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Changing Nature of Tribal Movements in Ranchi District, India: 1830-1925

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Abstract:

Ranchi district the core of Chotanagpur witnessed the saga of tribal movements from 1830-1925. In these socio-political uprisings, Oraon and Munda, the two major tribal communities of Ranchi district played a pivotal role. By taking the case of Oraon and Munda, the paper will highlight the transition of tribal movements from pro-colonial to anti-colonial. Alongside, the paper will try to bring out the heterogeneous character of the tribal movements by reflecting on the multiple layers of movements.

Keywords: *Oraon, Munda, Ranchi, Kol Rebellion, Sardari Ladai, Birsa Movement, Tana Bhagat Movement*

1. Introduction

From 1830-1925, four major tribal movements, viz. Kol Rebellion, *Sardari Ladai*, Birsa Movement and Tana Bhagat movement upsurge in Ranchi district and in the interim, their echoes reached the adjoining districts. These movements took place in different time frame, in varied circumstances under different leadership. Indeed, they differ from each other in terms of ideology, structure and objective. In short, they were heterogeneous in character rather than homogenous.

In order to highlight the diverse nature of tribal movements, K.S. Singh had divided the tribal movements into two phases: 1765-1857 and 1857-1920. According to him, the 1st phase was primarily based on the nature of resistance against aliens or outsiders in both baronial and plebian sub-types. In contrast, he considers the 2nd phase as agrarian and forest centered resistance which also included political issue, social reform and independence'. [Singh 2012: 90]. One cannot help but agree with him to a certain extent but it is also true that the diversity in the nature of tribal movements was not limited to the above division and must be seen beyond that. In order to understand, the nature and concept of tribal movements during the period under consideration, the article is divided into two parts: pro-colonial and anti-colonial.

Looking beyond the homogenous nature of these occurrences, this particular article is going to highlight the transition in the nature of movements from pro-colonial to anti-colonial by reflecting on the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of the movements. This article is also going to highlight different layers of tribal movements like the role of gender, internal hierarchy and the changing role of *dikus* from outsider to insider.

2. From Pro-Colonial to Anti-Colonial

The concept of 'good government' [Damodaran 2011: 69] was introduced among the tribes in the initial stage of colonial era. This meant that the only power that can bring justice in the land of tribes was colonial regime. However, the colonial government viewed tribes as an uncivilized community who were imbedded with volatile character. To a large extent, such insight was the outcome of the misrepresentation of tribal image by the *dikus* (the exploitative section who exploited the tribes economically, culturally and socially in Chotanagpur). In the maiden period, there was no direct contact between the tribes and colonial regime. The only link between the two was *dikus*, who misused the opportunity to create an image of tribes as savage, wild and beast in front of the regime.

Dikus, the exploitative section, flourished in the land of tribes under the rule of the colonial regime. Unknown from the truth, tribes looked forward to the colonial regime for protection in the beginning. Not getting the desired response from the regime, tribes resorted to violence in the hope that the regime will pay heed to their grievances. But this act of tribes did not bring the desired result and were termed as culprit instead of victim. This brought further disappointment among the tribes. However, there came a ray of hope among the tribes to improve their peculiar situations after the arrival of Christian missionaries at Ranchi district, as they identified them as a ladder to reach colonial regime. In this phase, under the guidance of missionaries, tribes tried to approach government by adopting legal methods. Unfortunately, the ground reality remained unchanged. This forced the tribes to question the role of 'benevolent administration'.

The 'good government' image started fading from the minds of tribes as they recognized the real figure behind the *dikus* and this brought about a shift in the nature of tribal movements turning from pro-colonial to anti-colonial. Here the term pro is used to represent the antonym of anti which conveys that tribal agitations were not anti-imperialist from the beginning. In order to get a better

understanding of this transition, this article is going to deal with the four major tribal movements that broke out in different corners of Ranchi district (see Figure 1.), in varied time frame:

