

# Journal of Adivasi and Indigenous Studies

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February 2019, Vol. IX, No. 1

ISSN 2394-5524

(A bi-annual peer-reviewed online journal posted on Academia.edu)

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*Journal of Adivasi and Indigenous Studies (JAIS)*

(A bi-annual peer-reviewed online journal posted on Academia.edu)

Vol. IX, No. 1, February 2019: 1-25

© 2019 JAIS, ISSN (online) 2394-5524

## **Remembering Poto Ho: The Leader of Adivasi Anti-British Resistance in Kolhan (1836-37)**

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### **Abstract**

The essay is a double remembering of a historical personality; about what way and how he had been remembered in history and how he is appropriated in the contemporary period and with what purpose. The person is Poto Ho, the leader of the anti-British resistance in 1836-37 in south Kolhan, who with his associates and broad popular support bravely fought against the British forces for several months. He was eventually captured and publicly hanged with his associates. But the martyrdom of Poto Ho apparently lingered in the memory of the adivasis of south Kolhan which found resurgence in the post-1980 decades through various memorialisation processes, like erection of the memorial, public functions and spreading orally popular stories of his heroic deeds. In different sections, the essay attempts to capture his resistance against British rule in Kolhan and examine in what way he is now remembered as shahid (martyr) Poto Ho and veer (heroic) Poto Ho. Interesting fact is that in this process, he has been reinvented, undergoing a process of deification as public functions dedicated to his memory go along with his worship and performance of other religious and cultural practices. Furthermore, the study also seeks to underline how local memory gets fast transformed into public memory, creating a shared platform for the adivasi community, civil servants, social workers, activists and politicians. The present essay weaves this history through a critical examination of documentary and oral sources to portray the phenomenon of revival and worship of a historical personality.

### **I**

#### **Culture of memory<sup>1</sup>**

On 31st December 2018, when everyone was busy planning for the New Year celebrations, a news item in the local newspapers attracted the attention of many people. The news item informed that the villagers of Rajabasa<sup>2</sup> of Jaintgarh panchayat of West

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<sup>1</sup> The present phrase is taken from Daniel J. Rycroft, 'Reinterpreting Adivasi History: Memory of Santal Revolution in Village Bhognadih', in Kamal K. Mishra and N.K. Das (eds.), *Dissent, Discrimination and Dispossession: Tribal Movements in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2014, pp. 51-71.

<sup>2</sup> Rajabasa village is located at Jaintgarh Panchayat of Jagannathpur block of the present West Singhbhum district of Kolhan Division, Jharkhand state. Jagannathpur block is located 47 km towards south from the district headquarters, Chaibasa. The present Kolhan Division (comprising three districts of East Singhbhum, Seraikela-Kharsawan and West Singhbhum) was called Singhbhum district during the British

Singhbhum district would observe a day of mourning and fast on 1 January 2019 in memory of a martyr of their village who was hanged by the British on this day in 1838 along with his associates. (see newspaper report below).

**जैतगढ़** • अंग्रेजों ने एक जनवरी को ही पोतो हो को दे दी थी फांसी

## कल शहीदी दिवस मनायेंगे राजाबासा वासी

● ग्रामीण उपवास रख पूजा कर शहीद को देगे श्रद्धांजलि

**प्रतिनिधि** ▶ जैतगढ़

वीर शहीद पोतो हो की शहादत की वजह से अपनी पहचान बना चुके शहीद ग्राम राजाबासा में पोतो हो के वंशजों ने इस बार नववर्ष के उत्सव को जगह शहीद दिवस के रूप में मनाने का निर्णय लिया है. राजाबासा के मुंडा कृष्णा जोड़ों की अध्यक्षता में हुई एक बैठक में कृष्णा ने कहा - 'हमारे परदादा ने शहादत देकर कोल्हान में नई दुबारात लिखी थी. हमारे लिए नववर्ष उत्सव कोई मायने नहीं रखता. पूरे गांव के लोग अब हर वर्ष 1 जनवरी को पोतो हो के शहादत दिवस के रूप में मनाएंगे. निर्मल गागराई ने कहा कि 1 जनवरी



राजाबासा में बैठक करते ग्रामीण.

को चूल्हा चौका बंद रहेगा तथा सभी अर्चना कर शहीद पोतो हो की आत्मा को शांति की कामना करेंगे. इस अवसर

ग्रामीण उपवास रखकर विशेष पूजा-

### पोतो हो का शहीद दिवस कल

**काईबासा.** सदर प्रखंड के घाघरी गांव में एक जनवरी को संरेग सिया घाटी के नायक वीर पोतो हो का शहीद दिवस मनाया जायेगा. कोल्हान वीर पोतो हो सरसन कमेटी के सदस्य पुरजोर तैयारी में लगे हैं. कमेटी ने कहा कि एक जनवरी को सुबह नौ बजे से पूजा पाठ के बाद शहीदों को पुष्प अर्पित की जायेगी. उक्त जानकारी सालुका बनरा ने दी.

पर चाई सदस्य गुरुचरण सोय, सिंघ बलमुचु, राजीव मित्रा, श्रीराम जोड़ो, शैलेन्द्र गागराई, मनोज जोड़ो एवं मुक्त गागराई आदि उपस्थित थे.

Courtesy: Prabhat Khabar, Chaibasa, 31 December 2018

The martyr was Poto Ho, a barefoot, bow and arrow rebel who dared to challenge the formidable British enemy-force with his small army of rebels. After a brave fight with the British that lasted for several months, the rebels were finally defeated and captured by the British forces. After a mock trial, Poto Ho and four of his associates<sup>3</sup> were sentenced to death and 79 other rebels were awarded jail-term for different duration of time. On 1 January 1838 Poto, Burrari and Narra were publicly hanged near Jagannathpur. On the next day, i.e. 2 January 1838, Borah and Pandua were also hanged at Serengsia village, near Serengsia ghati (pass), north of Jagannathpur (Areeparampil 2002: 125; Streumer 2016: 133).<sup>4</sup> It was in the sacred memory of Poto and his associates that the villagers of Rajabasa had decided to observe 1 January 2019 as *shahadat diwas* (martyr day).

period. It was then part of the Chotanagpur Division of the Bengal Presidency. The Kolhan Government Estate, formed in 1837, formed the south-west region of the old Singhbhum district.

<sup>3</sup> The five leaders who were pronounced death sentence were Poto, Burrari, Narra, Borah and Pandua ('Cole Insurrection', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australia*, Vol XXVI, New Series, May-August, 1838, Pt II, Asiatic Intelligence, 19; Areeparampil 2002: 125; Streumer 2016: 133; Sahu 1985: 80-81). Murali Sahu gives a longer list of chief rebels: Poto of Rajabasa, Bara, Debey, Narra and Topoe of Balandia; Potel, Gopari and Bajra of Palsa; Pandwa, Jotong and Jonko of Pat Dumaria; Kochey and Surdhan of Sarbila, and Mangni Naik of Barbil (Sahu 1985: 78).

<sup>4</sup> 'Cole Insurrection', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australia*, Vol. XXVI, New Series, May-August, 1838, Pt II, Asiatic Intelligence, 19.

### Rajabasa function, 1 January 2019

On the morning of 1 January 2019, Rajabasa, the native village of Poto Ho, turned into an important site of remembering Poto Ho. People consisting of the villagers, block officials and police personnel, one NGO (named *Being Tribal*) from New Delhi and freelance researchers and local media persons assembled there in moderate number to pay tribute to Poto Ho as a celebrated martyr and brave leader. However, nothing like a permanent platform or memorial stone located the function, but only a framed sketch<sup>5</sup> of Poto Ho, on a makeshift dais, was kept there. The sketch was brought from the village on the day of the function itself.



Photograph 1: Poto Ho's sketch, Rajabasa function, 1 January 2019 (Courtesy: Rinu Kumari)

The function began with the garlanding and puja of Poto Ho. This was followed by speeches from several guests, telling the importance of martyrdom of Poto Ho. However, Pradhan Birua<sup>6</sup> of *The All India Tribal Research Centre* delivered a long and eloquent speech in Ho language explaining aspects of the anti-colonial movement of Poto Ho. The government functionaries announced that Rajabasa has been officially declared a *Shahid Gram* (martyr village) and development projects would be launched with the allocated government fund for this village. The function ended with the villagers reiterating their resolve not to take food on the day and mourn the day as *Shahadat Diwas* every year. The whole function was designed to pay respect to the martyrdom of Poto Ho and his associates who bravely fought against the British rule in Kolhan in 1836-37. The villagers parted after signing a handwritten notice which stated that on 1 January 2019 a *shradhanjali sabha* was organised and *puja-archana* was done at village Rajabasa.

<sup>5</sup> In all likelihood, his original photo does not exist.

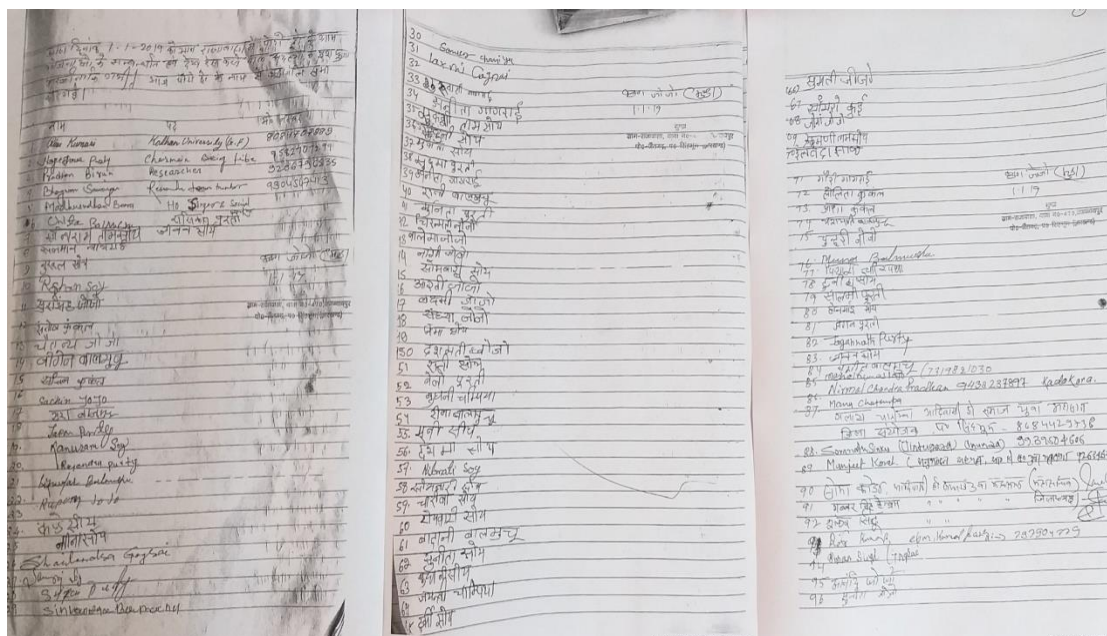
<sup>6</sup> Pradhan Birua is a school teacher, social worker and freelance researcher whose mission is to bring to light the great deeds of the adivasi leaders of the Kolhan region. He works through his organisation *All India Tribal Research Centre*, located at his native place, Pandrasali village in Manjhari block in West Singhbhum district.





Photograph 2: Puja ceremony, Rajabasa function, 1 January 2019 (Courtesy: Rinu Kumari)

Although the Rajabasa function was marked by simplicity, its significance is far reaching and complex. Through it, Rajabasa has become ‘part of a culture of memory’ that works through various process of remembering, giving agency and voice to leaders and places (Rycroft 2014: 56). The function may also be explained as an attempt to recover the past which was preserved in truncated form in the collective memory of a community. This recovered past is not static, but moving fast into the domain of public memory or more properly sacral memory, thereby converting Rajabasa into a pilgrimage.



Photograph 3: Rajabasa function attendance list, 1 January 2019 (Courtesy: Rinu Kumari)

### Serengsia function, 2 February 2019

Rajabasa function was followed by a bigger event on 2 February 2019 at Serengsia village, near Serengsia ghati (pass) in Tonto block in West Singhbhum district. It was yet another key commemoration site witnessing various memorialising processes. Unlike

Rajabasa, Poto Ho in Serengsia has a monument presence, called *Shahid Smarak*. Here, a platform and a memorial stone symbolise a place, one and a half kilometre south of the present site, called Serengsia ghati where Poto Ho had fought a heroic and fierce battle with the British forces. He occupied the narrow strategic pass to block the entry of the British troops into south Kolhan. A fierce battle ensued on 19 November 1837 which is accompanied by severe losses from both the sides. Whereas Serengsia pass is a site of the beginning of a movement, the nearby Serengsia village is a site of the public hangings of Borah and Pandua, two of the associates of Poto Ho, on 2 January 1838. Apart from assuming great geospatial significance, Serengsia, like Rajabasa, has become in recent times a part of the culture of memory.



Photograph 4: Memorial stone and platform at shahid smarak, Serengsia, 2 February 2019 (Courtesy: Rashmi Prasad)

According to local information and as far as public memory goes, an assemblage of people took place here for the first time in 1980, and it could have been made possible by the efforts of a government official, named Devendranath Sinku.<sup>7</sup> After that, people continued to gather here every year in increasing number and perform puja in the memory of the martyrs. Madhu Koda, the former Chief Minister of Jharkhand (2006-2008), who along with his wife Geeta Koda, the present parliamentarian of West Singhbhum, showed up in the function claimed that people from as far as Ghatshila and

<sup>7</sup> *Prabhat Khabar*, Chaibasa, 3 February 2019.



Jamshedpur in East Singhbhum and Rangamati have been visiting the place for the last 20-25 years. According to the local people, Shahid Smarak, as a small establishment, existed from 1982. It was given an uplift only recently (probably 2017) by the joint efforts of the people and the government. The earlier date 1982 was, however, retained at the front gate of the Smarak.



Photograph 5: *Jorong jid, Jorong jid*, Serengsia, 2 February 2019 (Courtsey: Rashmi Prasad)

The function on 2 February was attended by around 1000-1500 people comprising villagers, mundas, government and police personnel and the media. The aim of the programme was the same as Rajabasa, to commemorate Poto Ho and his associates. However, the function was organised on a much larger scale and accompanied by elaborate pujas and sacrifices. The function started with the local adivasis taking a holy bath at a nearby stream. After the bath and wearing a new dress, they marched on to the Shahid Smarak with the chant '*Jorong jid! Jorong jid!*' (जोरोंग जीड, जोरोंग जीड, Long Live Poto Ho!). They, along with the adivasi women, did several rounds of *parikrama* and performed elaborate puja on the platform. At the back of the platform, within the boundary of Shahid Smarak, a parallel puja ceremony was also performed in front of *bid-diris* (memorial stones).<sup>8</sup> These religious and cultural practices in memory of Poto Ho and his close associates are further living proofs of the reverence they command in the Ho community.

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<sup>8</sup> On the significance of *bid-diris*, A.D. Tuckey says, 'When a person visits a Ho village, he usually sees erect stones planted by human agency on the ground. They are from two to ten feet high and many of them curiously shaped. They are found generally round the village site in conspicuous places, such as the roadsides or the meetings of two roads or threshing floors. These stones are called *Bid-diris* (i.e. planted stones) and are what may be termed memorial stones. These stones are planted in honour and memory of a deceased person to perpetuate his memory to the generations yet unborn. With the advance of education the custom of inscribing the names of deceased with the year of birth and death, after the custom of the Christians, is being introduced. When these *Bid-diris* are planted all the near relations and the headmen of the villages are invited. A feast like that at the *jongtopa* ceremony is also provided to all who attend the *Bid-diri* ceremony. The *Bid-diris* are permanent land-marks...' (A.D. Tuckey, *Final Report on the Resettlement of the Kolhan Government Estate in the District of Singhbhum 1913-1918*, Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1920, 126).



Photograph 6: Bid-diris, Serengsia, 2 February 2019 (Courtesy: Rashmi Prasad)

However, an otherwise curious ceremony, which attracted the attention of every non-Ho eyes, was enacted at the site of platform and memorial stone. Here, a group of women relapsed into an emotional frenzy, weeping and crying, uttering the following words in Ho (translation given):

Khaji recham chirgeliyan...  
Kham khaji redo chilken chirgeliyan...  
Ondeo 4 saal purenj me aan redo aema meyanj  
Ondeo 4 saal purenj me aan redo aema meyanj  
Acha tik giya...  
Pure meyanj  
Pure meyanj

कब बताओगे, तभी तो जानेंगे  
नहीं बताओगे, तो कैसे जानेंगे

और चार साल पूरा करोगे, तब दोगे  
और चार साल पूरा करोगे, तब दोगे

अच्छा ठीक है, पूरा करेंगे, पूरा करेंगे  
देंगे, देंगे, पूरा कर देंगे

S.R. Tickell, the first Political Agent to the South West Frontier Agency, also gives a graphic description of a particular aspect of funeral rites among the Hos when a departed soul is called out to return. This call out is done through a melancholic song, bitter crying and much shivering. A few lines of the call out song, as produced by Tickell, are given below:<sup>9</sup>

We never scolded you,  
Never wronged you,  
Come to us back...  
We ever loved and cherished you  
And have lived long together...  
Come to your home...

<sup>9</sup> S.R. Tickell. 1840. 'Memoir on the Hodesum (improperly called Kolehan)' *The Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, Part II, July to December, Calcutta: Bishop's College Press, 795.



Photograph 7: Come to us back! Serengsia, 2 February 2019 (Courtesy: Rashmi Prasad)

The women in ecstasy, as seen in photograph 8, were urging Poto Ho to come back, and also tell them when he would finally arrive and be with them. Their ritualistic longing for Poto's return reveals to us how Poto exists in the minds of the local adivasis today. Once a warrior, he is now immortalised and deified. Living in the past, he is resurrected in the present and recalled as a messiah for creating a better future. Serengsia function was free from political colour. Madhu Koda, when asked by the media to comment on the occasion, said that Kolhan has a glorious tradition of anti-British resistance which should be highlighted, studied and researched. He demanded the inclusion of Poto Ho in the school and university syllabi. He also raised the question of why the revolt of 1857 should be given primacy all the time. This apolitical statement has a hint of political meaning in the sense that it seeks the emergence of Poto Ho as a cult figure like Sidu-Kanhu and Birsa Munda, but ignores the legacy of Raja Arun Singh, the well-sung hero of 1857 and also Gono Pingua, the unsung hero of 1857. Geeta Koda also emphasised the importance of Serengsia and said that visiting the place gives one immense strength and energy.

## II

### Historical background of Poto Ho's revolt

Madhu Koda struck the right chord when he said that the new generation should know more about the great deeds of Poto Ho, without probably realising its serious academic implications. We can reconstruct a historical personality through examining him in light of the contemporary circumstances and existing sources and using the right methodology. This method of study can produce a fair degree of dependable knowledge which we are able dissipate and make it a part of university curriculum. In case of Poto Ho, such knowledge production would serve double—making us more enlightened about him and also doing away with several current misunderstandings regarding him such as he was a hero of the Kol Revolt of 1831-32.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, he belonged to the period of 1836-37.

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<sup>10</sup> Even Madhu Koda, in his address to the media, called him a great hero of 1831-32.

We need to know what actually happened in 1836-37. The history of Poto Ho is intimately linked with the broader background of British-Ho relationship that started with the year 1819 and also Ho relationship with the Singhbhum chiefs that predates the British entry into Kolhan. During the pre-British days, Singhbhum was under the overall suzerainty of the Singh dynasty of Porahat whose rulers designated themselves as the rajas of Singhbhum. For military support, they were dependent upon the Bhuiyans who were supposed to be the earliest settlers of Kolhan along with the Jain Saraks who came to Kolhan slightly after the Bhuiyans.<sup>11</sup> Bhuiya-Sarak settlements date back to seventh century A.D. (Sahu 1985: 8-10).<sup>12</sup> Around the 10th century A.D., the Hos came from the north and north-west and settled in the present north Kolhan region. They originated from the Munda stock of Chotanagpur plateau and believed to have migrated from the plateau into Singhbhum. Here, they cleared dense forests, established villages and started settled agricultural life. Gradually, they moved towards the southern parts of Kolhan which was then the stronghold of the Bhuiyans and the Saraks. After a long struggle, the Hos were able to establish themselves in south Kolhan. They defeated the Saraks and drove them out of Singhbhum. They also dislodged the Bhuyians from their position of power. Thus they created 'Hodesum' for themselves (Sahu 1985: 8-10; Sen 2011: 13-14)<sup>13</sup>. The Gonds and the Bhumij were the other people who inhabited Singhbhum around the same period. We have no certain information about them. It appears that the Gonds in Singhbhum were connected to the Gonds in central India. They inhabited mostly south Kolhan. The Bhumij were also settled in some *pirs* of south Kolhan (Sen 2011: 14).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Singh dynasty of Porahat split into three branches—the Raja of Porahat, the Kunwar of Saraikela and the Thakur of Kharsawan. The three regimes had a complex relationship with each other. However, they had one common enemy—the Hos. All the three had claims of superior rights over the Hos, residing within the boundary of their respective estates. They demanded tributes from them. The Hos, on the other hand, denied the superior claims of the chiefs, owed them only nominal allegiance by paying occasional tributes (Sahu 1985: 12). The Hos also frequently plundered the territories of the three Singhbhum chiefs and the adjoining areas of Odisha, those belonging to Mayurbhanj Raj and his tributary estates, Bamanghati estate and Keonjhar estate. Thus the Hos were not only the common enemy of the three Singhbhum chiefs but also of the Mayurbahnj Raja, Bamanghati and Keonjhar estates (Ibid. 13). Despite their shared hatred for the Hos, they took advantage of their battle-skill to settle the score against each other. Whosoever was able to garner the Ho support, was able to win in a battle. For their bravery and love for independence, the Hos earned the epithet 'Larka Koles' from their adversaries. The area they inhabited was referred to as the 'tiger's den'<sup>14</sup> because they did not allow a passenger to pass through their territories and even murdered him for his misadventure. They insisted upon keeping Kolhan a closed domain (Sen 2011: 53, 55).

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<sup>11</sup> S.R. Tickell, op.cit. 696.

<sup>12</sup> This date is given by *Vamsa Prabha Lekhana*, the genealogy of the Singhbhum Raj. Other traditions gave much later dates to the establishment of Singhbhum Raj, which ranges between 13th to 18th centuries.

<sup>13</sup> S.R. Tickell, op. cit. p. 696; E.T. Dalton, 'The "Kols" of Chota-Nagpore', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. 6, 1868, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Writes Major Roughsedge in 1820, 'A traveller would soon think of venturing into a tiger's den, as of traversing any part of Lurka Cole...'; Major Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820, para 13. Extract Bengal Political consultations, 3 June 1820.



