

Impact of Corona pandemic on the economic life of Santal tribe of Ajodhya village: a micro study

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Abstract

Among tribal community, Santhal is one of the major tribe of India. They reside in Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, and Tripura etc. Apart from India Santals also found in the Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. They are basically belongs to Proto-Australoid race. Santals speaks Santali language, which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family of Munda branch. Santal tribe basically settled in the deep forest, hilly area and flat land, so as per their ecology they developed their economy and culture. Ajodhya hill is a most tourist attraction place of Purulia district. Many tribal communities are living at Ajodhya hill and most of them are Santhal people. The Santals constitutes more than half of the total ST population of the West Bengal (51.8 per cent). Santhal economy is depending on wood collection, labour, agriculture, tourism etc. Due to Corona Pandemic, human health is brutally affected, the first case was found in December 2019. Ajodhya hill region is also affected by COVID-19 in terms of economic condition among Santhal community. Basically this study focused on Santhal economic condition during Corona Pandemic and lockdown period at Ajodhya village.

Key words- Santhal, Economy, Corona, Ajodhya,

Introduction

Tribals are one of the important entities of Indian population and their Socio-cultural life is one of the important heritages for human civilization. India is the second largest tribal populated country in the world only next to Africa. A closer analysis of our census figures would reveal that, the tribal population in India increased over the years. The total tribal population of India in 1971 was 3.8 crores which constitute 6.94% of total population. It has increased to 104,281,034 in 2011, which constitute 8.6 % of the total population. "The tribal people are isolated in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social behaviour from other ethnic groups" Sinha (1967). As per the British legacy, that they coined the word tribes and they classified as tribe such people who were beyond the pale of Hindu Varna system occupied inaccessible hills and forest and were of dark complexion. After independence the many tribal communities were declared as Scheduled Tribe. The Scheduled Tribes are the communities which are included in the Schedule of Indian Constitution. Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. More than 600 tribal communities were included as Scheduled Tribe list in different time and space through the Parliamentary amendments.

Among tribal community, Santhal is one of the major tribe of India. They reside in Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam, and Tripura etc. Apart from India Santals also found in the Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. They are basically belongs to Proto-Australoid race. Santals speaks Santali language, which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family of Munda branch. Santal tribe basically settled in the deep forest, hilly area and flat land, so as per their ecology they developed their economy and culture. They fulfill all their basic amenities from these areas. The economic activities of Santhal are food gathering, hunting, fishing, agriculture, domestic animals and labour. Now a day due to the education and the constitutionals provision they are also seen in the white collar jobs. Santhal is one of the largest and develop tribal group who practice the settled agriculture. Even though they are settled agriculturist, still depends on the traditional agricultural practice and have not improved over time. So there is no noticeable impact of modern agricultural technology in the area. In West Bengal Santals are the major tribal communities, who are migrated from Jharkhand and spread from Purulia to North – Eastern states. The Santals constitutes more than half of the total ST population of the West Bengal (51.8 per cent).

Corona Pandemic: COVID-19 is a disease by a new strain of corona virus. 'Co' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease were referred to as '2019 novel corona virus' or '2019-nCov'. The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. The first human cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel corona virus causing COVID-19, subsequently named SARS-CoV-2 were first reported by

officials in Wuhan city, china, in December 2019. Previous Chinese authorities have identified human cases with the onset of symptoms in early December 2019. Gradually it spread over the Globe and stopped all human activities like social, cultural, economic etc. The W.H.O has announced some advice or guidelines to prevent people from contracting this disease they are to clean hands all the time with soap, sanitation etc. You have to refrain from putting your hands in your eyes. You have to wear mask, hand gloves, social distance when going in public places, foods bought from the markets should be washed well in hot water. If you have a runny nose, cough, fever, you should consult a doctor and get a corona test as soon as possible. Present study is focused in the economic life of Santals during the Corona Pandemic period of Ajodhya village of Purulia District. Ajodhya village is situated in the Ajodhya Hill of Chotanagpur plateau and covered with dense forest. Here several tribal communities reside and their economic life fully depended on forest based economy and partially on agricultural.

