CHAPTER 2

SOURCES OF DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The theoretical and conceptual issues discussed in the first chapter bring into focus the nature of contradictions that are built into the structure of a social system. Its comprehensive mapping in economic, socio-cultural and political domain overtime would require exploring a great number of subjects with a variety of methods. At micro level we analysed the debate relating to the mode of production and keeping in mind the specific characteristic of the Indian situation we tried to identify the relations of production under semi-feudal set up.

A detailed study of a tribal community in the present context calls for a close examination of the factors which affect their styles of living. The challenges that they face now are relatively different from the challenges that they faced earlier. Therefore, a study of the tribal community even in the present involves the events of past to be used as a flashback to examine the present tribal situation. Two hard facts explicit in the case of tribal communities in general and the Santhals in particular are usually observed. First is the intense exploitations of the Santhals which started with the British administrative rule and second is their determined effort to liberate themselves from the exploitative structure inherent in the production process resulting into protest movement.
In order to examine the economic and social formations, our study required a close scrutiny of the ethnographic and historical studies. Besides the ethnographic, historical and anthropological studies, we have also studied the documentary sources relating to the district Santhal Pargana after it came into existence (in 1855) by Act xxxvii of 1855. The creation of the district, Santhal Pargana was the direct outcome of the Santhal Rebellion of 1855. Since then (especially after independence) several administrative changes have come about which have substantially changed the administrative positions of the district. For example, since June 1983, the Santhal Pargana has been divided into four districts namely, Dumka, Deoghar, Godda and Sahibganj, each under the administrative control of a deputy commissioner. Further, Santhal Pargana has been made a division with its headquarters at Dumka under a commissioner. The various documentary sources and official reports such as Gazetteers, Settlement Reports, District Census Handbook, Commissioner’s Report on Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, etc., provide graphic details on tribal administration.

Another aspect of tribal life on which the documentary evidence throws light relates to the gradual erosion of tribal life from the colonial times onward. The policies and the programmes introduced by the colonial rulers brought about substantial transformation of the tribal life. No wonder the
scholars writing on the tribal society considers the colonial period as an important phase which has its effect on economic, socio-cultural and political life of the tribal groups.

2.1 SOURCES OF DATA

Contemporary political commentaries that appear from time to time in newspapers throw light on the functioning of administration in tribal areas and the tribal response to the programmes of the government. Since the information collected through the secondary sources did not provide adequate micro information, we also felt the need of having first hand information about the tribal people through field work research. For this, we selected four villages from two blocks after having surveyed the blocks vulnerable to tension and conflict. Thus we used the following four sources of data:

(a) Documentary Sources
(b) Ethnographic and Anthropological Accounts
(c) Contemporary Political Commentaries by Journalists
(d) Fieldwork Research

The four broad categories, which have been identified here, cover a variety of subjects available on the Santhals. Examining the studies on the Santhals under four-fold categories mentioned above may help in comprehending the Santhals' situation in different historical periods. Here when we talk of historical periods we mean those important historical phases which had a
substantial bearing on the Santhal social, political and economic life.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES: This category includes those materials which are available in the form of Gazetteers, Census and Settlement Reports, the Report of the Commission for Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe, States’ Statistical Handbook, District Census Handbook, etc. Most of the materials provided through these publications furnish details about the Santhal’s history, composition of population, agriculture, industry, land revenue administration, education and culture, medical and public health services, communications, etc. Data on agriculture is contained in detail in the settlement reports. It also contains information on types of land and the nature of cropping pattern. It also provides us list of the jamabandi raiyats, in each village. It is interesting to note that the list of jamabandi raiyats prepared first time between 1872-79 and the one prepared between 1922-35 showed the inclusion of non-tribals as well. The Santhals viewed the outsiders entry in the lists with disapproval.

