



Reasons of Santhal Insurgency Movement of 1855-56

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Abstract

The Santhals are one of India's biggest tribes. They are talented in a variety of activities, including music and handicrafts, and they have a rich cultural past. They have their own language and script that belongs to the austro-asiatic language family. However, literature about their habits, traditions, and culture is limited. Individuals from this village are generally illiterate, thus traditions and rituals are passed down verbally from generation to generation. The Santhals were a peaceful people who valued agriculture as one of their primary vocations. Forest land and the holy grove were symbolic of their guardian spirit or protector. The Santhals experienced disproportionate tyranny as a result of Colonial government and local moneylenders, which culminated in the Santhal Rebellion of 1855. Prior to this, as the Santhals were gathering in their holy grove, a miraculous incident occurred. The mythology describes the presence of a Thakur or deity who assists the Santhals in disposing of every 'diku' or foreigner in order to reclaim control of their country. Their trust in this Protector gave them the courage to resist the Colonials and the Zamindars, but did it eventually liberate them from their tyranny at the hands of both? This study focuses on this tale and its outcome while tracing the Santhal movements and determining the outcome with regard to the Santhal movements.

Keywords: *Santhals, Santhal Rebellion, Jitu Santhal Movement, Subaltern.*

Introduction

The Santhals are one of India's biggest indigenous tribes. According to the 1991 census, they account for around 6.8% of the nation's total tribal population. They are found throughout the eastern states of India, including Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya. They may also be found in the neighbouring nations of Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the South East Asian islands. They are usually farmers who value land as much as they do their own lives. As a means of subsistence, they engage in agricultural operations as well as gathering, hunting, and fishing. They are also quite interested in animal husbandry.

They are one of India's oldest tribal clans and one of the most basic castes. They live a modest and separate existence and believe in superstitions, which demonstrates their backwardness. The Santhals are masters in

making musical instruments, mats, baskets, cots, clay ovens, brooms, and fishing equipment. Their settlements are typically located in wooded areas, where members hunt, fish, or clear land for rice farming. While many people prefer to live in their traditional villages today, a sizable population has entered the industrial labour, working in coal mines, steel mills, or large-scale agricultural.

According to a famous 19th-century Santhal tale, two Santhal heroes, Sidhu and Kanhu, claimed to have seen in a vision the Thakur or God of the Santhals, who gave them a book in five batches. In this book, the Thakur exhorted the "dikus" or foreigners and sahibs to flee to the other side of the Ganges from the Santhal country. Santhals also claimed to have had "darshan" of the "Thakur" in various forms every day for some time. Every day, the Thakur came to the brothers, first as a flare of fire, then as a solid waggon wheel holding a book, some white paper, and a knife. The hamlet was directed to bring sacrifices of grain and milk, as well as sacrifice buffaloes, to a temple made of mud capped by a cart wheel. The worshipers were shown the slips of paper and the book and informed that the instructions of the God were inscribed on them. The miracle's tale travelled quickly, and messengers were despatched to all the Manjhi of the Damin-I-Koh with a branch of Sal tree, which, like the blazing cross of the Highlands, signalled the people to come. Their claims of being commissioned by the "Thakur" to lead them against all foreigners and establish Santhal dominion were debunked.

Santhal tribes still remember their heritage and celebrate "Hul Festival" every year for their magnificent occurrence in 1855 AD after 159 years. They recall the main insurgency and revere their commanders, Sidhu and Kanhu. The Santhal revolt was one of the most significant moments in Colonial history. Santhal tribes are one of India's ancient tribes and are simple and innocent by nature. Regarding their origin, Revd. Skrefsurd wrote that the Santhals lived in Persia, Afghanistan, and Chinese Tartary and entered India from the North West, first settling in Punjab, and then making their way to their current habitat in Chotanagpur, whereas Revd. Boddington believes that the Santhals entered India from the North Eastern part. The Santhal tribe's primary language is Santhali, and ancient stories are still passed down orally among the people. Agriculture is their major source of income, while dancing, music, and art are key aspects of their culture. Aside from agriculture, the Santhal people are skilled hunters. From the beginning, they resided in the Rajmahal Hills and worshipped their land as a God or "Thakur."