Objectives

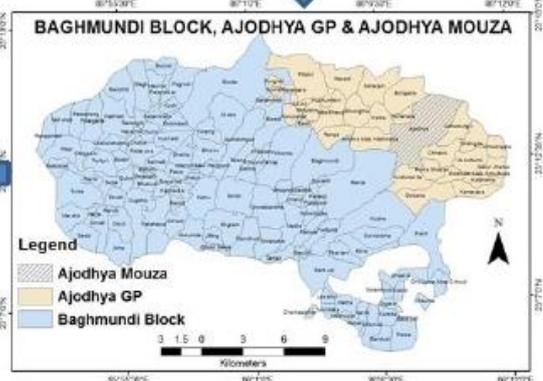
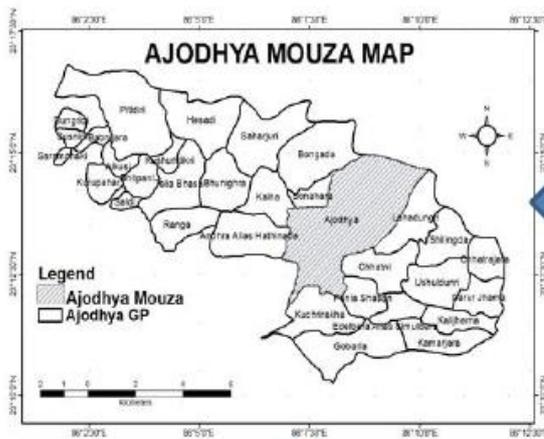
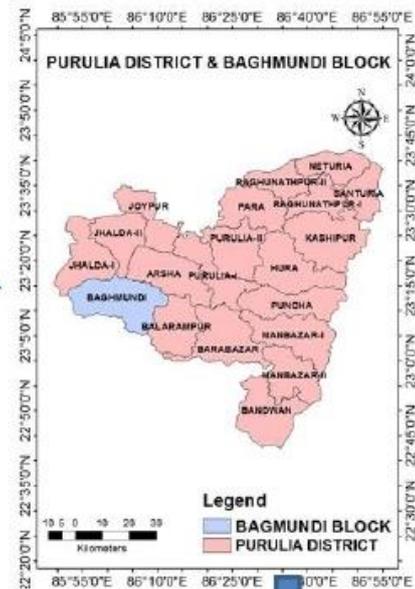
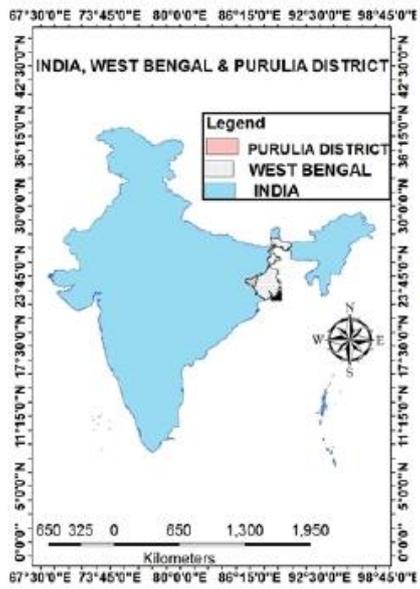
- ❖ To understand the origin, demographic structure and settlement patterns of the Santhal of Ajodhya village.
- ❖ To study their quality of living with regard to their access to healthy housing, sanitation, drinking water and other essential household amenities.
- ❖ To trace the economic background with regard to access to agricultural land, occupation and other livelihood activities.
- ❖ To identify the factors those affect their Economic status during Corona Pandemic.

Methodology

The Present study is based on the exploratory research design. The research is focused on the Santhal tribe of Ajodhya village, Balrampur Block of Purulia district West Bengal. For this study researchers used consecutive traditional Anthropological techniques and method like Observation, interview, Schedule, Photography and informal conversations were taken place. This study is carried out during the Corona pandemic period so WHO guidelines were followed and try to understand the different economic activities in several time and space. Primary data were collected from field area and for secondary data have been collected from the journals, books and different records. The 40 households sample was selected as per purposive random sampling. In 40 Households total 175 populations found, among them 80Male, 50 Females and 45 children.

