

Problem and Challenges on Collection and Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) in Dumka, Jharkhand: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Nature has rewarded innumerable gifts in the form of minor forest produce. Due to high biodiversity in Santal Pargana, minor forest produce is found in abundance here. Most of the tribals in Santal Pargana live in or near the forest area. Primitive tribes are mainly dependent on minor forest produce. Their requirements and source of income is only minor forest produce. At present, due to increasing demand and limited availability of minor forest produce, minor forest produce plays an important role in tribal economy. From the social and economic point of view, tribals are completely dependent on minor forest produce. The existence and means of earning livelihood of tribals is connected with the collection and marketing of minor forest produce. Tribals fulfil their economic and daily needs by collecting and selling minor forest produce. The present research paper is in the context of the contribution of minor forest produce in the tribal economy. In this study, the author has discussed what is minor forest produce, the collection and marketing system of minor forest produce, and the efforts made by the Government of Jharkhand for tribals. Tribals of Santal Pargana face many problems in the collection and marketing of these minor forest produce. Small contractors and middlemen exploit these innocent tribals to the fullest. At the same time, the government also suffers losses due to less revenue. Therefore, in the interest of the tribals and the government, it is necessary to develop a proper collection and marketing system of minor forest produce and it should be used appropriately, so that the economic condition of the tribals can be improved.

Keywords :- Biodiversity, Santal Pargana, Primitive tribes, Minor Forest Produce, Tribal Economy, Marketing, Government, Revenue.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted in Dumka district. The district of Dumka (replacing the old name Santal Pargana) was created on 1st of June, 1983 with the remaining Jurisdiction of the then Santal Pargana district after creation of districts like Godda (on 17th May, 1983), Sahibganj (on 17th May, 1983), Deoghar (on 1st June, 1983), Pakur (on 28th January, 1994) and Jamtara (on 26th April, 2001). Dumka district has distinction of being headquarters of old Santal Pargana district in past and presently of Dumka district and Santal Pargana division. Dumka is surrounded by districts of Godda (Jharkhand) and Banka (Bihar) in North, Jamtara (Jharkhand) and Burdwan (West Bengal) in South, Pakur (Jharkhand) and Birbhum (West Bengal) in East and Deoghar (Jharkhand) in west. This is situated at the height of 472 ft. from the sea level. The district has an area of 3716.02 km. Dumka district is at 86 16" North latitude and 87 15" East longitudes. With respect to population and area the rank of district amongst the districts of state are 11th & 10th respectively.

Tribals like Santals, Paharias and loharas make a sizeable chunk of the population of the district. Being tribal area, its culture and creed is unique. This district is covered with mountains, rivers and forests. Its natural phenomena are fascinating and rare.

1.1 Non-timber forest products (NFTPs) or Minor Forest Produce

NFTPs are popularly known as natural forest products also we may say, the yield obtained from the natural forest is called forest produce. If we see from the point of view of usage, forest produce can be categorized into these types such as

1. Timber
2. Non-Timber

Non-Timber forest products (NTFPs) are also known as Minor forest Produce (MFP) or Non-Wood Forest Produce (NWFP). In Jharkhand there is no legal definition of Minor Forest Produce like other States, however,

the collection and marketing of minor forest produce like kendua leaves, lac, mahua flower, mahua fruits, sal leaf, wild leafy vegetable, bell, sal seed, mashrooms etc., is free from the government, native tribals collect these minor forest produce and sell them in the local market and earn a living from it.



Fig 1: Map of Dumka district representing ten Blocks.

1.2 Population and its Distribution in Dumka District

The district of Dumka is the one of the district of Jharkhand State. The present Dumka district with a population of 13, 21,442 according to 2011 Census, is divided into 10 Community Development Blocks comprising 2928 villages (inhabited – 2688, uninhabited – 240) and 5 town (statutory – 2 and CT – 3). With 4 percent of the total population on the State comprised within the district. The population of males and females are 668514 and 652928 with density of population in 2011 is 351 (per sq. km.) of the district. Proportion of rural and urban population: 2011 of Dumka district are 93.2 (rural) and 6.8 (urban).

