

## Inception, Evolution and Spread of Communalism in Jharkhand (1950-84)



**Prakhar Kumar**

M.A in Modern Indian History and NET (2019)

Jamia Millia Islamia University,

New Delhi, India

### Article Info

Volume 4 Issue 1  
Page Number: 18-22  
Publication Issue :  
January-February-2021

### Article History

Accepted : 01 Jan 2021  
Published : 08 Jan 2021

### ABSTRACT

For a long time, the tribal society of India has been struggling with existential threats due to the influence of external cultures. The state of Jharkhand, when it did not exist as a new state, till today the tribal community is transforming due to social, economic, political and cultural reasons. Due to this, their water forest and land based identity has been broken and its dangers are also increasing. Post partition, these tribal identities were converted into religious identities and appropriated by the state and communal organisations. The causes, nature and result of these converting identities and their appropriation furnishes is the main historicity in this field.

**Keywords** - Inception, Evolution, Spread, Communalism, Jharkhand.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, I intend to discuss “social roots of communalism in Jharkhand and the role of political, ideological, social and cultural elements in propagating it from 1950 (formation of Jharkhand party) to 1984(death of Indira Gandhi).” In the words of Bipan Chandra- Communalism is the ideology of the petty Bourgeoisie at the command of imperialism and the Jagirdari elements. Although true in colonial context, this definition gradually changed its forms and meanings in the post partition period till the turn of new century and almost twenty years after that. Simply put, communalism is

the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests.

## II. BACKGROUND

Reorganization of Jharkhand as a separate state on 15th November 2000 added a new chapter in the democratic history of India. In a classic example of constitution at work, Jharkhand movement demonstrated how people's demands and movements are ultimately the core elements of any socialist parliamentary democratic republic. The movement emerged in the 1920s, but only got

significant influence with the formation of 'Adivasi Mahasabha' in 1939 with Jaipal Singh Munda presiding over its grand meeting in Ranchi and 'Jharkhand MuktiMorcha' in 1972 by merger of 'SonotSanthalSamaj' and 'ShivajiSamaj' under the able leadership of Shibu Soren and Binod Bihari Mahto. Throughout the struggle for a separate state, we can observe an element of strong regional tendency in the sense of regional bourgeoisie interests, and the possibility to link this interest with populist politics mobilising a significant share of local proletarian or peasantry population. Due to mining work related labour migration starting from the late 19th century, the tribal population became marginalized in the south Bihar. The regional bourgeoisie too was formed by outsiders (dikus) who were later on contested by the locals in the form of popular revolts and rebellions. By the time the Jharkhand movement started, the region of Chhotanagpur, SanthalPargana, Kolhanetc had already witnessed a number of tribal revolts. The major grievances leading to these revolts later on got linked up with a long struggle of separate statehood which was sought as the ultimate solution for all the grievances.

The narration of the Jharkhand movement starting from the 'Manbhum' has been that of a violent story entrenched in blood and sacrifice. A completely secular regional movement lost its initial enthusiasm and energy for a brief period in stages after the 'Jharkhand Party' was merged in the 'Indian National Congress' in 1963 under the leadership of Jaipal Singh. Struggle was refuelled in 1972 with the formation of JMM and organisation like All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), but soon with the proclamation of emergency by the then Prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 fractured the backbone of the struggle. However soon it recaptured the imagination of the Indian people and

government by many organisations coming under one banner of 'Jharkhand SamanvaySamiti' in 1987 in Ramgarh and continued the struggle with same conviction till the late 1990s. Finally the bill for the creation of a separate state was passed by the Bihar legislature on 25th April 2000. The bill was also smoothly passed in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha under the NDA government with Atal Bihari Vajpayi as Prime Minister.

### III. TRANSFORMING AGENCIES

Whatever be the trajectory of this long struggle for statehood, one aspect is clearly visible while studying this story of exploitation, struggle and martyrism – The movement never contained any communal overtone. Never do we see whether in the form of warfare or popular protests that any communal angle is subscribed by the movement. The imagined community of tribes in Jharkhand went through various changes in their identities. This change was brought about by the regular proselytising activities of various Christian and Hindu missionaries. These changing religious identities of tribals helped the communal organizations and missionaries to iron out diversity and insisted on conformity, to later use it for political ends. While constructing this new imagined community of tribals, there was an implied rejection of the applicability of other types of divisions in the society, such as status or class. Being exposed to various agencies of change throughout history, the tribals of Bihar living along with Hindu communities gradually emulated their practices and started 'sanskritizing' themselves. This emulation of religious identity was in stark contrast with the other agencies like Christianity, industrialization, urbanization etc. which were planned, induced and sponsored. Through the

arrival of 'Gossner Mission' to Ranchi in 1845, Jharkhand became a party to the institutionalised Christian missionary activities. It started with converting first four tribals into Christianity who were earlier followers of saint 'Kabir'. However in 1869, this mission was divided into two branches, the original one of which became the S.P.G Mission headed by Bishop Ray J.C Whitley. In 1919, this mission got converted into a church. Lutheran church in 1855 and Anglican mission in 1869 also started in Jharkhand. In 1871, The United Free Church of Scotland was also established which changed its name to Santhal Mission of the Church of Scotland in 1929.

However later on the Hindu impact on tribals also worked through sponsored agencies like Arya Samaj, Divine Light Mission etc. With the establishment of 'Arya Samaj' in Ranchi in 1894 to propagate the views of Dayanand Saraswati, the gradual Hinduization of tribals through institutionalised means started. Through the purification ritual called 'Shuddhi', it started reconverting the ex hindus converted to Christianity, Islam or Sikhism. It also incorporated the aboriginals within their fold by initiating them into purified Hindu upper caste practices.