2.1. Kol Rebellion (1831-32)

Kol insurrection was not a sudden outburst but was a well-planned movement as they had too much at stake. [Guha 1992: 2]. It was led by three tribal communities i.e. Oraon, Munda and Ho with an aim to overthrow the germs of *dikus* from their homeland. *Dikus* were basically the agents of colonial regime who wreaked havoc in the life of tribes as moneylenders, zamindars, merchants, etc. Initially, they hampered the socio-economic system of tribes by imposing taxes and extracting the fertile land of tribes through illegal means which was enough to create unrest among the tribes. However, their misconduct was not limited to this. In the meantime, they started harassing the women folk which ultimately turned out to be the immediate cause for the rebellion. For example: Bindari Manki, a tribal chief and an uprising leader defined the immediate cause in his words:-

.....When our flight was discovered, the Munshi and Jamadar carried off my two wives. They released the older, who was pregnant, but the other, who was young, was detained and ravished by the Munshi and two of his peons; the Singh of Surgaon has besides taken away two of my sisters by force, who are still in his house. We returned home, invited all the Kols, our brethren and caste to assemble at the village Lankan in Tamar, where we had a consultation. The Pathans had taken our honour and Singh our sisters, and the Kuar Haranath Sahi, had forcibly deprived of our estate of twelve villages which he had given to the Singh. Our lives we considered of no value and being of one caste and brethren it was agreed upon that we should commence to cut, plunder, murder and eat.It is with this resolution that we have been murdering and plundering those who have deprived us of both honour and homes, conceiving that committing such outrage our grievances would come to light, and that, if we had any master, notice would be taken of them justice rendered. [Singh 2012: 68-69].

Like any other Indian society, women were considered as the honour of tribal society. Thus, violence against tribal women meant dishonouring the tribal society, which was unacceptable for the tribes. Thus, the existing circumstances forced the tribes to take arms against the *dikus* to protect their dignity and honour. Simultaneously, tribes wanted to use this movement as a platform to highlight their grievances so that the justice can be rendered by the 'benevolent government'.

2.2. Sardari Ladai (1858-90)

The following year of 1857 marked the beginning of *Sardari ladai* also known as *Mulki ladai* (fight for country) in Ranchi district which continued for four decades. Unlike the previous agitations, the *ladai* witnessed a non-volatile approach. Here Oraon and Munda adopted peaceful means like petition, prayers and protest to demand justice from colonial regime. But despite the fact, there were also some instances when tribes adopted violent acts. For example: during 1862-88, there were occasional clashes between zamindars and their raiyats.

The main objective of the two tribal communities was to regain their lost land rights. However, the motive behind this was not just confined with their socio-economic upliftment. Through land rights, they also wanted to safeguard their cultural identity, which was in danger with the official characterization of Oraon and Munda as labouring class as it was increasingly reducing the status of tribes from land owners to serfdom. And unfortunately, it was giving pace to *beth-begari* (forced labour) system within Oraon and Munda tribal communities which ultimately turned out to be the immediate cause for the movement. For example: W. H. Grimley, (Commissioner of the Chotanagpur Division) collected the following passage to illustrate the general cause for the movement:

"I am compelled to render beth-begari just as if I was a Dhangar". [Kol agitation in the Lohardugga district, Home Department, Judicial, 1890, No. 95-109: 3. NAI].

The passage gives us an idea that tribes hated being treated as *dhangar* (farm servant) by the zamindars. Tribes were very conscious about the labour for their relatives/ neighbours and other forms of outside paid labour. In fact, they considered helping relatives/ neighbours or other members of the kin in their agricultural or other operations requiring collective work as respectful act while they considered selling their labour for money as shameful act. [Sinha 2012: 69]. Oraon and Munda who once enjoyed the status of *Khunkatti* (a descendent of the original founder or settler of a village) and *Bhuinhari* (a descendent of original clearer of soil) were now forced to render service in the land of zamindars. This was not limited to the male members of the tribal society but female members were also inducted in *beth-begari* system.

The circumstances became intense as unlimited labour was extracted by the zamindars under *beth-begari* system. To escape from the burden of *beth-begari* system, many fled from Ranchi district and many converted to Christianity who further led the *Sardari Ladari* to win back their golden days.