Since the Hos had always remained a threat to the Singhbhum chiefs, they wanted to check the menace with the help of the superior British force. At the beginning of 1820, Kunwar Bikram Singh of Seraikela and Thakur Chaitan Singh of Kharsawan subjected themselves under the protection of the Company government (Sahu 1985: 20). On 1 February 1820, the raja of Porahat entered into a written agreement unconditionally whereby he promised to obey all orders of the Company government and to pay them an annual *peshkash* of 101 rupees.<sup>15</sup> Although the raja received no written document from Major Roughsedge,<sup>16</sup> he solicited the support of the British for achieving three objectives: first, the recovery of the tutelary devi, *Pauri Devi*, from the Kunwar of Seraikela; second, the re-establishment of his authority over the Kunwar of Seraikela and the Thakur of Kharsawan; third, to check the inroads of the 'savage race of Lurka Coles which had increased so rapidly as to render his residence in Poorahath (Porahat) hazardous'.<sup>17</sup> Major Roughsedge promised him all the assistance towards the attainment of the first and the last but did not commit for the fulfilment of the second objective.<sup>18</sup> Major Roughsedge acceptance of the third demand of the raja had laid the foundation of the future British-Ho relationship. However, there was another factor which led the British to accept the third demand of the raja. The British wanted to keep the direct route between Bamanghati and Seraikela through the Kolhan pirs safe for traders and travellers. Otherwise, people had to take a circuitous route of 20 miles to the east to avoid the 'savages'.<sup>19</sup> Major Roughsedge, the Political Agent of the Governor-General, was initially reluctant to start a straightforward fight with the Hos. He wanted to employ conciliatory measures rather than using force.<sup>20</sup> But he soon concluded, after hearing many instances of their plunder, that 'the Lurkas were a dreadful pest to the civilized part of Singboom'.<sup>21</sup> He made up his mind to take military action against them.

### **The first Kolhan campaign, 1820**

In 1820, Roughsedge decided to proceed to Sambalpur with his Ramgarh Battalion through Kol pirs. On 18 March 1820, he entered into the 'tiger's den' from the north and reached Ajodhya pir where he stayed till 22 March. The Mundas brought him provisions and promised to accept the suzerainty of the Porahat raj. It is here that he came to know that the epicentre of the trouble was Gumra and south Kolhan. Then he moved to Rajabasa pir, where he got a hint of an impending resistance. He stayed there for two days and secured the submission of village heads to Vikram Singh of Seraikela. He reached Gumra pir and then Chaibasa on 25 March where he faced actual resistance of the Hos. In Chaibasa, British forces under Ld. Maillard had several battles with the Hos. After heavy casualties from the Ho side, their resistance subsided. On 1 April, Roughsedge marched to pargana Jaintgarh, the southernmost part of Kolhan where Mata Ho of Balandia village with his party was prepared to defend Balandia against the British attack. Roughsedge faced determined resistance from them. To break their strength, he

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<sup>15</sup> Wilkinson to Swinton, 12 January 1833, para 2, Extract Fort William Political Consultations, 20 January 1833.

<sup>16</sup> Major Edward Roughsedge, in 1819, was appointed as the first political Agent to the government in South Bihar, covering the present Jharkhand state, the districts of Sarguja and Raigarh of Chattisgarh and Sundargarh and Sambalpur of Odisha. These formed the operational areas of his Ramgarh Battalion.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Major Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820, paras 13, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Extract Political letters from Bengal, 9 May, 1823. Bengal Political Department, para 157.

<sup>21</sup> Major Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 9 May 1820, para 12.



destroyed Balandia and several other villages. But it appears that even these harsh measures failed to bring people into full submission (Sahu 1985: 27).<sup>22</sup> Roughsedge wanted to stay for more days in Jaintgarh, but the growing number of wounded and sick soldiers in his camp compelled him to leave Jaintgarh for Sambalpur.

### **The second Kolhan campaign, 1821**

As Mata Ho of Balandia thwarted Major Roughsedge's first campaign, a second campaign was in the cards. On 20 June 1820, Roughsedge wrote to C.J. Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government, that he wanted to revisit Jaintgarh and undertake a more intensive campaign to bring the Hos into submission.<sup>23</sup> The government did not approve his plan, and he was well advised not to 'undertake new operations political or military without obtaining the expressed sanction of government'.<sup>24</sup> However, certain developments in Kolhan went in favour of Major Roughsedge. At Gumra pir, the Company government had authorised Ghasi Singh to collect rent from the Hos. However, after Major Roughsedge left Kolhan for Sambalpur in 1820, he arm-twisted the Hos to pay more than the fixed rent. The Hos, who were already facing oppression at the hands of Ghasi Singh, opposed his new demand. Also, Raja Ghanshyam Singh of Porahat who had a claim on half of the revenue of Gumra pir, sent Bahuran Singh, the Subedar of barkandazee, to realise 2000 rupees from Ghasi Singh. On reaching Gumra pir, the barkandazees of Bahuran Singh molested the daughter of Kundu Pater, an important leader of the area. The Hos, as a community, felt insulted and they decided to drive away British and their allies (Sahu 1985: 31-32; Streumer 2016: 48).

On January 1821, the Hos attacked Subedar Bahuran Singh and his party at village Pokharia. Bahuran Singh and several of his men were killed in the attack, and their resources fell into the hands of the Hos. They repeated their exploits at village Chainpur against Rattan Singh, Jamadar of the bakandazee who resided in a mud fort. The Hos then attacked Chakradharpur. They also planned to attack Porahat, but raja Ghanshyam Singh saved his life by timely escaping to Anandpur (Areeparampil 2002: 88-89; Streumer 2016: 49). These developments made the task of Roughsedge easier in convincing the government that 'strong measures combined with conciliation after an impression has been made are absolutely necessary against this intractable tribe of ferocious savages, who inhabit a considerable extent of country within ten or twelve marches of the metropolis of British India'.<sup>25</sup> He also informed the authorities that the Larka force which had attacked Pokharia consisted of 1500 men and they were not far from the dawk route which lies only four 'Kos' south of the southern boundary of Singhbhum.<sup>26</sup>

At last, the Company authorities decided to strike. They sent a large force under the command of Lt. Colonel Richards,<sup>27</sup> and asked Roughsedge to cooperate Colonel Richards and provide him with all the necessary information.<sup>28</sup> According to John Bull,

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<sup>22</sup> Extract Political letters from Bengal, 9 May 1823, para 157. Bengal Political Department.

<sup>23</sup> E. Roughsedge to Metcalfe, 20 June 1820, para 12.

<sup>24</sup> Metcalfe to Roughsedge, 15 July 1820, para 3.

<sup>25</sup> Roughsedge to Swinton, 17 February 1821, para 5, Extract Bengal Consultations, 10 March 1821.

<sup>26</sup> Roughsedge to Swinton, 17 February 1821, PS, Extract Bengal Consultations, 10 March 1821.

<sup>27</sup> From Assistant General Nicol to Secretary Swinton, 17 March 1821, para 2, Extract Bengal Consultations, 10 March 1821.

<sup>28</sup> From Assistant General Nicol to Major Roughsedge, 17 March 1821, Extract Bengal Consultations, 24 March 1821.

'they (the Hos) were attacked on all sides by detachments from the Body Guard, the 13th N. I. the Hill Rangers, Ramghur battalion, and Cuttak legion, amounting to about 2000 men in all under the command of Colonel Richards.'<sup>29</sup> Col. Richards attacked the Hos from four sides, Sambalpur, Cuttak, Midnapur and Bakura. By the end of April 1821, several parties of the Hos of the different Kolhan pirs were defeated by British forces on several occasions and villages after villages were wantonly destroyed (Sahu 35; Areeparampil 90). A proclamation which offered pardon to all who would come and submit was circulated. By the end of May 1821, the Ho pirs, as well as the village Mundas, surrendered in large number. Even Jaintgarh submitted to Captain Mclead of Cuttack Legion. Mata Ho, the celebrated leader, also surrendered to him (Singh 1978: 83). The Hos accepted the following terms of the agreement:

First, they acknowledged themselves to be subjects of the British government, and engaged to be loyal and obedient to its authority.

Second, they agreed to pay eight annas per plough to their lawful chief for the first five years and afterwards one rupee, if their circumstances were such as to admit of it.

Third, they engaged to keep the roads through their parganas open and safe for travellers.

Fourth, they engaged to allow persons of all castes to settle in their villages, afford them protection and encourage their children to learn Oriya or Hindi language.

Fifth, if oppressed by their chief and zamindar, they engaged not to resort to arms for redress, but complain to the officers commanding the troops on the Frontier or some other competent authority.<sup>30</sup>

### **The third Kolhan campaign, 1836-37**

However, the agreement of 1821 did not work well due to several reasons. After the British forces left Kolhan, the Hos were subjected to various kinds of malpractices and exactions by the local authorities. Against these malpractices, the Hos of south Kolhan rose in revolt in 1830. They refused to pay land tax agreed upon earlier and also attacked Jaintgarh fort. Raghunath Bisee, the British representative in Jaintgarh, ran away to save his life (Areeparampil 2002: 90-91). The Hos also participated in the Kol rebellion of 1831-32. Then came the Bamanghati crisis (it was a quarrel between Mayurbahnj raja and his tributary Bamanghati estate) around 1832-34 in which the Hos of four southern pirs, namely Thai, Bharbharia, Lalgargh and Aula of Banmanghati played a key role. All these created great confusion in Singhbhum, which ultimately invited British armed intervention in 1836 (Sahu 1985: 60-66).

Captain Thomas Wilkinson, the Political Agent of the South-West Frontier Agency<sup>31</sup> (later day Chotanagpur Division) firmly believed that it was futile to force the Hos to

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<sup>29</sup> John Bull in the East, 'Short Account of the Lurka Coles', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies: Vol. XIII, January to June, 1822*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Captain Wilkinson to Swinton, 12 January 1833, para 5, Extract Fort William Political Consultations of 20 January 1833.

<sup>31</sup> By Regulation XIII of 1833, a new administrative unit called the South West Frontier Agency (SWFA) was established in 1834 with headquarters at Kishanpur (Ranchi). The Agency included the areas of Chotanagpur, Palamu, Kharkdiha, Ramgarh and Kunda (all these areas were formerly parts of the old Ramgarh district), Jungle Mahals and pargana Dhalbhum (taken from district Midnapur). The new unit was placed under an officer called Political Agent to the Governor General. Captain Thomas Wilkinson was appointed as the first Political Agent to the Governor General. Also, it was felt that general laws and regulations intended for the more advanced areas of Bengal and Bihar were not suitable for SWFA having large Adivasi population. Hence, the entire SWFA was declared a non-regulation area, exempted from the application of the general laws (Areeparampil 112).

submit to the local chiefs. He was in favour of annexing and introducing direct British rule in Kol pirs of Singhbhum as well as four Kol pirs of Bamanghati to bring lasting peace in the whole Singhbhum area. He counted the following reasons for his advocacy of direct government rule in Kolhan: first, the agreement reached between the Hos and Colonel Roughsedge in 1821 was utterly broken down; second, the Ho society was wrapped in the social evil of witchcraft and the darkness of illiteracy which British rule would help to mitigate; third, he saw the prospect of large scale conversion to Christianity, although spread of Christianity was not the avowed policy of the government, and finally, he saw the possibility of direct communication between Bengal, Sambalpur and Banaras through 'Kol' pirs (Streumer 2016: 110-11; Sahu 1985: 71-72). On 3 October 1836, the Company government approved his proposal for the direct military intervention as well as direct government rule in Kolhan (Paty 1997: 7).

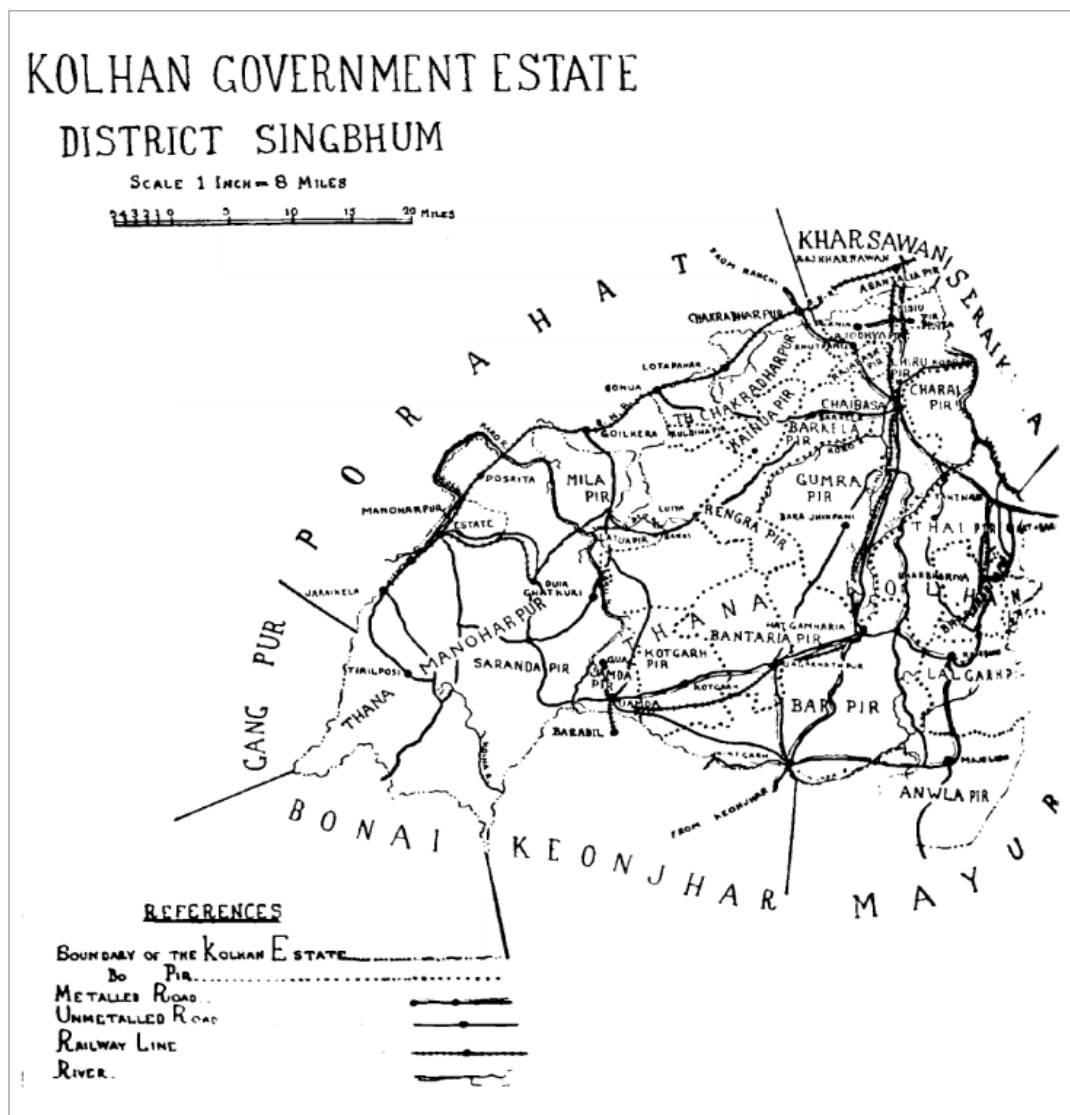
On 18 November 1836, Wilkinson reached Seraikela and won over some of the Mankis and Mundas to his side through conciliatory measures. He then sent a delegation to the Hos of Thai and Bharbharia pirs with the message of submission. But the delegation failed to achieve anything, and this brought to an end Wilkinson's conciliatory policy. Now, he decided to strike hard. On 3 December 1836, two detachments under Captain Wilkinson and Captain Corfield entered Thai pir from two different directions. They pillaged and destroyed villages of Thai pir, but could not secure ready submission. They had to face determined resistance from several villages of Thai pir. However, one by one they were defeated by the superior British forces. Bharbharia pir also submitted after putting up a dour resistance. On 29 December 1836, Wilkinson marched through Baghabilla to Lalgah pir. After subduing Lalgah, he entered Aula Pir with the same favourable result (Sahu 1985: 72-74; Streumer 2016: 113-14).

In the next phase, Wilkinson reached Balandia part of Bar pir on 23 January 1837. Here, he started a thorough combing operation of the rebels who had fled into the jungle. Finally, on 6 February 1837, Sardar Jotong, the leader of the rebels, was captured. After the capture of Jotong, all the Mundas of Balandia surrendered to Wilkinson. On 9 February, Wilkinson moved to Gumaria. The Munda of Gumaria handed over him sixteen rebels and 200 heads of cattle for purchasing peace. Wilkinson reached Satbantari pir on 14 February. All the Mundas of Satbantari surrendered themselves before Wilkinson. The Manaki of Jamda Pir also came in to help Wilkinson. From Satbantari he sent an invitation to the Mundas of Kotgarh and Rengra pirs to meet him at Gumra or Chaibasa and marched ahead with his detachment. Not only the invitation was readily accepted by Kotgarh and Rengra, but also by the Mundas and Mankis of the rest of the pirs of Kolhan (Sahu 1985: 74-76; Streumer 2016: 114-15). All of them surrendered one by one. They entered into solemn agreement to obey the orders of the British government and not those of the rajas and chiefs of the area. All the Mundas agreed to pay land revenue at the rate of 8 annas per plough as *malguzari*, as had been fixed by Major Roughsedge in 1821 (Sahu 1985: 77).

### **Formation of the Kolhan Government Estate, 1837**

With this resounding victory of Captain Wilkinson, the pirs which formerly belonged to the raja of Singhbhum, Kunwar of Seraikela, Thakur of Kharsawan and Mahapater of Bamanghati came under the direct control of the Company government. These areas were formed into a new administrative unit named as the Kolhan Government Estate

(henceforth KGE) comprising 26 pirs<sup>32</sup> and 622 villages. The newly formed KGE, along with the entire Singhbhum district including Seraikela and Kharsawan estates were included in the South West Frontier Agency (SWFA). Samuel Richard Tickell was appointed as the Assistant to the Political Agent of the South West Frontier Agency. He thus became the first British administrator of Kolhan. Chaibasa was chosen as the headquarters of KGE (Sahu 1985: 77; Streumer 2016: 118).



Courtesy: D.N. Majumdar, *The Affairs of a Tribe*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> These 26 pirs as mentioned by T. Wilkinson are:

Thai, Bharbharia or Nagra, Lalgah and Aula pirs belonging to Mayurbhanj raja (Bamanghati)  
 Bar pir, including Jaintgarh, Satbantari pir, including Jagannathpur, Kotgarh, Jamda, Natua, Chiru, Gumra, Barkela, Adjaudhia, Gopinathpur, Govindpur, Kallinua, Kuldiha, Rengra, Saranda and Chainpur belonging to Singhbhum raja (Porahat)

Rajabasa, Konchdiha, Purlong, Abroo or Sidiu and Lota pirs (Kunwar of Seraikela)

Asantalia pir comprising three villages of Bhinji, Jalembra and Chacha (Thakur of Kharsawan)

(See Wilkinson to Tickell, 13 May 1837, para 2. South West Frontier Political Despatch Register (SWFPDR) from 13 May 1837 to 1 December 1840, Vol. 231, Patna: Bihar State Archives).

<sup>33</sup> Dharendra Nath Majumdar, *The Affairs of a Tribe: A Study in Tribal Dynamics*, Lucknow: Ethnographics and Folk Culture Society, 1950.

In a letter dated 13 May 1837, Wilkinson gave his Assistant elaborate instructions regarding the general conduct of the government and a copy of the Criminal Rules. The text of the Civil Rules, as stated by him, was to follow later.<sup>34</sup> In his detailed instructions, Wilkinson advocated a system based on the concept of the Manki as the head of a pir and the Munda as the head of a village and the village *panchayats* consisting of 3-5 persons.<sup>35</sup> He visualised a paternalistic mode of government which aimed at spreading the light of civilization by establishing schools and hospitals and promoting material progress. He also expected from his Assistant to set up a high standard of individual conduct in the administration of the area. In his letter, he advised his Assistant:

‘You should at all time be accessible to the people under your charge, except at your hours for meals and recreation, and take particular care not to transact business with them, through the agency of any of your establishment which will be the surest means of checking anything in the shape of refraction or oppression, your patience and temper will be often tried, but I have every faith in your exercising both in the work for which you have been selected’.<sup>36</sup>

Thus Wilkinson, playing the role of a civilizer, founded the paternalistic British administration in Kolhan.

### III

#### The revolt of Poto Ho, 1837

However, Wilkinson and the British authorities in Bengal soon realised that the phoenix was rising again from its ashes. They received the news that a group of rebels in south Kolhan negated the new system and they were planning to wage a protracted war with the British. Tickell reported to Wilkinson on 21 October 1837 that ‘a number of disaffected Kols assembled together by some of the most notorious of those who escaped capture last year, and composed in part of the prisoners released from Ranchi, assembled close to Balandia and were making well-stocked supply bases hidden in the jungle.’<sup>37</sup> He also informed that two of his *dobhasiyas* were molested by the insurgents who escaped capture during the last campaign in Balandia in Bar pir.<sup>38</sup> The above report was significant as it anticipated a planned war by the Hos of Balandia.

Wilkinson, who was at Kishenpur (Ranchi) at that time, however, got alarmed at the news and instructed Tickell to speedily proceed to the spot with a sufficient force to apprehend the rebels. He advised Tickell not to trust his *dobhasiyas* and instead take the assistance of friendly Hos, such as Marteem, Raoria and Ghunnao Mankis of Bar pir, Donkurra, Chunla and Pattee Kur of Bharbharia pir in his operations.<sup>39</sup> Wilkinson’s belligerent reaction emerged from the fact that he knew the rebels by name and must have been aware of their capabilities. He wrote to Tickell in the same letter, ‘You have also omitted to mention the names of the leaders, who, I conclude are Poto of Rajah Bassa and Bara of Burudea [Balandia]’.<sup>40</sup> Wilkinson’s prior knowledge of the two

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<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson to Tickell, 13 May 1837, SWFPDR, from 13 May 1837 to 1 December 1840, Vol. 231, Patna: Bihar State Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., para 23.

<sup>37</sup> Tickell to Wilkinson, 21 October 1837, Patna: BSA.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Wilkinson to Tickell, 25 October, 1837, Patna: BSA.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



leaders, Poto and Bara, clearly shows that they were active during Wilkinson's last campaign and refused to surrender and evaded capture despite Wilkinson's known policy of pillage, plunder and arson.

The correspondent of the British Newspaper *Englishman*<sup>41</sup> calls Poto as 'sirdar of Rajabasa'<sup>42</sup> and his associates Narrah, Borah and Pandua of Balandia and Burrail of Khundbund as leaders.<sup>43</sup> As to the cause of revolt, he reported that the 'insurrection' was 'caused partly by a number of prisoners having been killed at Kishenpur Jail, while trying to escape which their relatives determined to revenge, and partly at the instigation of Poto, sirdar of Rajabasa'.<sup>44</sup> The casual description of the causes of the revolt is a representative case of colonial underestimation of a movement which has much deeper roots.

