

Haat: An Instrument of Cultural, Social, Economic and Political Socialization

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ABSTRACT

Village 'Haats' (market) are the most unique mechanism of gathering to exchange and sustain cultural, social, political and economic aspects of the citizens of any nation-state. Haats are the undefined structure that provides platforms not only to sell their product but also for the showcase of local artisans, craftsperson which could be available only in some specific locations. The present paper attempts to recall the traditional way of exchanging cultural, social, economic and political bonds among indigenous society in India. The Haat provides the path to come across different ideologies of different communities. Puts light on the ancient tool of a sustainable life that connects societies. The paper examines the Haat system of the west-Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsawain districts in the state of Jharkhand, India. The paper would also examine the role of Haats during the severe emergency situation like the pandemic of Covid 19. Finally, the paper presents the findings of the study on the status of the Haat system in present times and recommends ways and means to improve the Haat mechanism.

Methodology

The paper shows the case study of Haats in the Singhbhum and Saraikela districts of Jharkhand, India. Haats are one of the tools for connecting people for the cultural, social and political socialization of the Ho tribe. Primary data has been collected through survey and interview method and government records. Articles have been used for secondary data.

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KEYWORDS: Haat, social gathering, medium of connectivity, rejuvenate, economic, cultural and political socialization

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

1. To show the cultural, societal, political and economic bond and inter-dependency among the members of Ho society with other communities.
2. To examine the role of Haats in the economic development of rural areas.
3. To spread awareness regarding the Haat mechanism to academicians, Block development officers and policymakers.
4. To drive attention towards alternatives of employment generation in rural areas.
5. To rejuvenate the old Haat system with necessary improvements on it.

Introduction

World bank identifies the Haat as a natural dependency, lack of infrastructure, lack of

information, barter system, absence of credits, lack of transport, highly fragmented¹ without any specific government rules but the code and conduct of indigenous system of communication and socialization. These haats contribute to the development of the rural economy² in India without getting much noticed by the large financial institutions.

Haats have been around for 2000 years and offer an indigenous system of low-cost selling. Haats are found across the world. Haats are the oldest marketing channel in India. They continue to play a vital role in the rural economy. These markets provide people with an opportunity not only to purchase consumer goods but also to sell surplus agricultural and allied products³ so that there will be the attainment of monetary facilities. There are 47000

haats all over India, catering to almost 50 percent of the rural population.⁴ Haats are usually held twice a week. The middle day in a week Haat is famous in west Singhbhum. In other words, one could say that Haat is an instrument of indigenous media. Jharkhand state is known as the traditional supplier of food products especially vegetables to cities like Asansol,⁵ Patna, Rourkela, Bokaro, and Jamshedpur in India.⁵ Thus, Haats were not only a means of socialization for Ho tribes but also catered to the needs of adjoining cities since decades.

It is believed that weekly the Haat concept existed since 10th A.D.⁶. Harappan –Mohenjo-Daro civilization also had a Haat system that was much developed before one could think of a developed market. Haat(market) is a local term usually used in some states of India such as Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. In Hindi it is also called Bazaar and has a Persian origin that gained momentum in India⁷. They are the easiest accessible platform for exchanging products (sometimes more like barter system and monetary mode too) in a nearby village or kasba (an area where one could easily get major facilities).

In the social context, these markets served as a meeting ground for all ages and gender which later turned into a platform for business transactions of merchants and traders. And economically, these markets have been a place for exchanging the farmers' produce for basic necessities of their life, agriculture or household purposes such as clothing, iron tools and implements, conventional necessities like tobacco, fowls, cows and bull's ceremonial purpose and for social necessities. Artisanal goods are also a cultural need which plays important role in their society to meet the means of preserving or transferring art to the next generation.

Haats do not have any permanent structural or concrete infrastructure rather natural shaded place like under a tree or clothing, plastic or tirpaal (a sheet to resist water and sun light) shelter which protects them from sunlight and mild shower. Socially, culturally, economically and relationship-wise, Haats are different from modern markets. Haats are warmer and have knitted relationship among the participants.⁸

An essential part of creating a sense of community is open space⁹ Public areas with value will be able to accommodate social interaction needs.¹⁰ Haats are typically held in areas where there are road transects, convenient access for villagers, and good mobility.¹¹ Haats strengthens intra-community bonds¹² it also encourages traders of other regions to visit¹³ as Chotanagpur traders used to get Haat in villages.

