The Community in Dilemma: Responses of Santhals to the Globalization

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Abstract

Globalization is often associated with the integration of the world, with the market breaking open the barriers across nation states in terms of flow of trade, finance, technology, knowledge, culture and even movements of people. It is supposed to be a leveler, with universal benefits, reaching out all countries and all their residents uniformly. It has been a qualitative change for society, economy, institutions, and world over which has generated a three-tier structure of society consisting of the elites, the well to middle class and the marginalized. The present paper aims to deal, in particular, with the limitations of the ongoing process and its failure to achieve ‘people-centric development’. Instead, the fruits of globalization have not trickle down to tribal areas fully. The study revealed that though globalization is universal phenomenon but its effect is not homogenous at micro level. Thus, Globalization is causing profound and complex changes in the very nature tribal society, bringing new opportunities as well as risks. Developing countries like India will have to learn to manage the process far more skillfully and efficiently for the sustainable development of the country. Globalization affects tribes differently. The gains of globalization have so far accrued to those who already have education and skill advantage, easier market access and possession of assets for use as collateral to access credit. For the tribal society, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of job security, and lack of health care and tribal development programs.

Keywords: Globalization, local markets, typical products, experience economy.
**Introduction:**

In India, the New Economic Policy that was the harbinger of globalization to India was initiated in 1991. Over the last decade, the open market policy of the Indian Government has resulted in increased privatization, huge lay-off of labor, rise of corruption, and heavy debts on the nation. The benefits of development touted under globalization have not reached the poorest sections of the society. The disparity between the rich and the poor has widened. Its disturbing impact on family and the drastic erosion of traditional social life is a main concern.

There is widespread economic insecurity brought about by profound changes in trade, finance and technology. Poverty under globalization has assumed newer dimensions. Under the market friendly regime, the poor, the marginalized that have no entitlements (land, other income, yielding assets, social securities, employment etc.) are kept out of market, both legally and logically. In the light of this, the paper intends to deal in particular with the limitations of the on-going process and its failure to achieve ‘people-centric’ development among Santhals of Jamshedpur. However, it also inquires the contours of more sensible path of globalization with equity and social justice, and responds to the public demand and sentiments for a better world which provides ample space for all. I begin with the hypothesis that “though globalization is said to be universal phenomenon but its effect is not homogeneous at micro-level”. The work is the outcome of one month rigorous fieldwork among Santhals of Jamshedpur, Jharkhand which is primarily agriculturalist, occasionally work as skilled or unskilled laborers, belongs to Austro-Asiatic origin, have sound knowledge of arts and aesthetics and moreover they are said to be the largest tribe of Jharkhand being bestowed with rich cultural heritage.

Taking words from Rangrajan, broadly speaking, the term ‘globalization’ means integration of economies and societies through cross country flows of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and people. Cross border integration can have several dimensions – cultural, social, political and economic. In fact, some people fear cultural and social integration even more than economic integration. The fear of “cultural hegemony” haunts many. Limiting ourselves to economic integration, one can see this

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happening through the three channels of (a) trade in goods and services, (b) movement of capital and (c) flow of finance. Besides, there is also the channel through movement of people. Thus if the end of nineteenth century underlines the distressing effects of industrial revolution and colonialism, the end of twentieth century witnesses the emergence of two paradoxical processes: globalization: a process that cuts across the boundaries of nations, cultures and societies privileging a move towards larger integration of the world and facilitating interdependence moving towards a global culture; and (ii) resistances to globalization: in the form of a vehement articulation of the local for preservation of indigenous cultures and identities. At one extreme, globalization is seen as an irresistible and benign force for delivering economic prosperity to people throughout the world. At the other, it is blamed as a source of all contemporary ills.

**Literature review:**

Indigenous peoples are on the cusp of the crisis in sustainable development. Their communities are concrete examples of sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse ecosystems. Today, they face the challenges of extinction or survival and renewal in a globalised world. The impact of globalization is strongest on these populations perhaps more than any other because these communities have no voice and are therefore easily swept aside by the invisible hand of the market and its proponents. Globalization is not merely a question of marginalization for indigenous peoples it is a multi-pronged attack on the very foundation of their existence and livelihoods.

The forest occupies a central position in tribal culture and economy. The tribal way of life is very much dictated by the forest right from birth to death. It is ironical that the poorest people of India are living in the areas of richest natural resources. Historically, tribals has been pushed to corners owing to economic interests of various dominant groups. In social structural terms, Globalisation is a historical process of transition from the agrarian-industrial, post-industrial and finally the stage of the information society (Dissanayake, 1988).