Tickell reported to Wilkinson that the rebels met at Pokam, a small village in jungles at a short distance to the south of Jaintgarh. According to him, it was a small gathering of twenty to twenty five rebels (Singh 1971: 150; Struemer 2016: 130). But soon afterwards, on 31 October 1837, Tickell wrote to Wilkinson that the leaders had enlisted the support of twenty two villages.<sup>45</sup>

### Poto's leadership

Poto seems to have possessed extraordinary leadership qualities which included the great skill of mobilising people against British rule. His mobilisation methods had three chief aspects—persuasion, invoking religious and cultural practices and plain coercion. He organised a meeting (council of war) at Balandia which a large number of Hos attended and where his persuasive power was at full display. Knowing well the embittered feelings of the people whose relatives died while trying to escape Kishenpur jail, Poto persuaded them to take up arms against the British to revenge the murder of their relatives (Singh 1971: 150). It was in this war council that he announced his decision to occupy the two passes, the Seringsia and Bagabila passes, of *Singhasan* hills.<sup>46</sup> *Singhasan* hills almost bifurcate Singhbhum into two halves, north and south

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<sup>41</sup> The correspondent sent a contemporary account of the revolt of Poto Ho entitled 'Cole Insurrection' to the Newspaper *Englishman* bearing the date 13 February 1838. The report was subsequently published in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australia* (henceforth *AJMR*), Vol. XXVI, New Series, May-August, 1838, Pt II, Asiatic Intelligence, 19-20.

<sup>42</sup> 'Cole Insurrection', *AJMR*, May-August, 1838, 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; Murali Sahu gives a longer list of associates of Poto. They were Bara and Debey of Balandia, Potel, Gopari and Bajra of Palsa, Pandwa, Jotong and Jonko of Pat Dumaria, Kochey and Surdhan of Sarbila, and Narra and Topoe of Balandia (Sahu 78).

<sup>44</sup> 'Cole Insurrection', *AJMR*, May-August, 1838, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Tickell to Wilkinson, 31 October 1837. (Murali Sahu listed these 22 villages as Kundbund, Kullia and Kumetra of Lalgah pir; Unduda, Raikumar, Kokarbota, Ichakuti, Kankapukoria, Banagutu, Pandwaburu and Reagha of Aula pir; Buludia (Balandia), Sardia, Najumlohur, Rooya, Jaipur, Gomaria, Kantabila, Kondrakurra, Sarbila, Patta-Dumaria and Luckipee of Bar pir (Sahu 1985: 83). The same list of villages with slightly different spelling of names was given by Mathew Areeparampil (Areeparampil 2002: 21).

<sup>46</sup> Ranajit Guha remarks about the phenomenon of assemblage before the start of an uprising, 'Confer, plan, assemble, attack—the sequence occurs in many an Indian uprising. The initial meeting, often in the form of an extended Panchayat of the leaders of the insurgent community, had an important role to play in formulating grievances, defining the course of action and generally preparing the mass of its members for the hostilities soon to ensue...a number of such parleys are known to have preceded the Birsaite Ulgulan...the Kol insurrection of 1831 too had begun with a consultative meeting of this kind...we know a little of the actual mechanics of such autonomous mobilisation—the pull of the primordial ties of kinship, community and co-residence, the power of rumour, the compulsion of custom and religion—all of which

Singhbhum .It was a strategically important decision, for it not only forestall a sudden attack by the enemy but also put the rebel army into an advantageous position (Singh 1971: 150; Sahu 1985: 78). Another decided strategy was to carry food grain and utensils into the jungle for making bases for an anticipated long struggle with the British.<sup>47</sup> Most importantly, they fixed a programme to ‘kill all the Sahib Log, expel the Dikoos and plunder the villages’ (Sahu 1985: 78; Streumer 2016: 130).<sup>48</sup> It was indeed a terrifying programme, enough to produce panic in the enemy’s camp.

Poto also invoked religion to gain popular support. One of his associates Magnee Naik, a Bhuyian of Barbil in Koenjhar, performed pujas together with Poto and several of his friends like Pandwa, Jotong, and Jonko of Pat Dumaria, Kochey, and Surdhan of Sarbila, and Narra and Topoe of Balandia. (Sahu 1985: 78). Pujas were done to ensure victory and rendering the adivasi fighters invulnerable to British gunshots (Sahu 1985: 78; Streumer 2016: 130). Wrote the correspondent of *Englishman* in 1838, ‘Poto a shrewd fellow, worked upon the superstitions of the people, by pretending he had charms, which would render the wearer invulnerable and prevent the guns from going off.’<sup>49</sup> This was a sort of ‘spiritualisation of politics’ which gave to a political goal a quasi-religious character. Magnee Naik also forged charmed arrows which Poto sent to the villages in all direction as a mark of solidarity against a common cause (Singh 1971: 151). Circulating arrow of war was a kind of a ‘nonverbal transmitter’ used for the propagation of insurgency, and it was a common practice among the Hos of Singhbhum. E.T. Dalton observes in his *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, ‘An arrow passed from village to village is the summons to arm and sent to any one in authority it is an open declaration of war’ (Dalton 1872: 171).

Using some amount of force and threat by Poto to enlist people’s support cannot be ruled out. The government’s announcement of a reward for the arrest of Poto and his associates did not work. This made Tickell lament that they (villagers) were alarmed at the prospect of retaliation by the rebels (quoted in Singh 1971: 150). Tickell’s observation may have some truth, but not the whole truth. There is a strong possibility that it was not only the prospect of retaliation, but the reaction against the countless acts of pillage and arson by the British troops in the last campaign helped rebels generate popular support. The coercive character of the rebellion had, therefore, dual character.

### **Battle of Serengsia, 19 November 1837**

The British sources make us believe that the rebels made the situation so alarming and explosive in south Kolhan that the British had to undertake a military campaign against them. Captain Wilkinson arrived in Chaibasa on 12 November 1837. On 17 November 1837, under the command of Captain Armstrong, a military detachment, comprising four hundred men of the Ramgarh Light Infantry with a brigade of six-pounders and sixty men of the 5th Local Horse marched from Chaibasa.<sup>50</sup> Lt. Tickell

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might have combined in various degrees to make up for the absence of any formal machinery of call-up standing outside and above the rural communities. No real understanding of insurgency in colonial India will ever be achieved without a proper study of this phenomenon’ (Ranajit Guha. 1999. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 116-18).

<sup>47</sup> ‘Cole Insurrection’, *AJMR*, May-August, 1838, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

was accompanied by 200 armed soldiers of the Kunwar of Seraikela and several hundred friendly Hos from the northern and western pirs (Singh 1971: 151; Areeparampil 2002: 123). The detachment moved towards the south and reached Serengsia village, next morning, i.e. 18 November.<sup>51</sup> To go further, they were required to cross a narrow pass, popularly known as the Serengsia ghati (pass), about one and a half kilometres south of Serengsia village towards Jagannathpur. The pass was 'a rocky ascent, winding through the hills with jungle, rocks and ravines on either side' and was a dividing landmark between the north and south Kolhan.<sup>52</sup> At Serengsia, the British troops reorganised themselves and went forward to cross the pass on 19 November, little realising that they would face stiff resistance from the rebel Hos. When the troops reached the pass halfway, they picked up a bow-string and two arrows, crossed in the middle of the road. This was taken as an open challenge to move forward. Hardly the troops proceeded a few yards; they were attacked with a volley of arrows from the right direction followed by 'screams like a herd of jackals'.<sup>53</sup> In the fight, 'one man was killed and five or six wounded' and three others died of their wounds later. After clearing the pass, they found that one subahdar, one havildar and thirteen others were also wounded.<sup>54</sup>

#### **Aftermath of Serengsia, 20 November to 17 December**

After passing Serengsia, the British party reached Jagannathpur and fanned out in several directions to capture the rebels. Captain Wilkinson ordered fresh mobilisation. He asked some friendly Mankis to collect 100 pykes. He also directed Kandunatar of Koraikela, Babu of Kera and Thakur of Kharsawan to send their active pykes to Chaibasa. Wilkinson's target was Poto's village of Rajabasa which he attacked on 20 November. Poto was not found, but his six men were captured. Next day, he ordered a thorough search of *poots* (places of concealment) which led to the arrest of Poto's father and his two associates. Rajabasa village was burned and destroyed (Singh 1971: 152).

The next day, a party of 100 sepahis and 50 horsemen along with some friendly Hos reached Tondang Hatu, a village four kilometres south of Jagannathpur. The village was found deserted. However, two villagers and eight women were found in the poot nearby. Men were killed and women were captured and brought to the camp at Jagannathpur for questioning (Ibid.)<sup>55</sup>. Another party reached Jaipur village in the east and found the village deserted. A Tanti informant told the British party that along with this village, the whole of the south and east Kolhan had joined Poto. They were around two thousand in number and were gathered at 'Koela Booroo' under Poto, Borah, Debee, etc.<sup>56</sup> On 24 November, 300 men of Ramgarh Battalion under Captain Armstrong and Lt. Simpson and all the local allies marched to the place, but found that the rebels had left place before their arrival. The troops then started the search and combing operation in the whole area and burnt down several villages, like Ruia and Nizam Ruia and carried huge quantity of grains with them (Ibid.)<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

The troops then camped at Ruia village till 11 December 1837. From 20 November to 11 December was a period of intense struggle and manoeuvring. Six hundred heads of cattle and immense quantity of grains were recovered and carried off to British camp. Several villages like Khunbund, Kumardungi, a part of Balandia, Koliya, etc were burnt and raged to the ground.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, Poto, Borrah, Narrah, Burrai and Magnee, the sorcerer together with eighty or ninety rebels were captured at Serengsia.<sup>59</sup>

### **Mock trial and hanging, 25 December to 1 January 1838**

The revolt was brutally crushed, but there were more things to come. Captain Wilkinson arrived in Chaibasa on 18 December 1837 with the specific purpose of trying the rebels. Before reaching Chaibasa, he applied for the extra judicial powers to the Government and got these powers.<sup>60</sup> Now, he could pronounce a death sentence after a trial. However, on his way from Chaibasa to Jagannathpur, he fell from his elephant and got injured.<sup>61</sup> So he could not take up the trial immediately. The trial of the five major leaders and the other rebels, captured during the operations, could begin on 25 December 1837 and continued till 31 December. The five major leaders were charged with open rebellion against the government, tried and sentenced to the death penalty.<sup>62</sup> Seventy nine other rebels were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment (Sahu 1985: 81).

On the morning of 1 January 1838, Poto, Burrai and Narra were hanged to death near Jagannathpur in the presence of 'some thousands of Koles'.<sup>63</sup> On the morning of 2 January 1838 Bora and Pandwa were hanged at Serengsia village in the presence of hundreds of Ho onlookers.<sup>64</sup> These were the first instances of hanging in the whole Kolhan region.<sup>65</sup>

These executions, however, could not completely extinguish the fire of revolt as there was news of opposition to British forces at some places. On 3 January 1838, the troops marched to Kassira village, near Jaintgarh, on 4 January to Gumaria village and Kanta Marnie in Oulapoor where they stayed till 18 January. Finally, they returned through Bagabila pass to Chaibasa on 22 January 1838 (Areparampil 2002: 126).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. According to the Government letter No. 1368, dated 5 December, 1837, the powers to try the insurgent summarily and sentence them to death were vested in the Political agent, Captain Wilkinson (quoted in Sahu 1985: 80).

<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to believe that a war veteran of Wilkinson's calibre, in normal circumstances, could fall from an elephant and get himself injured. One is compelled to ask whether he faced a planned stealth attack or an open ambush on his way to Chaibasa by the rebels who evaded capture till then. The contemporary English sources, however, do not elaborate upon the circumstances of his falling from the elephant.

<sup>62</sup> 'Cole Insurrection', *AJMR*, May-August, 1838, 19; we do not get documentary evidence of the trial proceedings.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## IV

### Contemporary representation of Poto Ho

#### The amnesia<sup>67</sup>

In pre-1857 period, 1836-37 was a crucial phase for British rule in Kolhan. During this period, British had to face the formidable Ho challenge to the establishment of their rule in Kolhan, and also to the KGE, the dream project of Captain Wilkinson. However, soon after crushing this major revolt in Kolhan, the Company government pretended to have forgotten the incident. The post-1838 British records are almost silent on Poto Ho, to the extent of erasing him from historical records. It was not surprising knowing the British tendency to downgrade indigenous revolts. However, the real problem is that apart from the British records, we have no alternative sources to lean back upon, not even a scratch of oral evidence. The trend of forgetting Poto is continued in the works of modern historians, till C.P. Singh took up the issue and wrote a very dependable account of the revolt of Poto Ho in his small article, 'The Martyrs of Singhbhum'.<sup>68</sup> The account was based entirely on the contemporary English sources and focused on the activities of Poto and his associates. Subsequent historians who have given ample space to Poto's revolt in their works are Murali Sahu (1985), Mathew Areeparampil (2002) and Paul Streumer (2016). These works are part of post-independence decolonisation of history. These are also part of the attempt at regionalisation of history as a supplement to post-1857 writings of pan Indian 1857-58 discourse. Some examples of this genre of history are J.C. Jha's *The Tribal Revolt of Chotanagpur (1831-32)* and *The Bhumij Revolt (1832-33)*, K.K. Datta's *Unrest among British Rule in Bihar, 1831-59*, K. S. Singh's *Birsa Munda and his Movement (1872-1901)* and several others.

Apart from the contemporary British government's records, we get little subsequent reference to Poto Ho in the local newspapers, important local periodicals like *Singhbumi Ekta* and *Johar Sakam*, published from Chaibasa during the decade of 1970 and the other magazines and booklets. Before 1980, which is supposedly the starting date of the Serensia function, there was no tradition of organising any formal event in Poto's memory in Singhbhum. Even in his native village, Rajabasa, he was not a household name a few years ago. It appears that Poto's anti-British resistance movement had virtually faded out of the public memory.

#### The revival

However, an undercurrent movement, which insisted upon unearthing local history, went in favour of Poto Ho. In recent years, there is an upsurge of activities which study local history. People involved in this study are academicians<sup>69</sup>, local level freelance

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<sup>67</sup> Writes Daniel J. Rycroft, 'The descendants of those closely associated with the movements were often forced to forget their insurgent pasts, fearing State retribution. Yet each of these movements engendered shifts in colonial policy, pointing to their partial success in creating a discourse of indigenous power and mobility that could be reworked by Adivasi representatives and activists in later decades', 'Reinterpreting Adivasi History: Memory of Santal Revolution in Village Bhognadih', in Kamal K. Mishra and N.K. Das (eds.), *Dissent, Discrimination and Dispossession: Tribal Movements in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 52.

<sup>68</sup> C.P. Singh, 'The Martyrs of Singhbhum', *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol. LVII, January-December 1971, 149-53.

<sup>69</sup> One recent example of reconstruction of a historical personality is Gono Pingua, the unsung tribal leader of the revolt of 1857-58 in south Kolhan. Noted historians Gautam Bhadra, Asoka Kumar Sen and Sanjukta Dasgupta have retrieved him from the archives and brought him to the public forum.



researchers, activists, social workers and the curious villagers. Apart from the academicians who conform to standard practices of research, all the other groups who are active in unearthing local history pay particular attention to oral testimony and field-work. They do preliminary study<sup>70</sup> on the historical contribution of a personality, prepare a story and try to gain popular support for the story. They get help from the local newspapers who publish their stories. They often plead with the district/block level administration to recognise their research and uplift those sites intimately connected with the historical personality. As a result, there has been a revival of Poto's memory in recent years. However, the year 2019 has been particularly crucial for his restoration as two important functions, one at Rajabasa and the other at Serengsia, are held within a month. Also, Rajabasa has got recognition as a shahid gram and received government funds for its improvements. The government has also launched development schemes for Serengsia village. At Jagannathpur sub divisional office, a newly opened library is named *Shahid Poto Ho Pustakalaya* (see below). To name an institution after Poto Ho is a new trend which, in all likelihood, will soon become a common trend. In the next few years, we may find several such institutions dotting the landscape of Kolhan. In this way, Poto Ho will always be with us, as wished by the ladies at Serengsia.

## जगन्नाथपुर अनुमंडल कार्यालय में शहीद पोतो हो पुस्तकालय खुला



पुस्तकालय का उद्घाटन करती एसडीओ.

**प्रतिनिधि** ▶ जगन्नाथपुर

जगन्नाथपुर अनुमंडल कार्यालय परिसर में बुधवार को शहीद पोतो हो पुस्तकालय खुला. प्रखंड विकास पदाधिकारी रामनारायण खालको व अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी स्मृता कुमारी ने इसका उद्घाटन किया. मौके पर एसडीओ ने कहा कि पुस्तकालय में छोटे बच्चों के लिए विभिन्न पुस्तकों के साथ प्रतियोगिता परीक्षा व अन्य परीक्षा की तैयारी कर रहे विद्यार्थियों के लिए पुस्तकें उपलब्ध रहेगी. यहां पर बच्चे निःशुल्क पढ़ाई कर सकेंगे. इंटर्नशिप के लिए आये इंजीनियरिंग के छात्र मनीष कुमार व तेजश कुमार विद्यार्थियों का मार्गदर्शन करेंगे. मौके पर दंडाधिकारी सुष्मा लकड़ा, बीइओ इंद्रदेव कुमार, शिक्षक शमशेर आलम, बंगाली प्रधान, सविता सिंकू, संजू सिंकू, मनीष कुमार, कामिनी दुबे, चिंता कुमारी, एस्पायर के टी रमेश आदि उपस्थित थे.

Courtesy: *Prabhat Khabar*, Chaibasa, 20 June 2019

<sup>70</sup> Their methodology is usually limited to reading secondary sources and talking to local people. This methodology is described to us by Pradhan Birua, a private school teacher, freelance researcher and activist, presently residing at his native place, Pandrasali village at Manjhari block in the eastern part of Kolhan. During our talk with him, he told us that he has been doing research on Poto Ho since 2014 and his methodology includes walking through the villages, talking to local people and making field verification. He rarely uses a document to support his thesis.

## Search for the social roots of Poto Ho

Who was Poto Ho? What was he socially? To which place and locality and to what *killi* he belonged? These are some of the questions which have remained unaddressed, generating debates and claims and counterclaims. His location or region has great significance as it would explain the geospatial context of his uprising. It was mostly the southern Hos who organised the resistance against the British; the northern pirs surrendered early and remained friendly to the British. The probable reason for this contrasting behaviour lies in the ecological separateness of the north and south parts of Kolhan. North Kolhan has always been an agriculturally developed and the settled region as compared to the southern parts of Kolhan where the terrain was rugged, and agriculture was not the mainstay of the economy. We know that ecology has a role in the formation of human character and habit. The southern Hos were naturally more turbulent, more resistant than their northern brethren. The northern Kolhan pirs quickly surrendered when the British tried to impose their direct rule in Kolhan whereas the southern pirs resisted and engaged in a prolonged war with them. So, resistance to the British was, to some extent, influenced by ecology. During the study of Ho resistance in Kolhan, one term crop up again and again in our sources, that was 'Balandia Koles'. They were probably the most turbulent group of people. Although Poto belonged to Rajabasa village which was near Serengsia in Bantaria pir, his activities were closely associated with Balandia. Living in a rugged terrain which produced many valiant fighters must have impacted Poto and the others who were associated with him.

शहीद पोतो हो के वंशज का मामला उलझा, बीडीओ करेंगे जांच

# राजबासा : आखिर कौन हैं शहीद पोतो हो के वंशज ?

जगन्नाथपुर | संवाददाता

शहीद पोतो हो के गांव राजबासा को शहीद ग्राम घोषित किए जाने के बाद उनके वंशज होने के दावे कई लोग कर रहे हैं।

मालूम हो कि जगन्नाथपुर प्रखंड के राजबासा गांव को राज्य सरकार द्वारा शहीद ग्राम घोषित किया गया है। अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ सेरेंगसिया घाटी युद्ध का नेतृत्व करने वाला शहीद पोतो हो इसी गांव के निवासी थे। सबसे पहले रिट्ट हो नाम के बुजुर्ग ने पोतो का वंशज होने का दावा जगन्नाथपुर बीडीओ रामनारायण खलखो के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया था। उन्होंने अपने दावे के समर्थन में एक स्वरचित कुरसीनामा पेश किया था जो वहां के ग्राम मुंडा द्वारा सत्यापित था। तब बीडीओ ने असली वंशज की पहचान के लिए और जांच की जरूरत बताई थी। गांव में ग्रामीणों ने भी ग्राम मुंडा की अध्यक्षता में बैठक कर रिट्ट हो के दावे का समर्थन किया था। इसकी प्रतिलिपि भी बीडीओ को सौंपा गया था। इसके बाद रमेश पुर्ति नामक ग्रामीण का परिवार का दावा सामने आया। अब पट्टाजित पंचायत निवासी प्रखंड प्रमुख लक्ष्मी सावैर्या के ससुराल वाले पोतो हो के वंशज होने का दावा कर रहे हैं। इस संबंध में बुधराम पुर्ति ने खुद को पोतो हो का परपोता बताया है। उसने दावा किया कि पोतो हो का पुत्र गोला हो था। गोला हो का पुत्र का नाम भी पोतो हो था। पोतो हो के पांच पुत्र थे। इसमें गोला हो, बुधराम हो (अब बुधराम पुर्ति), सुखलाल पुर्ति व जगमोहन पुर्ति तथा अखिलेश्वर पुर्ति का नाम शामिल है। बुधराम पुर्ति ने राजबासा को शहीद ग्राम घोषित किए जाने पर खुशी जाहिर

## विवाद

- जगन्नाथपुर प्रखंड के राजबासा गांव को राज्य सरकार द्वारा शहीद ग्राम घोषित किया गया है
- सेरेंगसिया घाटी युद्ध का नेतृत्व करने वाला शहीद पोतो हो इसी गांव के निवासी थे



बुधराम पुर्ति



सुखलाल पुर्ति



जगमोहन पुर्ति

## शहीद ग्राम राजबासा में आयुक्त की जनचौपाल आज

जगन्नाथपुर। जगन्नाथपुर प्रखंड के शहीद ग्राम राजबासा में 21 जनवरी को जन चौपाल कार्यक्रम का आयोजन किया जाएगा। रविवार को एसडीओ स्मृता कुमारी ने राजबासा पहुंच कर जन चौपाल की तैयारियों का जायजा लिया। उन्होंने कार्यक्रम स्थल, बैठने की जगह, पार्किंग स्थल, स्टॉल की जगह आदि का निरीक्षण किया। उन्होंने पहुंच पत्र का भी निरीक्षण किया। इसके बाद उन्होंने प्रेस्वर्ता में बताया कि इस कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने के लिए कोल्हान प्रमंडल के आयुक्त, पश्चिमी सिंहभूम के उपायुक्त समेत कई आला अधिकारी आ रहे हैं। इनको सदर तथा जगन्नाथपुर पुलिस स्टाफ्ट कर कार्यक्रम स्थल तक लाएगी। कार्यक्रम में 18 स्टॉल, स्वास्थ्य शिविर भी लगाए जा रहे हैं। केवल वितरण भी होगा। मालूम हो कि राजबासा गांव को हाल ही में शहीद ग्राम का दर्जा दिया गया। स्वतंत्रता सेनानी पोतो हो इसी गांव के रहने वाले थे। उसने सेरेंगसिया घाटी में अंग्रेजों के खिलाफ हुए युद्ध में हो लड़ाकों का नेतृत्व किया था। बाद में उसे जगन्नाथपुर पीपल पेड़ पर फांसी दी गई थी। इस मौके पर जगन्नाथपुर थाना प्रभारी मधुसूदन मोदक, मानकी-मुंडा संघ के अंचल अध्यक्ष सत्यनारायण राठीर, राजबासा गांव के मुंडा कृष्ण जीजी समेत अन्य लोग मौजूद थे।

की और कहा कि इस गांव का विकास होना चाहिए। लेकिन कुछ अवसरवादी लोग खुदको पोतो हो का वंशज होने का दावा कर उसकी आत्मा को ठेस पहुंचा रहे हैं। पोतो हो के सही वंशज को चिन्हित किया जाना जरूरी है। इस संबंध में बीडीओ रामनारायण खलखो

का कहना है कि इस गांव का विकास सरकार की प्राथमिकता में है। गांव के विकास का खाका तैयार हो रहा है। उन्होंने वंशजों के मुद्दे पर कहा कि जब वह मामला आएगा तो जांच की जाएगी कि असली वंशज कौन है उसकी घोषणा की जाएगी।

Courtesy: Prabhat Khabar, Chaibasa, 2 January 2019

When we try to locate him socially, the question arises whether he belonged to a Munda family or a Manki family. Poto is generally called Poto Ho, but our sources call him Poto Sardar.<sup>71</sup> The term Sardar, which has a non Ho origin, has a significance. It implies that a person or family is a law enforcing and revenue collector agent appointed by the raja of Porahat. Whether Poto Ho belonged to such a family is difficult to say. Further, Sinkus were the known Sardars of the Porahat rajas. We have to find out whether Poto was a Sinku or not. It looks unlikely that he was a Sinku because Rajabasa village, which he originally belonged to, is a Purty dominated village and claims of being descendants of Poto are mostly coming from Purty killi of this village (see newspaper report).