1.3 Physical Aspects

Dumka district is a part of Hazaribag plateau it has been divided into four sub-micro regions, viz., Dumka – Godda uplands, Deoghar uplands, Rajmahal Hills and Pakur uplands on the basis of geological factors like soil, climate, mineral and natural vegetation.

This region comprises the Saraiyahat, Jarmundi, Jama, Ranishwar, Shikaripara and parts of Ramgarh, Dumka, Gopikandar, Kathikund and Masalia Blocks. The entire region is of undulating surface. Its height is 333 m in the east, 753 m in the west and 274 m in the South from the sea level. Throughout the region scattered hillocks covered with forests are spread over. The general slope of the region is towards the south.

1.4 Population of Schedule Tribes Census – 2011

The population of the Schedule Tribes in the district of Dumka during 2011 census was 571077. Numerically the five important ST s were namely: -

1. Santal – 4,81,809
2. Mal Paharia, Kumarbhag Paharia – 39,534
3. Mahli – 12,977
4. Kol – 6,063
5. Lohra – 1,803
6. Others (Chik-Baraik, Athudi, Bedia, Birhor and Khond – 28,891).

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to identify the problems and issues in collecting and marketing of minor forest produce in tribal areas of Santal Pargana, Jharkhand and to suggest suitable measures to overcome these problems.

1. To study the efforts made by Government of Jharkhand for using of Minor forest produce by tribal people of Santal Pargana.
2. To identify the problems and challenges faced by tribes for collection and marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP).

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is Empirical in nature. The information is based on the participant observation method in which the author had collected information through interaction with the villagers while visiting these blocks of Dumka district such as Shikaripara, Kathikund, Ramgarh, Masalia, Ranishwar, Gopikandar and Dumka. Author also consulted the secondary sources like Census of India 2011 and Forest Survey of India report 2019 for statistical representation of demographical features and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) of Dumka and Jharkhand.

4. SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION IN DUMKA

Table 1 and 2 presented below are based on Primary Census Abstract and Village Directory data of 2011 Census which give insight into the colour and texture of the tribal population in the district :-

Table-1: Number and percentage of scheduled tribes (rural) population in CD Blocks, Census 2011.

Sl. No.	Name of CD Block	Total population	Total Scheduled tribes population	Percentage of scheduled tribes population to total population
1	2	3	5	7
1	0172-Saraiyahat	156291	28050	17.95
2	0173-Jarmundi	168163	44796	26.64
3	0174-Ramgarh	159911	76525	47.85
4	0175-Gopikandar	42063	35577	84.58
5	0176-Kathikund	71458	45406	63.54
6	0177-Shikaripara	131464	79522	60.49
7	0178-Ranishwar	101667	45890	45.14
8	0179-Dumka	137730	68876	50.01
9	0180-Jama	137963	68021	49.3
10	0181-Masalia	124554	72966	58.58
Total		1231264	565629	45.94

Table-1. The above table shows that the percentage of scheduled tribes in Dumka district is 45.94 percent of the total population in the district within the district highest percentage of scheduled tribes population is in Gopikandar CD Blocks 84.58 percent and the lowest percentage of scheduled tribes population is in Sariyahat CD Blocks 17.95 percent.

Table-2: Proportion of scheduled tribe population to total population in villages, Census 2011.

Percentage range of scheduled tribes population to total population	Number of villages	Percentage	Scheduled tribes population	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5
Nil	559	20.80	0	0.00
Less than-5	136	5.06	2244	0.40
5 – 10	85	3.16	4036	0.71
11 – 20	141	5.25	13540	2.39
21 – 30	125	4.65	22059	3.90
31 – 40	110	4.09	25936	4.59
41 – 50	108	4.02	30142	5.33
51 - 75	274	10.19	94097	16.64
76 and above	1150	42.78	373575	66.05
District: Dumka (362)	2688	100.00	565629	100.00

Table-2., from the above table, it is apparent that there are 559 villages accounting for 20.80 percent of the inhabited villages in the district where the population of scheduled tribes range NIL and 0 percent of total population. 1150 villages where the population of the scheduled tribes ranges above than 76 villages having 42.78 percent of total inhabited villages' population with 66.05 percent of total population.

