes is on the rise and has increased in the past decade by a total of 2%. The data collected shows the atrocities against the Scheduled Tribes. It has tabulated a line graph which denotes the cases of violence registered for violence against the Scheduled Tribes. The data tells us that in the start of the previous decade, the number of cases registered were less than 6000. Then in the following year of 2012 the cases registered increased and reached a near about 6000. Similarly in the year 2013 the number of cases raised just below 7000. Now in the subsequent years of 2014 and 2015, the cases shot up exponentially. It reached a maximum of 11000 cases a year. However in the subsequent years, the cases decreased. From the year 2016 onwards the cases were lowered but since the onset of 2018, the cases started increasing day by day. As of now the cases are nearing 9000 a year.

The impact of this cannot be seen at a vivid scale. The reason being that these cases are not reported enough. There are many scenarios where the violence has not been reported. So the unreported and reported cases total to a very large number which is a very alarming case for the country. The Santhal Tribe being the 3rd most in number of Scheduled Tribes, it naturally becomes one of the most affected. Such acts of violence which go unheard can result in unrest and rebellion in the tribe. This is the reason why the Santhal Tribe has some sections which have converted into armed groups and maoists organizations.

The major role of such data analysis allows us to understand how the acts of violence and exploitation leads to unrest and acts of rebellion. Such studies and analysis can allow us to understand why such maoists groups are created, how to tackle already existing rebel movements, how to stop the discrimination against the Santhal Tribe and also how to reduce and ultimately put an end to the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe.

In 2016, Chief Minister Raghuvar Das had commanded the officials guilty to formulate Rural Farmers Committees, so development schemes could even be formulated because the suggestions require it and similarly on include the suggestions within the 2016-17 budget of the state.

The chief minister said his government would ensure that there's absolutely no shortage of water in any of the six districts - Jamtara, Godda, Pakur, Sahebgunj, Dumka, and Deoghar which is under the Santhal Pargana region.

Malnutrition within the state of Jharkhand continues to be an enormous challenge for the govt.. within the same year Chief Minister Raghuvar Das said the authorities was getting to recruit 250 doctors and 400 para-medical staff within the state. He further stated that necessary medicines of an oversized diverse kind are going to be made available altogether hospitals of the state within months time.

Even before this, when the Bhuria Committee had recommended in 1995, the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996. When this came into existence it absolutely was imagined to ensure tribal self-rule for people living in scheduled areas of India.

Findings

As seen from the first piechart seen in the data analysis portion, it is evident that the major population of the Santhal Tribe is concentrated in the state of Jharkhand. With that given, we all know the urbanization and industrialization in the state. Major cities have been built on the

native land of the tribes and the Santhal Tribe in particular. This has led to the exploitation of the homeland of the Santhal Tribe and thus rendering them homeless. The compensation promised since the early stages of the urbanization phase are yet to be fulfilled. However, in recent years many non-governmental organizations, industries and the government have implemented some schemes and policies and conduct various drives which benefit the tribes. Therefore ultimately the situation is improving slowly and steadily and with more continuous efforts, the social problem of exploitation of the Santhal tribe in Jharkhand can be resolved.

Now from the above data analysis and its interpretation, there are a few things that are very clear about the exploitation of the Santhals and the hardships they have had to face due to it. Firstly, the Santhal Tribe has been exploited right from the time before India was independent. There were multiple instances when the people of the tribe were discriminated against on the basis of the color and language. Secondly, the discrimination on the basis of culture, tradition and language has brought about a sense of difference from the other people who are new to culture. This has turned out to be an issue of acceptance. The Santhals were not accepted as part of the common crowd. This is still set in the minds of various sections of India. Thirdly, due to industrialization and urbanization in the cities of Jharkhand, the land which was native to the Santhal Tribe has been occupied by the industrialists. Many opportunists have cheated and exploited the Santhals and bargained and negotiated their land in such a way that the tribe did not profit from the deals. The negotiations were done in such a way that the Santhals received a sum of money which was less than what the land was valued. This has led to the Tribe being forced to live and settle in uninhabitable places, relocation by the buyers of the land was also not sought properly and has left a sore mark on the Tribe. This is one of the root causes which has led to the Maoists' rebellion starting from the Santhal Tribe in Jharkhand. Lastly, politics and corrupt individuals in politics has led to the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe in a similar way.

Further After the introduction of the Bihar Panchayat Raj System (BPRS) in 1947, the normal Adivasi governance systems became weaker. BPRS was formed with the non adivasi community in perspective furthermore. As a result, because of lack of priority and neglect, the method of the standard governance system was affected. This was further worsened by industrialisation, displacement of Adivasis and urbanization.

Now in most of the villages, especially nearer to the towns and cities, meetings became rare. Villagers of Makhamandro in Ratu block of Ranchi district said they didn't remember the last village council meeting was conducted. therefore the formation of rural committees as planned by Chief Minister Raghuvar Das wasn't much of a hit.

When it came to the problem of PESA , the partially implemented PESA had worsened self-governance in Adivasi areas in Jharkhand. The PESA although being the backbone of tribal

legislation didn't deliver thanks to the shortage of clarity, legal weakness, absence of a political will, harsh resistance to vary within the hierarchy of power, and so on.

Summary

From the above findings and data analysis, we can collectively summarize the interpretation as the fact that the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe in Eastern India and Jharkhand in particular has to be deemed as a social problem faced by the country. From the literature review and data findings, it is evident that the problem stems from the pre-independence era of India and despite the efforts to eradicate the exploitation, the situation is still not resolved. The issues have been discussed in detail in the above sections and are well explained. Also, this research has shown a few schemes that were implemented to remove the exploitation on the oppressed Santhals but have ultimately favored the exploiters. Moreover, the work is backed by mathematical data and trends that has been explained in the above sections proving the fact that exploitation against the Santhal Tribe is still a severe issue in Jharkhand. The Committee formation suggested by Chief Minister Raghuvar Das was not to be as successful as required and the poor implementation of PESA added to the problem of poor schemes for the santhal tribes.

Conclusion

With all the problems faced by the Santhal Tribe in Jharkhand, it is right to come to the conclusion that the Santhal Tribe is still being exploited in this day and age. There are many schemes and policies that have been employed by the state and central government which prevent the exploitation of these tribes and protect their culture and heritage. However, there are some other methods which can be used to make people aware about the situation of the exploitation of the Santhal Tribe. Some methods include awareness and education of the masses, health services to remote populations of the Santhal Tribe, transportation for expectant mothers and other medical facilities, health workers from the Santhal Tribe need to be groomed and ultimately giving fair and equal opportunity to Santhals to grow and develop and come out of this situation. This is one suggestive method which can reduce and ultimately put an end to this social evil.

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