



The Adibasisthan Agitation Andthe Role of Santal Mahasabha

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Abstract

To secure a separate state again for indigenious inhabitants of the area, particularly the Santals, the Adibasisthan movement was launched inside the western Rates have varied area as early as 1947. There was a lot of exploitation of a Hindu people behind such a effort. For the launch of the Direct Action, the movement was motivated by the separatist ideologies of the Jharkhand Movement. As part of the agitation, the Santal established the Santal Mahasabha and encompassed a wide range of economic and social problems for the benefit of the people. Anti-oppressive Hinduism and Bengalee Hinduism have indeed been fought by the Santal Mahasabha. They spread the word regarding Gero's message. Internal strife among Santal people, on the other hand, was the cause of its downfall.

Key Words – Adibasisthan Movement, Santals, Separate land, Santal Mahasabha, Gero Message, Bidhuchandan, separatist politics, Direct Action.

Introduction

Adibasisthan or Jharkhand movement began in the Jhargram Subdivision of Midnapore district in 1947 by tribal population mainly even by Santals.. The Dhalbhum and Mayurbhanj rulers and the philosophy of the region's Santals influenced each other. In the this way, the Adibasisthan movement was seen as a part of the Jharkhand struggle, which was founded in support of the Santals' distinct home. The Adibasis dubbed the uprising the Jahidsthan Movement. The British government's concession to Hindustan as well as Pakistan sparked the first groundswell of support for an Adibasi province, and so it gained traction after the Delhi Constitutional Assembly created a minority affairs commission

Background and Reasons of the Adibasisthan Movement

Tribal males were permitted by landlords to dwell anywhere they wished in the bush, and they carved off arable land from of the jungle. Rent-seekers were evicted and pushed into the deeper jungle, wherein they found more fertile land, only to be expelled once again by greedy owners. Next came the compound-interest moneylenders, who took the victims' arable land by force. In the border area between Midnapore and Bankura district in 1923, there was a revolution by Santals. Inside the forest, they started to plunder tanks and chop down trees for

firewood. However, it wasn't as widespread as the current trend being discussed. After the thieves were apprehended as well as imprisoned, the revolt came to an end.ⁱ

The upper-class Hindus had long-standing grudges against the tribal people. The territory of a Santal, Bhil, Kols, Bhumija, as well as other similar groups was wrongfully forcibly removed, and they rebelled inside the past, although not to the extent that current insurrection has been discussed. For the Adibasis, the agitation was centered on Bihar's Chottonagpur division, and the Birbhum, Bankura, and Kharagpur regions of Midnapore. The Adibasisthan movement were supported by the Muslim community. Some of the unrest stemmed from separatist politics, as well. The Tehesildar of Chilkigarh Raj Estate, Sk Allah Rakhya, supported also took part in the violence, so did his separatist organisation.ⁱⁱ To support this initiative, we gave Rs 1000/- (one thousand) and provided a vehicle to take passengers from the railway station to the gathering location. As a result of efforts, the Santals were able to drive the Bengalees out of this region by infusing the Santals' agitation with notion of "radical intervention."ⁱⁱⁱ The Muslim league's support for the Santals campaign remained a mystery. Most likely, that Muslim league tried to establish control over this region by conducting 'Direct Action,' which was intended to drive many Hindus from their abode in the this area. The Muslim League's 'Direct Action' Program was a hit when it was started. There were actual social and economic challenges at the core of the discontent. Their aspiration for just an independent state meant that they wish to prevent exploitation and tyranny both for Hindus and Bengalis. When the Caused by the gravitational refused to pay the levy, their land was taken from them by the Hindu Mahajans. According the Santal Mahasabha, a sovereign state for the Santals was necessary to preserve their ethnic and cultural identity of Hindus. Some social and economic problems were added into the mix by the leaders in order to have more people participating.^{iv}

The social issues were;-

1. Efforts to combat illiteracy
2. Stop using Haria
3. Third, the prohibition of outdoor dancing by the Santal girls
4. Inability to hire Bengalees as Santal labourers
5. Not selling anything to Bengalees is number five.
6. Not bringing Haria to a store operated by Bengalis.

The economic issues were;-

1. Female labourers are compensated three pios paddy, while male workers are paid four pios paddy, in additional to Tiffin and a single dinner.
2. Land that they gave away would be returned to its original condition
3. To compel them to buy paddy inside the correct way, that they had previously failed to do.

