

Studies on Livelihood Trends of Santhal and Munda Tribals in Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT

The Jharkhand state is bestowed with rich natural resources, abundant biodiversity and excellent human resources. Forest based livelihoods by the tribal people mainly revolve around collection, processing and utilization of various plant products like fuel wood, lac, tooth brush, leaves for plate and cup making, fodder and browse, vegetables, fruits, seeds, flowers, bamboos, medicines, mushrooms, oilseeds, oilseed cake, spices, honey, oils, gums, resins, gum-resins, dyes, wax, brooms, fibers, floss, silk, charcoal, fencing, wildlife products, thatches, baskets, ropes, mats, handicrafts, pickles, beverages, abiotic products etc. The tribal constitutes about 7.5 percent of india's population. Their main occupation is agriculture. The Santhals, Mundas and other tribals still use traditional agricultural equipments like plough driven by ox. They make plough from locally available timber. They call it in Santhali language as Nahel and in Mundari as 'Hal'. The point of the plough is made up of iron which is called 'phal' (S) or phar (M). It is fixed on a solid prismatic wooden block known as 'Nahel'. It is further fixed with a rectangular wood known as 'Nahelbah' (S). A handle known as 'chandli'(S) is attached with it. A wooden rod is fixed with 'Nahelbah' at 30degree, knows as 'Isi'(S) Which is joined with yok (Arrann). Many small and marginal farmers including the tribal farmers have started using high yielding variety seeds, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and sprayers. The growth in the level of overall awareness among the beneficiaries was observed. The tribal farmers and other marginal farmers of the regions have more food to eat and have lessened the period of food scarcity. Improvement in food habits reduced the problems of malnutrition, under nutrition and starvation. In the sample villages vegetable consumptions have improved the overall health and hygiene of the farming community of the region. The vegetable sales enabled the farmers to educate their children, better clothing and other such benefits.

1. Introduction

The sustainable agriculture synthesizes all human activities including five core assets: physical, natural, financial, human and social capital upon which the livelihoods are built. The sustainable agriculture approach aims to find out to improve the design and implementation of poverty reduction efforts in tribal areas of Jharkhand. The agriculture assets status of the tribal people in the state of India is the resultant outcome of collective performance of independent variables such as socio-personal (age, education, social participation and family composition), economic (size of land holding, main occupation, housing status, farm power, farm implements, livestock possession, material possession, income from forestry and gross annual income), psychological (level of aspiration, knowledge about forestry practices, adoption of forestry practices and attitude towards forestry), communication (extension contact and use of information sources) and situational (employment status, migration status and utilization of forest resources). Agriculture, which forms the livelihood of 80 per cent of the people, is still predominantly dependent on rainfall in Jharkhand. Net irrigated area forms just 9.3 per cent of net sown area and the vagaries of monsoon hit the economy hard. The productivity of the soil found in the whole Jharkhand is determined by the relief, which divides the

land into two categories, viz., upland (tanr) and the low land (don). The upland produces coarse rice and various such crops. The don land is terraced low and rice is grown. There are three main crop seasons namely, kharif, rabi, and garma (summer) crops. Major kharif crops are rice, bazra and maize etc. Rabi crops are wheat, pulses, gram, and mustard etc. Garma crops are rice, maize, groundnuts and vegetables etc. The land is irrigated by surface water, reservoirs, wells and natural streams, etc. The application of new knowledge in the method of cultivation and other agricultural activities by the farmers to increase production, productivity and quality is called New Agricultural Technology (NAT). The NAT aims at increasing agricultural productivity in the country by replacing the old method of farming by a modern and more efficient technique of cultivation. The sixties and seventies witnessed the development and widespread adoption of the seed-irrigation fertilizer-plant protection technology ushering in the green revolution. Acceptability and implementation of NAT usually depend upon the following factors:

- 1) Response of the farmers' community to Innovative ideas.
- 2) Extent and level of Education of the farming community.
- 3) Financial situation of the farmers, credit availability and accessibility to the Adopters.
- 4) Existing position of Technology, and

- 5) The present position of available Agrarian Infrastructures.

2. Materials and Methods

This study has been conducted in Jharkhand state. Data were collected for agriculture year 2007-2011. Extensive survey of Jharkhand state were carried out at a regular interval of three months to get more clear picture of occupational interest of tribals with special reference to agriculture. The Purpose of survey and field studies was to collect the information regarding the distribution, density/frequency, abundance and livelihood of tribals. For data generation of existing tribals following methods were adopted:

1. Physical verification
2. Secondary sources of data like Government reports, Books, Research publications etc.
3. By interviewing the local tribes / villagers.