Although the movement started in the year 1858, it only gained momentum after the failure of Chotanagpur Tenure Act (1869) and operations following on it –the *Bhuinhari* Survey and Settlement operation as they failed to restore the ancestral land right of tribes. [Chattorai 2010: 92]. From 1867, Oraon and Munda started filing petitions against the *dikus* and the rajas of Chotanagpur. [De Sa 1975: 112]. Although the petitions were ignored by the regime, tribes undauntedly continued filing petitions again and again. Their demands as evidenced from the petitions were based on the cultural and ethical ground [Bara 2010: 93], moving beyond land rights, and soon started highlighting the political objective of the movement. The demands put forward through the petitions were as the following:

1. Our forefathers came into this country and cleared the jungle. Now the Hindus rob us of our fields.
2. There were no Rajahs before; we do not know whence they have come.
3. We do not know from whom the zamindars have obtained their power; the Rajahs must have called them in.
4. Our forefathers never paid rent to any Rajahs or zamindars.

5. Our forefathers paid rent to the Pahraa rajahs only and were subject to them.
6. The Rajahs deceived the Pahraa Rajas, saying that he would collect rent for them.
7. There were Pahraa Rajahs over seven or eight villages, but there is now a zamindar in every village.
8. The villages of Ranikhatanga, Korambe and others have Pahraa Rajahs, who have their flags on their respective ensigns.
9. If there had been Rajahs from the beginning how could Pahraa Rajahs have got their ensigns?
10. We wish to be free as our forefathers were, and we will not pay rent to the Rajahs and zamindars, but will pay it to our Pahraa Rajahs.
11. When the English came into our country they asked the Rajah to prove that his claims were right; hereupon the Rajah showed them the ensign of the Pahraa Rajahs as his own.
12. We are willing to pay the roll (or revenue) to the English government but we wish to be free from the Nagvansis (i.e. Maharajahs of Chota Nagpore).
13. It is not right that a 100 should live in prosperity and 1,000 in diversity.
14. Every nation has its government, only we Mundas and Uraons have not.
15. As every child inherits his father's rights so we wish to have the rights of our forefathers.
16. The transmission of ancestral rights is exemplified in the story of Abraham.
17. Under the English administration we have become wiser than before, for which we are thankful to the English; now they should also free us our earthly distress. [Agitation among a section of the Christian Kols of Lohardugga and Singbhoom, Home Department, Judicial, 1888, No. 402-404: 3-4. NAI].

Despite the non-volatile approach, the regime put down the petitions by declaring the demands unjust and in the meanwhile took stern actions against Oraon and Munda. [Sahay 2008: 27]. This brought great disappointment among the tribes who started losing their faith in the benevolent administration. Consequently, by 1890, tribes turned against all Europeans including both missionaries and officials, who were suspected to have hand in gloves with the zamindars and the movement became violent in nature. [Singh 2012: 79]. However, it petered out after 1890, partly due to the arrest of main leaders. One significant departure was the Oraon and Munda leadership parting ways from 1880s. [Singh 2012: 223]. This separation in the leadership and company of Oraon and Munda was not limited to the last phase of *Sardari Ladai* but continued in future movements as well like Birsa and Tana Bhagat Movement.

2.3. Birsa Movement (1899- 1900)

The movement, better known as *Ulgulan* (Great Tumult), was led by Birsa Munda in the year 1899. However, the ground of the movement started developing with a religious character from 1895. Herein, Birsa tried to reform the traditional religion (as revealed to him by *Singbonga*, the supreme god of Munda) and asked his followers to abandon the worship of *Bonga* (spirit) and to prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food and alcohol. He also predicted the end of the world and ordered his followers to stop paying rent to the government and to stop ploughing. Later on, the movement was imbedded with the political character where the movement looked forward to establish Munda Raj by ousting the missionaries and government by adopting violent means.

In 1895, Birsa first grew as a leader and in a short span of time he grew as a healer, then miracle-worker, then preacher and then he grew to become a prophet. [Singh 1983: 58]. Altogether, this made him a prominent figure among the tribes (especially among Mundas) who saw him as their liberator. On the other hand, growing popularity of Birsa alerted the colonial regime and they demanded for his immediate arrest. Consequently, he was arrested on 19 November 1895 and was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years with a payment of a fine of Rs 50. [Singh 2010: 250]. During his imprisonment period, Ranchi district witnessed severe famine from 1896 to 1897 which was followed by the heavy out-migration of Munda tribe to Assam tea plantation. Table 1. highlights that during the year 1897, there was a heavy increase in the immigration of tribes in Assam tea plantation. Subsequently, this turned out to be the major cause for the Birsa movement.