They encountered several big issues in their daily lives with the formation of the East India Company. By the end of the 18th century, the Santhals had begun to migrate to the woods around the Rajmahal Hills. With the installation of the Permanent Settlement by Governor General Lord Cornwallis in 1793 AD, the Company gained control of the whole territory. They have implemented a variety of illegitimate levies and revenue methods. The East India Company granted Mahajans and Zamindars the authority to collect land revenues

Reasons of agitation

(1) The zamindars, the police, the revenue, and the court all engaged in extortion. The Santals had to pay a variety of taxes and levies. They were evicted from their home. They had been abused.

(2) Violence: Zamindar representatives, namely Karendais, inflicted personal violence on the Santals. On the timid and yielding Santals, a variety of tiny tyrannies were practised.

(3) Trespass on Santal Property: The tenants' land was trespassed on by the wealthier peasants. They seized their livestock.

(4) Exorbitant Interest Rates: Exorbitant interest rates were levied by the moneylenders. These moneylenders were referred to as diku, or exploiters, by the Santal. In fact, all Bengalis who had companies in the Santal districts were known as dikus.

(5) European oppression: Europeans were hired to build railroads in Bihar. These Europeans regularly pushed the kidnapping of Santal women, as well as murder and other atrocities. The Europeans who worked on the railway project were not paid for their services. As a result, the zamindars, moneylenders, traders, and European employees exploited the Santal peasants to the point that they had no alternative but to turn to rebellion.

Enough is enough; the Santals could no longer stand the operation. The powerful Santals began robbing the mahajans (moneylenders) and zamindars of their hard-earned wealth. However, the officials treated the Santals with disdain. This was far from reality, as thousands of Santals gathered in the early half of 1855.

The Santal assembly lamented that while their colleagues had been jailed, nothing had been done for the mahajans whose actions had forced them to take the law into their own hands. The insurgency extended throughout the Santal districts over time. The Santals resorted to guerilla warfare. This was a novel experience for the whole state of Bihar. It was shocking to see the Santals forming their own armies, made up of insurgent peasants marching against their oppressors.

Leaders of Santal Hul

The meaning of the word 'Hul' is revolution. Santals were quite arduous. They began to produce a large amount of grain and were overjoyed at Damil-il-koh. However, following the first part of the nineteenth century, the situation began to alter. Usurers and businesses arrived in that region. They began to defraud the helpless Santals. They cheated these naive Santals by abusing Governor officials. The horrible tortures

inflicted by these wicked individuals inspired Santals to start a revolt. This revolt was led by Sido and Kanhu. They were siblings. Aside from them, their other two brothers, Chand and Bhairav, were prominent participants in the movement.

Santhal Rebellion – The Uprising of Santhals

The Santhal Revolt occurred in 1855-56. Santhals are a tribal community mostly found in Jharkhand. This was the first peasant rebellion in India. The insurrection may be traced back to the implementation of the Permanent Land Settlement in 1793. The aforementioned British settlement pattern robbed the Santhals of lands they had been tending for centuries. The land tax was hiked and farmers were exploited by zamindars, moneylenders, Europeans, and British government officials. They were oppressed to the point that they decided to revolt against the landowners and the government.

The Santhals used guerilla warfare. This was an unusual incident in Bihar. The Santhals raised their own army of peasants to fight their oppressors. The railway and postal lines were destroyed by the Santhal army. The Santhal insurrection was certainly effective for a time, but it could not prevail against the government's ultimate authority and was crushed.

The Santhal insurrection was a watershed moment in tribal history, and it served as a precursor to the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 AD. This was the significant event that initially brought the British East India Company's attention to the Santhal area, and it exposes the nature of this relationship as well as the strengths and limitations of Santhal solidarity. The happy times for the Santhals of Damin - I - Koh were fleeting. The Santhals were losing their land ownership rights and became tenants and even slaves of Hindus who understood how to exploit legislation.