Today frequent visit of traders in village Haats has transformed and accelerated the activities of these haats.

Role of Haats in pandemic:

The pandemic of covid 19 has made the world realize and recall the need for age long transactional activity of the Barter system. The time when maximum cities got cut from the outskirts of the cities and villages. Borders were sealed in the year 2021 to stop the spread of coronavirus which resulted in the agricultural product remaining in their production units. During this time resident of various villages and city dwellers were affected as seasonal and daily laborers could not get work opportunities. The Pandemic had forced them to work for a meagre salary. Automatically Gross domestic profit declined continuously. At this time 'Local for Vocal' slogan given by the Indian government that focused on the revisit and reactivating the 'Haat' concept of local goods to strengthen grass root economy. Thus, grass root economy automatically contributes to the growth of societal binding and national gross domestic profit. Haat became a source of survival to feed oneself as a means of employment in lieu of daily employment.

Introduction of Ho tribe

Ho tribe is one of the ethnic societies in the state of Jharkhand, India, that belong to the proto-austroid race. The society follows the patriarchal system. It has its own system of living life according to their unanimously accepted norms within the society. These norms have been legally accepted by the Indian Constitution through fifth schedule for the scheduled tribes. Ho tribe administer themselves through the traditional Munda-Manki organization. The society is mainly found in the Singhbhum District of Jharkhand, Keonjhar district of Orissa and Medinipur in the district of West Bengal.

Ho tribes and Haat

Village Haats of the west Singhbhum attracts roughly twelve thousand persons on daily basis. Village Haat plays an important part in Ho's life as this is the place of sharing, meeting and fulfilling their daily household needs. Haats are usually held twice a week. Generally, the middle day of the week Haat is famous in west Singhbhum. Some Haats which are held once a week termed as periodic markets by researchers. Haats are actually a place of socio-cultural gatherings and village economic activities.¹⁴ This Haat system has emerged as a tool for life-solving issues which has been described here. It is told by the members of the community that they never miss attending the Haat bazar. Actually, Haat is also a medium of entertainment.

Table 1 Market in Kolhan in 1918

Sl. no	PIR	MANKI	VILLAGE WHERE HELD	DAYS WHEN HELD
1	Kulidha	Behra	Kuira	Tuesday
2	Kainua	Narayansingh	Sarjamhatu	Sunday
3	Gulkera	Antu	Puslata	Monday
4	Ajodhya	Shibcharan	Purnia	Do
5	Rajabasa	Debra	Sarda	Tuesday
6	Chiru	Mahendra	Chiru	Saturday
7	Thai	Mahnaik	Tantnagar	Thursday
8	Do	Garbett	Serengbil	Monday
9	Do	Do	Kathbari	Wednesday
10	Do	Pikrae	Kheria tangar	Saturday
11	Bharbharia	Borea	Bharbharia	Friday
12	Lagra	Raghunath	Bara Lagra	Tuesday
13	Lalgarh	Goo	Kharbandh	Thursday
14	Do	Bijae	Andhari	Sunday
15	Aula	Gono	Dhobadhobin	Saturday
16	Do	Sanatan	Kurposi	Wednesday
17	Do	Do	Manjhgaon	Friday
18	Do	Sagar	Angarpada	Sunday
19	Bar	Ghono	Gamharia	Monday
20	Do	Jamdar	Dumuria	Sunday Tuesday
21	Do	Abin	Khaerpal	Friday
22	Do	Turi	Mundi	Saturday
23	Do	Daetri Sardar	Jayantgarh	Friday
24	Do	Roea	Bhangaon	Wednesday
25	Do	Dobro	Gorea duba	Friday
26	Do	Do	Karanjia	Sunday
27	Gumra	Bonmali	Gura	Friday
28	Do	Bholanath	Asuru	Saturday
29	Do	Do	Jora Pokor	Wednesday
30	Do	Chaibasa Municipality	Jhaikpani	Tuesday
31	Barkela	Samu	Chaibasa	Saturday
32	Rengra	Toprea	Barkela	Saturday
33	Bantaria	Ganga Ram	Tonto	Thursday
34	Do	Do	Jaganathpur	Tuesday
35	Kotgarh	Goma	Jatea	Sunday
36	Saranda	Churmu	Kotgarh	Sunday

Source - A.D Tuckey Final Report on the Resettlement of the Kolhan Government Estate, op op.cit., Appendix A, p. 81.