One prominent historian<sup>72</sup> on the history of Kolhan and Singhbhum addresses him as Poto Pingua. Thus, he assigns him Pingua killi. However, he does not give enough supporting evidence to establish this fact. Our sources are virtually silent on this aspect of social history, besides indicating that he was Sardar of Rajabasa. Going by the connotation of the term Sardar, we can tentatively conclude that he should be somebody very important socially, be it a Manki or a Munda. Being socially high might have helped him in organising people against British rule.

### **Dimensions of remembering Poto Ho**

Evidence related to Poto Ho's anti-British activities were consuming the dust of archives for a long time before C.P. Singh partially salvaged them in his short essay, 'The Martyrs of Singhbhum'. Slowly, Poto's revolt became a part of a larger narrative of the history of Kolhan and Singhbhum in the works of the subsequent historians. Thus a marginalised history of Poto Ho was constructed which might have helped local researchers to strengthen their oral accounts of Poto Ho. Today, Poto is represented in the broader context of the anti-colonial movement both in written and oral forms. However, the oral construction of the past is not conditioned by the autonomy of the past, but the need of the present which always portray him as Veer Shahid (brave martyr). On important occasions, local newspapers publish stories of Poto Ho, taking relevant materials from both written and oral sources and play crucial role in the spread of the collective memory.

What is the place of Poto Ho's rebellion of 1836-37 in the historiography of adivasi movement? We have difficulty in putting the rebellion in the bracket of the peasant revolt or the subaltern historiography. Kolhan during the first half of the nineteenth century had a mixed economy, comprising agriculture as well as forest resources (Sen 2014: 92). This state of economy was more applicable to south Kolhan which was the epicentre of 1820-1821 and 1836-37 rebellion. Here, as discussed earlier, the terrain was more rugged and inhospitable as compared to the agriculturally developed north which was a more prosperous and sedentary region. Also, the Hos of Kolhan, till the advent of British in the region, were the masters of their destiny, under nominal allegiance to Singhbhum chiefs. The most prominent leader of the movement, Poto Ho, was in all probability, a high village-level functionary; either he was a manki or a munda. This was probably also true for his close associates. The prevailing rate of land tax of 8 annas per plough could hardly be burdensome for him or even the ordinary peasantry of Kolhan.

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<sup>71</sup> 'Cole Insurrection', *AJMR*, May-August, 1838, 19.

<sup>72</sup> The historian is Paul Streumer. In his significant work, *The Land of their Own: Samuel Richard Tickell and the Formation of the Autonomous Ho Country in Jharkhand 1818-1842*, Wakkamen, Houten, The Netherlands, 2016, he calls Poto as Poto Pingua.

The colonial officials are on records that the villages of Kolhan, under their direct management, were free from exploitations of mahajans or any other middle rung village officials. To quote Hunter, 'Agrarian disputes between landlords and their tenants are almost unknown; and the secluded position of Singhbhum has hitherto preserved the peasantry from that tyranny of the petty usurer and grain-dealer (mahajan) which prevails in other Districts of the Chutia Nagpur' (Hunter 1976: 82-83). At the present state of our research, we cannot describe with certainty the factors that had compelled Poto and his associates to rise in revolt against a formidable enemy-force.

### **Identity assertion**

Fixing the character of 1836-37 rebellion is largely an academic exercise in which general public has hardly any interest. People are more concerned with their present than with the distant past. Their interest in history is limited to those accounts which serve their present purpose. The Ho community today is increasingly in search of its identity and in this process it is also looking for an icon, like Baba Tilka Manjhi and Sidu-Kanhu of the Santals and Birsa Munda of the Mundas. It appears that their prolonged search has finally ended with Poto Ho, who classically fits into the discourse of a glorified anti-colonial struggle. The people of Kolhan have lost no time in declaring him a martyr and the guardian god of the community. This helps refurbish Ho identity within the community of Jharkhand ethnic groups.

[Acknowledgment: We owe profoundly to Prof. Asoka Kumar Sen, independent researcher, Chaibasa for information, ideas and interpretation. We are grateful to Rashmi Prasad of XLRI, Jamshedpur for accompanying us on our field visits to Serengsia and Chaibasa and giving useful suggestions on drafts. We are very thankful to Janaki Sundi of Tribal Research and Training Centre, Lupungutu, Chaibasa, Ramesh Jerai and Gopal Das of Johar Office, Chaibasa and the team of Bihar State Archives, Patna for their help and support. We also gratefully acknowledge the tremendous help that we have received from Raj Kumar, Chaibasa.]

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*Journal of Adivasi and Indigenous Studies (JAIS)*

(A bi-annual peer-reviewed online journal posted on Academia.edu)

Vol. IX, No. 1, February 2019: 26-34

© 2019 JAIS, ISSN (online) 2394-5524

## **Struggle for Identity: A Case of Chota Nagpuri Tribes in Andamans**

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### **Abstract**

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a land of primitive tribes, is an important destination of Chota Nagpuri tribal migrants, who were recruited from 1918 onwards by the missionaries as a contract labour to work in forest department. The basic reason of selecting them was the similarity of their habitat, the forest dwelling and lifestyle, which enabled them to adjust and work on these islands. The migration of Chota Nagpuri tribes, who are locally (in Andaman and Nicobar Islands) referred as 'Ranchis' from the main land, continued in different phases up to 1972. In the context of recent Supreme Court judgement, 'which held that members of Schedule Tribe or Schedule Caste community from one state cannot claim the benefit of reservation in government jobs or admission in another state, if his or her caste is not notified there', this paper looks into the status of the Ranchis in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and their struggle to reclaim their lost tribal identity.

### **Introduction**

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a land of primitive tribes namely Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges and Sentinelese of Andaman Islands and Nicobares and Shompens of Nicobar Islands, has been an important destination for the migration of Chota Nagpuri tribal communities and other marginal groups.<sup>1</sup> They were brought here since the second decade of the twentieth century as contract labourers from Ranchi to replace Andaman convicts and for taking over the specialised tasks of forest clearance and infrastructure development. The shift from convict to coolie labour, i.e. from forced labour to the market-based model of privatised labour exploitation, aimed to enhance the economic productivity of industrial timber exports from this region (Taylor 2009: 370). There was a growing demand for Andaman timber and at the same time, a decrease in suitable forest labour. The British were concerned about the general unsuitability of convict labour to extract and transport timber, as a consequence of the moist tropical climate and high rate of convict mortality (Ibid.: 371). They assumed that aboriginal forest dwellers from Chotanagpur would cope better with the harsh Andaman environment. The basic reason of selecting them was the similarity of their habitat, the forest dwelling and way of life, which could enable them to easily adjust and work on these islands. As

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<sup>1</sup> Chotanagpur tribes namely, Oraons, Mundas, Kharia, Santalis, Bendia, Gond, Lohara, Chickbaraik, Korwa, Mahli, Nagesia, Majhi, Nagvansi, Dhanwar, Bhoga, Turi, and Domra are found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

'primitive' *jungles*, who came from the forests, the British classified 'pure aborigines' from Chotanagpur as 'first-class coolies', because they were believed to be docile, hardworking and sufficiently racially fit to endure adverse climatic and ecological conditions (Ghose 1990: 9). The migration of Chota Nagpuri tribes, who are locally referred as 'Ranchis' from the main land, stated in 1918, continued in different phases up to 1972. The British aimed to expand the boundaries of the Andaman penal colony. The replacing of convicts with specialised forest labourers enabled the colonisers to increase the number of convict settlers, whom they rehabilitated on cleared plots of forestland. In different sections, this essay seeks to explore the history of migration beginning from the colonial period and then study how their marginalisation resulted in an assertion of identity during post-colonial decades.

### **History of Chotanagpuri tribal migrations into Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

On the request of M.C.C. Boning, Divisional Forest Officer of North Andamans, the recruitment and transportation of the Ranchis was organised by the Catholic Labour Bureau at Ranchi. At the end of 1918, 400 Chota Nagpuri tribals, mostly Oraons and Mundas, were recruited in 'Labour Corps' from different villages and shipped to Port Blair, via., Kolkata, as contract labourers on an agreement of six months term, to work in the forest department (Jossen 1993: 215-16). Since then, batches of 'Ranchiwalas' continued to be recruited on contract and transported to Andaman Islands. This resulted in an increase of their number that converted them into a numerically significant group in the population of these islands.

From 1923 onwards, Ranchi labourers were allowed to stay in the Andamans after their six-month contracts had ended. Seeking to ensure the social reproduction of the labour force, they were even offered permission to stay permanently (Anderson 2001: 6). As baptized Catholics and an established 'coolie race', they were regarded as potentially pioneering residents of the colony's periphery. The Ranchi tribals came here as contract labour.

Nonetheless, most of these early migrants refused initially to settle on Andaman. They mostly preferred to circulate seasonally between their homelands and places of migrant work. The recruitment of young male Catholics from Ranchi continued until 1942, when the Japanese occupied the islands and the British left (Kujur 2016: 52). During the time of Japanese occupation during Second World War (1942-45), about 900 Ranchi labourers were stranded on these islands. When they were deployed for the construction activities of roads, bunkers and air strips, they were subjected to many tortures and hardships. Out of 900 Ranchis who stayed during the occupation, 123 died likely due to starvation or execution as suspected 'spies' of the British by Japanese Government (Barla: 22). Their condition and status somewhat changed when Inamul Majid (1946-1949), the first Indian Chief Commissioner, offered the surviving Chotanagpuri labourers free land as an incentive to stay. Nonetheless, only a few among them chose to remain (Barla: 23). After the British reoccupation of these Islands in February 1946 until December 1946, 1717 labourers were brought from Chotanagpur region to Andaman Islands in six batches, because of labour scarcity (Kujur 2016: 36).

### **Chotanagpuri migrations since 1947**

After Indian independence, the colonial framework for settling 'socially deviant' groups on indigenous lands continued. The Indian administration constructed the sparsely populated Andamans as an 'empty' space that could be colonised and



commercially exploited (Sen 2011: 222). Rehabilitation and colonisation schemes served to 'fill' supposedly unproductive spaces by installing an Indian settler population in the islands that visibly underlined the national claim on the overseas territory. Refugees from East Pakistan were also settled on cleared tracts of forest. The transfer of disadvantaged groups into those areas and the proposed economic exploitation of forest resources renewed the demand for specialized labour forces writes the weekly news magazine, *The Light of Andamans* (Govindaraju 2010: Vol. 35, no. 2). As a result of the general scarcity of labour as well as positive experiences in the past, the administration started to revive the colonial legacy of contracting of Chotanagpuris (Dhingra 2005: 81). By 1956, Ranchi labourers, numbering 9,900, were already on the payroll of the Forest Department (Govindaraju 2010: Vol. 35, no. 2).

One significant change was, however, introduced. Catholic Labour Bureau's monopoly on transportation was terminated in 1954 and private contractors were allowed to enter the field. The new recruiting system bore the name of contractors, such as Osman *chalaan*, Sen *chalaan*, Saif *chalaan*, Suleyman *chalaan* and Dipu *chalaan*. The shift of contracting policies also impacted the religious structure of the Ranchi community, church agents transported a vast majority of Catholics, but private contractors tended to recruit Hindus, Lutheran Catholics, some Muslims and so-called 'animists', who, in later years came to identify themselves as Sarna or worshippers of spirits residing at sacred groves. In spite of these other migrants, significantly Catholics remained by far the largest religious group among the Ranchis (Zehmisch 2017: 156).

The majority of labourers were employed by various government agencies like the Forest Department, the Public Works Department, Andaman Harbour Works, the Military Engineering Service (MES), the General Reserve Engineering Force (GREF), the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the Rehabilitation Reclamation Organisation (RRO) (Justin 1994: 174). Apart from clearing forests for settlements, Chotanagpuri labourers helped in expanding the airports at Port Blair and Car Nicobar and constructing numerous other roads as well as buildings, jetties and breakwaters all over the islands. Parallel to public employment, they were also given jobs by private companies like Albion Plywood at Long Island, Jayshree Timber Industries at Bakultala, Andaman Timber Industries (ATI) at Bambooflat, Western Indian Matches Company (WIMCO) and P.C. Ray & Co. from Kolkata that processed timber. They had leased North Andaman from the administration in the 1950s for the purpose of large-scale extraction of timber (Kujur 2016: 42).

Post-independence recruitment from Chotanagpur by public and private agencies considerably augmented their number. Around 1970, there were approximately 15,000 Chotanagpuri labourers in the islands. During that period, they composed about one third of the working population (Verma 1976: 115). Apart from those who were recruited and brought by contractors, there were a good number of Ranchis, who had arrived on their own for employment or in search of a new life. Most labourers who stayed permanently were eventually joined by their families, relatives, and friends from the mainland (Zehmisch 2017: 129). Thus individual migrations took the form of family and community migrations.

Ranchis were allotted land by the administration, presumably inspired by the idea to settle 'pioneers' of forestry and infrastructure development at the frontier. Between 1952 and 1954, fifteen Forest Department labourers and their families were settled at Borhem Valley and Foster Valley in Middle Andaman and twelve families at Long Island, under a 'forest village scheme' by allotted of five acres of land for each family (Barla: 22-23).

In spite of their major contributions to the process of colonisation and rehabilitation through clearing of forests and infrastructure development, there were only 197 families rehabilitated as reward for their compliance with the Forest Department (Dhingra 2005: 83). Starting in 1959, within three years, 132 families were settled on cleared plots of forest on Baratang Island, 40 Ranchi families at Ramnagar, Diglipur in 1960-61 and 17 Ranchi families in Hanspuri, Mayabandar in 1964 (Biswas 2009: 11). As many other Ranchis had not been provided with land to settle down, they had either leased or bought land from settlers. Most have encroached forest land for building houses and gardens, often near their previous places of work.

### **Marginalisation and a desire for recognition**

Migration and settlement processes have decisively influenced socio-economic status among the Ranchis and other communities in the Andamans. Large numbers of refugees and repatriates were settled on allotted plots of forestland previously cleared by Ranchi labourers. As a consequence of this cleavage, unequal property and class relations were established between the Ranchis and other communities in the decades that followed. The settlers became landowning farmers with access to social mobility, while the majority of Ranchis remained landless and 'poor'. Unfortunately, those who had earned revenue for the islands through their services to the forest department; who had created massive infrastructure for Bengali settlers<sup>2</sup> and others, were themselves forced to live in ramshackle *jhopdis* [huts] in abject poverty, despair and neglect (Govindaraju 2010: Vol. 35, no. 2). The subtext speaks about the ways the political relations of the Ranchis to other settler and migrant communities and the state seem to be negatively shaped by the perception of these unequal policies. Agapit Kujur, President of Ranchi Association<sup>3</sup>, Port Blair expressed clearly how many Ranchis felt about such differential treatment by the authorities: 'Before the government settled the Bengalis, our people came and cleared the jungle. The Bengalis just came as guests, but the workers were the Ranchis!' Expressive of these views, sensitivity about the meager rewards for the exploitation of their labour power in processes of colonisation also shaped the popular consciousness of the Ranchi community (Kujur 2016: 48).

Interesting fact was that this was the sentiment of the Adivasis of Chotanagpur in general. Vidyarthi's description of the Ranchis as 'modern builders' of the islands resonates in the articulations of contemporary Ranchi leaders (Vidyarthi 1976: 8). Chotanagpuri migrated tribes, regularly stressed the importance of their personal and collective contribution to development processes, from which the whole society has benefited. They emphasised that it was they who constructed the infrastructure of the Andamans, such as the wharf at Haddo or the Andaman Trunk Road, which are now used by all residents. Many underlined that their 'blood and sweat' poured into such projects when they worked without proper medical care, technical equipment or work-specific clothing. These invisible architects of Andaman have really been 'architects' of modern Andaman (Zehmisch 2017: 129). However, their contributions have neither been appreciated by the government nor by members of other communities. Equally, these powerful iterations of subaltern history are yet to be part of public discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> Bengali refugees from East Pakistan or Bangladesh are settled in Andaman and Nicobar islands under colonisation process during 1948-1971.

<sup>3</sup> Ranchi Association was established in 1973 at Port Blair with an objective to mobilise the Chotanagpuri adivasi communities, who are referred as 'Ranchis' in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and fight for their rights and privileges as tribal community.

Understandably, the establishment of Adivasi settlements in marginal zones suited the policy of strategic colonisation. It aimed to extend the supposed space of 'civilization' against the 'wildernesses' of the forests. Beyond that, the decision of the administration to allot land to a larger number of Ranchi labourers in the margins was also influenced by local politics, the influence of the Local Born Association<sup>4</sup>. The Ranchi settlements in forest areas in Andaman are away from the urban centres, devoid of development and basic infrastructural facilities. This adversely affects the socio-economic standards of the Ranchi tribal population, pushing them to under privileged margins of society. Ironically, those who had been settled under the forest village scheme or colonization scheme had insecure tenancy right on land. The Andaman and Nicobar Administration provides for only a tenancy right over the lands, without any right of ownership. The Chota Nagapuri tribal rights over land have no legal status because they have not been notified as tribal in these islands by administration. The reason is that Andaman and Nicobar Islands do not come under the Fifth Schedule of Indian constitution as tribal areas. Consequently, the children of these Ranchi labourers, who expanded their settlements in jungle after 1978, are treated as encroachers. This way, Ranchi's encroachments accounts for 47% of total encroachers in 2003. This created a crisis because the Supreme Court order, directing the removal of the encroachments, threatened the hearth and home of the Ranchi population on these islands.<sup>5</sup>

There was yet another existentialist crisis. According to rules, reservation in education and jobs was provided to two categories. First, the Local Born, heterogeneous groups (Mopilas, Karens and Bhatu) and Bengali Settlers were provided with the status of Other Backward Classes (OBC), with 38% reservation in recruitment of services under the Andaman and Nicobar Administration.<sup>6</sup> Second was the tribal category. In the case of tribal population, only the native six groups namely, Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges and Sentinelese of Andaman Islands and Nicobares and Shompens of Nicobar Islands, who account for only 7.50% of the total population of these islands, are provided with a reservation of 12%. On the contrary, the Chota Nagapuri tribals of Andaman and Nicobar Islands were not provided with any reservations in education and public employment. Progenies of the immigrants, born in the Islands, had not been not treated as local born. Likewise, as Chota Nagapuri tribals were not notified in the list of Scheduled Tribes for the State of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, they remained deprived of reservation. Unfortunately, lack of official records, survey and classification in the administration, made it difficult to gather information on the share of Chota Nagapuris in public employment, agriculture, industry and service sector, and therefore fathom the magnitude of the crisis. Moreover, there were some palpable constraints on their way. Though numerically the Ranchi community forms the third largest demographic group in these islands after Bengalis and Tamils, they have not adequately been able to act as a

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<sup>4</sup> The pre-1942 inhabitant's families of Andaman, comprising the local born, who formed into Local Born Association opposed wholesome settlement of Bengali refugees in the islands, which forced administration to provide certain settlements to Ranchis in the process of rehabilitation of the islands under colonisation scheme during first and second five years plan period.

<sup>5</sup> Andaman and Nicobar Administration Notification No. 343/2005/INOC/2003 TW make the reference to removal of encroachments in forest area.

<sup>6</sup> Government of India letter No. B.C-16014/1/82 and BCD-1 dated 06.08.1984 provides for OBC reservation. This is against the 27 % OBC reservation provided under the Government of India, for the employment. Caste and economic criteria is not applicable in providing the OBC status in these Island Union Territory. Due to non-existence of Scheduled Caste (S.C) category on these islands, the S.C. reservation quota of 11% was added to the OBC category, on the recommendation of Andaman and Nicobar Commission for OBC.

pressure group politically. Owing to absence of any reservation in education and public employment, they continue to remain underrepresented and marginalised, despite efforts of Ranchi Association to mobilise them. Due to dispersal of the community in margins and forest areas they have not been able to emerge as a united front.

In this backdrop, we notice the emergence of political consciousness among the Ranchis about their contribution to the colonisation of the islands. This underlines their desire to remember the hardships this historical process entailed. There are strong indications that the contract labourers from Ranchis and their descendants do not want to be identified or discriminated against as 'aboriginal coolies'. Instead, they prefer to be recognised as residents of Andaman and Nicobar islands with an Adivasi status. Therefore, they expressed their unwillingness to be considered as Other Backward Classes before the Chairman, Andaman and Nicobar Commission for the OBC on 8 December 2000 and stood for nothing less than Schedule Tribe status on these islands<sup>7</sup>.

The organisation that played a major role in advancing the cause of the Chotanagpuri's in Andaman is Ranchi Association. This had represented to Andaman and Nicobar administration and Government of India, seeking recognition for the migrated Ranchi community the same status of the Scheduled Tribes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which their kinsmen enjoyed in the States of Bihar and Jharkhand from 1973. But their demand could not be acceded to as they had been migrants and not original inhabitants of these islands. It was further argued that this concession would jeopardise the interest of more backward aboriginal tribes of these islands.