3. Results and Discussion

Ethnically the Mundas are the Proto-Austroloids. They speak Mundari dialect of the Austro-Asiatic family. They are divided in two branches: Mahli Mundas and Kompah Mundas. The Mundas live in a mixed village with other tribes and castes. Each village has three important sites – (i) Sarna (ii) Akhara and (iii) Sasan. The Sarna is sacred grove where village deities reside. The Akhara is an open space where panchayates take place and where young folks assemble to learn dance and singing. The Sasan is the burial ground.

The Mundas erect their house with mud walls, wood, bamboo, phoos and tiles. Some houses thatched with tiles have double storied. The middle floor is made by wood, bamboo, khar and soil. The clan names of the Mundas are Kunkal, Kujur, Aaind, Eragat, Tute, Dag, Dungdung, Dodrai, Tirky, Topno, Balmuchu, Bodra, Bhengra, Murun etc. The Mundas believe in numerous gods and deities. Their prime god is called 'Singbonga' whom they propitiate on every religious ceremony. Other important deities are Hatu Bongako (village deities) such as Desauli, Jaher, Buri, Chandi Bonga etc. They also recall Marang Buri for rainfall. The important festivals of the Mundas are Mage Parab, Phagu Parab, Karam Parab, Sarhul Parab, Aouba Parab and Sohrai Parab. Almost all the festivals of Munda's belong to a crop or plant. For example in Sarhul and Sohrai festival the Sal flowers/twigs are brought to the sarna and the Pahan propitiates all gods of the Mundas. The Santhals speak 'Santhali' language, which has some connection with the Austro-Asiatic language. The Santhals are known by different 'Gotras' Such as Murmu, Hansdak, Marandi, Soren, Hembrom, Tudu, Kisku, Besra etc. Their Gotra belongs to a plant or an animal which is taboo for that particular Gotra.

The Santhals have many gods. Their principal god or deity is 'Singbonga' who is the sun god. Marang Buru is the highest god after him. Other important village deity of the Santhal is Jaher -era. Besides these other principal deities of the Santhals are Gosai – Era, Pargana Bonga. Manjhi Haram Bonga, Orak Bonga and Abge Bonga. The Santhals celebrate many festivals and ceremonies. They celebrate 'Erok' before sowing the seeds in the fields. "Richar" is celebrated in July –

August for rich harvest. "Sohrai" is celebrated in the month of November –December after harvesting the crop. 'Baha' is celebrated in the month of Feb – March. 'Bandhana' festival takes place in the month of January.

In a close observation it has been seen that almost all the festival belongs to a plant or a crop. Also there is a nutritious value of these festivals. In each and every festival they use Alcoholic drink 'Modh' and "Handia". 'Modh' is made from juice of Mahua (*Madhuca indica*). "Handia" is made from juice of Rice (*oryza sativa*). Mundas make their Handia from Rice, Kodo (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*) and Maize (*Zea Mays*) whereas Santhal makes their Handia from Rice. They do not use Kodo and Maize. Both the tribes make "Modh" an alcoholic drink, from Mahua (*Madhuca Indica*). The flower of Mahua is used for this purpose. Handia/Modh is prepared by fermenting rice/Mahua with ranu. It is a popular drink and used in all celebrations including birth, marriage, death and other religious festivals. The plant materials like root, tubers, leaves, bark and fruits are collected from forests. People engaged in this profession have enough knowledge of habitat, distribution, phenology and ecological conditions of plants. During favourable season the tribals complete the collection of plants materials and store it for future.

4. Conclusion

Jharkhand is an ideal place for ethnobotanical study. So the authors have focused to compile a comparative ethnobotanical study of Santhals and Mundas of Jharkhand. Among the tribals Mundas are the numerically dominant over other tribes whereas Santhals are agriculturally dominant over other tribes. A number of plants are being used by the tribals in some form or other for their daily chores. In the present study livelihood of some important tribals of Jharkhand have been studied. The main occupation of the tribal is agriculture. The Santhals and Mundas use traditional agricultural equipments like plough driven by Ox. They make plough from locally available timbers. The Santhals generally use the woods of Siris (*Albizia lebbek*), *Syzygium cumini*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Butea monosperma*. The Mundas use the wood of *Shorea robusta*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Bombax ceiba* and *Madhuca indica*. A close study of other agricultural implements like Kudali, Gainta, Haswa, Yoke and leveller reveals the scientific ideas in their making and selection of quality timbers depending upon the purpose. In conclusion it may be suggested that Santhals and Mundas have basic as well as practical knowledge of plants passed on through generation from their folk lore, folk tales and religious customs. The ethnobotanical study gives opportunity to gather new information's on plants to be utilized for the benefit of mankind. It is also suggested that over exploitation of plants for commercial use may lead to destruction of some important plants and they need to be conserved.

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