

Tribes of Jharkhand in Labour Market in the Colonial Period

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The colonial and post-colonial periods mark a watershed in the history of labour force among tribal population in India. Using a case study of Jharkhand, this paper aims at analysing the evolved labour market and examining the structure of labour market along with the conditions of work during colonial period. It also attempts to comprehend whether the evolution of labour market for the tribals can be explained by the theory of 'natural selection' of efficient or incentive-compatible responses of the industry. Two major industries were selected for analysis, viz., tea plantation and coal mining, where, the proportion of Jharkhand tribes employed during the colonial period was high. The paper discusses the demand side of tribals' participation in the labour market. A major factor behind employment of tribals in the industries developed during the colonial period was the demand for cheap unskilled labourers in these industries and which eventually decreased with the development of industries.

I Introduction

Development of any nation relies on the development of every section of the society. However, the development process initiated by the government in India failed to end the deprivation faced by the marginalized sections of the society. Indeed, it has replicated the process of marginalization followed during the colonial period. Historically, often the losers are people from marginalised sections of the society (Kannan 2007). Among them one of the worst affected is the tribal population. Its conditions have remained unchanged over centuries even after government initiatives for its upward mobility. The failure of government initiative is not only in terms of integrating them to the development process, but also in the process of exploitation that was carried out in the development process in the form of land alienation. Nearly 60 per cent of the large dams for irrigation and hydro-power have been constructed in tribal areas (Saxena 2005). There is a concentration of mining and industrial projects in the tribal belt in central India which has displaced tribal people. For resource seeking

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