The Santhals desired to be freed of their financial difficulties. The Santhals' inability to seek redress in court, their desire for independence and increased political power, an inefficient, inexperienced, and sluggish government in dealing with the Santhals' grievances against indigo planters, cattle lifting, rape of Santhal women, abnormal price rises, the British system of fixed payments on land in cash, ill treatment meted out to Santhal prisoners, including children and women, and poor geographical knowledge The oppression of the Mahajans, Darogas, and Amlas was the primary reason of the Santhal insurrection. These Mahajans gave the Santhals money as a loan with a high interest rate, and once he had contracted a debt, he had little chance of escaping because if his creditor sued him, the Santhals could not produce any authentic record, whereas the creditors had his ledgers and daybook, and these Mahajans sometimes going to court to realise his capital and interest, sent his agents to forcibly take away their cattle. The Santhals had spoken out against the Indigo

growers. The planters had erected several kuthis in the Damin - I - Koh region and compelled the Santhals to produce indigo, which the Santhals were opposed to. Another motivation for the Santhal uprising was the English administration's incompetence.

According to Ranajit Guha, adivasis were often picked up and forcefully pushed off the land, forcing them to become migratory labourers. They resorted to violence at times, and there are countless instances of uprisings in Adivasi territories during the colonial period, typically for this subject. The Santhal rebellion in Chotanagpur, Bihar, in 1855 AD was the most dramatic of the uprisings related with British land policy. This tribal community was being tortured physically, economically, and emotionally on a daily basis, and the uprising was an outpouring of their rage. The Santhal uprising began in 1854 AD, when the Santhals plundered the Mahajans of their money by "dacoities, burglaries, and thievery." Bir Singh, Parganait of Sasan in Lachimpur, Bir Singh Manjhi of Borio, Kaolej Pramanik of Sindree, and Doman Manjhi of Hatbanda robbed Isree Bhakat and Tilak Bhakat of Litipara, Jitu Kolhu of Bagsisa, and other residences in Dariapur in 1854 AD.

Santhal insurgency movement of 1855-56

The Santhals are a tribal community mostly found in Bihar. They are primarily farmers. The earliest peasant movement in India dates back to the Santhal insurgency of 1855-56. This insurgency was inspired by the formation of the Permanent Land Settlement in 1793. The British settlement design took away lands from the Santhals that they had nurtured for centuries. The zamindars purchased land from the British government at auction and sold it to peasants for agriculture.

The land tax was raised and the ordinary peasants were oppressed by the zamindars and moneylenders, as well as groups of Europeans and government officials. The Santhals were so oppressed that they resolved to revolt against the zamindars, moneylenders, and businessmen. Following Permanent Land Settlement, the Santhals of Bihar did not show much resistance at first. They even went to the boundaries of retreat and relocated near the borders of the Ganga plains, where competition for land was fierce and rents were greatest. This was too much for the Santhals. They resorted to insurgency.

Conclusion

The famous legend of the Thakur was formed during Sidhu Kanhu's Santhal insurrection of 1855 AD to combat against the "dikus" or strangers in order to defend their own area. Sidhu Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav

fought against colonial rule but were unable to restore their property. Jitu Santhal was also unable to retrieve their lands from the then-ruling government. However, after 122 years, the Santhal people were able to retrieve their property in 1977 AD with the help of Kanu Sanyal of the CPIM administration in West Bengal. It was a testament to their organisation and voluntary discipline that such a vast number of people, in excess of 10,000, constructed and dismantled in such a short period of time. The Santhal troops disrupted mail and train links. The authorities recognised that the Santhal insurrection has all of the elements of a rebellion against the government. The Santhal insurgency was undoubtedly formidable, yet it could not prevail against the government's authority. It was put down. Despite its defeat, the insurgency was a success.

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