

HISTORY OF JHARKHAND MOVEMENT: REGIONAL ASPIRATION HAS FULFILLED YET

AMIYA KUMAR SARKAR¹

¹Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Adamas University Kolkata, West Bengal, INDIA

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to analyze the creation of Jharkhand as a separate state through the long developmental struggle of tribal people and the condition of tribal's in the post Jharkhand periods. This paper also highlights the tribal movements against the unequal development and mismatch of Government policies and its poor implementations. It is true that when the Jharkhand Movement gaining ground these non-tribal groups too became part of the struggle. Thus, Jharkhandi came to be known as 'the land of the destitute' comprising of all the deprived sections of Jharkhand society. Hence, development of Jharkhand means the development of the destitute of this region. In reality Jharkhand state is in the grip of the problems of low income, poor health and industrial growth. No qualitative change has been found in the condition of tribal people as the newly born state containing the Bihar legacy of its non-performance on the development front.

KEYWORDS: Regionalism, State Reconstruction, Jharkhand Movement

INTRODUCTION

The term Jharkhand literally means the land of forest, geographically known as the Chhotanagpur Plateau; the region is often referred to as the Rurh of India. Jharkhand was earlier a part of Bihar. After a long standing tribal movement Jharkhand became 28th state of India on 15th November, 2000. But still the state is in grip of the problems like low per capita income, low literacy rate low agricultural and industrial growth. In this article we are going to analyze in detail the history of Jharkhand movement and how the creation of new state fulfills the aspiration of the tribal people? Or they are in same position as they were earlier.

There are so many economic, political, cultural and administrative reasons behind the Jharkhand movement. The formation of the state of Jharkhand is the culmination of a 200 year old struggle by the people of Jharkhand (Louis 2000: 148) The various movements in South Bihar and Santhal Parganas were not apparently 'political' before 1940s; they only aimed at tribal awakening and social and economic uplift. Built later on the leaders of the movements realized that unless they ejected the north Bihar leaders and other 'outsiders' from 'positions of power and authority. They would not be able to deliver their own people. The main reasons for tribal unrest in this region can be categorized into four basic issues, which are as per the following:

ALIENATION FROM FOREST

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, especially in Chotanagpur hill area.

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, tribal's 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-tribal's, 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, tribal were the main suffers. They totally depend upon the forests for daily purposes. This shows the process of transfer leads to conflict between tribal and non-tribal outsiders who resulted in a lot of uprising both peaceful and armed. Santhal's Rebellion and Birsait Movement was repercussions of this. By this time, the British Government has introduced the Chotanagpur Tendency Act (Amendment) of 1903 and Santhal Pargana Settlement (Amendment) Reputation 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 was paid but it was not properly given to them. Since the land ownership was common and chief of the tribal's managed the land, the poor tribal's did not get their proper share. On the other hand most of the tribal's 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 fulfill the demand of big industries thereby taking away more land. The tribal's 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-tribal's which was due to a large scale immigration of non-tribal's to these industrialized areas.

UNEMPLOYMENT ISSUES OF TRIBAL

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 tribal's 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 tribal's, 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 tribal's. Although the Government has provided reservation for tribal's 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 tribal's. As the process of industrialization continue the tribal's 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 tribal's migrate to far off places.

CULTURAL CONFLICT

Maintenance of owns 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 tribal's 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 etc.

UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

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 places 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 tribal's are even satisfied with such discriminate development if the fruits of it come to them but this was not the case. The meager 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-tribal's of the region. Thus, mass discontent arose among the tribal's of the Jharkhand and the outburst was oriented in the form of movement against them. Due to discrimination faced by the tribal's, 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 tribal's 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 tribal's who can understand these issues will descent over the ongoing process. The demand for separate statehood was oriented towards solving all these problems. Political parties plays significant role to concretize the aspiration of the tribal people. The attitude of the congress party towards the creation of autonomy or statehood was rather over cautious but the BJP led National Democratic Alliance came to power at Centre in 1999 and passed State Reorganization bill 2000. After passage by the Rajya Sabha and approval of the president of India, the new state Jharkhand came into being 15th November 2000. (Singh: 2017)

Jharkhand is rich in natural resources forests, minerals and abundant land. It has diverse population and more than fifty people of its population lives under poverty line. There is big gap between rural and urban population. In May 2000, many people died in Palamou districts due to starvation. Though Jharkhand is very rich in natural resources, the state is confronting challenges of underdevelopment, high incidence of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and ill health. (Mathew: 1989) As the mineral storehouse of the country with almost 40 percent mineral reserves Jharkhand could have been an economic power house. Yet since its inception in 2000, the

state still craves for stability- both financial as well as political. The result is Jharkhand has emerged as a hot naxal belt with 22 of its 24 districts affected by Naxal insurgency. It would be worthwhile to point out that the Jharkhand region with 40 percent of India's mineral deposits had accounted for about 60 percent of the state revenue in undivided Bihar. But Jharkhand is under a debt of Rs. 34868 crore. Its vast mineral reserve becomes its undoing in light of the unholy collusion between government politician, contractors, and mining mafia in the state. As they plundered the resources, the grand dream of tribal autonomy went for a loss.

