

## **Social Capital and Leadership Development: A Study of Jharkhand (India)**

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**Abstract:** *The concept of social capital has played a significant role in the development of leadership quality at both levels of practices, i.e. micro and macro. Social capital is, however, a very recent conceptual development and is applicable at all fields of human life. Social capital is defined as a degree of network, relationship based on larger degree of co-operation and collectively oriented action towards a specific goal, whether the end product may be individual or society. In fact, it is the assumption that those who are having higher status in terms of caste or class position, they possess high degree of social capital and as a result having the leadership quality. In contrary, I have found from the empirical study that those who are having more degree of community involvement and social life, they are having high degree of social capital and having the quality to lead society and hence so is the case with Jharkhand state also. From the very beginning of the creation of this new state, whole socio-political life is leading by the Tribals of the state. The present paper tries to focus on these issues and discusses how the different framework of social capital lead to the development of leadership quality among the Tribals in the state with the help of empirical data collected specially in two districts of the state.*

**Keywords:** *Social Capital, Leadership, Jharkhand, Tribals*

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### **1. CONCEPTUALIZING SOCIAL CAPITAL**

The concept of social capital is a very useful to explain public life. It is used in almost all disciplines, such as Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Education, Management, Law and so on. The World Bank has used it with regard to economic and societal development and by management experts as a way of thinking about organizational development. The concept is firstly appeared in Lyda Judson Hanifan's discussions of rural school community centers (see Hanifan 1916, 1920). He used the term to describe 'those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people' (1916:130). Hanifan was particularly concerned with the cultivation of good will, fellowship, sympathy and social intercourse among those that 'make up a social unit'. It took some time for the term to come into widespread usage. Contributions from Jane Jacobs (1961) in relation to urban life and neighborliness, Pierre Bourdieu (1985) with regard to social theory, and then James S. Coleman (1988) neighbour in his discussions of the social context of education moved the idea into academic debates. However, it was the work of Robert D. Putnam (1993, 2000) that launched social capital as a popular focus for research and policy discussion. As stated above, 'social capital' has also been picked up by the World Bank as a useful organizing idea. They argue that 'increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable' (The World Bank 1999).

The three thinkers, developing a theoretical appreciation of social capital, are Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Bourdieu (1986) wrote about the interaction of three sources of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Coleman (1988) focused on the role of social capital in the creation of human capital. Although both scholars concentrated on the benefits accruing to individuals or families by virtue of their ties with others, there are significant variations in their conceptualization. While Coleman's model, for instance, has structural-functionalist roots (going back to Durkheim), Bourdieu's conceptualization is grounded in theories of social reproduction and symbolic power. As a result, social capital has been elaborated in two principal ways: in terms of norms and in terms of access to institutional resources. This differentiation is apparent in theoretical interpretations and the resulting empirical works.

The explanation of social capital as access to institutional resources has its roots in the work of Pierre Bourdieu who was the first sociologist to systematically analyze the concept of social capital. He understood social capital to be 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu 1983:249). Relations may exist as material or symbolic exchanges. Social capital is made up of social obligations or connections and it is convertible, in *certain conditions*, to economic capital. Bourdieu (1986) proposes that the volume of social capital possessed by a person depends on size of the network of connections that he or she can mobilize and on the volume of capital—economic, cultural, and symbolic—possessed by each person to whom he or she is connected. Thus, Bourdieu's social capital is decomposable into two elements: first, the social relationship that allows the individual to claim resources possessed by the collectivity, and, second, the quantity and quality of those resources (referred in Portes 1998). Ultimately, Bourdieu sees social capital as the investment of the dominant class to maintain and reproduce group solidarity and preserve the group's dominant position (referred in Lin 1999).