Organization of the Movement:-

It was necessary to refer that the Santal organised Santal Mahasabha for conducting the Adibasisthan movement from one central institution. The member of the Santal Mahasabha was recruited on the payment of four annas and six chhatak of rice per head^v. The Mahasabha recruited only the trusted Santals who followed the instructions of Mahasabha very cautiously avoiding the eyes the police and the Hindu People. The recruitment was held on the occasion of '*Bidhuchandan*'^{vi}. The *Bidhuchandan* was actually a meetingin which thesandal leaders recommended the trusted Santals as the members and the volunteers of the Santal Mahasabha. The elder and the important members of the Mahasabha instructed the new members about their duties

and the responsibilities and warned them not to disclose the secret news of the Mahasabha^{vii}. The actual aim and object of *Bidhuchandan* was to involve the young trusted Santals chaps in the currents of the Adibasisthan agitation. In this purpose they staged drum with dance.

To inform the tribal people about the movement they took up the policy of Gero message^{viii}. Gero symbolized as pious or holy thing to the Santals. What to Quran was to the Muslims, the mandates of Gero were to the Santals. So, the mandates of the Gerowere abided by all the Santals people who were informed. Gero means a knot in a rope which was signal and it carried all the necessary information about the movement. The man who sent it, sent through bearer with information relating to the place, date and time, when and where to assemble^{ix}. The bearer took it to a village and handed it over to a villager with all necessary information kept in secret. Whom the man who received it, made a knot in the same rope and sent it to another village where another knot was given and so on. The numbers of the knot indicated the numbers of the villages informed.

Sk. Allah Rakhya had supplied the names of two or three Santals in each village in Jamboni area to the leader of Chakulia who was described □ 'Uparwala' by the Santals^x.

It was not identified who was actual 'Uparwala'. Only the reliable Santals names were supplied by Allah Rakhya taking the permission of Mahasabha. These persons could be entrusted with the change of receiving "Gero" message and propagated it within Santal community with all necessary information. It was also known that one Charu Chandra Bisra of Ramchandrapur near Jamboni was the lieutenant of Mr. Jaipal Singh in Midnapore district and was responsible for spreading the ideas of Jaipal Singh among the Santals^{xi}. The other persons outside the Mahasabha helped Jaipal Singh were:-

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1. Two Santals leaders of the district of Mayurbhanj, one was identified Sonahar Soren and the name of the other person was not known,
 2. Dinabandhu Mandi of Sahari
 3. Manahar Hansda of Kurchiboni-Binpur.
 4. Banerwar Saren- Place was not identified
 5. Basu Soren of Gidni
 6. A Santal Christian – Kukurmuri, Jamboni.

For the Adibasis, the current movement encompassed the whole Chhoto Nagpur division of Bihar, and the districts of Birbhum and Bankura, and the territory up to Kharagpur in Midnapore. A separate land for the Santals in this region has become the apparent goal of the campaign throughout the time it was going to take place. When it came time to begin the struggle against Hindu tyranny, Santal Mahasabha hand-picked just few people. The men of Dhalbhum as well as Mayurbhanj had a significant impact on these young Santals. People in Dhalbhum and Mayurbhanj were in touch with–

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1. Gan Santal, Gara Santals of Balidiha.
 2. Kuna Santal of Kanai Mahali
 3. Fakir Hembram of Chatta Rangameliya
 4. Rup Chandra Mandi of Ramchandrapur
 5. Mrigen Kisku of De
 6. Sagar Santal of Bhatpur-Kondong-Kadumdiha
 7. Kenka Santal of De
 8. Eera Santal of De
 9. Ram Santal of De
 10. Bhungla Santal of De
 11. Dhiren Tudu of De
 12. Narain Santal of Joka Salboni
 13. Barah Santal of Joka Salboni
 14. Chunaram Santal – Jambani
 15. Sarat Murmu – Chetla Rang
 16. Diku Mandi – Binpur
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From these names mentioned above, it could be said that Santals of Gopiballavpur and Nayagram area were not influenced in the Adibasisthan Movement at the initial stage^{xii}.

Various Stages of the Movement:-

This Santals agitation in 1946-47 had been developed into three stages: There were

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- i) Some people were conscious of Social evils only.
 - ii) Some people were conscious of their economic backwardness.
 - iii) Some people wanted Adibasisthan being conscious of two above.

The Santals of Sankrail, Nayagram, and a portion of Gopiballavpur were totally unaware of a movement at the beginning. As the movement gained steam, it impacted them, and they became more aware of it. They stayed in the movement's initial stages. Second stage: The Santals were aware of their unfair cost in the rest of Gopiballavpur, Jamboni, Jhargram region. The Santals in the nearby areas of Jamboni, Jhargram, and Binpur were well with the group's demands, and therefore they were in its third stage.^{xiii}

Geros were despatched to advertise the commotion, and drums were sometimes played. Dances and songs were organised in addition to the meetings. The Santals danced as well as sung all over the space, but secret negotiations occurred inside.^{xiv} It was quite hard to decipher what the general public were debating.