The first Settlement Report in this area was started during Brown Wood’s time (i.e., between 1872-1879) and it was concluded under the supervision of Mr. Cravern. Therefore, it is known as Cravern’s Settlement Report. The second Settlement operation was started by Mcpherson and concluded by Mr. H.L.L.Allanson, who succeeded Mcpherson in 1905. The period of the second Settlement
of Mcpherson and Allanson was confined to 1878-1906. It is called Mcpherson's Settlement Report. The third settlement started in 1922 and it was concluded in 1935 under the supervision of Mr. J. F. Gantzer. The period of third Settlement Report ranged between 1922-1935. It is called Gantzer Settlement Report. The settlement operation after independence is currently in progress and has yet not been completed. However, the Report renders useful material for understanding Santhal's social and economic life.

There are three gazetteers which came into print in 1910, 1938, and 1965 respectively. Its authors were L.S.S.O'Malley, S.C. Mukherjee and P.C. Roy. Chaudhary. The 1931 Census of India Report by J.H. Hutton provide detailed ethnographic information on the various tribal communities of India. It also contains valuable extracts from the ethnographic reports prepared by the scholars earlier. The 1951 Census of India Report by Ashok Mitra stands out among other Census Reports on two accounts: Firstly, it is the only Census Report after independence which takes into account the time dimension in presenting the factual details about different tribal communities. Secondly, as a result of its historical perspective, the descriptive account presented here serves a useful purpose of providing facts in a historical frame which is quite helpful in understanding the social and economic life of the tribal communities.

contain block-wise detailed information on Santhal's social, demographic, economic and political life. Similarly Russel's Report of 1938 on Santhal Pargana provides an exhaustive description of the agricultural life of the tribal community. It presents a detailed account of the land revenue administration of the region. The Commission's Reports of 1978-79, 1980-1981, 1983-84 and 1985-86 on Scheduled castes and tribes also provide useful information about their social and economic conditions. Besides providing details about tribal representation in different groups of services, it also furnishes details on the incidents of the atrocities committed on the tribals. The details of the incidents of violence in different blocks came very handy while selecting the village from the blocks for field work study.

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS: The second category of work includes those studies where facts have been analysed with reference to the history of the tribal community in general. Some of the studies under this category could be considered as excellent pieces of ethnographic study. E. T. Daltons' (1871) book entitled DESCRIPTIVE ETHNOLOGY OF BENGAL deserves special mention. Although there is a paucity of anthropological studies on particular themes especially relating to economic activities of a tribal group and their exploitation in the market. The studies which are available on the Santhal's life throw light on their socio-cultural activities. P.O. Bodding (1921, 1942), R.
Carstairs (1935), K.K. Datta (1940), W.G. Archer (1945) N. Datta Majumdar (1956), Charulal Mukherjee (1962), Martin Orans (1965), Sachchidanand (1969), George Somers (1977), M. K. Gautam (1977), Joseph Troisi (1976), J. Macdougall (1977) - all provide details of the Santhals' socio-cultural life but they do not bring into sharp focus the emerging contradictions of the tribal life vis-a-vis the state. R.N. Maharaj and K.G. Iyer's study based on empirical data tries to analyse the contradictory features in the Government's development strategies and the Santhals response to those contradictory features. Similarly, Edward Dyukers' (1987) study on the Guerilla activities of the Santhals throws light on the Santhals' involvement in organising themselves against their exploiters along radical lines. He has especially provided details about the guerilla activities resorted to by the Santhals under Naxalite influence. However such studies are rare.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL COMMENTARIES BY JOURNALISTS: The third kind of literature, especially the political commentaries by the journalists comprises those write ups which periodically take up the tribal problems for debate and discussion. Some of the noted journalists who have covered different forms of protest and problems pertaining to the tribal community are Arun Kumar Sinha, Darryl De Monto, Janak Sing, Ashish Kumar Bose, H. Dhar and Arvind Narayan Das. Besides these journalists' write ups, there are quite a few editorials in the local newspapers which have
flashed tribal problems from time to time. These writings help us to have an understanding of the local situations that obtained from time to time. Government schemes on forestry, contractors' mischief in felling trees in the tribal areas, the nature and functioning of the tribal markets, moneylender's deceptive tricks, the plight of bonded labour, illegal land transactions, police harassment of the Santhals, flesh trading, factional politics and other issues of this kind have featured repeatedly in the local as well as the daily national newspapers.