Being aggrieved, the Association filed a writ petition in the High Court of Calcutta, Port Blair Circuit Bench in 2006. But this was dismissed with the observation that 'none of the Ranchis nor any tribes who have migrated from the mainland have been included in the Presidential Order (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), 1959. Therefore, they could not be treated as Scheduled Tribes in respect of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, referring to Articles 366 (25) and 342 (1) of the Indian Constitution. The Ranchi Association then filed an appeal before division High Court of Calcutta, Port Blair Circuit Bench. This too was dismissed on 7 August 2006 on the same ground. This was followed by a review petition, being No.1 of 2007, filed in High Court of Calcutta, Circuit Bench of Port Blair. But this was disposed of on 14 February 2007 declining to entertain the review petition.

In the wake of dismissal of their writ petitions seeking Scheduled Tribal status for the Ranchis by different Benches of the High Court, they filed Appeal (C) 9845-9847 of 2008 in the Honourable Supreme Court (Ranchi Association -vs- Union of India). The two judge bench comprising Justice B. Sudershan Reddy and Justice Surender Singh Nijjar in their order dated 07.10. 2010 placed the Case before Chief Justice of India for constituting a bench of appropriate strength to resolve the extent and nature of interplay and the interaction among Articles 16 (4), 341(1) and 342(1) of the constitution in the matter of enlistment of Scheduled Tribe migrated to another State from the State of their origin.

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<sup>7</sup> Commission for Other Backward Classes observed that 'Hardworking tribals from Bihar-known locally as Ranchis were bought into these Islands and settles here by the then Govt. in or about 1925 and they have been living here ever since. They also perhaps qualify for being considered as OBCs. We have not, however, taken up their case for consideration since they have not applied for the status. They are- so we are told bent upon getting the 'Scheduled Tribe' status and are not interested in getting OBC status. The Commission may take up their case for consideration as and when they apply for the OBC status'.

Ranchi Association had represented to Andaman and Nicobar Union Territory Administration as well as the Government of India many times, seeking recognition of the migrated Ranchi community (Scheduled Tribes in relation to the states of Bihar and Jharkhand) as Scheduled Tribes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The activism of the Association attracted all-India attention. *The Telegraph* on 15 December, 2010 reported “Ranchiwallas” are on the warpath in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, demanding tribal quota for them (Chakraborty 2010).

The efforts of the Association met with some success. In pursuance of the recommendation of the Chairman, National Commission for Scheduled Tribe vide minutes of the review meeting held by him with Chief Secretary, Andaman and Nicobar Administration on 24 November 2011, a proposal for grant of ‘Special category or Status’ to Chotanagpuri tribals (Ranchi Community) resident in Andaman and Nicobar Islands with a provision of four per cent reservation in public employment and education was made.<sup>8</sup> This four per cent was the additional reservation given to tribal population in Andaman and Nicobar Islands over the National Reservation Policy.<sup>9</sup> The Government of India asked for the clarification on the term ‘Special Status’ from the Andaman and Nicobar Administration through a letter dated 13 September 2012. In response, the Union Territory Administration observed that it was not backed by the statutory provision. The Administration was of the view that granting of special status for four per cent reservation in public employment and educational institutions of the administration should be over and above the existing reservation for S.T. and not a part of the existing quota already earmarked.<sup>10</sup> However, on the ground of subject being sub-judice in the Apex court, the proposal for granting of ‘special status’ to Chotanagpuri tribals (Ranchi Community) was put on hold by the Union Government. It, however, added that the issue would be considered after pronouncement of verdict by the Honorable Supreme Court of India.

The verdict<sup>11</sup> of 30 August 2018 by five judge constitutional bench of the Honorable Supreme Court was headed by Justice Ranjan Gogoi. This responded to the eight petitions<sup>12</sup> that had raised the issue whether an SC/ST community member in one state could seek reservation in another state where his caste was not notified as SC/ST. The judgment directed the Government of India and Andaman and Nicobar Administration to act on providing ‘special status’ to Ranchi Community in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The arguments, given by the Ranchi Association in the petition, in favour of

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<sup>8</sup> Andaman and Nicobar Administration letter No. 1-554/2016-TW/43, dated 13 December 2012 proposed for grant of ‘Special category or Status’ to Chotanagpuri tribals (Ranchi Community) resident in Andaman and Nicobar Islands for 4% reservation in direct recruitment to the group C and D post/ services/technical and non-technical higher educational institutions quota under Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

<sup>9</sup> There was 12% reservation for Scheduled Tribe for direct recruitment to Group C and D posts in terms of the Government of India, Department and Training, New Delhi vide O.M. No. 36013/4/85-Estt.(SCT), dated 4 May 1985. However, this has been brought down to eight percent with effect from 23 June 2011. This four percent was added to un-reserved (General) category.

<sup>10</sup>File No. 1-554/2012-TW/1227, dated 13.12.012 of Andaman and Nicobar Administration to GOI, Ministry of Home Affairs raised the issue of statutory / constitutional provision for implementation of four percent reservation. It implied that unless the Ranchis are granted S.T or OBC status they cannot be provided reservation in either of these communities.

<sup>11</sup> Court said that person belonging to Schedule Tribe or Schedule Caste in one state cannot be deemed to be S.T or S.T person in relation to any other state to which is migrates for the purpose of employment or education.

<sup>12</sup> Supreme Court Civil Appeal (C) 9845-9847 of 2008, Ranchi Association-vs-Union of India.

special status to Chota Nagpuri migrants, were based on historical, social, economic and legal grounds. These could not be ignored. Therefore, the long efforts of the Association succeeded in earning the rightful place and representation for these marginalised sections of migrated tribals.

### Postscript

The fight for identity by the Chotanagpuri tribals in Andaman and Nicobar Islands however continues. The Ranchis want to take it to a logical end and wish to continue it till the special status is fully granted to them, as recommended by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribe. But the inclusion of Ranchis in any of these categories will be possible only by the Presidential order as per Article 340 or 342 of the Indian Constitution. There is a possibility of providing Special OBC Status, in order to implement the reservation of four per cent to 'Ranchis' in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, it cannot be denied that the grant of this special status and reservation under the special OBC category is a silver lining in their fight for tribal identity.

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*Journal of Adivasi and Indigenous Studies (JAIS)*

(A bi-annual peer-reviewed online journal posted on Academia.edu)

Vol. IX, No. 1, February 2019: 35-55

© 2019 JAIS, ISSN (online) 2394-5524

# **Inspirations of Visual Forms: A Study on Painted Mud Houses of Eastern Jharkhand**

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## **Abstract**

Murals on the walls of the mud houses is a common feature in the rural areas of Eastern Jharkhand. The walls of the mud houses are painted with vegetative, figurative and manmade visual forms during festivals, weddings, and other social occasions. In this paper, ethnographic documentation was undertaken in the village premises, sacred grove, field and forest to understand the purposes, motivations, incentives, rational limitations behind the art which is not significant in and of itself. Rather they have meaning and significances only within that content.

## **1. Introduction**

Jharkhand is located in the eastern part of India (Fig. 1). Most of Jharkhand lies on the Chhotanagpur Plateau between 23.35°N 85.33°E with an area of 79,710 km<sup>2</sup> and the state has a population of 32.96 million of which 75.95 % population live in the rural areas. Average literacy rate in Jharkhand for rural areas is 61.11 %. Majority of the people are Hindu followed by Christianity while 12.84% belong to the other religious category. The Santhal, Oraon (Kurukh), Munda, Kharia, and Ho are the principal indigenous groups, and together they constitute the vast majority of the total tribal population, and 91 % of them reside in the villages according to 2011 Census report of the government of India (Census 2011).

In the villages of Jharkhand, various communities make Khond art, Dag art, Gudna art, Bhumi bandan art, Woodcarving, Pytkar Patuaa art, Jadopatia Patuaa art, and Sujni art on the wall, floor, an animal, human body, and textiles and other surfaces. Amongst these visual forms, wall art is the most popular practice. In eastern rural Jharkhand, the women/girls and men of Santhal, Ho, Kumhar, Lohra, Bengali and Kurmi communities repair their mud houses before the festivals and make traditional designs on the external and internal walls, floors and pillars of the mud houses. The walls of the mud houses contain various visual forms such as animals, birds, flowers, creepers, decorative bands, and borders.

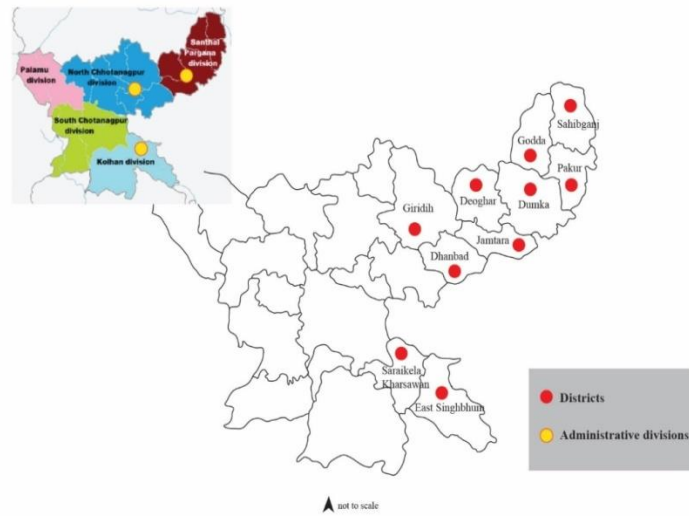


Fig. 1: Map of Jharkhand: location of selected administrative divisions and districts

For the study, ethnographic documentation is undertaken in Santhal Pargana, North Chhotanagpur and Kolhan administrative division. Six districts of Santhal Pargana (e.g., Dumka, Godda, Sahibganj, Pakur, Jamtara and Deoghar) two districts of North Chhotanagpur (e.g., Giridih and Dhanbad) and two districts of Kolhan division (e.g., East Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsawan) were selected randomly for the field study.



Fig. 2: Wall art traditions in eastern rural Jharkhand. See details in 2A, 2B, 2C & 2D

Flower, animals, creepers and plants are the common subjects in Santhal Pargana (Fig. 2A), but in some villages of Deoghar (Santhal Pargana) human forms are painted on the walls (Fig. 2B). Similar forms are seen in North Chhotanagpur. In Kolhan division, the mural art forms are mainly geometrical border and band patterns (Fig. 2C). Giridih wall art forms are painted with plants and borders have no resemblance with

visual forms of other districts (Fig. 2D). Except for Deoghar and Giridih, in other districts, creepers are painted with a pot on the doorways. 'Flower,' 'peacock,' 'elephant' and 'pot' is the most common types of murals (Fig 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D).

## 2. Methodology

This study aims to understand and identify the inspirations behind the visual art traditions of Jharkhand. Data have been collected from Dumka, Godda, Jamtara, Pakur, Shahibganj, Deoghar, Dhanbad, Giridih, Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsawan districts of eastern Jharkhand by using photo documentation, photo interview, participatory research, and unstructured interviews. The photographs that were shot during the photo documentation were exhibited in the street and courtyard of the villages of each administrative division. This Photo interviews were open for all kind of participants (artist and non-artists). The main objectives of this interview were to identify the visual forms and finding its visual similarity with the natural and original object. Colour coding of contents has been done to analyse the collected data. In this analysis, contents that carry similar meaning was coded with specific colour and similar meaning was noted. The objective of this analysis was to conclude interpreted inspirations of rural mural art forms. The overall objectives of the study are to document the lifestyle, myths and traditions of the communities practising the art.

## 3. Study area

Villages of two blocks of each district (total 10 districts) were selected for the study. In Santhal Pargana, *Mohanpur* and *Deoghar* blocks of Deoghar district, *Poreyahat* and *Sundarpahadi* blocks of Godda, *Jama* and *Jarmundi* blocks of Dumka, *Jamtara* and *Nala* blocks of Jamtara, *Pakaur* and *Maheshpur* blocks of Pakur district and *Pathna* and *Barharwa* blocks of Sahibganj district. In North Chhotanagpur region, *Govindpur* and *Baliapur* blocks of Dhanbad, *Bengabad* and *Giridih* blocks of Giridih. In Kolhan region, *Potka* and *Ghatshila* blocks of East Singhbhum, *Govindpur* and *Saraikela* blocks from Saraikela-Kharsawan were selected for the field study and photo documentation and photo interview. 22 types of *baha* vegetative visual forms (e.g., saal, rose, lotus, jasmine, champa, hibiscus, plash, bur, sunflower, non-flower plant and creeper) 10 types of birds (e.g., peacock, parrot, goose, pigeon, duck, heron, cock, hen and butterfly) and 15 kinds of animals (e.g., elephant, goat, cow, ox, rabbit, camel, dog, tiger, frog, buffalo, deer, nilgai and fish) including domestic and wild were documented and local names were identified.

## 4. Ethnographic study

In North Chhotanagpur, *Kurmi*, *Ho*, *Santhali* and *Bengali* communities, practices the art. While in Santhal Pargana it is practised by *Santhali*, *Christian* and *Bengali* communities. In Kolhan Santhal, *Ho*, *Lohra* and *Kumhar* communities practice division comprising of East Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsawan districts the art.

An analysis of the field data shows that in the district of Santhal Pargana, among the other communities, the Santhals are the best practitioner of the art. The art form of Santhal Pargana made by mud is known as *likhan-gadhan*. The art form made by cow dung is known as *jadopatia* and *guruj baha* in North Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. In Giridih region, the art form made by rice-paste is known as *jaunara baha/phul*. In Kolhan region, the painted art form is known as *rong-baha*. A graphical representation of administrative divisions, communities with painted visual forms are shown in Fig 3.

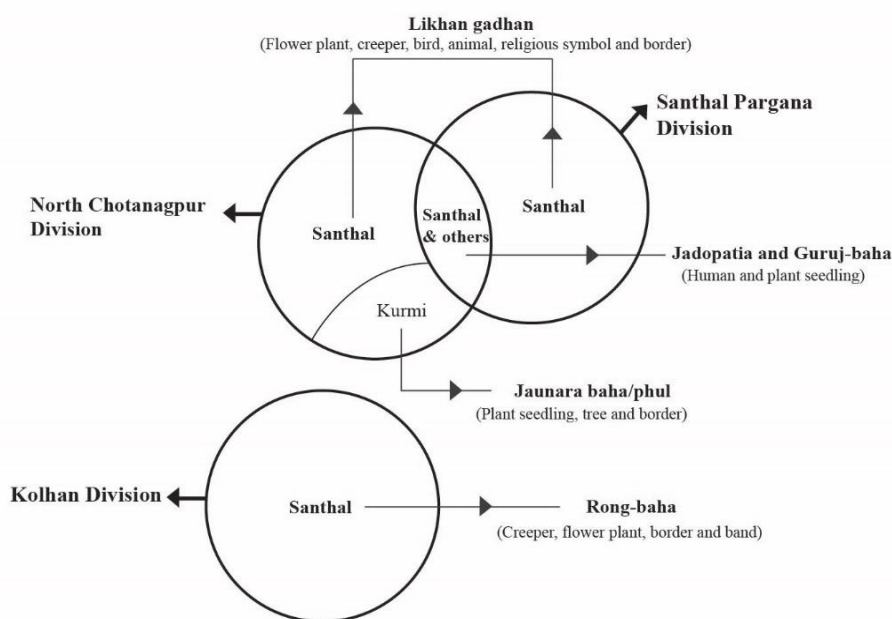


Fig. 3: Graphical representation of three administrative division, visual forms, and communities

Categorization of visual forms is done following the categorization of the rural artist for particular visual forms. In table 1, natural and manmade forms are categorised in vegetative, figurative and manmade visual form. *Baha* is considered as vegetative, figurative and manmade visual forms. *Baha* as vegetative visual form painted with plant, creeper and grass. *Baha* as the manmade visual form is painted with band and borders. Figurative visual forms comprise of *jan janvar* and *hor*. In *jan janvar* bird (chene) and animal (janwar) is painted as a visual form and in *hor* human visual form is painted on the wall.

*Baha* is also considered as a figurative visual form if the vegetative visual form is composed of figurative visual form and vegetative visual form is more prominent than supportive visual form.

Table 1: Visual forms with local names and its categorization

A. Natural visual forms				B. Manmade visual forms	
Vegetative		Figurative		Manmade	
Baha (1)		Jan-janwar	Hor	Baha (2)	
1.	Flower or non-flower Plant	Bird (chene)	Human	1.	Border (baha)
2.	Creeper	Insect (chene)		2.	Band (baha)
3.	Tree	Animal (janwar)		3.	Religious symbol (baha)
4.	Plant seedling	Reptile (janwar)		4.	Pot (gamala)
				5.	Weapon
				6.	Word (chiki)

#### 4.1 Baha

Baha is a flower and it is the most popular form of rural Jharkhand. In '*likhan-gadhan*', '*rong-baha*', '*jaunara-baha*' and '*guruj-baha*', flower plant, non-flower plant, creeper, tree, plant seedling, a religious symbol, band and border pattern are all known as *baha*. In-group motif if the flower is painted bigger than bird and animal than it is considered as *baha*. Textile pattern and decoration for marriage purpose or festival and any visual design drawn or painted on any surface is considered as *baha*. The popularity of *baha* is because the Santhalis believe that, the flowers are the most beautiful gift of God. At first, *Marang Buru* planted the seed in the earth and *Jaher Era* nurtured it and flower came out. In this way, a flower is a union of *purusha* and *prakirti* that spread the message of love, happiness, goodwill, prosperity, and peace. It is also considered as an element of decoration and salutation for which they paint flowers on the doorway and named the doorway as *baha-duar* (Rycroft 2010).

*Baha-porob* is a flower festival of Santhal. It is celebrated in arrival of New Year and season change in *falgun* month (mid-February and March). In this month, *palash*, *saal* and other flowers bloom. Rural people believe that bees and birds are roaming around the flower during this period to show respect and give thanks to *Nature*. *Baha* is a deity of spring whom they celebrate *baha porob*. To welcome *baha* deity Santhalis do not eat new fruits and pluck new flowers during the spring until *baha porob* (Kisku 2000). *Baha porob* is a three-day festival. The first day of this festival is known as *uhm* (bath). On this day, the rituals are performed in the *Jaher Sthan* (sacred grove). The second day is known as *sardi maha/baha puja*. This day goats and hens are sacrificed on the worship place. During the *baha puja*, *Sarjom Baha* (Saal flower) and *Matkom Gele* (Mahua flowers) are offered to the Gods and Goddess and distributed as a sign of goodwill to people. People put the flowers on the ear and hair, bring it home, and hangs it at the *baha-duar* (main entrance). It is believed that hanging the flower will bring prosperity in the house. Third-day *baha* festival is celebrated as *baha baskey/baha dahk /baha sendra*. This day they splash water on each other.

Just after the *baha porob*, *Baha Sendra*, a hunting festival is celebrated. In the festival male hunters go for hunting in the forest with their traditional weapons like bow and arrow. After the hunt when the hunters enter and pass through the streets of the village, young girls of that village wash their feet, and the hunters gave these girls' *champa* flowers and they *johar* (salute) to each other. This tradition is practised at present in some areas of North Chhoanagpur and Kolhan region.

The *Karma* plant is sacred for Santhal, Kurmi and other communities. As per the *Santhal* creation story, *Karam* is the first plant that was shown in the earth. *Karma* is a god of wealth and fertility among *Santhal* and *Kurmi*. They celebrate *Karam puja* as a festival. *Karma Puja* is a spiritual and religious festival associated with harvest. For the puja, they cut a branch of *Karam* tree and carry to *akhda* (worshiping place) youth perform *Langde* and *Karam daantha* (karam branch) dance. In Kolhan region, it is not popular among *Santhal*. Among other Hindu community, this festival is celebrated with fasting and by worshipping *Karam* branch.

In case of the crop, being the subject of an evil eye a branch of *soso dare* (Bhelwa Tree) is planted in the field. *Kajol* is applied on the forehead or on cheek of babies to ward off an evil eye. In villages when babies and kids cry breathlessly and do not sleep the whole night, or any person behave unnatural way, people predict that she/he has fallen victim to an evil eye. For protecting the evil eye, *ojha* is called. *Ojha* asks

for a seed of *bhelwa* a worn out broom, a piece of coal and *lamak here* (a huge creeper, Known as *Phanera Vahilii*). Using these articles and by chants, evil power is drawn away into the fields of others.

If a woman is sterile a *gulanj* flower from the head or ear of an unmarried girl is stolen. They grind it and make two pills. After taking bathe in a full moon night, she offers one pill to *Jaher Era* and takes one for herself. Hibiscus flowers are used for hair growth.

Rural communities consider lotus as a symbol of purity, beauty and love. They explain lotus rises from unclean water to blossom as a pure, uncontaminated flower. Lotus and the Sun reciprocate unconditional love. Santhal praise the bridegroom or bride keeping resemblance with lotus. They say '*aman rup dai upal behare or aman rup dai sagan sakamre* means *your beauty is just like a lotus! Or your beauty is just like a new leaf*. A red rose is a symbol of divine beauty. Yellow *genda* flower is used for garland in festivals. They wear in neck and wrist while dancing. Sunflower is a symbol of fertility, and it is said that as the petals of flowers their coming generation would be like the fertile sunflower.

Santhals are fascinated for the flowers. They draw, paint, knit, carve and embroider flower in other daily use products. It is noticed that they embroider Jasmine, lotus and rose flowers on mattress using colourful thread. They knit four or six petals in wall-hanging using colour wool and thread. Santhals explain that Jasmine and lotus flowers are beautiful flowers and these are easy to draw or knit. Jasmine flowers carry one central disk and four to six petals which enhancing the beauty of this flower in doorway hanging. In doorway hanging and mattresses, combination of white (Jasmine) and red (rose) is popular combination which define beauty and salutation at the same time. Lotus is also their common motif for tile (floor) decoration. Carving of half lotus flower and border patterns were found in their wooden measuring pot. Lotus is one of the most popular flowers which has drawn in various angle in artefacts. In measuring pot, half lotus *baha* pattern around the pot mouth, they relate pot and lotus with the prosperity, wealth and fertility. In tile (floor) decoration, open lotus containing four petals or some time eight petals are drawn to decorate the tiles. Tiles which generally made in squire shape and decorated with various lotus design by carving the mud floor. The corner of the squire touches the petal edges which indicates that prosperity will come from four different direction and accumulate in one place. Carved lotus on the floor also welcome the guest and make the floor more visual pleasant. Rural people also make artificial flowers with colourful papers and glossy plastics. They use the *baha mala* of artificial flowers in different ceremonies for felicitate, for dancing performance and for decorating their houses. Among Santhal Christians, artificial flowers are more popular. They tie the glossy papers in such a way that it looks like marigold flowers. The speciality of these marigold flowers is that it is found in multicolour and colour combination. Apart from these artefacts, people like to wear flower embroidered (*baha*, *jan-janwar* and manmade motifs) saree and dhoti occasionally and in daily life. They like to wear jewellerys with contain various *baha* motifs. Lotus flower hairpin and *baha* bordered anklet and neck piece women wear to enhance her beauty or look attractive.