The second principal is the way that social capital has been elaborated—as consisting of norms and social control—is exemplified in the theoretical work of James Coleman, as stated earlier. Coleman's (1988) interpretation of social capital is the most frequently cited in the educational literature. He proposes that social capital is intangible and has three forms: (a) level of trust, as evidenced by obligations and expectations, (b) information channels, and (c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good over self-interest. Social capital is inherent in the structure of relations between and among actors, and it constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure (Coleman 1988:S98). Like Bourdieu, Coleman also highlights the importance of social networks. His later work (e.g., 1992) continues to focus on the role of parental involvement in developing social capital, and, consequently, his work is usually cited in support of a particular kind of community—one characterized by strict, traditional values, rigorous discipline, and hierarchical order and control.

Coleman's contribution (1988) to the development of the notion of social capital was to theorize it in a way that illuminated the processes and experiences of non-elite groups. In other words, he argued that those living in marginalized communities or who were members of the working class could also benefit from its possession. Drawing upon a base of rational choice theory, Coleman (1990, 1994) looked to social capital as part of a wider exploration of the nature of social structures. He argues that social capital is defined by its function. 'It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure' (Coleman 1994: 302). However, as Portes (1998), Foley and Edwards (1999) and others have pointed out, a number of problems flow from defining social capital by its function. In particular, the same 'outcome' could flow from very different processes. As such, Coleman's explorations were to highlight the possibility that different institutions and social structures were better suited to the cultivation of reciprocity, trust and individual action than others. Like other social investigators, he highlighted the role of the family and kinship networks, and religious institutions in the creation of social capital. He believed that changes in both spheres were problematic. They were less able to socialize in appropriate ways; ties appeared to be looser and weaker (see Portes 1998).

Robert Putnam (1993), a political scientist, proposes that social capital can be viewed as an attribute of community, a property of cities or nations. This usage of the term has become extremely popular in public discourse and has been used to support the idea of loss of community or social decline in America. It was into this situation that Robert Putnam's work on social capital exploded. Returning to commentators such as de Tocqueville (1994), and drawing on some of the debates around and insights from Coleman's contribution, he looked to the significance of association and civic community (Putnam 1993).

In the recent literature on social capital, these varied relationships between trust and particular types of social and political outcome (such as democracy or development) have been differentiated in terms of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital is that which binds members of communities strongly to each other, and therefore possibly makes it more difficult for them to

transcend their group or community identity to unite for common purposes with members of other communities and groups. Bridging social capital is that which enables individuals to forge links with others in society, regardless of ascriptive affiliations. Linking social capital, finally, describes the ties between poor people, on the one hand, and a variety of influential people in government agencies, banks and schools, on the other (Harries 2001: 87).

## **2. AREA PROFILE OF THE STUDIED VILLAGES**

The study was carried out on the basis of empirical investigation of two villages of Ranchi and Deoghar districts of Jharkhand. The selection of the villages—Itkithakurgaon (Itki) and Bhagwanpur was based on the largest concentration of tribal population. The selection of tribes was not an issue in the sampling. Although different tribes are found in different districts and villages, the Oraon and Santhal tribes have been selected for our study from Itki and Bhagwanpur villages respectively as only these are living in the studied villages. According to the Census of India, 2001, the ST population of Itki and Bhagwanpur villages were 2096 and 426 respectively. Out of this, the representative samples of the Tribals from of Itki and Bhagwanpur villages were taken as 166 and 34 (approximately 12.63 %) for knowing about their per cent in the ratio of 50 per cent males and 50 per cent females. The data was collected from door-to-door, i.e., through households visits from the household members. In addition, we have also taken some personal interview from the local people, government officials, civil society representatives, politicians and school teachers and headmasters. The most important and interesting fact of this study is that we found literacy gaps between the two villages are very high (36.70 %) as the literacy rates of the Itki and Bhagwanpur villages are 79.30 per cent and 42.60 per cent respectively.

