

A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL ON JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

It has been one of the central themes in sociology for quite some time that social and regional movements should be studied. The sociologists are generally considered the pioneers of dealing with such movements in the field of sociology. After this, the study of these issues was taken up by political scientists, anthropologists, and historians in order to gain a deeper understanding of them. It is only relatively recently that geographers have entered this field of study. As far as geography is concerned, it focuses on the physical and socio-economic attributes of the region rather than the economic development of the region. Early in the 1970s, it was only then that they started to focus on the disparities between the different social groups in terms of regional disparities. In spite of the fact that the study was not directly related to the political movements, this gave growth to the study because most of these movements were a result of disparities in development and/or non-participation of locals. In the course of such political movements, it has been observed that it is almost always the deprived section of the society who are at the forefront. In the Indian union, the Jharkhand movement resulted in the formation of a separate state. There may be no other state formed because of regional differences.

Keyword: Regionalism, Movements, Unrest, JAAC

INTRODUCTION

Many studies in Jharkhand were conducted mostly during the British period. However, a few references of the region are also found in literature before the Britishers came to India. The region acquired greater importance after independence due to the political movement for separate statehood under the Indian Union. Even a memorandum was submitted to the State Reorganization Committee (SRC) in 1953. But the demand was put aside by the commission and the movement also slackened. With the implementation of Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) in 1995, it has again risen and a number of scholars have started contributing to the literature on Jharkhand. Tribals, being among the backward section of the society attracted the attention of policy makers, planners and social scientists. Socio-economic data for tribal groups was generated by Census of India and other Government agencies. All these factors led to an increase in tribal studies of India and Jharkhand is no exception in this regard. The published material in tribals are in the form of administrative reports like District Gazetteers or the articles which were based on material collected from secondary sources. The geographical studies on the issue of Jharkhand movement are a few. However literature written by Sociologist, Anthropologist, Political Scientists, Administrators, Economists and even Journalists are extensively available. To understand and analyse the socio-political movements among the tribes of India it is appropriate first to discuss the definitions and types of such movements. As already stated that this is a part of sociological research and hence, a lot of sociologists have given different definitions. Wilkinson (1971) gives a representative definition of social movement which is based on the following formulations:

- (a) A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into utopian community.
- (b) A social movement must evince a minimal degree of organization through this may range from a loose, informal or partial level of organization to a highly institutionalized or bureaucratized form.

(c) A social movement's commitment to change and the *raison d'être* of its organization are found upon the conscious violation, normative commitment to the movement's aims or beliefs and active participation on the part of the followers or members. Thus according to him, conscious commitment to change minimal organization and normative commitment and participation are the major characteristics of social movements. Besides, they are multi-dimensional and kaleidoscopic and emerged from a variety of reasons or motivating factors. In India, Mahapatra (1968) cites two other definitions of social movements. First, "a social movement occurs when a fairly large number of people are bound together in order to alter or supplant some position of existing cultural or social order or to redistribute the power of control within a society." Second, "a direct orientation towards the change in the social order, that is, in the patterns of human relations, in social institutions and social norms". Having viewed this definition, social movements can be defined as an organised social activity within a sufficiently large number of people who consciously and continuously involve or take part in it with some.

specific goal or object before them. The objectives could be the establishment of a new social order or promotion or resistance to change in one's social environment. Tribes in India represent a distinct cultural stratum and a definite demographic position in India's national life. Despite their comparative isolation they have maintained a unique place in the history and civilization of India. Though their historical self-awareness may be of limited range and depth, there are several instances of their participation in the socio-political life of the region and the country. They have asserted themselves in an organised manner in the local and regional power politics throughout the history, particularly during medieval period. The tribes have been undergoing a variety of socio-political changes particularly for the last two hundred years. Emergence of certain socio-political movements is one of the variant of these factors. Since the beginning of the last century, tribal Indian has been witnessing an upsurge of social movements. These movements have been of different magnitude in their underlying reasons, origination, objectives, organizational activities and outcome. In Jharkhand region, the movements were mainly associated with particular charismatic leaders under whom the movement got momentum.