Men in the third stage of the movement's development were aware that demand for economic advantage can not be met until more backward communities joined the struggle.

Eleven backward communities were also documented to be interested in their fold that pushed for an improvement in their daily fare^{xv}. Muzra, Bhumij, Kamar Bagals, and many others joined the movement with the Santals in their 'Direct Programme Of action.' The Bagals had been granted their sovereign as a dubious proposition, but the Santals accepted it with reluctance. They didn't want the Bagal's assistance right now, but they may in the future. The Bagals, who were much more in contact with Bengalee, did not seem to be totally accepted by the Santals. The agitation to establish the Adibasisthan was going secretly among Santals at the beginning of 1947^{xvi}. They held several meetings in the Jhargram Sub-division to keep up their Tempo. In some parts of the sub-division they forcibly removed the paddy from the field owned by Bengalee People, Uriya Brahman (apparently the Satpatis and Sarangi were meant), Big Zamindar such as Raja of Jamboni, very rich Peasants such as Kali Kar of Jhargram. In other parts of the sub-division the Santals had ceased to any kind of work of the Bengalees. Besides these, many Santals in some areas of the sub-division were agitating for the enhancement of their daily wages^{xvii}.

In the latter development of this agitation, the attention of the Santals was directed for the boycott of the Bengalee, whom they held responsible for the total deprivation of the landed assets. The Santal leaders like Chaka Ram Santal, Mukund Tudu, Bitambar Murmu and others were the sponsor of the boycott movement while Biram Soren and Muchiram Soren, of Chhoto Bansaro, Kalipada Basui of Bamaris and other were trying to intensity the agitation for Adibasisthan through forcibly removing the paddy from the lands owned by the peoples other than Santals. They also staged some demonstrations in Ramchandrapur area (so Gopiballavpur P.S.) shouting slogan. "Jaipal singh ki Jai" , "Adibasis ki jai", and held

many secret meetings in the various parts of this sub-division, carried on posters depicting how the Hindus gradually sobbed the Santals of their lands and how they brought barren lands under cultivation^{xviii}.

Intensification of the movement and bringing the idea of Direct Action

The movement approached its pick point, moving the event farther away from the Santal movement's currents. The police fire at Garhbeta, where a mob of around 500–600 Santals recruited by one Sasadhar Ghosh Bathantore, Garhbeta for the forcibly removal of rice from fields belonging to Bibhuti Mahapatra, of the hamlet Bathen Trore on 18.11.47 intensified the Adibasisthan movement.^{xix} It was a fact that several Santals panicked in fear, ran house to house, and hid when they catches a glimpse of the police firing their guns at Garhbeta. Some of them even attempted to leave. On the other hand, the bulk of Santals grew more rebellious. They were equipped with a crossbow as well as claimed the rights to their land, which they've been removed from. They believed, depending on their vast prior experience, that the only achievement of "Adibasisthan" could fulfil all requirements.

Therefore, the Santals were getting prepared to carry out their request of Adibasisthan in order to achieve goals. They received assistance from the Santals of Dhalbhum as Mayurbhanj, as well as from the Santals who practised Islam and Christianity. The Santals Mahasabha was given instructions by "Uparwala," but it was not able to ascertain who "Uparwala" really was. It's likely that he was Jaipal Singh. For the purpose of establishing Adibasisthan in the best financial interest of their own society, the Santals convened a large list of available and covert meetings amongst themselves about the various parts of the Jhargram subdivision. After being persuaded by members of the Muslims league during in the clandestine meetings, the Santal Mahasabha reached the conclusion that they should begin a campaign called "Direct Action." The Santals made a concerted effort to begin the direct action in a manner comparable to something which was taken by the Muslim League. After the end of the Badhan festival, the Santal Mahasabha reached the conclusion that Direct Action would begin on November 15, 1947 at 23:00 from Bend, a hamlet on the Bombay Highway that borders the Jamboni region. This decision has been made by the Santal Mahasabha.^{xx} During this period of festival Santals were licensed to take their drink and at this moment they could do anything.

The Direct Action consisted of having to send the women folk to harvest this same paddy, irrespective of legal or real possession, and if anyone objected to it, the male members in amount 100 to 1000 would attack this same opposition with bows and arrows as well as extended it to loot as well as arson of houses. If anyone objected to it, the male members would attack the opposition with bows and arrows and enlarged it to plunder as well as arson of houses. Every Santal was given the instruction to make sure they were armed with bows and arrows in preparation for the "Radical Intervention." They were encouraged by Allah Rakhya, who was liable for fomenting unrest by saying that Muslims had gotten Pakistan by violence and that Santals would resort to the same type of brutality in order to achieve their goal. This created tension between the two parties.^{xxi} It was said