Location: Ajodhya village is under the Ajodhya Gram Panchayat in Baghmundi Block. Nearest police station of this area is: Baghmundi. It is 39 km from Purulia town. The nearest market of this location is Baghmundi and the distance from Baghmundi market is 15 km.

STUDY AREA MAP



Land and People:

Ajodhya hill is one of the oldest hills of Chotanagpur plateau in Purulia district with mesmerising natural beauty. Ajodhya hill is the eastern part of Chotanagpur plateau and extended part of Eastern Ghats range. Ajodhya hills falls on Baghmundi Block, Arsha Block, Joypur Block and partially the other blocks of Purulia district This field area is located in Baghmundi block of Purulia district. Fieldwork carried out in Ajodhya village of Ajodhya gram panchayat. The village is located 39 km from the district headquarter of Purulia. Ajodhya village boundary is surrounded by Lahadungri, Chhatni, Puniashason, Kuchrirakha, Hatinada, Sonahara, Bongada and Shilinda village. This village is the famous tourist centre of Ajodhya hills. Notable tourist places near this village are – Sitakundu, Ram Mandir, Bharat Sebashram, Mayur Pahar. Within 7 km from here, there are tourist places like Bamni Falls, Turga falls etc. For all these tourist centres, this Ajodhya village is the busiest village in the Ajodhya hills. Due to tourists spots lots of hotels and restaurants has sprung up here. Here numerous tribal communities like Santhal, Birhor, Bhumij, etc. are living together with other communities. Per year 10,000 to 15,000 tourists are visiting this place from different parts of the country.

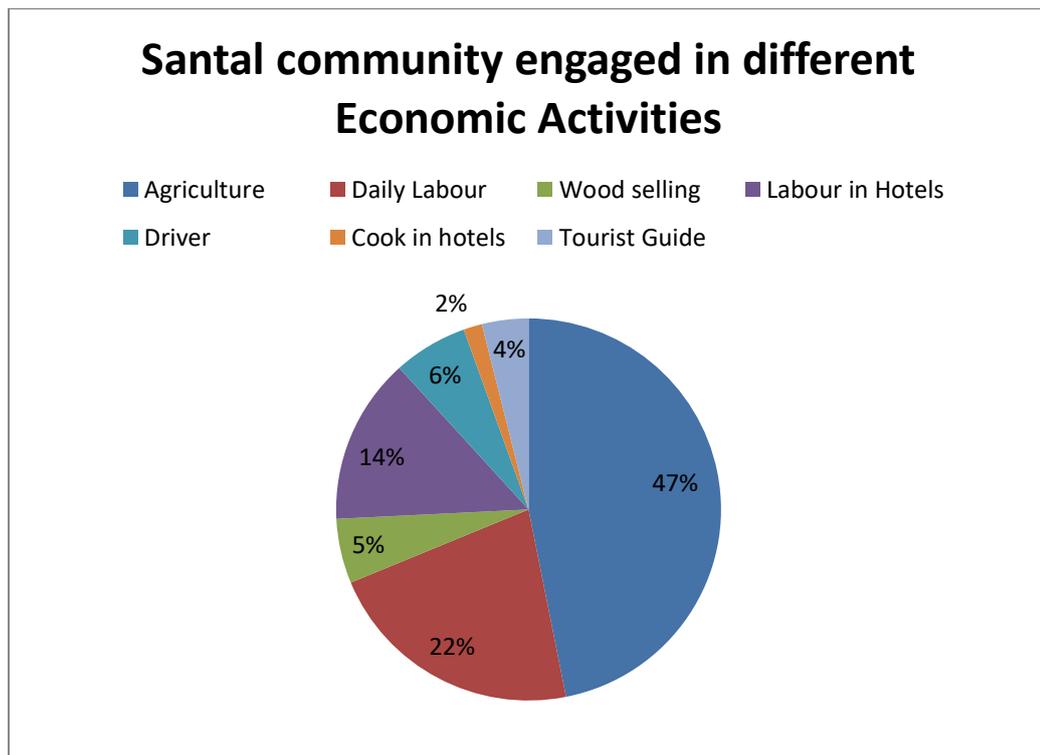
Discussion***Economic life of Santhal***

Santhal is the largest tribal community in Ajodhya. The economy of the Santhal is almost entirely dependent on forests and partially on Agriculture. So the forest is deeply connected with their daily life. Once upon a time hunting was their main economic livelihood. So they are accustomed to hunting ethnically. But at present, due to various laws and the declining number of wild animals in the forest, they are being forced to take up other professions.