Although geography and distance still matter, it is nevertheless the case that globalization is synonymous with a process of ‘**time-space compression**’. That is to say a ‘**shrinking world**’ in which the sources of even very local developments, from unemployment to ethnic conflict, may be traced to distant conditions or decisions (**Baylis and Smith 2011**).
To sum up this point, it can be argued that ‘contemporary globalization’ is a multi-dimensional, uneven and asymmetrical process. Thus, ‘contemporary globalization’ is best described as a thick form of globalization or globalism. To quote Anthony Mcgrew (2011), however, “contemporary globalization” is not a singular process: it is manifest within all aspects of social life, from politics to production, culture to crime, and economics to education. It is implicated directly and indirectly in many aspects of our lives, from cloth we wear, the food we eat, the knowledge we accumulate, through to our individual and collective sense of security in uncertain world. Evidence of globalization is all around us: universities are literally global institutions, from recruitment of students to the dissemination of academic research. To understand contemporary globalization therefore requires a mapping of the distinctive patterns of worldwide interconnectedness in all the key sectors of social activity, from economic and the political through to the military, the cultural, and the ecological”.

**Methodology:**

We have used a combination of primary research in the field, and secondary data, and combines quantitative and qualitative elements. Prior to fieldwork, I collected as much relevant current and historical secondary data as possible, including information on crops, rainfall, livestock holdings, fishing, income data, market prices, relief/ development interventions, nutrition surveys, education statistics and anthropological research. These are used both to help guide the direction of primary research and for cross-checking information collected in the field. Primary research is then carried out using a variety of standard Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques to gather the information needed to carry out the analysis described above. The main tool is the semi-structured interview, carried out either with focus groups of purposively sampled households or community leaders, or with specific key informants from particular sectors or activities (e.g. a grain trader, a government fisheries expert). Within these interviews, RRA tools such as seasonal calendars, historical timelines, resource mapping, wealth differentiation, ranking and proportional piling are used to elicit and cross-check information. Unlike most RRA/PRA-based research, in our work we try to quantify information in addition to getting a descriptive picture. This is done by asking in detail about each activity, and cross-checking and triangulating information within interviews and between different information sources to ensure that a consistent and logical picture emerges. The tools used improve our ability to capture the reality of the people we are studying.
II

Now let us return to ‘Culture’ at large. Globalization is accompanied by a need to homogenize the product, even the cultural product. The more homogenous the product, the greater the market it has withered. Where ever you go in the world, you will have the same soaps, same toothpaste, pizza, hamburger, sprawling retail food chains like Mc’D, KFC and the same sort of other products that you will find in our country. The homogenization of the product is the first step in a globalised economy for maximization of profits by the multinational corporations. Homogenization of products also has a natural consequence in the homogenization of culture. Studies have shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa, people may not have anything to eat; they may not know how to read and write but the moment you show them Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse, and they will recognize it. This is homogenization of a certain thought process and homogenization of certain symbols. Homogenization of symbols requires cultural products to be produced on mass scale. One immediate impact is that all the rich variations in the cultural legacies will be eliminated in order to create the homogenized product. This is the essence of culture of globalization -- homogenization of cultural products and symbols. Impact of Globalization in India has also many other dimensions. It has wide ranging impact on everything else connected with our lives. It influences our entire culture or the entire value system, on the milieu in which we are living. Again I go back to Marx. 150 years ago, he actually said that capitalism not only produces the object for the subject but it also produces subjects for the object. He made a very penetrating statement. In today’s advertising world if you see this what is actually being created. You are creating human beings who are capable of consuming certain products. The emphasis is no longer on creating the products that are required by the human beings rather creating human beings that are required for the products. This is essentially the defining feature of culture under Globalization. Human beings are reduced to the status of products who will consume the other products that capitalism produces. This entire trend of culture -- consumerism, degeneration etc -- creates its own atmosphere which affects every aspect of our life and society.