by some Santals that they would be illiterate and became very intoxicated after drinking a lot of liquor, and that conflict could break out in any degree of intoxication. It was also noted that the Santals would celebrate the "Gajan" festival beginning on the night of November 15th, 1947, and in connection with this, roughly 10,000 to 12,000 people, male and female, would socialise at Parsule in Chakulia (Bihar), which is located on the boundary of the Midnapore district.^{xxii} It was expected that a significant number of Santals would participate in the event, which was one of the starting points for the Direct Action initiative. However, a portion of the Santal population were in favour of starting the direct action on the night of the Kalipuja, which was the 12th of Nov, 1947. This was the same night that the Adibasis, especially the Santals, would celebrate the 'Jagaran' festival. According to what Jagaran has said, they will not be able to go asleep but would have to begin their day by worshipping their gods. Because of this, there was contention among inhabitants of the indigenous communities on the proper moment to launch active steps. The indigenous community, on either hand, had no doubts about start of the direct action programme. Whenever it came to kicking off the Direct Action initiative, the tribal people showed some signs of impatience. Among the Santals who have been involved in the this link were the following ones^{xxiii}.

1. Jagal Durga Hembram of Gopiballavpur.
2. Ratan Soren of Dhansole
3. Bhagahari Soren of Dhansole
4. Abhay Soren of Putulia, Gopiballavpur
5. Lakshinarayan Hembram of Rangaru side
6. Nabin Soren of Kamarbandhi. Binpur
7. Jaleswar Soren of Pathra, Jhargram
8. Kanu Santal of Kani Mahali, Jamboni.

As the storm approached, the movement have become more vigorous and stronger. As many as fifteen to twenty thousand Santals attended almost daily mass meetings in the censure of the sub-division as well as beyond the area. There were meetings held in Dhansole near Gopiballavpur on October 19th, at Ghatshilla on November 2nd, at Parsuadi in November 9th, at Madhuban on November 10th, as well as Raghunathpur near Binpur on November 10th. Bhimpur near Salbani and a variety of other locations around November 11th.^{xxiv}

Hearing that the Santals were about to launch direct action, the Hindus, Bengalees, and particularly hindu Zanindar were terrified. That's what Zamindar of Chilikigarh admitted, and he declined to provide any information about the Santals' impending action. Hindus inside the Nayagram region were boycotted by local Santals. In terms of improving the community, they had decided to give up Haria. Santals cut the paddy in several of the local villages in this region. There were also participation from the Santals of Jamboni, Gopiballavpur, Binpur, Belpahari, as well as Jhargram.

Causes of the Failure of the Movement:-

The excitement, however, was brief owing to a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It's unlikely that many Santal in Jhargram Division would step up to execute active steps. This article stated that the Santal agitation for Jahidstan had failed since numerous Santals were unwilling to join the effort.^{xxv} At the same time, it is noted that the police were

extremely active in dealing with the Direct Action of a Santals. They'd used legitimate means to restrain the revolt. Belpahari, Parihati, and Chichira all have had armed police pickets. A secret conference police was sent to Chaibasa to seize control of the organization (Bihar)^{xxvi}. Anti-terrorist measures also were taken by armed police at Chakulia. As a result, both the Congress as well as the Communist Party were more alarmed by the deteriorating situation. Propaganda from the Congress urged Santals to take drastic measures. Some of their ideas backed the underlying objectives of the agitation, including such ending the Zamindari regime and returning the Santal-cultivated lands. Meetings between the Communists and Santals leadership were arranged to put the situation back to normal as well as put an end to a agitation. The communist authorities organised the Jungle Mahal activities in response to social and economic problems.^{xxvii}. With all these efforts the Santals had given up their demand of 'Adibasisthan'.

Conclusion:-

The Adibasisthan's goal was to create a separate dominion for the indigenous people, especially the Santals, that would span from Chhotonagpur all the way up to Kharagpur inside the Midnapore region. The Santals want to create their own state to protect them from the Hindu majority's oppression. As a result of a separatist politics, they gained support. They group called as 'Santals Mahasabha' to work for establishing an independent state. To meet the demands, many programmes have been used. On the festival of Bidhuchandan, the Mahasabha organised a large-scale recruitment of Santals. The Mahasabha included numerous socioeconomic concerns of the Santal community in order to extend the movement among the public. Many Santals were attracted to the Adibasisthan movement by the Santal society's upliftment effort. The Mahasabha used 'Gero,' a message that was symbolic to all Santals, to propagate its Adibasisthan movement ideals among the broader Santal population. They were compelled to take action by separatist politics in order to have what they wanted. Nevertheless, the district's Santals were divided about whether or not to begin direct action. The congress as well as the communists had a major role in calming the protestors. The movement was dealt with in a special manner by the state. The Santals were driven to reject Adibasisthan's demand by all of nature.

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