EVOLUTION OF HISTORY

Almost two centuries ago, Mundas took up arms against the local landlords and the British administration. The leader was Binsu Manki. The reason of discontent is transfer of Jharkhand to East India Company in 1771. The movement confined to Bundu area of Ranchi district. With limited influence, this movement was subjugated but it gave enough recognition to Britishers. Within a short span of time other movements arose in other part of region like Bhumiji Revolt of Manbhum (1798-99); Chero uprising of Palamu (1800) under the leadership of Bhukan Singh, and two uprising of Munda in Tamar region during 1807 and 1819-20 under the leadership of Dukan Mank and Bundu and Konta. Not many references are found on these movements due to their localization. Kol insurrection, under the leadership of Singhhray and Binray Manki during 1830-33, was considered as the earliest rebellion with more influence and effect. The Munda tribes took up other tribes like Oraon and Hos by which lot of area came under the contact. Even this was the first united rebellion against the "outsider" in the region. The main uprising which has made an impact on the tribal as well as non-tribal population was Santhal Rebellion during 1855-57. The leader was Sidhu and Kanu. They rebelled against the landlords who exploited them for many years. This has opened the eyes of Britishers who's Contractors and Zamindars were employed to collect tax from the local people. This movement got momentum due to mass support. But soon the Britishers with their power subjugated the movement. While Santhal's were on fire, another tribal group, Mundas again geared up their movement. under the leadership of Birsa Munda during 1896-1901. He was versatile and efficient in taking whole tribal people in unidirection. His main idea was to reintroduce tribal religion and opposing the Christianity. But since, the movement did not get a mass support due to anti-Christian attitude it suffered a setback with the arrest of Birsa Munda in 1901. This early uprising among the different tribal groups does help in learning lot of lessons. It was further rectified in their political movement after independence. **Reasons for Unrest** There are many reasons for the tribal unrest in this region. It can be categorized into four basic issues, which is as per the following:

❖ Alienation of land and forests

Ever since the introduction of the laws of permanent settlement in 1793 and the subsequent sale and rent law of 1859, large scale transference of tribal land into the hands of the outsiders, the absentee landlords has taken place in the entire Jharkhand region, specially in Chotanagpur hill area³. The main concern of East India Company and the subsequent British Government was the collection of revenue. This agreement with the local tribal chiefs, if fulfilled, then their estate or parts were auctioned away to someone who can pay the said amount. This transfer of

land to the outsiders resulted in most of the earlier uprising. Tribals consider land as their home and forest as a source of livelihood. By staying in these areas, tribals developed a deep affinity towards the land and forest. They were totally unhappy with the process of transfer, as this resulted in not only in immigration of outsiders or non-tribals, but also losing their home and source of livelihood.

Later on, Indian Forest Act in 1878 restricted the people to collect materials or by-products from the forests. Like earlier, tribals were the main sufferers. They totally depend upon the forests for daily purposes. This shows the process of transfer leads to conflict between tribals and non-tribals outsiders which resulted in a lot of uprising both peaceful and armed. Santhal's Rebellion and Birsait Movement were repercussions of this. By this time, the British Government has introduced the Chotanagpur Tendency Act (Amendment) of 1903 and the Santhal Pargana Settlement (Amendment) of 1908. This slowed down the process but opening up of the area through mining and industry like Tata Iron and Steel Company, further added the process. The other large industrial companies like the Hindustan Copper Mines, The Indian Aluminium Company, The National Coal Development Corporation and the Heavy Engineering Corporation etc. followed soon. While taking the lands, the compensation were paid but it was not properly given to them. Since the land ownership was common and chief of the tribals managed the land, the poor tribals did not get their proper share. On the other hand most of the tribals were not aware of the currency system of Britishers. They were left on the worst land which others do not want. Further, added to their woes when a sizeable amount (nearly 50 lakh acres) of forest land was taken away by the Government under the Indian Forest Act of 1878, 1927 and Bihar Private Forest Act of 1927. The purpose was to manage forests for scientific purpose and making forest products marketable. After independence, with the launching of Five Year Plans, further industrialization and urban expansion began. The only difference from pre-independence was that, the exploitation is now through the government, both central and state which emerged as a result of increase in the demand for power. Thus, the construction of the big power projects under the Damodar Valley Corporation and the Patratu Thermal Power Projects was done which engulfed thousands of acres of land resulting in large scale land alienation. Further, added to it, subsidiary industries which were established to fulfil the demand of big industries thereby taking away more land. The tribals became the main sufferer as most of this land was in tribal areas. Today 50-60 percent of the best tribal land is in the land of non-tribals which was due to a large scale immigration of non-tribals to these industrialized areas.