#### 4.2 Gamala (pot/ vessel)

Pot is one of the most common visual motif, which is associated with plant, creeper, bird, animals and religious symbol and word motif. In local habitat, pot is

used in the kitchen (household work), ritual place (sacred performance) and agricultural activities. Rural people do not use pot for flower or creeper plantation. In wall paintings, the plant and creepers are associated with various kind of pots. Using the pot as a visual form touch various cultural aspects among the rural people, it is discussed below.

Pot or vessel is connected from Santhal's creation story. *Marang Buru* taught *pilchu haram* and *pilachu budhi* (first parent) process of preparing *handia* (rice beer). They prepare it in the earthen pot that is locally known as *handia*.

For starting any trip good omens include a pot full of water, a herd of cattle, a corpse and some washed clothes. A full pot is a good omen because it shows that the journey would be full of joy. In rituals, earthenware and metal pots (e.g., *lota*, *ghada* and *handi*) are used.

*Johar* is the rituals of the Santhals to welcome to express gratitude. The ritual completed in two to three steps in Santhal Pargana. At first, the young girl or ladies of the house bring a *lota* (brass vessel) of water, keep *lota* in front of the guest join their both hands and express *Johar*, after that she washes the feet of the guest with water, massage it with oil and rub it with a cloth. In North Chhotanagpur and Kolhan division, people join their both palm and give them *lota* full of water to the guest for *johar*.

The women who are not able to conceive a child is known as *banjh/banjhi*. For curing the bareness rural people do *totaka* (a ritual exorcising evil spirits). In this ritual at night, husband and wife carry an earthen pot full of water on the head and go to the end of the village street. The women sit there, and the water from the pot is poured on her. She changes the clothes and leaving the wet cloths theirs on the street. While going, they break the pot. A pot full of water in this ritual represents the fertile womb. The water is regarded as a life-giving element. The act of pouring rain on the women in the act of bestowing fertility on her. The empty earthen pot representing the barren womb. It is believed that the women are a kind of container of seed much like the earth itself. A pregnant woman is spoken of as the collector of a bundle of seeds and her womb as *Kumbh* among Hindu.

To find a suitable match for marriage the word *pot* is used to refer to an eligible boy and girl. People use pot/vessel word as a connotation for girl/boys and potter for their parents. The matchmaker will ask, 'we are searching for a new pot, please show us this pot'.

*Sarpha* is a community dance of the Santhal women. It is performed on *Amavasya* (New moon day) of *Kartik* (October-November) month. Women dress in symmetrical checkered and bordered saris. They keep *Kansa Thala* (brass plate) and *Katori* (brass bowl) in their hand with a wooden *sarpha* (a single string instrument framed in wooden bits) and a *kasa lota* (Brass pot) on their head. The pot is precisely balanced on the head while dancing.

The village people generally, keep the vessels or pot near the doorway because it is accessible for them from inside and outside of the doorway.

### 4.3 Animal and bird (jan janwar)

Animals have been in close association with rural people of Jharkhand. Animals play multiple roles in their life. They use the animals in the provision of food, agriculture, transportation, identity and as a guard. Animals are worshipped as supernatural beings. Owning animals bring honour and prestige to the people. A new



animal is initiated into the family by the application of *roli/sindur* on their forehead and turmeric and oil on their horns. The Santhal's respect all animals, living or death. Santhals categorise the animals into three categories (Mathur 2001):

1. Domestic and offered in sacrifice - Cows, buffaloes, pigs, rabbits, goats, sheep, fowls, other birds, etc.
2. Non-domesticated edible and not offered in sacrifice - Porcupine, mongoose, squirrels, snakes, frog, rats, monkeys, etc.
3. Flesh is edible but not use for sacrifice-Dogs, cats, tiger, elephants, horses, etc.

A bird is known as *chene*, domestic animal is known as *ato-janwar* and forest animal is known as *bir-janwar* among Santhal. The *jan-janwar* visual forms are painted on the wall in a single motif and group. Using *jan-janwar* in pair is a sign of goodwill among them. The inspirational aspects behind these visual forms are discussed below in detail.

In a Santhali's lifestyle, animals are associated with their creation and their totems. The animals and birds are known as their ancestors; therefore, their clans are named after animals. According to them, their ancestor *Pilchu haram* and *Pilchu budhi* gave birth to seven sons and daughters. They married each other and formed seven exogamous clans (Hembram, et al. 2016). In the course of time, five more groups were formed. A total of 12 clans *Hansdak, Kisku, Hembram, Marandi, Soren, Tudu, Baske, Besra, Bedea, Pauria, Chore* are found among the Santhals, and every clan has their totem animals. *Hansdak* clan totem is *Haas* (goose). *Murmu* clan totem is *Murum jel* (nilgai/ blue bull), and *Pautie's* totem is pigeons. It is observed that the animals, which are connected with a particular clan are preserved. For a Santhali, the killing of one's totem is equivalent to killing a member of his clan. At present, the Santhals residing in the study area do not strictly believe in totemic animals.

Sohrai is considered as the biggest festival of Santhal. Santhal mentions this festival as *hati lekan Sohrai*, (i.e., a festival as big as the elephant in the jungle). The first day of the Sohrai is known as *umh*. This day, all the villagers gather at an open place after taking an early bath. Rituals are held in *Jaher Sthan* or *got tandi*. Animals are sacrificed, and their blood offered to *bonga*. Later a feast is served with *Sode (khichdi)* to the male at *Jaher Sthaan*. Women do not participate in this event. The first days of Sohrai, the villages put an egg or some paddy stalk near the place to bring good luck to the village through the domestic animals in these. In this course, the cow, which crashed the egg, is considered as the lucky cow. The owner of the cow gets special treatment in the village. He has to distribute *handia* to all and sing *Jagarni Gaan* for the welfare of these domestic animals and arose these animals. This practice is called "*Gayi Jagaw* or *Gai Jagran*." Married girls are invited to their parents' home, and it is considered a significant part of this festival. All the invited relatives gather on this second day (*sarde maha*) of the celebration from the distant village. The second day of *Sohrai* is dedicated to cleaning cowshed. They clean all their agricultural tools and machinery as well as their cattle, and then they anoint the horns of their animals with vermilion and oil. They bring some ripe paddy from their field that they have cultivated and offered it while worshipping. The third day is known as *'khuntao maha* known as *gura khunta* and *kara khunta*. *Gura khunta* is a process of teasing the cow and *kara khunta* is teasing the bullocks which are used in the field for

harvesting. It is believed that cows and bullocks become idle after the harvest. The whole process works as a physical exercise for the cattle before the winter harvesting season.

According to the Santhal tradition while searching for a new site for setting up a new village, if they see a bird sitting on their eggs, or a tiger roaming around they take it as good omens. They predict that, in future, our village will be here and we will increase in numbers. For more confirmation of the selected place, they bring with them two white and one speckled fowl, rice, *sindur*, and a thin-necked earthen pot. On the land, they tie the fowls and keep the rice and water away from them that they cannot reach the rice. Next day, they come to check. If a big or small fowl-feather has fallen, it is not a good omen, and if no any feather is there, it is considered a good indication. If the water of narrow-mouthed pot has become a little less, they say that after a couple of years there, they will have a scarcity of water. A vessel full of water, a cow, a new earthenware vessel, a pack bullock or the footmark of a tiger, it means good omens for them when they go to find a match for boy and girl. When they finish planting the rice, they sacrifice the fowl only to the village *bonga*. They address growing crop as green fowl, and they say that they are doing it for the sale of green fowl (O'Malley 1910).

If a young *Santhali* man forcibly applied *sindur* to a girl, the girl's father asks for justice to the headman and say, please act for us following the custom. Then they enter the young man's courtyard and beat him, and break household water-pots into pieces. After that, they go hunting for castrated goats or pigs. Thereupon they go to the cattle-herd to seize some cattle to deprive his power.

If a wife demands divorce as the husband has taken a co-wife, the man will not get the bride price paid back, and he will have to give a cow, one bundle paddy, and clothes as compensation to his wife.

The Santhalis believe that the pigeons are peace-loving birds and do not make their nests in quarrelsome families. Christen interprets the dove as a symbol of peace and likes to paint it as a motif.

*Dasai* festival is performed during the *dasai/ daak-saay* month (Sep-Oct) among Santhal of Santhal Pargana. In this festival, people dance and visit each door of the village household. Dance performers wear a saree as a *dhuti*, tie a *pagadi* on the head with peacock feathers. Along with bow and arrow, they carry *bhuaang* (a dried gourd covered as conceals wood) they dance and sing a sorrowful song (*hai-re-hai*). They do this performance in search of the worriers in villages and adopting this type of attire to camouflage their look. *Dongar* dance is one of the oldest dance, which is known as hunting dance among Santhalis. While other dancers performed like hunters, they wear *baniyan*, *dhuti* tied in a unique style, colourful headgear- turban fitted with peacock feathers. *Dantha* dance is a primitive dance form of *Santhal* community. The young *Santal* male performs *dantha* dance together with vigour and speed on the third day of the *Sohrai* festival. This is a male-dominated dance which reveals the festive mood of the auspicious occasion. During the dance performance, men wear white tops and *dhuti* (*lungi*) with a colourful band on their forehead. *Golwari* dance is known as vulture dance and is modelled on different kinds of birds. The women stand in a row and their arm held out like flapping wings. Then very slowly and deliberately, they start to move in a circle. In their song, they mention about peacock feathers and express her/his desire to dance like a peacock (Archer 2013).

Children are described as parrots. The *caco chatiyar* is a ceremony celebrated to accustom the growing children of the village. The ceremony is usually performed once a child is eight to ten years old. For announcing a date for this ceremony headman say that, *I have heard some little parrots crying in the hole of a tree. Their feathers are sprouting.* The headman then enquires in how many holes there are parrots means how many children are proposed for confirmation. The headman then announces a date and commands all the villagers to be present. After this ceremony, children are allowed to brew rice beer, go to fairs, and summon the meetings.

In Santhal's creation story, the dog stood against the "day horse" who wanted to destroy the first human being. It is believed that dog appeared from the sky on the earth and after going back they shine as Dog Star in the sky and stand as a saviour of man. The *Manjhi Santals* though being animists do not exactly worship the forest god Shiva, but they believe that dog belongs to *Shiva* or *Mahadev*. The dog is an affectionate inmate of the Santal household.

In Santhal marriage, bridegroom gives bride price and in compensation, the bride family gives cow, brass-cup, earthen pot and cloths. After marriage in a ritual, the *Jog Manjhi* is asked remaining bride price money. In this situation, they sing a folk song; *Bring out, young man, bring out. Money, fine like the puthi fish.* In this song, they acknowledge fish as money (Bodding 2016).

Santhals believe in *baghut bonga* or the spirit of a tiger. They worship it for the welfare of the villagers as well as the domesticated animals especially the cattle. They believe that they cannot hunt the tiger because the tiger is a vehicle of *bir- bonga* (forest god).

#### 4.4 Hor (human)

Among the rural communities, dance has a significant place in their lifestyle. They generally dance in a group in open space. They celebrate every festival in a group, in Sarana (e.g., Baha porob, janthar, harihar sim) and in village premises. *Karam, sohrai, harihar sim, janthar, disom sendra sohrai* and *baha* festival are village level festivals. In these occasions, people gather and celebrate the festival with dancing and playing musical instruments (Singh 1982).

Santhals are not idol worshipers but peacock and human figurines are placed in their sacred groves made using the straw. These figurines are known as *Pilchu haram* and *Pilchu budi* as per their legends. As per Hindu legend, *Shiva* is drawn with *trisul*. Hindu worship *Shiva* as their god and call him *Mahadev, Bhola, Shankar*. They worship him in abstract form and in figure form also. Among Santhals, there is no figurative form of *Shiva*, but they worship *marang buru* as *shiva* in an abstract form like a stone.

Two types of scroll paintings are found in selected regions one is *Jadopatuaa* (Santhal Pargana), and another is *Pytkar* (East Singhbhum). *Jadopatuaa* is a scroll painting that is made by the *Jado* community in Santhal Pargana for a long time. These *Patchitra* are narrations of myths and tales from the Santhal cosmos, like yamaraj story, the creation story, Baha festivals, Santhal dance Santhal totem (Sinha 2014 and 2016). In West Singhbhum *Pytkar* community also make the scroll paintings on handmade paper with natural colours.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Baha

The Santalis are nature lovers, and flowers always attract them. It is known as *Baha* among them. The blossoming of the *saal* and *palash* flowers marks the arrival of the new beginning in their daily lives. *Saal* flower is the most sacred flower among them. The *saal* is the most holy tree among them. The flower is associated with their festival that is known as *baha porob* and *baha sendra* festival. They also celebrate the flower friendship. They decorate the entrance with painted creepers and plants. They also decorate the *baha-duar* with *saal* leaf or flowers. They have the concept that a guest is a form of *bonga*. For their salutation, it is not possible to arrange garland quickly, so they paint it on the entrance doorway. They have the concept that these creepers pictured with pot will bring prosperity in their house. This concept shows similarity with Hinduism where the divine creeper is a symbol of wealth. Apart from the natural flower they love to execute, knit, draw, carve and paint various kinds of flowers in mattress, wall-hanging, tile decoration and garland making. It describes their inspirations towards popular visual culture of their society. They take inspirations from natural flowers and execute it in simplified way following their cultural and social aspects. These examples keep indirect relation with the wall art forms of rural Jharkhand.

**5.1.1 Baha (1):** 22 types of *baha* vegetative visual forms are documented from the painted mud houses of rural Jharkhand. The list of *baha* is shown in table 2 with local names and with inspirational aspects of painting.

**Table 2: List of documented baha (1) natural visual forms with the purpose of execution on the wall**

Baha(1)			Inspirational aspects
No.	English name	Local names: Santhali <sup>1</sup> Hindi <sup>2</sup>	
1.	Saal flower	<i>Sarjom baha, Saal phul</i>	Ritual, prosperity, salutation
2.	Gulantha flower	<i>Gulanj flower</i>	Medication
3.	Jasmine	<i>Chameli</i>	Beauty, salutation
4.	Champa	Champa	Beauty, salutation
5.	Sunflower	<i>Suraj Mukhi</i>	Fertility
6.	Flame-of-the-forest	<i>Murud baha, Plash phul</i>	Beauty, salutation
7.	Lily flower	<i>Upol baha</i>	Fertility, beauty, prosperity
8.	Lotus	<i>Porayani baha, Kamal phul</i>	Fertility, beauty, prosperity
9.	Marigold	<i>Khushbi baha</i>	Beauty, salutation
10.	Rose	<i>Gulap baha</i>	Beauty, salutation
11.	A common flowering plant	<i>Caulia</i>	Ritual
12.	Bur flower	<i>Karam baha, kadam phul</i>	Prosperity

13.	Brinjal	<i>Bengarh baha</i>	Beauty
14.	Ladyfinger	<i>Bherawa baha</i>	Beauty
15.	Bitter gourd	<i>Karuyala</i>	Beauty
16.	Hibiscus	<i>Joba baha, Urhul phul</i>	Medication, salutation
17.	A flowering plant found in the gardens of Santhal	<i>Bare baha</i>	Beauty
18.	A small common plant	<i>Catom arak</i>	Beauty
19.	A small bush	<i>Gada hund baha-</i>	Beauty
20.	An ornamental tree	<i>Bokom baha</i>	Beauty
21.	Creeper	<i>Narhi baha, lata phul</i>	Beauty
22.	Small flowering plant	<i>Cutia candbol</i>	Beauty

A graphical representation of table 2 is shown in Fig. 4. In this figure, the inspirational aspects of *baha* are mentioned in the form of wings. The highest number of wings show the strongest aspect of *baha* visual form execution on the wall. Beauty and salutation are the most inspirational aspect among rural people to paint the *baha* motif.



Fig. 4: Graphical representation of baha (1) visual forms and the inspirations

**5.1.2 Baha (2): Band and border:** Kolhan region is in the southern part of Jharkhand, and it is the neighbouring districts of Orissa state. This region is an industrial area. The geometrical mural is the speciality of this division, and it is known as *rong-baha* among Santhal. On the mud, houses of East Singhbhum and Saraikela- Kharsawan geometrical bands are painted on the wall. Triangle, square and circular forms are painted including the vegetative *baha* visual forms. The bright colours and geometrical forms give a resemblance of the *sambalpuri* textile pattern (traditional textile of Orissa) and *pandal* decoration.

A graphical representation of *baha* (2) border & band (manmade visual form) is shown below (Fig. 5).

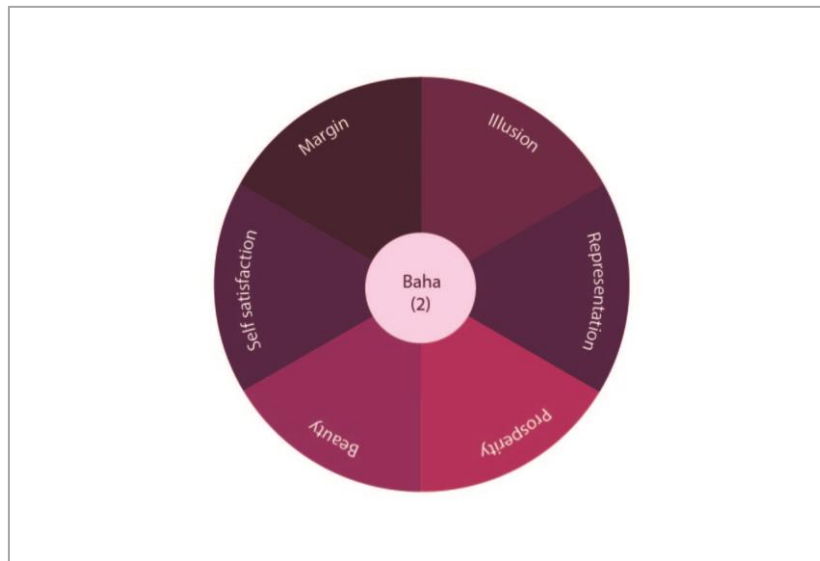


Fig. 5: Graphical representation of *baha* (2) border and band visual forms and the inspiration

### 5.2 Pot/ vessel

Vessel has an important place in the life of rural people in the form of sacred drink, add glory in dance forms or life-giving power. Water plays an important role in all human activities. In *baha porob* and marriage, ceremony Santhal sprinkles water on every people and every house of the village. It conveys the meaning of *jibon* (life). The birth symbol is known as *Kumbh* (womb) among the Hindu community. *Kumbha* is locally known as pitcher or well. It means *Kumbh* is the source of water or water container. Their daily life habit also motivates them to paint the vessel or pot as a visual form. A graphical representation of the inspirational aspects of the pot visual form is shown below (Fig. 6).

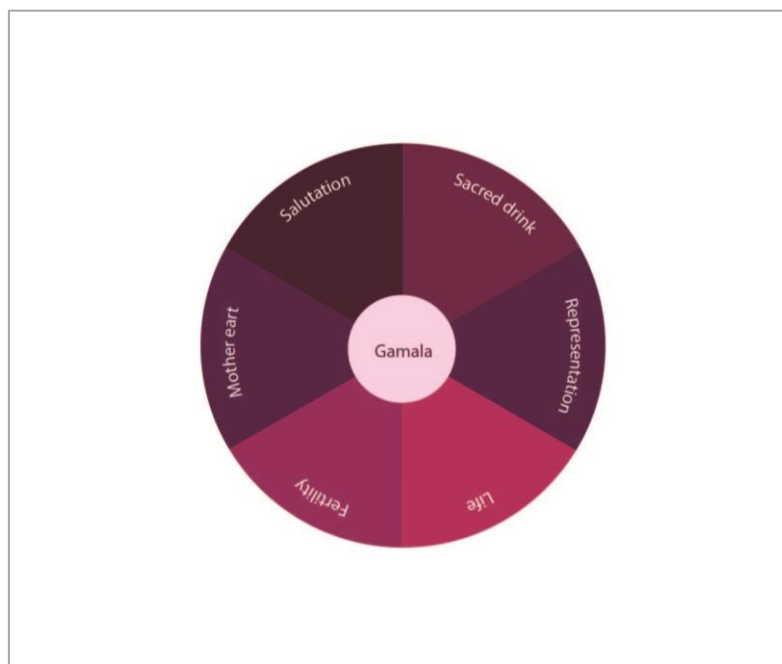


Fig. 6: Graphical representation of *gamala* visual forms and the inspirations



### 5.3 Jan-janwar

Apart from the provision of food and clothing, animals were connected with religious belief and practices. The song and dances of *Santhalis* express their traditional art based on the habit or imitation of animals. Their festivals acknowledge the contribution of animals in the creation of wealth, and body decoration with various purpose. Animals also carry good and bad omen in their social life. Different connotations are used for assigning animals in their day to day life. In wall paintings, ten kinds of birds and 15 kinds of animals including domestic and wild are documented. The list of *jan-janwar* is shown in table 3A and 3B with local names and with inspirational aspects to paint it. A graphical representation of table 3A & 3B is shown in Fig 7 and Fig 8.

**Table 3A: List of documented chene visual forms with the purpose of execution on the wall**

Chene			Inspirational aspects
No.	English name	Local names: Santhali <sup>1</sup> Hindi <sup>2</sup>	
1.	Peacock	<i>Marah/Pilior marak, mor</i>	Beauty, love, legends fertility, prosperity
2.	Peahen.	<i>Martu marah</i>	Beauty, love, legends fertility, prosperity
3.	Cock	<i>Sim, murga</i>	Ceremonial, Status, nourishment
4.	Parrot	<i>Miru, tota</i>	Beauty, love, fertility, prosperity
5.	A species of wild pigeon	<i>Kudbur potam</i>	Peace, prosperity, nourishment
6.	Butterfly	<i>Pipirhiyarg, titali</i>	Beauty
7.	Duck	<i>Gede</i>	Beauty, nourishment
8.	Heron	<i>Koh</i>	Beauty, nourishment
9.	Pigeon	<i>Parva, kabutar</i>	Peace, prosperity, Identity, nourishment
10.	Goose (mythical birds)	<i>Has hasil</i>	Fertility, prosperity, Legends

**Table 3B: List of documented janwar visual forms with the purpose of execution on the wall**

Janwar			Inspirational aspects
No.	English name	Local names: Santhali <sup>1</sup> Hindi <sup>2</sup>	
1.	Cow	<i>Gai</i>	Fertility, beauty, legends ceremonial, prosperity, nourishment
2.	Buffalo	<i>Kada</i>	Fertility, ceremonial, prosperity, nourishment
3.	She goat	<i>Merong/bir merong, kutura</i>	Fertility, ceremonial, prosperity, nourishment
4.	Goat	<i>Mero</i>	Fertility, ceremonial, prosperity
5.	Elephant	<i>Hati, Marang horh</i>	Status, prosperity, nourishment
6.	Ox	<i>Dangara</i>	Fertility, ceremonial, prosperity, nourishment
7.	Camel	<i>Unt</i>	Positivity, legends
8.	Dog	<i>Seta</i>	Honesty, legends, nourishment
9.	Pig	<i>Sukari</i>	Nourishment
10.	Rabbit	<i>Kulay</i>	Fertility, ceremonial, prosperity, nourishment
11.	Frog	<i>Rote</i>	Nourishment
12.	Tiger	<i>Chetara</i>	Legends, status
13.	Deer	<i>Jeel</i>	Fertility, nourishment
14.	Fish	<i>Hanku</i>	Fertility, nourishment
15.	Antelope	<i>Murum jel, Nilgai</i>	Identity, prosperity, nourishment



Fig. 7: Graphical representation of Chane (bird) visual forms and the inspirations



Fig. 8: Graphical representation of Janwar visual forms and the inspirations

#### 5.4 Hor (human)

Dancing form, sacred performance, scroll painting and daily life activities are the inspiration of human visual form. In wall painting, human forms are painted doing some action (dance or guarding the house and salutation gesture) with the association of musical instrument and weapons. A graphical representation of the inspirational aspect is shown below (Fig. 9).