These write ups, no doubt lack historical depth and analytical focus, but the descriptive and narrative accounts of the events discussed in them provide rich information. The advantage of using such journalistic material is threefold. First of all it helps in furnishing details about the micro-level situation. Secondly, it helps us in understanding the problems of topical importance at macro level. Thirdly, the local newspapers capture the prevailing Santhal sentiments and views their response to non-tribals and government programmes and policies.

FIELDWORK RESEARCH: The tribal research in general is a legacy of the social anthropological tradition of field work. This type of research on the tribal community was nothing strange to the researcher interested in studying Indian tribes. However, the field work research necessitated a certain degree of commitment to research and, therefore, it was natural for a researcher to
devise ways to get an entry into the tribal village. One such method was the participant observation method, which required the researcher to live with the tribal community as one of the members in their villages for years. Therefore, the researcher encountered many problems in the tribal areas. The first problem was researcher's entry in a tribal village. His entry must not arise any suspicion. Second, the purpose of the stay in the village should not be held in secret. For the present study, the school teachers and the students studying in schools were found quite useful in establishing rapport with the villagers. Thirdly, in a tribal village, the language may turn out to be a major handicap. A researcher desirous of applying the method of participant observation must be familiar with the language of the people. During the fieldwork, students and teachers proved useful to the researcher in overcoming this difficulty. Fourthly, participant observation is a time-consuming method. It takes time to be friendly with the people and unless he wins their confidence, it is not possible for him to do justice to his job. John Beattie's (1964:83) sounds a note of caution and concern in this connection when he writes:

Studies of other people's cultures carried out in few weeks or months can be misleading enough when they are made in countries with which the investigator is more or less familiar; they are bound to be even less adequate when the culture is a totally strange one.

Lastly, while using the participant observation method, one must
not lose sight of the objectives with which the researcher started his work. It is also essential for a researcher to establish a link between the observation and the theoretical perspectives.

While conducting the field work research, we participated in the daily life of the village and tried to be present at important events (festivals, ceremonials, weekly markets, meetings, etc). Besides, the participant observation method, we interviewed informants in long unstructured interviews. By using the interview schedule we tried to collect information on the Santhal mode of production, consumption and distribution. In order to have some idea of the modes of production, questions relating to land ownership, method of cultivation and the crops that they produce etc., were asked. Similarly, in order to examine the consumption pattern, we tried to collect information about their expenditure by having an assessment of their income, sources of income and an estimate of their expenditure on marriage and other festivals.

We also collected information on the land holding position of the tribals for the districts, blocks, as well as villages from the Block Development Office and the settlement office. The circle officer gave us the information pertaining to land records. The information thus collected was further verified while recording information pertaining to land holding positions.
of the tribals. How the middlemen exploit the tribals by forcing the Santhals to sell the wood, fruits etc., gathered from the forests was also observed in course of our regular visits to the tribal weekly haat. In this sense even the non-participant observation method was employed for collecting information. Similarly, we tried collecting information about the distribution of the economic resources. Some other questions on which we focussed our attention were: How did the government agencies geared towards looking after the developmental activities in the tribal area extend patronage to the tribal community? How efficient is the government machinery in extending loan facilities to them? How do the tribals view the various developmental efforts of the government meant for removing their economic misery? After having collected the information with the help of various methods of data collection, we gained some insight into the question mentioned above.

2.2 FIELDWORK DESIGN AND SAMPLE SELECTION

Four villages of two different blocks i.e., Jama and Shikaripara were selected for fieldwork. Unless a brief description of the villages selected from these two blocks is given it would not be possible to identify the sources of exploitation operating at the village level. The main objective behind selecting the villages was to understand the perception of the tribals about the exploitative structure operating at a micro-level situation. At the micro-level the structures that
have been operating may be useful in examining the patterns of relationship existing within the Santhals and between them and the non-Santhals.