## **3. ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBALS**

The leadership quality of a person is developed either through the formation of higher degree of social capital or through community involvement, which is a dimension of social capital. Before analyzing the empirical data, it is essential to look into some important studies done in the context of Indian society. In fact, Indian society is characterized by caste, class, religion and ethnicity. The formation of social capital depends on various aspects and dimensions. One of the most important dimensions is collective action that is related by leadership. Niraja Gopal Jayal (2004:71-96), in this regard, examines collective action for forest conservation in the Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand by the villagers and a number of voluntary organizations such as the Van Suraksha Samiti and Mahila Mangal Dals. However, Bishnu Mohapatra (2004:97-116) argues that building social capital is not easy because people get involved in collective action with their narrow self-interest. But the social capital, on its part, plays a significant role in the collective action. For instance, Ashok Swain (2004: 296-322) examines the usefulness of social capital in mobilizing protest movements. He also describes the impact of strong social network or connectedness on the success of protest movements within the civil society. Social capital, he points out, supports the mobilization of a protest movement by building, bonding and bridging the gaps, if any, in it within the protesting community. It also provides bridges to the outside support groups. It can, then, be said that social capital is formed through collective action, social interaction, cooperation and social networking. The impact of strong social network or connectedness would result into creating more possibility to form social capital and easily to realize the goal.

From the empirical study in Itki village, we found that those who are having more interaction with the community, they have more capacity to organize collective action and hence having leadership quality. It is cleared from the words expressed by a tribal leader working with the Indian National Congress (Party), “Here we collectively work to get any goal whether it is education or any problem or issue. Recently we get various projects such as construction of road and tube wells and work collectively (based on the intensive interview with Prakash Oraon conducted on 24 August, 2006). It may be said that the collective efforts always matter in generating personal interest or societal interest, which, in turn, facilitates the formation of both human and social capital. The three differentiated terms of social capital—bonding, bridging and linking—are also interlinked here as far as the issue of collective action is involved. In this regard, all the three terms of social capital are associated with the collective action of the Tribals. Hence, it cannot be denied that high degree of social capital contributes them to have more leadership quality among the Tribals in the studied villages.

### **3.1. Fostering Values**

Fostering a set of positive values in a person is another parameter of the formation of social capital. Fostering values has a special impact on the tribal leadership so far as the social cooperation among them is concerned. It also provides the "Meeting Place" where various social networks interact. However, fostering values through any medium, whether it is family or school or peer group or an organization, has greater contribution in the development of leadership quality that involved in social networking through cooperation. This is quite clear from the words of Ramesh Manjhi, a resident of Bhagwanpur village, who says that "We are always engaged through some social values so that they are able to cope with the cultural reality of the community. It is not something that if one gets educated, gets job and then forgets the values of one's own culture. Here, therefore, we try to provide them all basic values, which are necessary to lead their community life as well" (based on intensive interview conducted on 13 October, 2006). In our analysis of the development of leadership among the tribal of the studied villages, we have found that the community life has the capacity to foster values for social cooperation among them. They have also the capacity of providing "meeting place" where the various social networks intersect to the extent to which social capital is formed. 100 per cent tribals from both the villages have accepted that the community fosters values among them. Therefore, we may say that the degree of social capital formation along its parameter of fostering values or social values through the schools located in both the villages is higher.

### **3.2. Engagement of Community**

The community involvement, both directly and indirectly, is another parameter in the development of leadership quality in a person. It has the capacity to develop personality and hence social capital. Community's participation, in fact, is also necessary for the leadership development of Tribals. From the empirical investigation, we found that 100 per cent Tribals were involved in different activities in both the villages. This also shows the formation of greater degree of social capital along this parameter. Despite the low level of human capital (low level of educational and economic status) among the parents, the new generation Tribals have higher degree of social capital. This is also proved from some views of the local people.