III

Santhals World View

Inhabiting the northern region of India, in an area covering six states, the Santhals are descendents of the oldest human in India. Indeed linguistic evidence shows these tribes
ancestors as part of the original human migration out of Africa. While written script for Santhali is a recent invention, the Santhali language is a form of the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family rather than the Aryan family of dialect common to much of India. The uniqueness of the Santhali language and script has become a political tool in Jharkhand where heavy pressure for Santhali as secondary official language has recently surged. The village of Santhals is located mostly in forested areas, where members hunt, fish or clear the land for rice cultivation. While many people choose to remain in their traditional village in present in present day, another significant population has joined the industrial workforce in coal mines, steel factories or large scale agriculture. The Santhals have 12 clans with a caste system based on descent. Marriage is strictly into different clans. Those that marry within their own clan are seen as incestuous and driven out of the tribe. Each village has its own judicial system, priest and hereditary leader. While the Santhali have their own cosmogony (or creation of myth) and practice animism to some degree (as a Christine would prey to saints, the Santhali animism pray for favors from intermediaries including ancestor Ghosts and God natural features). They are mostly followers of the ‘Sarana’ religion, a believe system following Singbonga, or the Sun God. The Santhals tribe was the first to rebel against British colonial presence in the late 1700s, protesting their enslavement by a fellow tribe that received direct sanction and assistance of the British military. Though the rebellion was unsuccessful, it remained a point of pride with the Santhali people and was a source of inspiration for later revolutionaries in India from the 1850s on. Art, music and dance are highly prized in Santhali culture. Physical mediums of art such as painting or sculpture use mythological figures or ancestors as their subjects. What truly sets the Santhali apart, however, is their music and dance. Beginning with the instruments themselves, Santhali music is predominantly flute and drum. These instruments are typically elaborated decorated and are believed to have the power to communicate with the dead. Instruments can be passed down through generations or occasionally are cremated with the body of the owner. Songs are communal in nature. Though new songs are frequently created, the author gives his or her song to the community as soon as it is composed; there is no private ownership of music. Dances are held at all major life occasions namely Birth, marriage, death and along with all periods of the agricultural calendar. In addition the Santhals also hold courting dances on full moon nights and welcoming dances when people from other clan visit, but these are more informal social gatherings. The purpose of these dances is as varied as their occasion, but the overall emphasis of every dance is to reinforce community identity and solidarity. Because of highly ritualized dance ceremonies and festivals, strong, separate language and tribal sovereignty
within Indian state, the Santhals have maintained their identity and cohesiveness over centuries when bombarded with invasion, new government, and technologies even into the modern era. This diversity is evident in the costumes, rituals, and religious practices of the people that differ from tribe to tribe even.

IV

1. Social Impact on Santhals

The social dimension of globalization refers to the impact of globalization on the life and work of people, on their families and their societies. This section looks beyond economic variables to focus on how globalization has affected peoples’ lives and will try to go deeper into these topics and provide some theoretical and empirical answers to the question of whether globalization is good for employment, poverty alleviation and income redistribution within these tribal societies.

 Extreme income poverty has badly affected Santhals tribes compelling them for migration. Unemployment is another issue which is hovering in the minds of youth. Sometime these also lead to deviation and they are easily trapped by ‘Naxalite’ leader for waging the incessant battle against the local state government. Tribals on one hand allege that they are harassed by the police if they don't co-operate in anti-Naxal operations. If they help the police then it means death at the hands of the Naxals. Life for the tribals was always a struggle but brutal execution of government officers like has made it worse. "People don't like violence but with so much unemployment they often get attracted to the Naxal folds. However, they soon realize that that Naxal style of functioning is not good and therefore they leave. Naxals say that the government's apathy towards the tribals and under development in the region is the reason for their existence. But developmental work by Naxals is also limited. They focus more on discrediting the state machinery. Therefore, “Naxalism” in this area is a political problem. Socio-economic causes are just fodder to aggravate their problems further. But in a space where both the state and the Naxals have failed, Christian missionaries have stepped in. They work to ensure education and healthcare facilities. In some places, road connectivity linking villages in the interiors gives the tribals some hope. Though, Poverty, under development and exploitation of people has often been cited as the reason for the Naxal battle against the state. But in a few belts of these regions everything from looting banks to beheading Taliban-style is getting passed off as the work of Naxals and the people are the end losers. Development has been a far cry and atrocities both by the police and the Naxals has become the norm.
Therefore, cultural modernization, sponsored by the forces of globalization, is resented if it encroaches upon or does not promote the core cultural values of society, its language, social practices and styles of life. The vigor of the renewed sense of self-awareness generated among the members of the local cultures and communities and regions in India, which have existed historically, reinforce instead of threatening the national identity. These bonds seem to become stronger as India encounters the forces of modernization and globalization.

Despite the existence of tenancy laws that seek to protect adivasi rights to land in the Santhals Pargana, recent years have seen the considerable transfer of land from adivasi to contractors mainly through privately negotiated, temporary lease arrangements. This has serious implications for the employment and health of local populations as well as for the sustenance, in the long term, of common property resources and local livelihoods. At the same time, siltation and flooding in the upstream and lower reaches of the dam have rendered cultivable land in several villages useless. As most of the adivasi population in the region depends on agriculture for its livelihood, the need to revise and rethink development strategies is of utmost importance.