Table 1. Santal Tribe engaged in different economic activities

Sl.No	Economic Activity	No of person
1	Agriculture	60
2	Daily Labour	28
3.	Wood selling	07
4.	Labour in Hotels	18
5	Driver	08
6	Cook in hotels	02
7	Tourist Guide	05

Source: field data



As per above table and pie chart the Santals are engaged in different economic activity like 60 people are still doing agriculture work for their survival which is 47% of the other economic work. 28 Santal people are doing daily labour work in the different sectors which is 22%, 7 person are cutting the dry wood form the forest and sell it in the nearby the village market which is 5%, Due to the tourist sports here new economic centre is developed here so 18 person were working as a labour work in the hotels which is 14%. Ajodhya hill has different tourist places and Ajodhya village is the centre of these sports so here 8 people working as a driver and 5 people are giving their service as a tourist guide which is respectively 6% and 4% and 2 Santhal are doing cooking work in the Hotels which is 2% of the total.

Impact of Corona Pandemic in their Economic life

The Corona epidemic is the greatest terror in the world today. There is no country in the world that is free from the effects of the Corona epidemic. This corona effect has just broken the health care all the driving force of the world. So the most powerful countries in the world today are terrified and cornered to prevent this epidemic. India, the world's second most populous country has lost many citizens. So today everything from the society of the country to the economy is upset. India's economy is largely based on rural economy and due to Corona Pandemic the rural life and there economy is ruined. But the Ajodhya hills are one of the

safest places for the tribals and the other communities of Purulia district. In above table we had discussed about the economic activities of Ajodhya village were 47% percent is engaged in their traditional subsistence agricultural work and rest were depend on the tourism related work. Ajodhya's tourism industry has been damaged by corona epidemic and lockdown. As a result, the economy has been affected and at the same time the daily life has been affected. At present they have largely abandoned their traditions and become dependent on the modern economy where tourism is one of them. In many ways they are directly or indirectly associated with the tourism. Some of them work in hotels and some work as guides. Some of them have their own land. Also the car driver is one of the most important in Ajodhya. But they have lost their jobs because tourism has been completely shut down due to the lockdown. So this is the biggest impact of coronavirus on the economic life of the Santals of the Ajodhya hills. Due to the Corona pandemic and Lockdown other livelihoods activities was also brutally affected. Santals livelihoods are also based on forest they were collected various wildlife cards and try to sell them in the market. This work is mainly done by Santal women. But due to Pandemic, they collected the many items from forest but cannot sell those things because market was closed. In addition many Santals were engaged in small stalls at various tourist spots were also closed. So we can say that the rural economy of the Ajodhya hills was completely destroyed. The Corona pandemic in the hills of Ajodhya has severely affected the economy and the tribal life.

Conclusion

Santhal tribe of Ajodhya village are depends on the forest based economy, traditional agriculture apart from the newly economy of tourism. Traditional cultural heritage in the form of songs, dance and handicrafts are other important aspects of attraction offered by the residents, for which tourists are attracted. Due to speeding of the Corona Pandemic, Lockdowns were imposed and the human life is totally stopped as well as the all human activities were stopped. Here the tribal people of Ajodhya hill was in terms of Health they were fit and corona pandemic not affected them but brutally affect their economic life. After lockdown or with different restrictions markets and other human activities were opens by the government. But Corona disease still affects the Ajodhya hill economy because the tourists still not visiting as earlier the normal days. The Santal community now fully depends on the agricultural, forest based and the other labour work economic activities. They are waiting for the normal life, which will provide them new aspirations and economy.

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