### **3.3. Making Tribal Aware**

Awareness is the most crucial steps towards development of the people in general and upliftment of the weaker sections of society in particular. The civil society, a dimension of social capital formation, can play a pivotal role so far as the issue of awareness is concerned. In this study, the non-government organizations, in their view, have worked to make the Tribals aware, especially about their health and educational needs. Our data also reveals that 94 per cent of the non-government organizations have worked for the cause of the Tribals in the field of education and health, along with making them aware in all fronts of life. For instance, the CARE India, the NGO of wide network, providing funds to the small NGOs, has not been involved directly to make the Tribals aware, but its network has a bigger contribution in developmental activities. At this point, it may be said that the social capital formation along the parameter of awareness towards their developmental activities among the Tribals in these villages is found to be high. Hence, it may also be said that the NGOs have played a key role in the formation of social capital among the Tribals in the studied villages. This is also supported by the statement of a local tribal who has said, "There are different types of organizations such as NGOs, missionaries, and the tribal associations, which have been active for the last 6-7 years. Due to their efforts, we are able to understand all socio-political and educational situations. Now, we are also participating in the associational activities in many fronts" (based on interview with Rakhi Toppo, conducted on 23 August, 2006). This statement explains clearly the non-government organizations' efforts have special contribution in their leadership development. That is, however, a well-accepted fact that they are becoming aware in whatsoever ways. They are, no doubt, having high degree of social capital without emphasizing on the issue of human capital, as they are not so much socio-economically and educationally developed.

### **3.4. Involvement of Tribal Community with Organizations**

The Tribals have always been involved in the various activities through the organizations. The Tribals are becoming much aware on all fronts of their life. In this regard, we concentrate here on the nature of involvement of the tribal community in terms of higher, moderate and low, depending on their knowledge and awareness. Our sample data has indicated that 63 per cent NGOs have higher degree of involvement of the Tribals in their respective organizations. Of the remaining, 31 per cent have

moderate and 11 per cent low degree of involvement of the Tribals in their organizational activities. In this context, the bridging type of social capital formation seems to be present as most of the NGOs have the higher degree of involvement with the tribal community with their organizational activities. Looking at the perspective from the Tribals, we have found a tribal Engineer from the Bhagwanpur village saying that, "In the last 3-4 years, many NGOs have been visiting our village for different purposes. However, the major work done by them is the making of the toilet facility available to each household. Due to this, we have had much interaction with the NGOs" (based on the interview with Sushil Murmu, conducted on 12 November, 2006).

#### **4. SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG THE GOVERNMENT - NGOS - MISSIONARIES AND COMMUNITY**

There is also a necessity of social networks, with shared norms, values and understanding, among the various components of society to facilitate the cooperation between or among the groups for effective development of Tribals. Social network has been the main aspect of social capital, which is formed through the collective collaboration of the different groups, institutions or organizations. In this context, networks of government, NGOs, missionaries, and community can make efforts at the greater level as all the four components are present in the studied villages, especially in the Itki village. For instance, an office bearer of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Ranchi has pointed out, "We the civil society organizations always work through the process of networking. For this, it is necessary to have mutual interaction at all levels, i.e., at the level of government, missionaries and community so that the desired goal would be achieved" (based on the interview with the Secretary of the YMCA, conducted on 11 August, 2006). In short, collaborative measures/efforts definitely work more in terms of achievement of any type of societal goal and more especially delete in one's quality of development of leadership. It is evident from our data as 100 per cent of the NGOs; working in the studied villages accepted the presence of networks of government, NGOs, missionaries and community with shared norms and values in one way or the other. It clearly indicates that all three types of social capital, i.e., bonding, bridging and linking are present there through the social networking of the said components working for the purpose. In addition, Secretary of the Manthan Yuva Kendra has said, "NGOs and their networks have a bigger role to play in the fostering trust and providing civic engagement to the tribal people. So far our NGO is concerned, we are involved through bridge courses and we also foster values to the tribal people" (based on the interview with Sudhir Pal, conducted on 21 August, 2006). It has also been pointed out that, "To the extent that teaching methods and organization of learning encourage shared learning and teamwork as well as openness to new ideas and cultural diversity, the more schools can underpin social capital which bridge across different groups in society" (OECD 2001:46). In this regard, the mother of Aman Toppo, a tribal resident from Itki village, rightly said, "In this village (Itki), the Shamima Society, a local voluntary organization, has worked a lot for the development of this village, particularly for the upliftment of the tribal girls, as it provides handicrafts skills to the tribal girls" (based on interview, conducted on 29 August, 2006). In this way, we can say that these NGOs have been working in these villages as leader and trying the inculcate the value and spirit of leadership.