The motive behind the arrest was to control the growing influence of Birsa Munda among the tribes. But even after the arrest, he remained an inspiring force among the tribes through the medium of his disciples. On 30 November 1897, he was released and immediately after his release started organizing meetings in the Munda region. [Singh 2012: 251]. Alongside, he continued his revolutionary teachings which lasted for nearly two years. Eventually, there was an outbreak of a violent movement on the Christmas Eve of 1899 at Ranchi district.

The movement was short lived as it was cruelly crushed by the officers, who killed many followers of Birsa. On 3 February 1900, Birsa was arrested and with this, the movement also came to an end. [Singh 2012: 256]. Though the movement did not last long the impact of the movement was so powerful that it forced the state to take some effective measures to solve the problems of Munda tribes. Among such measures, the initial was the compulsory commutation of praedial conditions and the abolition of *beth-begari* system. [Singh 2012: 258]. The most effective one was the introduction of Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908. This act was intended to provide a degree of protection to the Chotanagpur tribes by making *khuntkatti* tenures secure against the encroachment of landlords by fixing their rents in perpetuity and making illegal the sale of these lands for any purpose other than arrears of rent. It also gave statutory recognition to existing customs regarding use of forest, occupancy rights, right to claim land etc. [Gupta 2011: 90].

2.4. Tana Bhagat Movement (1914- 25)

Three months before the beginning of World War I, a new movement outraged within the territory of Ranchi district on 21 April 1914. It was started by Jatra Oraon who proclaimed that he had received a divine message in his dream from '*Dharmesh*' the supreme god of Oraon. According to the message, Oraon Raj was going to be established, where he would be a raja and his followers will share the kingdom. At the same time, he was assigned a task to reform the traditional religion (*Kurukh dharam*) and to teach incarnations

(*mantra*) to his people. The followers of the new religion were supposed to lead an ascetic life where they need to prohibit the intake of non-vegetarian food and alcohol and to give up the worship of (*tana*) ghost or spirit along with animal sacrifice. The main objective behind the reform of traditional religion was to uplift the social strata of Oraon community and to achieve equal status that Christians and Hindus enjoy. Henceforth, this created a new religious sect among Oraon community whose followers came to be known as Tana Bhagats.

Jatra ordered his followers to stop ploughing fields, paying rents to the landlords and to render their service as coolies or labourers to the zamindars or men belonging to the other castes and non-tribals, as their major grievances centered around rent and *beth-begari*. [Lata Singh 2012: 170]. Following this Jatra and his disciples were arrested. Although Jatra was released on 2 June 1915, he abandoned his leadership. [Singh 2012: 226]. Following him, series of leaders came into the scene and withdrew from the movement at various points of time. Altogether the movement witnessed several ups and downs.

In the beginning of 1919, when the movement was on the verge of fading, Sibua Oraon gave a new life to the movement. Under his leadership, new rules of conduct were formulated and the restrictions on food, drinks and conducts were removed and the *tanans* were allowed to enjoy all the pleasures. Like Jatra, he also proclaimed that Oraon Raj is going to be restored shortly and asked his followers to stop cultivating the fields or to do any sort of work as god would feed them. Alongside, he ordered not to pay any rent to zamindars. He targeted the Brahmins, Rajputs, *Banias* (moneylenders), Marwaris and Mussalmans, the exploitative and the dominating section. [Dasgupta 2014: 121]. By the end of 1919, the movement under him faced the same fate like previous ones and ended. This brought the first phase of the movement to an end.

In spite of this, Tana Bhagat movement never died completely. The spirit of the movement remained alive among the Tana Bhagats till 1925. From 1921, the Tana Bhagats came under the contact of Congress workers, all non-tribals, who reminded the Tana Bhagats that they were the original rajas of the country, who had become coolies. And if they give up drinking liquor, and using foreign cloth they could become rajas again. [Singh 2012: 236]. Following this, the Tana Bhagats joined Indian national congress and played a prominent role in non-cooperation movement.