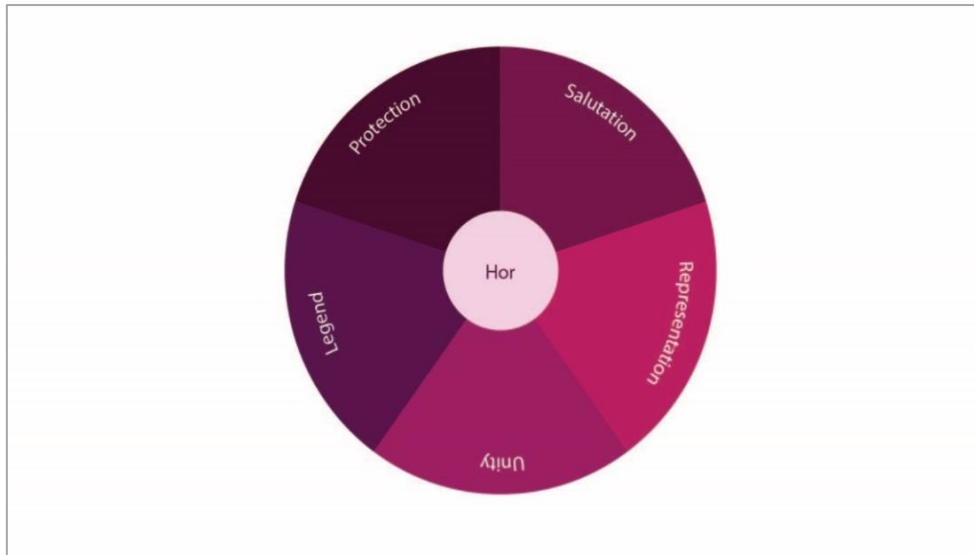


Fig. 9: Graphical representation of human visual forms and the inspirations

## 6. Discussion

The rural lifestyle of eastern Jharkhand is simple and elegant. Most of the villages are surrounded by hills and forest and are away from the town. Archer's statement holds true about Santhal mud houses where he stated that 'The Santhal villages are very structured and mud walls have a hard cement-like precision. Of all the other tribes of eastern India, none has quite the same relish for neatly ordered houses (Archer 2013). In Santhal village, houses are arranged in a sequence and separated with a narrow street. There is always a *kulhi* (long straggling street) between two houses, and there is no boundary or wall around the house. Most of the homes have their entrances open to the street. There is always *Manjhi-Sthan* (It is a mud mound with a thatched roof over it, which is supported by five poles) at the end of the street and *Jaher-Sthan* (sacred grove) in the outskirts of the village. In these holy centres (*manjhi-sthan* and *jaher-sthan*), rituals, devotional activities and sacred performances take place. *Kulhi* is the main attraction of the village and is an integral part of the village livelihood. In the *kulhi* people share, their feast, festival and host village councils. Through this street, people bring local produce (crops, firewood, and grocery) from the local market, field, river, and forest and nearby villages. Bicycles and motorbikes are used for transportation. Hand - Pumps are placed in the street, which is commonly used by the villagers. *Ota* (circular mud platform around the house) is attached with the entrance wall (opens in the main street) is frequently used by the villagers for sitting purpose in *kulhi*.

The wall, which faces the *kulhi*, is known as *baha bhitt*. The height of *Baha bhitt* is mostly that of average human height. As the height is accessible by people, the upper elevation of the wall is used to hang pitchers for the pigeons or hang ropes for drying clothes. In the locality, it is rare to find plants and creepers growing or planted in any pot or vessel. There is a common habit found among the villagers that they keep the drinking vessel near the *baha-duar* (doorway). It is noticed that they do it for the accessibility purpose from inside the house and outside the home.

Size and structure of the Santhal house vary from region to region. However, the courtyard and veranda are constructed in the same manner and consistency in the house structure of every region. Courtyard and veranda are used for socio-cultural activities.

Within each house, the rooms are spread around the courtyard. It is used for storing all kinds of miscellaneous things like rice and *mahuua* (*Madhuca longifolia*). The courtyard is also used for drying flowers and clothes etc. People keep their *dhenki* (rice-grinder) and their *janta* (hand mill) in the courtyard. The courtyard is also used as a kitchen. People mainly use earthenware, aluminium and iron utensils for cooking purpose. For eating purpose, they mainly use *Kasa Thali* (brass plate) and *bati*. For drinking purpose, they use utensils like *kanda* (pot), *lota* (drinking vessel), *kasa tari* (brass plate) *bati* (bowl). Hen-roost is also reared in one corner of the courtyard. People use the street and courtyard to mix the mud and cow dung for wall and floor plastering purpose.

*Baha-duar* (doorway) facing the courtyard is decorated with visual forms. From the courtyard, this door leads to the rooms. The rooms are used as a granary, storeroom, bedroom, and sometimes kitchen. Windows are rarely provided in the rooms. Each house has a *bhitar* (which is a sanctified corner in any room of the house). They keep a figurine of a horse and elephant made either of metal, wood or mud in the corner and they always cover it. They believe, it will be harmful to the clan if dust falls on it. Guests are not allowed to enter this place. Generally, rooms are dark, but beams of light emerging from the eaves create a cosy ambience in the interiors of the house. The rooms are snug and warm in the winter and cool in summer. The villagers rarely use electricity. There are television sets in some of the houses, but they are not used as much by the villagers. In the daytime people might sleep or do some craft work, to name a few: *sujni* (mattress) with colourful flower patterns on it, door hanging, floor designing, basket making and wood carving. They also maintain and repair agricultural tools and appliances. At the backside of the house a pig shed, cow shed, and goat shed is found. A kitchen garden is common and a patch nearest to the house is used for it. Santhal villages comprise of hamlets or *tola* of other communities like Hindu, Lohra and Kumhar. They follow the Santhal rituals and traditions and share their festivals and vice-versa. They also worship in *majhi-sthan* and *Jaher-sthan* (sacred groves).

Five to six members live in a house jointly. In the house and village premises cocks, hens, pigeons, dogs freely roam and these animals are an essential part of the family. It is seen that the rural people are soft-spoken and there is a sense of peace and tranquillity in the village. Because of the quiet environment, one can hear and enjoy the natural sounds of animals and birds found in the village.

The men work as farmers, labourers, factory workers and some of them run the small business. With the advent of mining and industry, some of them have adopted mining and factory labour as their occupation. Educated men join government jobs and services. Nevertheless, agriculture continued to be the main occupation. Women also work as ASHA worker and Anganbadi (playschool) employers. The women help men in agriculture and take all the responsibility of household work like gathering firewood, coal and preparing food for the family. They are also responsible for cleaning and decorating the house.

Every day early morning, people go to the nearest river, hilly area and field for defecation. The women like to live and walk in a group for bathing, for collecting water (use for cooking), for fuel collection and gathering food from the forest. They also prefer to attend fairs, festivals or celebration as a group. Women also use a bicycle as a means of transportation to carry materials collected from the forest.

The dressing style of women or men varies from region to region. In Santhal Pargana, women are invariably dressed in simple white and yellow attire. In North Chhotanagpur and Kolhan embroidered green, blue, ochre colour *saree*, *dhuti*, *dhari* (turban) are most

preferable among men, women and children. It is seen in the saree, that small motif of bird, flower, pot, weapons and emblem of *Sarana* religion are embroidered. Weapons (bow & arrow) is common visual motifs in men's dhoti because Santhal known for hunting. The Santal women decorate their hair by sticking colourful flowers into it. For body decoration, *godana khodai* (tattoo making) is popular among women. Girls in their teenage marks specific visual forms (e.g., karam tree, kadam flower, bird, animal, comb style pattern and various border patterns) by *ojhain* or *khodani* (Sharma 2011). They consider these as permanent jewellery and mark it on their body parts like neck, hand, leg, etc. They believe that this body mark will stay with them always even after death and in seeing this body mark *yamaraj* (God of Death) will redeem them from any punishment. *Santhal* also considers these markings as having medicinal properties, which gives protection or cure to particular body parts where they are marked. The women also use the ornaments, which are made of nickel, silver, and other artificial materials. At present, women wear long silver chain, which dangles on the chest and some silver bangles and anklets, which adorn the arms and legs.

The sacred groves, which is a replica of a forest is cared for and protected by the villagers. It is an indispensable part of the Santhal village. It is associated with the environmental, social and ethnic identity of the Santhal community. The village priest *Naek* (Santhal priest) conducts rituals in sacred groves. The puja articles are vermilion, *arwa chawal* (rice), flowers, paddy, maize and puja utensils pitcher, drinking vessel, and bawl. Sacred figurines are made using straw before the festival (Kisku, Bakhat and Guha 2010).

Some festivals of Santhal are celebrated in the village premises but most of them are celebrated in the sacred groves. The festivals like *Magh Sim*, *Baha Parab*, *Mak More*, *Erok Sim* and *Got Jom* are celebrated in the sacred groves (Singh 1982). *Marang Buru*, *Jaher era*, *Moreko Turuiko*, *Purudhul*, *Sima bonga* are worshipped and various rituals are performed in the sacred grove. Most of their festivals are related to agriculture. The agricultural festivals are celebrated during the sowing season usually in July and August (*Erok Sim* & *Hariar Sim*). During these festivals, hens and cocks are sacrificed to please the *bongas* (Gods) for they believe that the Gods will make their crops yield better as they prepare the paddy fields for farming. The festival does not start on the same day in all the Santhal villages. Depending upon the completion of the harvesting and financial condition of the villagers of a particular village, the day for celebrating the festival is decided. For the decision of selecting the starting day of the celebration, a meeting for discussion and decision-making is held among the members of the community, after which the final call is taken by the *Manjhi*. After the day has been decided, the responsibilities to be performed for the festivals are assigned to the people of the village. *Sohrai* and *Baha* are considered one of the biggest festivals among Santhal.

Santhalis are known for their tradition of warm welcome. They use typical gestures for welcoming the guest. Never is the gesture done unilaterally; the person standing in front always reciprocates.

The Santhals eat less spicy food. Boiled rice and rice beer are among their favourite foods. Rice beer is related to their myth of the origin of mankind. It has great importance in religious festivals and is also used as good medicine for the stomach. Rice-beer is always offered to a respective visitor and refused by the visitor is considered as disrespect. Rice-beer is a sign of womanhood and femininity. A married woman who does not prepare rice-beer is inconceivable.

Santhalis eat almost all available kinds of fish and crabs. Added to these are many varieties worms, and insects like red ants and termites and the flesh of various animals like tigers, bears, crows, mice, frogs, and snakes constitute their menu and suit their palate. Different varieties of cakes are prepared like *jil-pitha*, *chor pitha* and *arsa pitha*. They eat various kinds of leafy vegetables. They also prepare different types of food items made of multiple food grains.

Traditionally, the Santhalis are non-idol worshipers; they have no temple, no image, no holy books, no official founder of their religion and no regular worship. According to beliefs of the Santals, the world is inhabited by *bonga* (invisible supernatural beings) and this *bonga* have an interest in the affairs of their survivors. The Santals relation to these *bonga* governs their reverential fear, dependence, submission, and propitiation. To please this *bonga* they offer them rice beer and sacrifice animals on behalf of a particular group.

Lifestyle and cultural values of rural people show that they are nature lovers and nature conservers. They respect nature, for instance, the human being is accepted as products of nature and all things made by human beings like art, artefacts, song, music, dance, etc. are also highly respected. For nature's greetings, they celebrate various festivals, performs many rituals, and follow some taboos to conserve it. The festival is performed for unity, representation, awareness for nature, man and animal relationship and social status. The social rituals, including, marriage and rites of passage for children are performed for good or bad omen, fear, prosperity, fertility, and love. Dance forms represent attitudes, competition, mood, and documentation. Their popular visual culture (carving, embroidery, knitting, scroll painting and other artefacts) more favoured towards beautification, prosperity, salutation and documentation context.

The uses of natural object and the representation of artefacts such as, floor art, wood carving, embroidery, doorway hanging, scroll painting, idol making etc show direct/indirect and exclusive connection of visual form representation (natural and manmade) with the documented wall art tradition. Overall, this study talks about human non-linguistic forms of communication, which mainly emphasize social context and materiality of the rural mural art form of eastern Jharkhand.

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## **Forms of Social Discrimination: A Case of Handicraft Artisans from Udaipur, Rajasthan**

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### **Abstract**

Social discrimination is a scenario wherein an individual eligible for a particular endowment is deprived of it based on social factors such as caste, religion, gender, etc. Such discrimination can be both tangible and intangible leading to refusal from the several opportunities and long-term impact on survival. One such case of social discrimination is highlighted in this paper wherein the handicraft artisans of Udaipur belonging to SCs/STs are deprived of by the higher social groups. This discrimination leads to a lack of opportunities, low wages, poor education, no health facilities, and low standard of living. The data collected for the study includes both primary and secondary sources. The research method used is the case based wherein few of the instances directly from the communities are narrated. Moreover, based on the interactions with the socially disadvantaged groups, the paper suggests few capacity building and policy level interventions that could be incorporated preferably in empowering such groups.

### **Introduction**

Indian Constitution through its several provisions and amendments have provided Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policies that ensure equal opportunities to all its citizens irrespective of caste, religion, sex, race, or place of birth.<sup>1</sup> However, the practice at the grassroots is much more grave than what appears superficially especially in the informal sector.<sup>2</sup>

The caste hierarchy or system has been prevalent in India for thousands of years. This hierarchical division is determined by birth. The caste attached to the person provides her or him an identity that acts as a base for deciding all the future opportunities available to that person. Thus, the caste acts as a closed system in the society wherein the lower caste people are the most vulnerable. There have been several research carried out by scholars

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<sup>1</sup> Article 15 pertaining to prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; Article 16 pertaining to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment; Article 46 pertaining to promotion of educational and economic interests of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections; Article 335 pertaining to claims of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to services and posts.

<sup>2</sup> There are different definitions to informal sector but the comprehensive one is given by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) as “The informal sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers”.

on social discrimination in the Indian context (Dhesi, A. S. 1998; Borooah, Vani K. 2005; Thorat, Sukhadeo and Paul Attewell 2007; Bhise, V. B 2012; Kumar, Vivek 2015). One of the studies carried out in Pune (Maharashtra) reflects on the extent of discrimination in wages against OBC factory workers (Lambert, 1963). Similar studies have been conducted at different locations across the country. There are studies which measure the extent of caste discrimination in the Indian labour market in general as well (Banerjee et al., 2009 and Thorat and Newman, 2007).

With the discussions above, given with the fact that around 81% of the total workforce is employed in the informal sector (ILO 2018), it is impractical to capture every detail of the discrimination happening in different parts of the country. Moreover, the legal and constitutional provisions such as Indian Factories Act, Minimum Wage Act, ESIC scheme, etc which are formulated and implemented for the employees belonging to both formal and informal sector has not provided appealing results especially for the informal one. The prominent reason for this situation is lack of fast and effective dissemination of information to the informal sector thereby making it more vulnerable for the socially disadvantaged groups. An example for supporting this statement is the experience that the researcher had in the field. There is a government initiative wherein every handicraft artisan should be given a free of cost artisan card which covers insurance, provides loan and other training support. However, most of the artisans here in the cluster were unaware of such identity card and the same when discussed with the concerned department over telephone had no clue on this matter.

There are different forms of discrimination but the ones observed in the study location are:

**a. Wage disparity:** Here, different wages are given to different people even if productivity is the same. The criteria used to distinguish vary and depend on multiple factors. There was a research conducted to examine the differences in the wage rates among the employees of upper and lower caste in the urban labour market and the result highlighted job discrimination against the lower caste (Borooah et al., 2007).

**b. Caste based discrimination:** Here, differential treatments are met to different people based on their caste with lower caste groups facing outright discrimination as compared to the privileges enjoyed by the upper castes. Such discrimination has widely been discussed under the rubric of 'social exclusion' in the context of Indian society and has its roots in caste. There is a good amount of work done by Sen (2000) on social exclusion wherein he presents a distinction between the scenarios of excluding an individual and the unfavourable circumstances for social inclusion. This form of discrimination can impact an individual from all the aspects - be it employment, health, education, living.

**c. Human capital discrimination** (Woodson Kevin, 2016): Here, the specific group is treated differentially and provided with less or no opportunities. The opportunities can be in terms of education or on-the-job training. The human capital discrimination is informal, incremental and inchoate in nature. It is most common in informal labour market affecting the employment opportunities.

Thus, all these discriminations perpetually put the socially disadvantaged groups economically backwards and has an inter-generational element to it, i.e. continues from one generation to another generation. In line to this thought, the paper makes an attempt to present the case of social discrimination among the handicraft artisans in the Udaipur City of Rajasthan. The discrimination is practiced to such an extent that it affects the

livelihood of the STs/SCs artisans when compared with the one from the upper caste even after having more experiences and skills.

### Mapping of the study area

The study is conducted around the Udaipur city of Rajasthan wherein the artisans live and work. Such type of setting within a given geographical location wherein similar type of products are produced having similar opportunities and challenges is termed as a cluster. Thus, the regional setting of this cluster is around the Udaipur city of Rajasthan with predominance in two *tehsils* (Developmental Blocks) namely, Girwa and Badgaon. The cluster includes around 1000 artisans working in approximately 100-150 small units. There are some 20-22 exporters and local showrooms as well.

The map of Developmental blocks of Udaipur district:

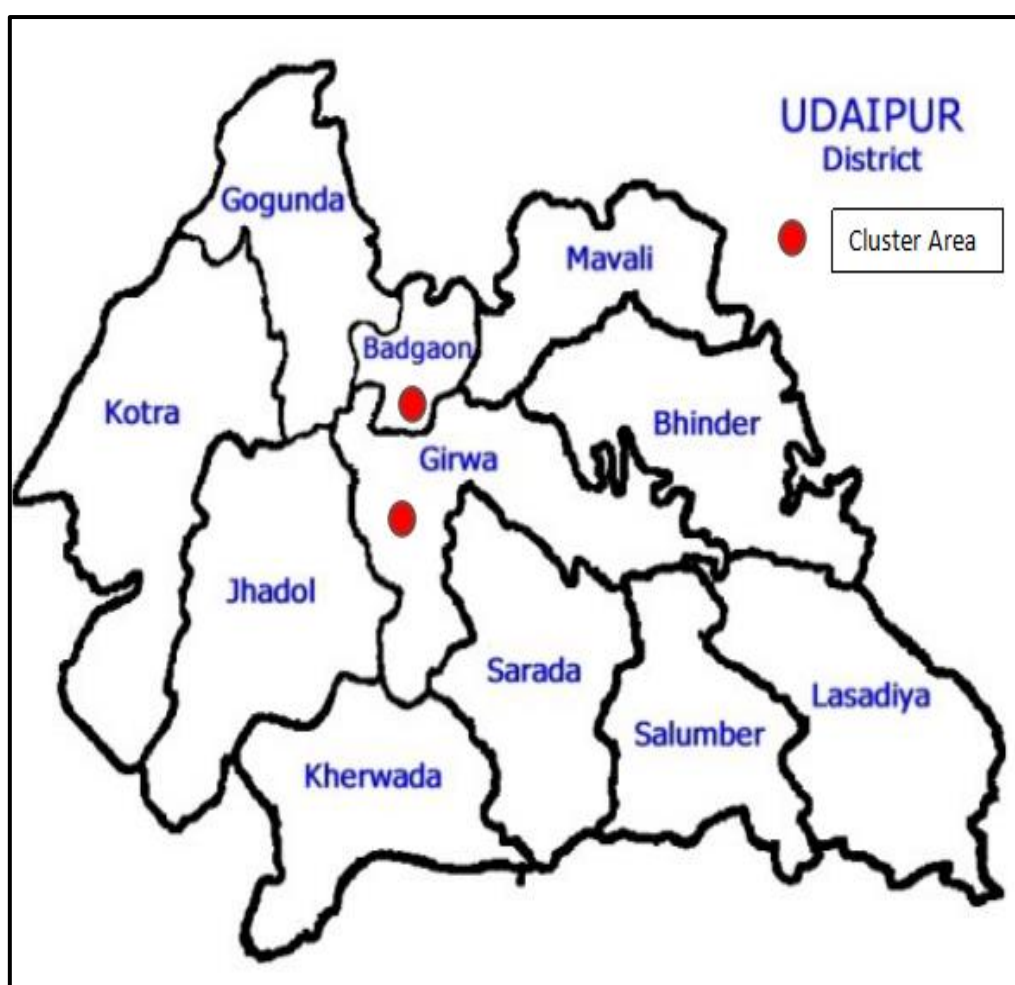


Figure 1: Tehsil map of Udaipur District (The red circular dot in the map represents the Tehsil wherein the cluster resides)

Source: *Udaipur Times*

Further exploring deeper into the cluster or location map, then there are more than 15 Village Panchayats in Udaipur District that these artisans belong. However, there are certain areas in the Udaipur city which have some of the artisans working in the small units. In terms of distance, the geographical spread of the cluster measures about 15-20 Km radius. Following are tehsil-wise division of the villages in the cluster:

**Table 1: List of villages as per the tehsils surveyed in the study**

Tehsil Name	Villages in the Cluster
Girwa (16)	Chhota Hawala, Bada Hawala, Malla Talai, Mastan Baba, Dewali, Chikalwas, Sisarma, Naga Nagri, Brahmpol, Savina, Machala Magra, Eklavya Colony, Amal ka Kanta, Dudh Talai Lake, Jagdish Chowk
Badgaon(3)	Badi, Loyera, Liyo ka Gurha

### **Research methodology**

The diagnostic study of the artisans in Udaipur handicraft cluster was performed using data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included artisans (both male and female), handicraft unit owners, local showroom owners, and exporters. The researcher approached these sources directly to collect the data from the field. On the other hand, the secondary sources included previous reports, news articles, Detailed Project Reports (DPR), international and national guidelines pertaining to the subject matter of the study such as UNDP diagnostic framework, SFURTI guidelines, etc. These data collected was then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to arrive at the conclusion and offer suggestions.