Depending upon the homogeneous and the heterogeneous character of the village, four villages were selected. The villages dominated exclusively by the Santhals and the villages of mixed type (i.e. Santhals and non-Santhals) from Jama as well as Shikaripara block were selected. Two villages from the Jama block i.e., Thandar Dumaria and Madhuban were selected by using the purposive random sampling method. Thandar Dumaria is a mixed village bearing heterogeneous character whereas Madhuban is a homogeneous village dominated by the Santhals only. Similarly from Shikaripara block two villages namely Pratapur and Jamuguria were selected. Pratapur was purely a Santhal dominated village whereas Jamuguria was a mixed village.

In Shikaripara block the activities of Hul Jharkhand (a political party of the Santhals) was quite pronounced. Besides, the block had earned notoriety because of the hostility existing between the Bhagats (belonging to non-tribal Hindu community) and the Santhals, which had resulted into several incidents of clashes between them.

The four selected villages included two exclusive village of Santhal domination and two of mixed types. In the Shikaripara block Pratappur was an exclusive village of the Santhal
domination while Jamuguria was a village of mixed type. Pratappur had an area of 393.35 hectares as against 131.19 hectares of Jamuguria. There were 118 occupied residential houses in Pratappur while in Jamuguria the number of occupied residential house was 83. The total scheduled tribe population in Pratappur was 671 out of which 97 were literate whereas in Jamuguria the total scheduled tribe population was 480 out of which 129 were literate. This is an indication of the fact that in a Santhal dominated village the percentage of literacy was quite low as compared to the mixed village. In Pratapur village out of 671 the total of the main workers was 425 with females (218) out numbering male workers(207). Again the strength of the female population in the category of the cultivators was quite significant in comparision to the male. There were 217 female cultivators as against 197 male cultivators. As a result of excessive female working participation, the number of non-working population was higher in the male category (132) as against the female(114).

In Jamuguria there were 161 male workers as against 42 female workers. The number of male cultivators was 123 as against 29 female cultivators. Similarly the number of females among non-working group was quite high as compared to the males. There were 180 male non workers.

Similarly in Jama block Thandar Dumaria was a village of mixed type while Madhuban was an exclusive village of Santhal
domination. **Thandar Dumaria** had an area of 188.47 hectares as against 269.87 hectares of Madhuban village. In correspondence with the magnitude of the area the strength of population in **Thandar Dumaria** was 397 whereas it was 457 in Madhuban. In a mixed village the literacy rate was found to be higher as compared to the homogeneous village. **Thandar Dumaria** was a mixed village—where out of 392 people 95 were literate whereas Madhuban was a homogeneous village where out of 457 people 85 of them were literate. The total number of main workers was high in both the mixed as well as homogeneous villages. In **Thandar Dumaria** there were 109 main male workers as against 52 main female workers, whereas in Madhuban there were 114 main male workers as compared to 14 main female workers. When we examined the non-working population we found that in a mixed village, i.e., **Thandar Dumaria** there were 96 male non-workers as compared to 73 female non-workers. On the other hand, in Madhuban, the strength of female non-workers was 131 as against 91 in case of male non-workers.

From Jama block one of the most revered tribal leaders of the Santhals in contemporary times, Sibu Soren contested election in 1985 Assembly elections. Sibu Soren was a Santhal whose personal experience with a non-tribal was quite hostile. He himself had suffered at the hands of the zamindars, moneylenders and the merchant groups. He had mobilised the Santhals during
1970s and formed almost a parallel government. He founded a political party called Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in early 1970 and the activities of this party were quite pronounced in this block. Like Shikaripara, Jama block also experienced several incidents of violent clashes between the Santhals and the non-Santhals. The non-Santhals who occupy residence in the village of Thandar Dumaria are mostly Bhagats who are perceived to have occupied Santhals' land illegally. And this is the recurring source of conflict between them.

All the four sources of data proved useful in research. For a macro analysis the census material, gazetteers etc., were an important source material. Similarly fieldwork research had its own importance because it was only by doing fieldwork research that we could collect useful information for a micro-level analysis. Highlighting the importance of the field work research, Daniel Thorner (1976:4) has observed:

Theoreticians must learn to do fieldwork on the dust, wind and swampy terrain of the villages, while field investigators must be helped to reach a level where they will have some comprehension of the larger analytical issues involved.