Overall, it was a non-violent movement but still at certain points acts of violence took place. For example: between 21 April and 4 May 1918, the rebels looted 14 villages and killed 51 non-tribals. [Singh 2012: 231]. Interestingly, the movement was not confined to 'insider' and 'outsider' ideology but it also challenged the internal hierarchies within the Oraon community. [Dasgupta 2014].

3. Multiple Layers of Tribal Resistance

The above four movements gave a generalized outlook of tribal society that draw a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. And tribes always stood against 'them' to protect their socio-economic life. However, the tribal resistance was not confined to conflicts between insider and outsider but it also reflected the multiple layers of tribal resistance to the internal hierarchies, social structure and village life of tribal communities. This part of the paper is going to discuss three layers of tribal resistance and will focus on the internal complexities of tribal society. The following are some of the pertinent questions that the article is going to address.

- How the power structure developed within the tribal communities? Who poses power and who are deprived from this power? And why deprived group challenged the power structure?
- What was the role of women in tribal resistance movement?
- How the insider became an outsider?

3.1. Power Structure

In the pre-historic period, Munda entered the land of Chotanagpur plateau, cleared the virgin forest and founded villages at several places. Each family had their own village which came to be known as *Khuntkatti-hatu* or the village of the family of original settlers. [Roy 2010: 60]. And the descendent of these village founders were known as *Khuntkattidars*. In course of time, their affinal relatives (men of other villages) started settling down in the village. Though the newcomers belonged to the same race, they were not given equal status and were admitted as farm servants or tenants. As the land ownership was based on lineage membership, the newcomers (*praja*) were forbidden from the land ownership. However, later on, few plots of land were allotted to them and through the medium of these plots they acquired the status of raiyats. Ultimately, this gave birth to the social stratification in the Munda tribal community and divided the community into influential and non-influential groups.

A few centuries later, Munda was followed by Oraon tribal community, who also adopted the *Khuntkatti* system. And the pioneer families of Oraon came to be known as '*Bhuinhars*' corresponding to the Mundari term *Khuntkattidars*. [Srivastava 1981: 95]. The *Bhuinhars* and *Khuntkattidars* both enjoyed high status and influential posts like *Pahan* (the priest), *Munda* (civil head of the Munda village), *Manki* (Village chief), *Mahto* (the Oraon secular head). Like land ownership, these posts were also hereditary and only descendant of original settlers or original clearer of soil were allowed to claim these posts. The influential communities of both the tribes continued enjoying their supremacy over the village even after submitting themselves to a Raja. Unfortunately, in the colonial period, this group received a serious blow as their power and prestige came under threat with the introduction of land and forest laws. Eventually, this forced the influential class to lead the movements in order to safeguard their position and status. However, the leadership of this group was confined to the first phase of tribal agitations as the second phase witnessed the rise of non-influential group leaders who led the movement to elevate their status within their community.

In the beginning of colonial era, profound changes were brought in the agrarian system of Ranchi district. This led to the influx of interlopers who started claiming their possessions on *Bhuinhar* and *Khutkuttidar* lands of Oraon and Munda. Subsequently, it turned out to be a serious concern for the influential class as their status was gradually decreasing to the rank of 'raiayats'. This became one of the causes for Kol Rebellion which was led under the traditional leadership of *Manki* and *Mundas* who tried to oust the interlopers

from their land. Seeing the seriousness of the movement, Mr. Blunt, a member of the Governor-General's Council concluded after the rebellion that:

To secure the future peace of the disturbed pergunnahs, the first measure necessary appears to me to be the restoration of the *Mankis* and *Mundas* to their hereditary possessions: and then subjecting the police establishment to the most vigilant control. [Roy 2010: 117] Nevertheless, the hereditary possessions of *Manki* and *Mundas* were restored in some areas, but still many parts were left untouched. This brought the influential class again on the forefront to lead *Sardari Ladai*. As we know, the climax of the contest began after the failure of *Bhuinhari* Settlement of 1869, thus, it become necessary for us to understand what this Settlement was all about? From the name itself, it becomes quite evident that it was intended to entertain the influential section of the two tribal communities by demarcating their ownership of ancestral land. However, it proved to be a failure due to the negligence of affluent class towards the settlement. Under this, Oraon and Munda were asked to declare the amount of ancestral land they possess so that their lands can be protected from the encroachment of *dikus*. But they declared less land than they actually possessed due to the rumours which were spread by the *dikus*. According to the rumour, the settlement was meant to impose a special additional tax on their fields. This is the reason why they declared less land to save themselves from the additional tax. Contrary to this, *dikus* turned the settlement in their favour by declaring more lands than they had. This resulted in the steady loss of ancestral lands from the hands of affluent class.

The objectives and causes of the above two movements were centric towards the upper crust of the tribal society than the lower crust as they were led under the leadership of affluent class. On the other hand, government also tried to take up the issues of affluent class for political reasons and showed minimal or no interest towards the non-affluent class. The biasness of colonial regime and the affluent class compromised the cause and the visibility of non-affluent class in their own tribal community. Thus, there was an urgent need for this section to come in the forefront to relocate their identity in their own tribal community. Ultimately, this led to the emergence of leaders from the lower crust of the tribal society.

Birsa Munda who claimed himself as Father of Earth, *Dharti Abba*, belonged to a family of raiyat. In the history of tribal agitations, he was the first leader who responded against the ongoing out-migration of Munda tribal communities in which raiyat class formed a predominant group. Similarly, Tana Bhagat Movement witnessed series of leaders, who came from the lower crust. The movement emerged after the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which was implemented to stop the alienation of tribal land, chiefly the *khuntkatti* and the *bhuinhari* lands and had little to do with the raiyat lands. This gave rise to conflict between affluent and non-affluent class. And through the movement, raiyat class of Oraon community tried to challenge the increasing dominance of the affluent class.

3.2. Gendering the Movement

Tribal women actively participated in movements and fought against their internal and external subjugations. In the initial phase, external issues became the key cause for tribal movements, but in the second phase, both external and internal issues were taken up by the movements. This shift can be understood by the emergence of women leaders in tribal resistance.

The internal subjugation is more closely related with the patriarchal structure of Oraon and Munda society. In order to understand the internal subjugation, we need to first understand the 'status' of women folk in their patriarchal system. There is a generalized notion regarding the status of tribal women that they enjoyed better socio-economic space compared to the 'mainstream' women. But before coming into any conclusion, we need to keep in mind that in their patriarchal society, they had inefficient political and property rights which were centric to 'power' and that remained under male authority. Though in few cases, women acquired the political post or land ownership for temporary period when their sons were minor. This put a question mark on the position of women in tribal society as they were kept from accessing power. Contrary to this, external subjugation started with the intrusion of moneylenders, traders and middleman in the beginning of colonial era. These intruders dishonored tribal women by harassing and exploiting them. This not only threatened the honour and prestige of tribal communities but it also degraded the position of tribal women. Thereby, it became a vital reason for tribal movements.

In the beginning phase, violation of women's honour remained the main cause of tribal movements. For example: the immediate cause for Kol rebellion was the exploitation and harassment of women folks by *dikus*. In this context Kol said:

The Pathans have taken our doormats and the Sikhs our sisters. Our lives are of no value, and being of one caste, let us stand fast to each other, and commence to plunder, murder and loot.[Roy 2010: 110].

However, the movement was concerned with safeguarding the honour and prestige of tribal community rather than uplifting the position of women. If we talk in the context of *Sardari Ladai*, the main cause of the movement was *beth-begari* system where women were also forced to render their service in the lands of zamindars. For example: "Each house was obliged to supply one male and one woman each day for work." [Kol agitation in the Lohardugga district, Home Department, Judicial, 1890, No. 95-109: 4. NAI].

This ultimately made the women folk more prone to mistreatment and harassment, which was considered as shame for the community. During these two movements, violence against women remained a main cause, but to what extent they participated in these two movements is questionable due to the lack of written sources.