❖ **Depriving workers of training and employment**

As stated in earlier section, the new industries and power projects started mainly during Five Year Plans. These new establishments needed specialized personnel which were filled by people from outside the region who came in large numbers. Industrial development was on a boom and the region has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country from the point of view of population growth. Main contribution in this growth was due to a large scale immigration of non-tribal population especially from adjoining areas of Bengal. The tribals on the other side were forced to live in search of menial jobs in faraway places like Punjab, Assam and others. This influx of an outside population and emigration of tribals, had led the ratio between the two to become 70:30 in 1996 which was 40:60 respectively four decades earlier in 1951. This reversing rate is still going on and the worst affected section is tribals. Although the government has provided reservation for tribals in jobs and educational institution, sources reveal that majority of it were lying vacant due to the "non-availability of suitable candidates", which after sometime were filled up by the non-tribal candidates. It is necessary to understand this process of de-reservation to the tribal people of Jharkhand. As most of the collar jobs was taken by outsider and now with opening of lot of job opportunities these outsiders preferred their own people to settle in the area. This preference usually led to the deprivation against the tribals. As the process of industrialization continue the tribals lost more and more of their productive land and the ruling class never paid them the amount of compensation that they deserved. Even this can be affordable to tribals but worst thing happen to them was not able to get a job in that industry. Enough lucky, if they had then, had to satisfy with class III or class IV jobs. It was only then these tribals migrate to far off places⁹.

❖ **The submersion of culture in society**

Maintenance or preservice of own culture and tradition is the main characteristic of every people. This concern for preserving their own culture and tradition was one of the main issues of the movement in Jharkhand since ancient period. Due to the fact that it is the only area in India where three major cultural streams have met and had created an integrated synthesis. Thus, the culture of Jharkhand region has attained distinctiveness by foresting a balance between nature and culture, egalitarianism in social structure, accommodative history, equal sharing of economy, secularism in religious pursuit, a democratic political thinking and the people oriented art and literature over the years. But now we find totally different culture which has dominated the earlier culture. A large scale devastation of

nature due to deforestation and unmindful, unscientific mining led to a threat to the prevailing culture. Besides natural environment, their social, religious and psychological attitudes are also changing. It became hierarchical in place of egalitarian, faced exploitation by incoming people in terms of accommodativeness. In fact, the tribals of Jharkhand, out of sheer frustration and inability to cope with the external pressure, have developed a negative identity for themselves. In most of the urban areas of the region, they are being branded as lazy, good for nothing, drunk and criminals etc¹³. These development in the environment of tribals, led to sheer frustration and the movement was out busted of it. In the name of assimilation these tribals are facing degradation of what they thought of was their identity. Many thought that it should be stopped, if India as a nation wants to have better future for every citizen of her.