Born on November 15, 2000, after the bifurcation of Bihar, mineral rich Jharkhand was potentially the richest among the three newly created states. It had plenty of mines, minerals and industry compared to Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal. Yet, today, Chhattisgarh and Uttarkhand are ahead of Jharkhand in terms of the Gross Domestic Product as well as in terms of human development indices.

Why did the state lag behind the other two states? Most observers offer three reasons: political instability, massive corruption among political elites and short sighted policy of the Government. Political instability is the name of the game in Jharkhand ever since it was created. The state has had six chief ministers in 13 different regimes in sixteen years. Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das admitted that political instability was the main reason behind its relative economic and social backwardness.

In the past corruption too has been very high with major scandals rocking the political firmament from time to time. From, the mining and coal scams in which former chief minister Madhu Koda was arrested. Corruption has led to crony capitalism and mafia culture in the mining sector. State sponsored natural resource exploitation and economic development move generally thus created the social pressure that led to the creation of a politically meaningful Jharkhand region and repeated demands for a separate Jharkhand state. (Stuligross, 2001:133)

The aspiration of the tribal people has been threatened by developmental forces of the so called Government policies. It has been difficult for the ethnic clans to safeguard their culture. Tribal communities in Jharkhand have been exploited, displaced and dispossessed of their resources by the State. The Government ruthlessly exploits tribal population in the name of national interest and does so almost unchallenged by other sections of society.

It's considered that the mineral policy has more to do with profiting large firms. The royalty fixed by the central government for mineral mines is very low, thus benefitting

private mining firms than the state. The private sector seems to have taken a special interest in drastically reforming the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act to make transfer of land from tribal to non tribal. So slowly the tribal people alienated from their own land.

Presently the state facing two major problems. Poverty and low rate of economic growth. There is a marginal shift of working force from agriculture to non agriculture sector due to marginalization of land holdings in Jharkhand. Those cultivators who had small piece of land had lost their land and converted into agricultural labors. Most of them belong to tribal community. In Jharkhand the agricultural labor earn very low so they need the assistance of banking and other sectors. But in reality the industrialist are only concerned with the profits and not the tribal agricultural labor. They are depriving them of the resources making them unskilled labor to work at construction site. Most of the tribal fall in the extremely poor category. They don't have access to basic amenities like clothing, food, shelter, etc. Further, most of them are unable to benefit the facilities meant for their uplift. Even the media and journalists hardly highlight their issues. Even the Government has framed some schemes for the poor but the dealers are eating the share of the poor.

Babulal Marandi Government changed the previous reservation policy of the Government of Bihar and raised the percentage from 50 percent to 60 percent. But the new policy faced resistance by some of the Cabinet colleagues of Marandi. Ultimately the matter ended with verdict of the Jharkhand High Court. And the Government of Jharkhand amended the reservation policy by bringing down the reservation limit to 50 percent.

In order to meet these challenges and to make existing sources of livelihoods stronger, result oriented and sustainable, the Government of Jharkhand, under Rural Development Department, has formed an independent society named Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) with financial support by UNDP. The Development Council since its inception on August, 2015, on Tuesday met for the first time to chart out the states development goals, priorities and policies. (Upadhyay: 2017)

CONCLUSION

This is ironical that Jharkhand is one of the most backward states although it is one of the richest states in terms of natural resources. So the long standing tribal movements, their aspirations all are in vein when we see the fact sheet of the tribal people are not satisfactory. They are alienated, marginalized from their native land and from their identity and

culture. The market oriented society compelled the tribal people to come out from their traditional value. The weak institutional mechanism and lack of effective Governance, political instability has led to the underdevelopment. Tribal have been the real owner of forest. If these tribal people get their rights properly then only the purpose of the separate state can be fulfilled.

REFERENCES

- Alex. Ekka, (1996) "Wither Jharkhand, *Social Action*; Vol. 46(2), April- June; 1996.
- Bhalla Surajit,(2016) Breaking the shackles of the past, *India Today*, 5th August 2016
- Basu Moushumi(2008): Arcelor- Mittal in Jharkhand, *EPW*,Vol XLIV No 50
<http://xiss.ac.in/JJDMS/issue1.php>
<http://infochangeindia.org/human-right>
<http://www.epw.in/journal/2013/23/web-exclusive/voice-jharkhand.html#sthash.T9zoNb5P.dpuf>
- Louis Prakash (2000): Jharkhand Marginalization of Tribes,*EPW*, XXXV, **47**, 18-24 November
- Munda Ram Dayal (1988) Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Perspective in *Social change* Vol. **18(3)** 1988
- Parvatiyar, Deepak, Political history in Jharkhand –will it get a clear verdict this Time, www.elections.in
- Rath, G.C.(2006): Tribal Development in India: the Contemporary Debate, Sage Publication New Delhi
- Swain Ashok (1997): Democratic Consolidation? Environmental Movements in India, *Asian Survey*, Vol 37, No 9, pp818-32
- Singh Paul C.K :The Aspects of a Changing Context in Jharkhand
- Sharma K. L, Jharkhand Movement in Bihar Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 11, No.1/2 (Jan. 10, 1976), pp. 37-43
- Singh Sunil Kr, Inside Jharkhand, Crown Publications, 2017, Seventh Edition, pp 106-107
- Upadhyay Rajesh, Programme implementations Key for Jharkhand's Development, Hindustan Time, 3rd June, 2017