In the second phase, women not only actively participated in the movements but in many occasions they also emerged as leaders. In Birsa Movement, one of the main objectives was to restore the golden age of the Mundas and in this regard, one of Birsa Munda visions was of an ideal society where there was no violence against women. [Sujata Singh 2010: 68]. Thereby, women remained an important part of tribal movements. In this particular movement, women played a heroic role by taking arms to fight against their enemies. There was an instance when the Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi, on receiving the alarming news rushed to Gaya Munda's (prominent leader of Birsa Movement and a follower of Birsa Munda) house to arrest him but had to face his agitated wife (Manki), the two daughter-in-laws, and the three daughters, Thigi, Nagi and Lembu. They furiously attacked him with *lathi*, sword, *tangi* and

fought bravely till they were disarmed. Among them, there were two women who had small babies in their left arms while brandishing axes with their right. [Singh 1983: 106-108]. Apart from them, there were two women named as Sali and Champi who remained a companion of Birsa and stayed with him when he was finally caught. [Sujata Singh 2010: 70].

The above three movements were followed by a new episode of resistance termed as Tana Bhagat Movement. Unlike the erstwhile outbreaks, the movement not only witnessed the participation of women in the gatherings held by the leaders but also witnessed two women leaders i.e. Linda Oraon and Maya Oraon, who led the movement in different time period. This ultimately, helped them to improve their political status in tribal resistance and in their society as well.

3.3. Transformation of Sadan to Dikus

The village of Oraon and Munda contained three elements: the *Khuntkattidars* or *Bhuinhars*, the *parjas* or the *raiya*t and the subsidiary castes (also known as *sadan*). The first two elements have been already discussed above, thus, here we are going to discuss the role of subsidiary castes in tribal movements and their changing image in Ranchi district. In Chotanagpur, the exogenous group was categorized into two groups: *sadan* and *dikus*. Unlike *dikus*, *sadan* group belonged to a marginalized community and were accepted as an insider in the villages of Oraon and Munda community. In the villages, they constituted a service class or artisan group who performed the non-agricultural functions necessary to the village life and rarely cultivated the land. [Hoffman-II 2005: 27]. For example:

Oraon whose principal occupation was agriculture considered derogatory to engage himself in non-agriculture works like weaving, basketry or wicker work, pottery, and working in iron. Thus, for performing these particular works artisan group resided in their village like Lohras who made or mend the Oraon ploughshares and other tools and implements, Ahirs, who tend their cattle, Kumhars who made earthen-ware for their domestic use and tiles to roof their huts with, Jolahas and Chik Baraik who weaved their clothes, Turis, Mahalis or Ors who weaved or plaited their baskets and Goraitis and Ghasis played music in their social festivities and served them in other ways. [Roy 1915: 68].

Nevertheless, they played a prominent role in the village economy under the dominance of Oraon and Munda. And in return they received grains for their services.

However, when the village economy of Oraon and Munda started breaking under the governance of colonial regime, it also affected the livelihood of *sadans* to the core. In response they also stood up against the unjust and voluntarily participated in the tribal movements. Similarly, tribes never targeted them as they performed useful services for the villages. In the respect of Kol rebellion, Metcalfe stated: "Every inhabitant of the country, that was not a Cole was driven out or put to death, except the artisans whose workmanship they considered necessary for their own convenience." [Insurrection in- Enquiry into causes of, Indian dispatch to court directors, Foreign Department, Secret, 1832, 6th August, No. 8-11: 49. NAI].

But with the changing time frame, their image started changing too from victim to exploiter as many of them took advantage of the new set up under the British to enhance their power and status by securing positions within the village administration as accountants or as watchman. [Gupta 2014: 50]. Alongside, many became a part of labour market as agents and popularly came to be known as *arkatis* (known as men seller among Munda tribe) and mushroomed in the parts of Ranchi district.

From *sadan* group, *Gasis* (musicians) and *peraes* (weavers) formed a majority group who were the active suppliers of labour from Oraon and Munda community in the tea plantation fields. [Hoffman-I 2005: 25]. They used all the unlawful means like kidnapping, abducting, wrongful confinement, cheating, snatching away of coolies and other malpractices to push the tribes to tea plantation. All such activities distanced the tribes from *sadan* who came to be considered by the latter as *dikus*. [Gupta 2014: 51].