#### IV. AVAILABLE LITERATURE

Most of the work in this field is done for pre-partition period, that mainly focuses upon missionary activities. There has been a paucity of scholarly work on post-partition period including other major dimensions of communalism. H. Risley questioned the philanthropic work of Arya Samaj and tried to highlight its main motive. According to him, Arya Samaj was started just to stop conversion of Hindus and tribals to Christianity and at the same time

convert Indian Christians (mainly tribals and Dalits) to Hinduism. Risley saw the motive of Arya Samaj as a counteract of efforts of Christian missionaries.<sup>1</sup> According to Sumit Sarkar, anti-conversion sentiments received a major stimulus from Savarkar's very influential definition of 'Hindu' in 1923 which uniquely combined '*Pitribhumi*' and '*Punyabhumi*' (fatherland with holy land). Through appropriation of nationalism by Hindu majoritarianism, the indigenous origin of religious beliefs, practices, or institutions was made the supreme criterion for nationalism. It became easy to brand Muslims and Christians alien and unpatriotic by definition, a charge particularly effective against Christians in the colonial era due to their religious affinity with the British rulers.<sup>2</sup>

The ideology of Savarkar as propagated in '*Hindutva*' crystallized largely in reaction to the proselytizing activities of Christian missionaries. Arya Samaj initiated a Hindu conversion technique which was borrowed from Christian missionaries but shaped along the lines of traditional ritual called '*Shuddhi*'.<sup>3</sup>

According to Sarat Chandra Roy, some efforts appeared to have been made by more than one Hindu organisation to bring the Oraons into the official Hindu fold by making them undergo *Shuddhi*. Some propaganda work also appeared to have been carried out by Arya Samaj. But neither the propagandists of official Hinduism nor the preachers of the Arya Samaj appeared to have made an impression on the minds of the simple Oraons. This may be partly due to the absence of genuine religious enthusiasm and missionary zeal among such propagandists, and due to Oraon's suspicion of political or other motives at the back of such propaganda. Nor were these propagandists able to lure Oraons of social prestige. However, enlightened

leaders among the Oraons naturally fought shy of such propagandists under the apprehension that orthodox official Hinduism with the religious and social exclusiveness of the twice-born castes would relegate aboriginal converts to a very low, if not the lowest, stratum in the hierarchy of Hindu castes.<sup>4</sup>

K.S Singh argues that the conceptual framework developed by the British administrators-turned-ethnographers and by anthropologists was inspired by the then prevailing model in anthropology. Tribal communities were treated as isolates, tribals as Noble Savages, and the primitive condition was described as a state of Arcadian simplicity. The deterioration of tribals was attributed to the Sanskritization of the semi tribal chiefs and the vulnerability of the tribal character. He further says that unofficially the Hindu society has always been tolerant of the groups that would not conform to the standards set by higher castes. K.M. Panikkar argues, it was the Christian missionaries who drew the attention of Hindus towards tribals. Tribals had been neglected alike by the Hindus and Muslims. Christian missionaries saw in these neglected millions a unique field for their activity. They met with some success there but their greatest success was in arousing Hindu conscience and sense of responsibility in this matter.<sup>5</sup>

## **V. POST INDEPENDENT INDIA**

In the post-independence period, there were certain social and cultural developments within the social milieu of tribals that made them prone to be preyed by the later communal identities. The acculturation of these changes in the form of communitarian beliefs accentuated by the influence of the dominant Hindu culture, the efforts of missionary activities of Christians and Hindus and other mild religious

organisations finally resulted in the conversion of communitarian identities into communal imagined communities. The development of various classes within the society of tribals and further mobilisation of these classes on communitarian lines till the start of Ram-Janambhoomi movement created feasible conditions for these populations to be finally absorbed by the political propaganda of state and rival political organisations in spreading communalism. The appropriation of already consolidated communitarians finally paved way for the entry of communal politics with the ushering of liberal market policies in the 1990s and the later period. It was within the given democratic structure established after independence that these communitarian beliefs were able to pour in the tribal society, and the administrative and political setup provided by the state fuelled the absorption of any such identity.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

For a long time, the tribal society of India has been struggling with existential threats due to the influence of external cultures. The state of Jharkhand, when it did not exist as a new state, till today the tribal community is transforming due to social, economic, political and cultural reasons. Due to this, their water forest and land based identity has been broken and its dangers are also increasing. Post partition, these tribal identities were converted into religious identities and appropriated by the state and communal organisations. The causes, nature and result of these converting identities and their appropriation furnishes is the main historicity in this field.

## VII. REFERENCES

- [1]. Risley H. (1908), *The peoples of India* , as cited in L.L. Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, New Delhi, 1991, Pp.162
- [2]. Sarkar, Sumit(2002) *Beyond nationalist frame, Permanent Black, Himalyana,' Mall Road Ranikhet Cantt, Ranikhet Pp.235*
- [3]. Jafferlot, Christopher(2007) *Hindu nationalism A Reader*, Princeton University Press Pp.233
- [4]. Sahay, K.N.(1981) 'The Hindu Impact on Tribal', in P.D. Sharma, (eds) *The Passing Scene in Chotanagpur*, Ranchi Maitryee.
- [5]. Panikkar K.M. (2019)*The foundation of new India*, Aakar Books, New Delhi, India

### **Cite this article as :**

Prakhar Kumar, "Inception, Evolution and Spread of Communalism in Jharkhand (1950-84)", *Gyanshauryam, International Scientific Refereed Research Journal (GISRRJ)*, ISSN : 2582-0095, Volume 4 Issue 1, pp. 18-22, January-February 2021.  
URL : <http://gisrrj.com/GISRRJ120333>