5. MAJOR NTFPs & INVASIVE SPECIES IN JHARKHAND

Major NTFPs and invasive species as assessed from forest inventory data are presented in the Table-3 and table-4 respectively.

Table-3: Major NTFPs species in the State of Jharkhand

Sl. No.	Species	Plant Type	Relative Abundance (%)
1.	Shorea robusta	Tree	67.97
2.	Buchanania Lanza	Tree	8.15
3.	Madhuca indica	Tree	6.77
4.	Diospyrus melanoxylon	Tree	5.33
5.	Butea monosperma	Tree	4.11

Table-4: Major invasive species in the State inside the RFA/Green Wash in Jharkhand

Sl. No.	Species	Estimated Extent
1.	Lantana camara	665
2.	Chromolaena odorata	166
3.	Ageratum houstonianum	36
4.	Acacia farnesiana	28
5.	Imperata cylindrica	6

Major NTFPs species are given in terms of relative abundance whereas invasive species are given in terms of their estimated extent.

5.1 Quantified estimation of Dependence of People living in forest fringe villages on forests in Jharkhand

Through a nation-wide study, Forest Survey of India 2019 has done estimation of dependence of people living in the villages close to forest for fuel wood, fodder, small timber and bamboo in quantified terms for each State & UT of the country. The estimated quantities of the four produce for Jharkhand is given in the table-5.

Table-5: Estimation of Dependence of People in Forest Fringe Villages on Forests in Jharkhand

Fuelwood (tonnes)	Fodder (tonnes)	Bamboo (tonnes)	Small Timber (cum)
73,72,340	5,54,82,427	50,535	1,83,240

6. MARKETING SYSTEM OF MINOR FOREST PRODUCE

In the marketing system, tribals collect minor forest produce from forests and send these collected minor forest produce to local traders or middlemen. The middlemen sell them to the main trader. The main trader sells it to the cottage industry. After getting ready, it comes to the open market for marketing. Thus, the marketing system is completed.

7. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES OF COLLECTION AND MARKETING OF MINOR FOREST PRODUCE

Tribals neither have knowledge of the method of collection of minor forest produce nor of marketing. Many minor forests produce collecting tribals do not even know where, to whom and how to sell these forest produce. Most of the time forest produce is plucked raw; hence they do not get a fair price. The tribals do not have the knowledge of proper technology of processing minor forest produce. The contractors, middlemen buy the minor forest produce from these tribals at a very low price. In all the blocks, even today, the tribals send Mahua flower after measuring it in a vessel made of iron. There is a lot of exploitation by these contractors. Even today, the tribals do not have the means of transport to reach the local market. Therefore, they are forced to give their forest produce at the local level at a low price, which is easily available to them. Minor forest produce can hardly be called a source of income today.

8. INITIATIVES OF GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND

In this race of livelihood, the exploitation of tribals depend on minor forest produce is a matter of deep concern. At present, many studies and research are being done, but all these are limited to higher academic and departmental level only. The collection and marketing of minor forest produce by Jharkhand state has been freed from control in the interest of tribals and no royalty is given by the government. Therefore, the collection and marketing of minor forest produce is free from government control. Full authority has been assigned to the Gram Sabha, but the Gram Sabha has no written action plan for the management of minor forest produce, nor has the thinking been developed. Interestingly, due to the awareness of the members of the village forest committees, there has been a limited ban on the bad practice of collecting raw fruits, but a lot needs to be done in this direction, which also includes the legal provision to ban the plucking of raw fruits. Incidents of illegal logging and smuggling are also seen.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, it is very important to consider some concrete measures for tribals to provide proper remuneration for their minor forest produce. Efforts should also be started for collection and marketing of minor forest produce through forest committees, which will definitely help the tribals directly and indirectly and it will reduce the opportunities for exploitation. Along with these measures, it is absolutely necessary to find and provide medicines necessary for trees to bear more fruits, their ripening and to protect fruits from insects, so that more production can be possible from the existing trees. Also, by developing a proper collection and marketing system, the economic condition of the tribals can be improved to a great extent, as well as the contribution of minor forest produce to the entire economy can play an important role. Immense possibilities of development are hidden in the collection and marketing of minor forest produce, which can be harnessed to free many tribals from economic distress.

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