### **Sampling and its technique**

The total of 300 participants, from among the artisans (both male and female), handicraft unit and showroom owners, and exporters, was selected as the sample for the survey (assuming there are 1000 artisans) that ensures a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. The sampling technique used here was both probabilistic and non-probabilistic in nature. The probabilistic sampling method called as the simple random sampling was used whereas, in the case of a non-probabilistic sampling method, snowball sampling was used wherein one participant recruited other participants for the survey.

Participants for the survey are artisans (both male & female), unit owners, exporters and local showroom owners

### **Background of the study**

#### **Key economic activities in the study area**

Udaipur district is considered to be one of the most renowned city in the country for tourism and it receives tourists throughout the year. It has a long history of arts and crafts dating back to the year 1559 when Maharana Udai Singh II founded the city. So one of the common economic activity for the population of Udaipur is in hospitality sector such as hotels, restaurant, driving, guide, security, etc. But due to the vibrant culture, it has a large number of people involved in the handicrafts sector as well which forms a cluster. There is also a presence of Shilpgram which is a rural arts and crafts complex. It has

annual *mela* (fair) conducted every year in the month of December where artists come from different parts of the country to portray their skills and arts in front of lacs of the crowd. There are just a handful of the people who perform agriculture as primary occupation. Also, the ones who are performing is just for sustenance purpose. Further, since the Rajasthan state is rich in marbles large scale stone mining activities also acts as a source of income for some people. However, the people in the Udaipur city do not prefer working in mines as this requires migration and incurs costs as well.

### **Handicrafts cluster**

Since the artisans are involved in the handicrafts for many generations and living together to form a cluster, it is important to understand their history and the products produced by them. The cluster has evolved over the years at its own without any governmental/external support. There are more than 1000 artisans involved in this cluster performing several arts. The base material for the crafts by the artisans in this cluster is wood. Once, the wood is carved, it is routed to the specific group of artisans for further value addition to it based on the requirements. There are five types of value additions performed by the artisans which are:

- a. Laminating the wood with metal sheet and embossing intricate carving on it
- b. Making the *kaufgiri* (decorating the arms and weaponry by beating the pattern into the iron), *tarkashi* (process of inlaying brass, copper, silver or gold wires in wood) and *raal* (holoart wherein the products are made which are holo from inside and coated with iron) using the silver or gold wires. However, *kaufgiri* have the least dependence on wood as they can be prepared by only moulding the iron metal.
- c. Laminating the wood with a metal sheet that has been embossed and then coloured by fusing bright colours over it which is known as *meenakari* art
- d. Camel Bone inlay/outlay wherein the bones are applied instead of a metal sheet on the wooden structure
- e. Coral shell inlay/outlay wherein the shells are used on the wooden structure

Note: inlay is when the bone/coral shell is inserted onto wood into the depressions made on it whereas outlay is when the bone/coral shell is placed on the wood having a plain surface.

The cluster has widened its scope and diversified products owing to the demand not only from local and domestic market but also triggered by the international market in the past few decades. This is how the entire cluster has appeared to be evolved. Figure 2. below represents some of the traditional products of the cluster.



Figure 2: Photographs of sample products of the cluster  
Source: Photos taken by the researcher

Note: The products from clockwise are *koftgiri/tarkashi*, *raal* (holoart), camel bone furniture, coral shell frame, *meenakari* box and white silver metal laminated sofa.



## Findings and discussions

### Roles of the cluster artisans based on skill level

The cluster artisans leverage different benefits based on their skill levels which are as follows:

**Master Artisan:** They are involved in a highly skilled task and have been performing the handicraft work since generations.

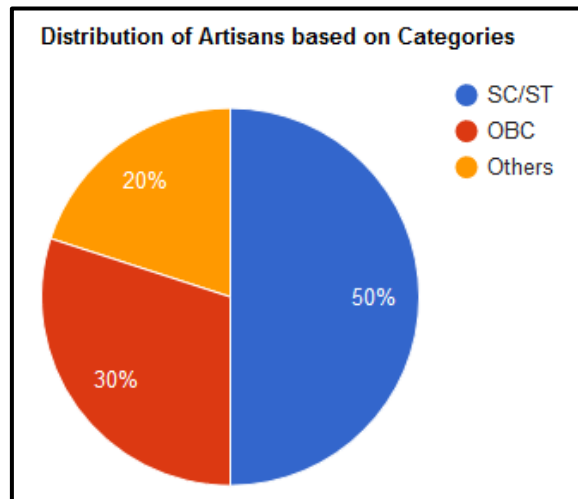
**Skilled Artisan:** They are predominantly involved in as a labour contractor who obtain work order from exporters or local showrooms. Also, there are few of them who work as skilled artisans under other labour contractors due to lack of finances available to start their own work.

**Semi-skilled Artisan:** These are first generation handicraft artisans who work for/under labour contractors.

**Unskilled Artisan:** They are the least paid and most exploited group of artisans again working for the labour contractors.

### Caste based discrimination

For most of the informal setting, the work profile is divided based on several factors. So far the context of the paper is concerned, the artisans' work profile is divided based on caste. Figure 3. represents the distribution based on the caste wherein the majority of the cluster artisans belong to SCs/STs i.e. 50%.



SC/ST	OBC	Others	Total
150	90	60	300

Figure 3: Distribution of Artisans based on Social Categories or caste

The SCs/STs dominantly include Gameti, Damor, Kathodi, Rawal, Bhil, and Banjare. Although the majority of the artisans belong to SCs/STs categories, the percentage of skilled and master artisans who are well paid belong to OBC/Others category. This fact has been further elaborated in the coming sections.

### Skill-productivity based discrimination

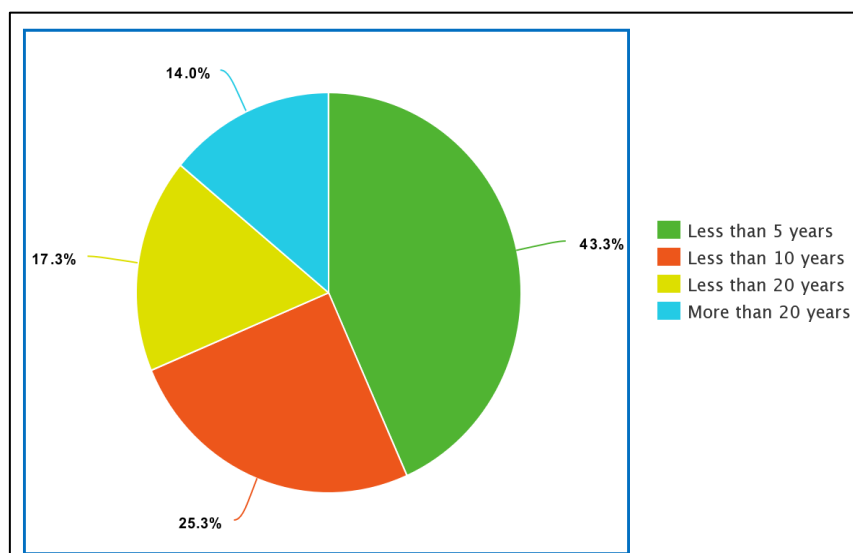
The discrimination is not just limited to caste identity of the artisans but goes on dictating the level of skills that could be possessed by the artisans hailing from a particular caste. The table below provides information on the division of the skill level based on the caste:

**Table 2:** Skill level and categories of the artisans

Skill Level	Categories
Master and Skilled	OBC and Other
Semi-Skilled and Unskilled	SCs/STs (Gameti, Damor, Kathodi, Rawal, Bhil, Banjare)

Table 2 shows that artisans of the SCs/STs social groups are mostly semi-skilled or unskilled whereas the master and skilled artisans mainly consist of those from OBC and Others (upper or general caste named as Others) category. This is further substantiated by the survey wherein only a small percentage of artisans, i.e. 4% among the master and skilled categories were SCs/STs. However, such a combination (SCs/STs as master and skilled artisans) represents exceptional cases wherein they have been able to move to a better position with the support from the upper caste people. Notwithstanding these exceptions, there were many participants in the survey from among the SCs/STs who had been working in this handicraft sector for more than one- two decades but have hardly managed to grow to the level of skilled artisans.

Figure 4 shows the division of artisans among the SCs/STs based on their working years.



Less than 5 years	Less than 10 years	Less than 20 years	More than 20 years	Total
65	38	26	21	150

Figure 4: Division of SCs/STs artisans based on their work experience

It is observed that out of 150 artisans under SCs/STs, 21 of them have experience of more than 20 years and yet they are not able to move up the ladder to become qualified as skilled artisans. Here, moving up to become as skilled artisans don't mean in terms of skills but in terms of wages, i.e. even though these artisans are performing the same work as skilled artisans they are underpaid when compared to the skilled artisans of OBC/Others categories.

### Sex based discrimination

In terms of sex, the involvement of women in handicraft work is extremely low with only 10% as compared to their male counterparts who constitutes 90% of the artisans. Even these 10% of the women belonged to the lower caste. Based on the interviews and personal visits conducted in their locality, it is found that they live under extreme poverty and having to feed a big family has compelled them to join this sector. The wages paid to these women are not discriminated as against their male counterparts but yet again they face discrimination based on skills similar to the men from lower castes. Meaning, even as women perform tasks of a semi-skilled artisan, they remain underpaid and disqualified to get the wages accordingly.

### Wage based discrimination

The distribution of the income is independent of gender and purely depends on two factors: 1) the level of skill the artisan possess (Master/Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled) and 2) the caste that they belong (whether STs/SCs, OBC and Others).

Table 3: Skill level and wages of the artisans

Skill Level	Wages per day in Rs. (both male and female)
Master Artisans	800-1000
Skilled Artisans	600
Semi-Skilled Artisans	400
Unskilled Artisans	200-250

Note: the wages are paid on hourly basis.

Table 3 represents the wages of the artisans based on their skill level. These figures are most common but there were few of the unskilled and semi-skilled artisans belonging to lower caste groups who have per day wages as Rs. 50 and Rs. 150 respectively. This is due to exploitation from the upper caste as they know these lower caste artisans do not have any other source of livelihood. It is important to note that this is just one such parameter to provide the wages. If the artisan belongs to STs/SCs and has the capability and experience equivalent to skilled artisans, still s/he would be paid less than Rs. 600 per day due to the second factor (caste) as mentioned above.

### Health concerns of the cluster artisans

The process involved in making the cluster products is labour intensive and requires less body movement (immobility) due to which most of the artisans are afflicted by arthritis, muscular pain, neck pain, back pain, breathing problem, coughing, etc. Involvement of women in the course of production is limited to polishing work and filling the colours in *meenakari* art which do not require much hard work compared to

other list of activities. The following table lists the health issues being faced by the artisans.

**Table 4: Art and the health issues associated with it for the artisans**

Sr. No.	List of Art Activities	Health hazards associated to the activity
1	Wood carving	✓ Exposure to dust particles ✓ Coughing
2	Metal sheet lamination	✓ Muscular pain ✓ Arthritis (Rheumatoid) ✓ Increased gap in vertebrae (backbone)
3	<i>Kaufgiri &amp; tarkashi &amp; raal</i> (holoart)	✓ Body pain ✓ Arthritis ✓ Breathing issues due to burning of the iron
4	<i>Meenakari</i>	✓ Body pain ✓ Arthritis
5	<i>Bone inlay/outlay</i>	✓ Coughing ✓ Bone smell ✓ Arthritis
6	<i>Coral shell inlay/outlay</i>	✓ Coughing ✓ Arthritis

The nature of work is labour intensive and requires continuous sitting at one place for a punishing stretch of time (usually 8-10 hours). The work involves frequent cuts on hands, legs and sometimes even major cuts could happen. But the units where these artisans are working do not have medical provisions as basic as the first aid. They are not even granted any leaves and in case the artisans take a day off from the work due to some injury, s/he would not be paid for that the day. The unit doesn't remain closed even on Sundays' such that the artisans are subjected to work 56 hours a week on an average (7 days \* 8 hours per day). Most of the small unit owners work as contract labour and do not provide any monetary or non-monetary benefits to the workers during marriages, pregnancy, health issues, etc. When asked about the number of holidays they avail artisans claimed that they hardly get leave for 3-4 days round the year. However, in case they take leave apart from these days, their one day wage is deducted. It was also identified that many of the artisans working at the unskilled and semi-skilled level (basically SCs/STs) consume overdose of pain killer on a frequent basis to avoid the body pain and be able to go for work the next day.

There are some units which function in house (domestic spaces) and since the work involves generation of wood dust, camel bone powder, coral shell dust, etc., it harms other members of the family, including children. The lower caste women artisans usually had to carry their infants/ children (below 5 years of age) to the workplace. Exposure to such a harmful environment at the work place severely impacts these infants/ small children leading to health problems.

### Aspirations of the artisans

This section describes the aspirations of the lower and upper caste artisans. The SCs/STs artisans have low aspiration and lack entrepreneurial thought. They have been exploited (feel demoralized) to the extent that they do not think themselves as capable of taking decisions independently. From the survey, it was observed that most of the artisans are afraid to open their own venture despite having decades of experience. There are several factors such as non-availability of finance, lack of market linkages and institutional support, etc. which impairs such decisions. But the most dominant reason pointed out in the survey was the *fear of not knowing how to run the business*. On the other hand, *there were many artisans at the skilled and few at the semi-skilled level from the upper caste who have opened their own units and work as a labour contractor. They are privileged to take their own decisions and have a financial backup, institutional support, etc.*

The low aspirations among the SCs/STs is quite visible in their response to the questions, for instance when asked how they envision their future generations. Many of them wanted their children to work in this sector owing to a lack of economic opportunities available to them and least/no prospect of education to their children. Thus, the reason for them joining this field is lack of education, employment opportunities and last but not the least, the sector do not require them to migrate elsewhere.

### Satisfaction and willingness matrix of the artisans

Table 5, given below, represents the matrix of satisfaction and willingness level of different artisans categories. The major focus would be the semi-skilled and unskilled artisans as they are the ones coming from the socially disadvantaged groups.

**Table 5: Satisfaction and willingness matrix for the artisans**

Artisans	Satisfaction?		Willingness?	
	Yes/No	Reason	Yes/No	Reason
Master	No	it has become common, no recognition and support from government	Yes	save the art
Skilled	No	not getting proper price for the amount of hard work	Yes	no other options available
Semi-Skilled & Unskilled	Yes	daily income and no migration	No	no alternative
Skilled small unit owner	Yes	gives an additional income as compared to being an artisan	No	increased competition for wage labour

From the matrix, it is clear that lack of employment opportunities and daily continuous flow of income have enforced the lower caste groups to join and stick to the handicraft sector. The conditions of being struck in a particular situation where they could hardly foresee a better alternative reinforces them to stick to this sector. Thus, their wiliness to remain in the sector can also be seen as a compulsion.

## **Cases from the field**

### **A male artisan from Gameti community (Scheduled Tribes)**

A survey was conducted with, say KP-1 (Key Participant-1), who belonged to the Gameti community. Upon critically interviewing KP-1, there were several observations and feedback received. The KP-1 aged 27 years working as an unskilled artisan in a small unit ran by a labour contractor who belongs to Others category. He is has received education up to 6th standard and has been in this field for the past three years. He is married and has the responsibility of feeding four people (wife, two children, and mother). Before entering this sector, he was employed in the hospitality sector as a waiter but due to frequent leaves taken during his wife's pregnancy, the owner of the hotel fired him from the job. Currently, the wage KP-1 gets for a day's work of 8 hours is Rs. 200, i.e. Rs. 6000 a month provided he works for all the 30 days in a month. However, upon asking whether he would prefer working in this sector, KP-1 expressed his helplessness as he had the responsibility of feeding the family and there were no availability of any other probable alternative either to him. While discussing the treatment that he receives at the workplace, it was identified that there is huge discrimination especially in terms of wages. Citing an example, KP-1 told there was an unskilled artisan who had recently joined received relatively higher daily wage (Rs. 250) as compared to him. Reason being the newcomer belonged to the same caste as that of the owner of the unit, i.e. Rajput category. Again, many a time the unit owner did not deduct any amount even if this newly joined artisan left work without completing prescribed 8 hours of days' work. Whereas, in a similar instance of leaving the work in-between due to family emergency the owner had cut wage of the respondent KP-1 as per the hours left in the day to complete.

### **A female artisan from Damor community (Scheduled Tribes)**

Here, the Key Participant-2 (KP-2) is a female artisan belonging to Damor community (Scheduled Tribes) having age of 32 years and six members in her family. Family members include three children, husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law. Husband is working as rickshaw puller/driver in the Udaipur city. As single person earning was not enough to run the house, she joined this handicraft work for supplementing family income. She is in this sector from past eight years. The skill sets she has gained across the years rightfully makes her eligible to be considered as a semi-skilled artisan. However, when cross-checked her case of eligibility with the unit owner (a labour contractor), the owner ran down her claim saying she was an unskilled artisan. This act of running down her claim was directly linked to her wage. Like other unskilled artisans she was also being paid Rs. 200 for 10 hours of work per day. Such outright discriminations are very much prevalent in the sector though which contractors belonging to upper caste perpetuates exploitation. The exploited female artisans KP-2 could not afford to lose job and since the contractor, deceitfully, was aware of the fact that she was in dire need of job for her family's sustenance.

### **A male artisan from Gameti community (Scheduled Tribes)**

Here, the Key Participant-3 (KP-3) is from the Gameti community (Scheduled Tribes) aged 38 years. He is considered to be semi-skilled artisan by the unit owner who belongs to OBC category. KP-3 has three members in his family (two children and wife). He is working in this handicraft sector since past 18 years and while having a

conversation with him, it came out he is enough experienced to be counted as skilled artisans. But just because he belongs to lower category, he is paid the wage according to semi-skilled artisans (Rs. 400 per day). However, KP-3 made an attempt to approach District Industrial Centre (DIC) for obtaining an artisan card using which he could set up his own small unit by purchasing required machines from bank loan at cheaper rates. However, due to the lengthy bureaucratic process and hassles, KP-3 failed to obtain it.

It is important to note that one of the major factor responsible for the success of upper caste labour contractor is the availability of artisan card with them. The artisan card is basically an identity card which gives an individual a tag of being an acknowledged artisan. It also specifies the specialization of the artisans. The advantage of having artisan card are: a) free insurance every year; b) bank loan up to 2 lacs at minimal interest rates and without collateral; c) scholarships to children of the artisans with specified criteria; and d) invitation to several national and international exhibitions to display their skills. With such benefits being fully utilized by the upper caste artisans and absence of the same with the lower caste artisans has further aggravated the scenario of discrimination. Thus, instead of extending support to the deserving lower caste artisans, the Artisan Card plays a pivotal role in furthering the discrimination.

#### **A male artisan from Banjare community (Scheduled Caste)**

The Key Participant-4 (KP-4) belongs to the Banjare community, a Scheduled Caste person aged 39 years. He has received no education and having four family members to feed, one child, wife, mother and father. Since he belongs to Banjare community that keeps on moving from one location to another, he keeps on changing the labour contractor as per new locations. However, recently there was an incident that happened due to which he left the handicraft sector. One of the working days at the unit, he somehow got his left hand's nerves cut. Seeing the blood profusely gushing out of his hand, other artisans tied clothes to check the bleeding. Two of the artisans supported him to reach to the nearest hospital. An expense of Rs. 350 was anchored on account of this entire mishap. After a week's rest, he went back to join the unit but, eventually, denied to join work by the contractor. Upon asking the reason by KP-4, the contractor bluntly replied to him that since he had taken a week long holiday the owner had replaced him by another artisan hired soon after the mishap. Even the day when KP-4 met with an accident, he was not paid the wage of that day. This time also the contractor denied paying his dues. The excuse of not paying him as given by the owner was because on the day of mishap KP-4 had worked only till lunch and there were two other artisans who had to spend two-three hours of their work in taking him to the hospital. As a result of such a cruel form of violent KP-4 left this sector and at the time of interview he was working as a security guard in a hotel.

#### **A male labour contractor from Rajput community (Others)**

The Key Participant-5 (KP-5) belongs to Rajput community (upper caste) aged 36 years. He works as a labour contractor and has the unit situated in Badi village of Badgaon block. There are 13 employees working in his unit wherein seven of them are from the SCs/STs category and six are from the general category. In terms of gender, there are only two female artisans. Discussions with the KP-5 exposed underlying scale and extent of discrimination against lower caste artisans in the sector. The space provided for keeping the respective belongings of the artisans was bifurcated in two parts



based on caste. Similarly, the lunch area was bifurcated according to the same logic. Such practices represent the level of discrimination possible in informal sectors such as this.

These were five cases of social and economic discrimination practiced against the lower caste people. Even the government and local administrative bodies have been playing the role of a catalyst towards worsening the situation and curtailing the hope for the socially disadvantaged social groups having no alternative but to eke out livelihood from this sector.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it is clear that even after having so many mechanisms, laws, and policies devised to provide safeguards against social discrimination, it occurs and in different forms and in shuttle ways. The steps taken by policymakers to curb discrimination might have shown appealing results in the formal sector but the informal sector has its own setup where it is still very much prevalent. And lack of any formal support system and institutions to guide the sector has further aggravated the scenario especially for the lower castes. The case discussed here entails just about one sector of one district and of a single state. There can be a high probability of similar conditions prevailing in other parts of the country as well. The major pitfall of such discrimination for the socially disadvantaged groups is that they are pushed away or ignored from several opportunities that they as an individual or groups would be capable enough to capitalize upon.

Finally, the limitation of this paper includes a lack of analysis of emotional context (psychological impact) on the socially disadvantaged groups who are being subjected to outright discrimination. The data discussed here about the discrimination in the handicraft sector might be useful to analyse other informal sectors or types of small and medium scale enterprises/ industries.

### **Recommendations**

1. The small units in the cluster area are not registered with the MSME ministry. As per the MSME criteria, any unit having a minimum of 10 employees have to abide by certain rules and regulations. Some of the major ones include providing social security to the artisans and safe occupational working environment. Formalizing the units would bring them in the purview of the government and would subject them to public scrutiny. This would ensure proper regulation on their activities.

2. There should be regular monitoring of the government schemes designed for socially disadvantaged groups. For example, in the handicraft sector, there are many lower caste people who are not having an artisan card which is a central government's scheme. The lack of artisan card makes it difficult for these persons to identify themselves as an artisan, thereby depriving them of a range of benefits of governmental schemes meant for them. Also, the process should be simplified for this group of people in order to make the benefits accessible to them.

3. Many a time, there are incidences where a person intentionally or unintentionally engages in social discrimination. This is due to lack of awareness and sensitization on the issue. Thus, capacity building and awareness programmes should be conducted especially targeting the informal sector for both the upper caste and lower caste category. This will ensure sensitization against caste-based discrimination.

4. Here is a dearth of a cluster development approach in such a setup where a large number of people work together having similar opportunities and challenges. Having cluster development approach would bring all the artisans to work under a similar environment that could be properly monitored. Cluster development ensures there is a suitable training process for all the artisans and transparency is maintained. This model has been successful in similar other clusters such as Varanasi cluster, Chanderi cluster, etc. Moreover, working in a cluster with hundreds of artisans develops a sense of belongingness and acts as a catalyst in overcoming such discrimination.

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