Missionaries, in fact, have key role in the tribal development in general and their leadership development in particular. In this regard, Xaxa has rightly outlined that the method used by the Christian missionary is called developmental and social service oriented works. In his words, "...methods acted as a powerful means of deliverance or emancipation of tribes from the oppression and exploitation of the rajas (kings), zamindars and moneylenders. The methods also emancipated them from the clutches of their ignorance, illiteracy, superstition and diseases, and opened up the way for reaping and enjoying the benefits of development and modernization" (Xaxa 2006:826). Therefore, missionaries are involved almost all fields in the process of their development and upliftment. In addition, the role of NGOs, particularly missionaries, in the studied Itki village, as has been pointed out by Lal Rameshwar Nath Shahadeo, "... especially the Christian missionary, have been playing a key role in the wholistic development of the tribals. We cannot deny the fact that they (the tribals) had been influenced by the missionary so far as the issues of education, health, development, and conversion are concerned. Before that, they were very much Hinduised and Sanskritised but after the establishment of missionary schools, they have been getting education and also the lesson about Christianity. Presently, they follow a mixed way of religious life called Sarna. However, those who got converted into Christianity, they get the maximum benefit from the missionary and are more educationally and economically developed than the other tribal groups,

especially followers of the Sarna religion” (based on the interview, conducted on 16 August, 2006). Here, once again the issue of Hinduisation, Sanskritisation and the conversion in Christianity come in forefront. On the other hand, if we take the view of a tribal Aman Toppo (an Assistant Labour Enforcement Officer), of the Itki village, said, “The Christian or non-Christian tribal, whoever has been educated, has advanced, not only materially, but also intellectually. The Christian Tribals who are educated have become ministers in the state and employees in the central and state governments. The Christian population has more access to education and in changing their way of life. If one of other community opposes Christianity, it is only on the grounds of jealousy at their (tribal Christian) advancement rather than on theological ground. The impact of missionary schools has been seen at all levels of their life and is considered to be satisfactory” (based on interview, conducted on 4 September, 2006). At this point, it can be said that the missionaries’ involvement with the Tribals’ well-being at the larger scale shows their higher degree of both human and social capital formation. Of course, it seems to be true that human capital is the source of social capital formation and vice-versa.

The Missionaries, in fact, have a long history of their involvement with the welfare and progress of the tribal community. It is also important to note that missionaries always work with the Tribals and provide better platform to develop leadership skills in all fronts of their life. In this regard, we have found in the Itki village that 96 per cent the Tribals have agreed that the missionary provide better environment for their leadership development with the help of community. It is also clear from the words of Subho Tuddo of the Bhagwanpur village, who says, “In this village (Bhagwanpur), we do not have any interaction with missionary and we have a very little capacity to lead society. However, some of them are Mukhia and Sarpanch but we are not able to make any larger attempt at the districts and state levels (based on the interview, (Local Authority) conducted on 28 November, 2006). This statement makes clear that the missionary has special contribution in the development of leadership quality among the tribals.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Social capital, in fact, is associated with many parameters, aspects and dimensions as is discussed in this paper. Social capital always plays a crucial role in the development of quality of leadership. But it is also a fact that if a person has larger engagement with the community, he/she has the higher degree of leadership quality. This fact has already shown in this paper that the Tribals belonging to Ranchi district have higher quality of leadership than the Tribals of Bhagwanpur. The reason behind this is that the Tribals of Itki village have larger degree of community life and higher degree of social capital supported by Christian missionaries than the Tribals of Bhagwanpur.

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