Problem operating in the core area of “Damin-I-Koh” is also of grave concern. As per the Santhals Pargana Tenancy act (1949spl.) powers to justice and administration have been entrusted to the traditional leaders of the Santhals communities residing in Damin-I-Koh since its formation in the year 1832-33. In the record of right of SPT Act, it is clearly stated that the land, revenue, community decision and policing power in the Damin-I-Koh is vested in the traditional leaders of the tribal community. Rights of the traditional leaders and community are also recognized by PESA-1996. But the community people and its leader are still hankering after to revive their rights. In the course of time and by the overlapping of several laws, the traditional governance system in the villages have been disintegrated resulting into illegal extraction of natural resources, massive exploitation, land alienation, non-functioning of govt. service centers, migration and other several problems created alarming situation before community. Thus people strongly reiterated their demands to revive their self-governance system.

V

2. Conclusion

To sum up there is urgent need to see globalization with human face. The one issue which came to the fore time and time again was employment and livelihoods. While people largely
favor more openness and interconnection between societies, they are much less positive when asked about the impact on their jobs and incomes. “There is no point to a process of globalization that reduces the price of a child’s shoes, but costs the father his job”. Since globalization is only one of many factors affecting people’s lives, the dialogues sparked broader debate on the role of the market in society and how the needs and aspirations of people can be expressed and met in their own communities. It was widely argued that progress was impeded by the unfair rules of the global economy. These were biased in favor of the rich and powerful and neglected the social impact of economic policies. The adverse effects were sometimes strikingly similar in different parts of the world.

Markets are not very friendly to the poor, to the weak or to the vulnerable, either nationally or internationally. Nor are markets free. Thus, “there is a growing feeling that we live in a world highly vulnerable to changes we cannot control; a growing sense of fragility among ordinary people, countries and entire regions”. All these have aroused sense of instability and insecurity.

In a capitalist economy, all are not in a position to compete in the market. Some like Tribal’s who do not have enough education, health and nutrition to compete will fall outside the market place. That is why much better distribution of income and assets, of credit, of power structures and certainly of knowledge and skills are vital to making markets work more efficiently. Markets cannot become more neutral or competitive unless the playing field is even and playable. Furthermore, it has been accepted as an undisputed fact that rural and tribal particularly women, have a very intimate and symbiotic relationship with the ecology around them as they are untenably linked to the natural resources. People adversely affected by development have been mainly dalits and tribals and among them women, who suffer even severe forms of discrimination. Repeated displacement, migration and drastic changes in livelihood patterns have socially and culturally denuded the status of the indigenous people, increasing violence and abuse against them.

Thus, it has posed severe threat to the ‘Culture’ and ‘identity’ of Santhals of this region. The socio-cultural change among the tribal communities has no doubt empowered the tribal’s; however, their cultural identity is under severe stress. However, it is not too late to rise above the politics of exclusion and marginalization, to unearth and mainstream fast vanishing tribal traditions, whether in India, or in African countries. Perhaps it’s time to amplify long marginalized voices and awaken contemporary nation States to the realization that only through the establishment of such democratic, reconciliatory, gender friendly grass root tribal traditions could one create a more equitable, more just society and world order.
The reality remaining that without rapid action, these native communities may be wiped out, taking with them vast indigenous knowledge, rich culture and traditions, and any hope of preserving the natural world, and a simpler, more holistic way of life for future generations.

Thus, globalization does hold out great promise if it is managed properly. However, it will only work if the winners share with the losers. So, when we plan for tribal development, we have to regard these differences, take a special note of their situations and capabilities and provide them facilities to develop on the line they want to take. Outsiders cannot develop tribals; they can only become facilitators if they want to do so. If they have to unfold from within, they must have participation in any development decision. Their felt needs should be transformed in development programs. But again, tribals can participate in their development programs only if they are considered to be equals and if unique identities are respected.

Furthermore, we cannot leave ‘people-centric’ development to the serendipity of market forces. Rather than retreat, the State must forge new smart partnerships with the “private sector and the institutions of civil society”. Thus need of the hour is to search for a fair globalization which would create opportunity for all. I repeat metaphorically that “if globalization is a river, we must build dams to generate power”. However, throughout the discourse, my humble submission was to see globalization from a wider perspectives, in regions throughout the world through the prism / lens of micro- analysis of Santhals of Jamshedpur that how it had affected people’s lives; what hopes, fears and concerns it had aroused; and what action people believe should be taken to expand its opportunities and reduce its insecurities. A recurring theme that emerged was that ‘to take advantage of the opportunities of globalization’, people and countries had to invest in education, skills and technological capabilities across the board. Education systems needed reform and illiteracy has to be tackled. In fact, the whole process had to be managed to make it more inclusive. However, all these need / require better governance at all level.
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