4. Conclusion

The four movements highlighted the intra and inter dimensions of tribal resistance at Ranchi district, which revealed the existence of two kinds of distances in the tribal social sphere: the distances within the tribes and the distances between the tribes and non-tribes. The distances within the tribes which were based on the social and economic inequalities, questioned the egalitarian structure of tribal society whereas the distances between the tribes and non-tribes which were based on discrete ethnic identities highlighted the strong sense of separateness among the tribes for non-tribes. On the whole, the multiple layers of tribal resistances and diverse nature of the movements challenged the contour of homogenous nature of tribal movements presented by the erstwhile scholars.

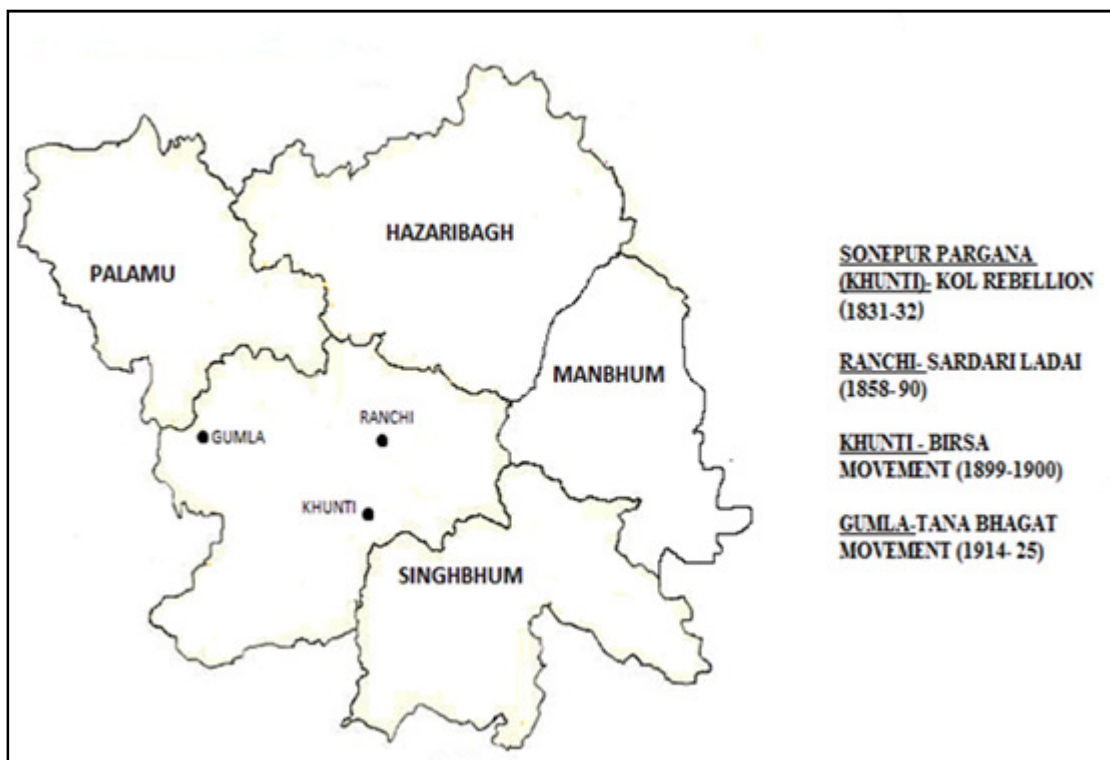


Figure 1: Rebellion map of Ranchi district from 1830-1925

[Here the map has been prepared by the author on the basis of information gathered from Jharkhand Map, retrieved from: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/india/jharkhand/> on 22/7/2015 at 3 pm]

Year	Total number of emigrants including children.			Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana (adult)
	Assam Valley	Surma Valley	Total	
1895	35,041	37,796	72,837	18,369
1896	42,384	38,731	81,115	16,122
1897	66,952	28,979	95,931	28,078
1898	33,762	15,407	49,169	18,597

Table 1: Emigration of tribes into Assam tea plantation from 1895-1898

[The report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Commission, Calcutta, 1906: 14]

5. Notes

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- NAI stands for National Archives of India.

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