❖ **A lack of balance in the development process**

All of the above factors have led to discriminated development of the Jharkhand region. The movement mostly stated in the Bihar part of Jharkhand. If the level of the development that has taken place in Jharkhand region in compared to that of the state then the discrepancy become prominent between the two. The region contributes approximately 70 percent of the total revenue to the state where as the states assistance for development expenditure of this region was merely 20 percent. Total contribution of the Bihar revenue from Jharkhand was nearly 70 percent whereas the expenditure state is providing to this region was merely 90 percent. Rest of it went to other parts of the state. The irrigated land was only 5 percent to the total area. Even the villages electrified were merely 5 percent whereas rest of the state had 40 percent rural electrification. Further added to this the pucca road per 1000 KM was only 5 KM in Jharkhand region as compared to 20 KM in rest of the state. Therefore, the people of Jharkhand thought that the state government was exploiting the region and this was a new type of colonial rule. Under such circumstances the people got frustrated and reacted against these forces. Even lot of studies shows that this exploitation of Jharkhand by state as well as central governments has made it the “fourth world”. (Sengupta, 1982). The peace loving tribals are even satisfied with such discriminal development if the fruits of it come to them but this was not the case. The meagre funds which the area receives from the state government, only about 30 percent of it reaches to the people and mostly these beneficiaries are the non-tribals of the region. Thus, mass discontent arose among the tribals of the Jharkhand and the outburst was oriented in the form of movement against them. Due to discrimination faced by the tribals, they mostly migrated from the region in search of better living conditions than before. They usually find themselves in slum of urban areas. These are the local tribals whose land has been taken up for industrialization. Such activities of step-motherly led to a lot of discontent among tribals of Jharkhand region. Thus, those tribals who can understand these issues will descent over the ongoing process. The demand for separate statehood was oriented towards solving all these problems.

AN INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH STATEHOOD IN THE STATE

The modern tribal movement for regional autonomy is a phenomena after India got independence. Jharkhand movement too is such a phenomenon. The main aim of the Jharkhand movement was the creation of a separate “Adivasi state”. Before independence, it was the main issue. But after independence, decks were clear to orient the movement from ethnicity to regionalism. With this, Adivasi Mahasabha got affected since they were the champions for separate Adivasi state. According to 1941 census the “land” of Jharkhand had only 44 percent of tribals, thus the demand of having a separate tribal state could not be fulfilled. This resulted in the formation of a new regional party, ‘**United Jharkhand Party**’ in 1948. This was formed by Justin Richard, a tribal leader who latter invited Jaipal Singh to join it . After hesitation, Adivasi Mahasabha joined the United Jharkhand Party and thus results in the formation of **Jharkhand Party** in 1950. The tribal political awakening reached its culmination point with the inauguration of the Jharkhand Party. It was exclusively declare as a “Political Party” and not a social, economic, religious organization like the previous one. For the first time, non-tribals were invited in the ongoing movement for autonomy and there was a shift from ethnicity to regionalism in the objectives of the movement. The main credit was given to Jaipal Singh who included all the people of Jharkhand. The Jharkhand Party declared to establish a separate state comprising of mineral belts of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The demand for a separate state includes autonomy and preservation of tribal culture and language. This was made by **52 MLA’s** of Bihar Assembly , who were also in opposition in the Assembly under the initiative taken by DavendraChampia. Although the Jharkhand Party remained in the opposition in the Bihar Assembly, it was not able to prove its majority for a separate Jharkhand State. In general elections of 1952 the party won 33 seats for the Jharkhand area.

Having political power, they submitted a memorandum signed by 34 legislators to Faizle Ali, Chairman of States Reorganization Commission in 1953. They demanded a Jharkhand state consisting of districts of Chotanagpur and Santhal pargana and portions of Gaya, Shahabad and Bhagalpur in Bihar, Mirjapur district in Uttar Pradesh beside the portion of Raigarh and Sarguja in Madhya Pradesh and Sundergarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in Orissa. The commission however in its report, rejected their demand for the separate state by giving the following points.

- (i) Although the Jharkhand Party got substantial verdict of the people, they did not obtain clear majority within Jharkhand area and the assembly members did not represent the majority's view.
- (ii) Public opinion outside Jharkhand did not favour the division and even within the Jharkhand other parties opposes the division.
- (iii) The demand of having a majority of tribal area was decline by saying that it constituted only one third of the total population and there are several languages spoken by the tribals. Thus, this is a different question and cannot be decided on the basis of only "majority".

(iv) The separation of South Bihar would adversely affect the entire economy of the state as the plains were predominantly agriculture and Jharkhand provided the industrial balance. Thus, the loss of this area could not be afforded by the rest of the state.

(v) The separation would upset the balance between agriculture and industry in the residual state which would be a poorer area with fewer opportunities and resources for development.

(vi) Beside this, the centres for the higher education like Patna University and Bihar University were outside Jharkhand, so it would be very inconvenient from this point of view to go for a separation.

Failing to make Jharkhand as a separate state, there was a lot of contradiction within the Jharkhand Party. In 1963 a section of it joined the congress and with that the movement got slackened. Further disintegration the party resulted in losing the people's verdict for a separate statehood. A lot of parties emerged after like Birsa Sa Dal, Jharkhand Peoples Party, Jharkhand Kranti Dal, Jharkhand Vichar Manch and so on . The endless list of splinter parties made the movement suffer. After a lean period of ten years, in 1973 a new leader came into the arena. A new party Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) under the leadership of Sibu Soren came into prominence. With lot of non-christian tribals supporting this party, it readily transmitted a rays of hope in the mind of the people. It enlarged their roots to the Santal Pargna and Hazaribagh plateau area and soon it was found that the center of the movement has shifted from Ranchi area to Santhal Pargna region. Sibu Soren soon became the champion of the movement and carried it through his comprehensive philosophy and systematic analysis of the whole affair. Going through an Assam Model of agitation, an All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) was formed, whose main aim was to include youth of the region in the ongoing movement. This resulted in gearing up of the movement in a militant way. On the other hand the Jharkhand Party (Horo group), presented another memorandum which was again for the formation of the separate statehood. The reasons were again the same, i.e. for good and efficient administrations of this neglected and backward region by the people themselves of the region, in furtherance of functional democracy, socialism and secularism; and for upholding the basic human rights of the people majority of them are backward and belong to "ethnic groups". Once again this proposal was refused by the parliament. A lot of reasons were given and the most important was "lack of common language" across the region. As most of the states were formed by taking a common language criteria, this was insignificant in proposed Jharkhand. Besides, there was a lack of "unified movement" among different parties. This further contributed significantly in weakening of the movement for statehood. Even the people were fed up with this "power politics" which most of the parties were playing. The people of Jharkhand wanted an identity and not power but political parties were on a different track. The political dominance of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was upon 1984. Then again a lean period in the process of the movement was seen. The verdict started shifting towards the non-congress national party as now they thought it would be efficient to have their members in the ministry at the center . Thus Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) emerged as a major political force. Their main aim was to assimilate the region in the national political system and came up with the proposal of making "Jharkhand" as "Vananchal". As Bhartiya Janta Party was a new party with high probability of being in or near center , the people supported them freely. They were the first national non-Jharkhand party, who supported the issue of Jharkhand. And after the failure of Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) and the chargesheet of Sibu Soren and Suraj Mandal, JMM leaders, there was no choice for the people to vote for them. Thus in the 1996 general election, BJP made almost a clean sweep by winning 14 seats out of 16 Lok Sabha from this region.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, one can say that the movement passed through different stages of development during its period of existence. Earlier, it was educated Christian tribals who dominated the area, but now it is the non-Christian tribals who dominate it. A long history of political activity in this region has accustomed the parties to power politics over the years. The main reason for the unfulfillment of the demand was this. Furthermore, each party went their own way due to a lack of coordinated strategy. It was further exacerbated by the disintegration of major parties like the Jharkhand Party and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. Jharkhand Party joined forces with Indian National Congress in 1963, and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha joined forces with Janta Dal in 1989, which was a main setback. There is still no unity among the parties today. However, even though their goals and objectives were similar, coordination was still needed. In 1991, the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) was formed to avoid disintegration between political parties. Nevertheless, many parties did not express interest in joining the committee. There are major parties such as the Bhartiya Janta Party and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren). The demand would have been fulfilled long ago if these parties had joined the movement and had a combined plan and approach.

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