Historical importance of Haat

The above table illustrates how Haat used to be organized by various communities at appropriate intervals. The Kolhan administration used to monitor Haats because they were a source of revenue

Some communities like Lohar, Tanti, and Dome were allowed by the Hos to reside a little bit far away from Ho villages for the requirements of their daily needs would be fulfilled. This shows the exchange of culture among these communities. Lohar (blacksmith), Tanti (weaver), and Dome (producer of bamboo products) were the communities who used to sell their handmade products to Ho villagers in Haat Bazar. Ho community generally is an agrarian society so they used to buy products.

Ho society strongly holds the importance of historical events that have marked their existence. On 1 January 1948, it was the weekly Haat day in Kharsawain princely state when people gathered to protest against the merger of Saraikela and Kharsawain with the state of Orissa or Bihar. Government ordered open fire resulting in the of killing more than two thousand people and uncounted injuries. This massacre soon spread, and there was a feeling of strong agitation among the people to protect their unity. In the present times, Ho society observes January 1 every year as a black day for recalling the sacrifice and act of unity. These events show the importance of Haat in the Ho society. Haat also provides a discursive space to build social narrative.

Aside from “public meetings to mobilise public opinion, the non-cooperation movement among the Hos took the form of forest Satya grahas and no-tax campaigns at the local haats or weekly markets.”¹⁵ Since the forest used to be the centre of their existence, Haats was utilised as a platform for a campaign to save it. Members of the Ho tribe have also organised protests against cooperation in one of the Haat of the Singhbhum district. “In 1921, four Hos, who declared themselves non-co-operators, attempted to organise a non-cooperation protest at Serangbil Haat.”¹⁶ Hos planned these demonstrations to demonstrate their unwillingness to cooperate with the British.

Relevance of Haats in the present time

Public welfare schemes or policy could be introduced in these Haat bazars by the government as schemes like Haat Bazar clinic yojna (scheme) has been introduced in the districts of Chhattisgarh state of India. According to this scheme more than 62,47,000 people have been cured through 1789 Haat bazar clinic and 429 mobile motor vehicles.¹⁷ Villagers and government both can make use of these traditional Haat mechanisms to reach out to the maximum number of people.

The Lupungguttu village of Sadar Chaibasa subdivision of the west Singhbhum district of Jharkhand is densely populated with Ho tribe. In 2020, the villagers gathered in the weekly Haat to protest against the imposition of municipality as the villagers were well aware of the rights and provisions of fifth schedule area.¹⁸ Rajshree Purty, one of the female residents of the Lupungguttu village, states that this is against the law of the constitution to impose municipal corporation on us as our village falls under fifth schedule area. It is very pathetic that the municipal corporation forcefully imposed on the area. Villagers’ demands were very simple that they wanted to have the continuation of their customary law rather than that of the municipal corporation.

One cannot say that Haats are irrelevant in the present time as every modern market has the foundation of the old Haat mechanism. Haats’ significance changed from time to time but never vanished from the life of nation-state.

Above mentioned events shows how this traditional Haat system provides the ground to connect along with the transition of discourses on the contemporary issues. Haat is important for around 104 million indigenous people in India.¹⁹ belonging to 705 ethnic groups, who are dealing with various structural and communicative barriers.²⁰ as they reside in dense forest areas where telecom connectivity is very poor. One could say that the barter system of Haat brought

economic empowerment to the villagers. Empowerment brought the transmission of ideologies which is in continuation till date.

Impact of Haats in Ho’s life

1. Haats have led to social, Cultural, economic and political strengthening of the Ho community. Population of West Singhbhum is mainly dependent on agriculture. Surplus food grains are sold to traders for their monetary needs. Contact with traders leads to social dilution and exchange of various forms of new knowledge to their lifestyle. Social dilution, however, may be harmful to the spirit of the society. Cultural exchange also takes place as non-tribals also exist in Kolhan.
2. Availability: Hos sell their food products and other commodities in loose. It is a market where one can purchase household goods, cloths, durables, jewellery, cattle, machinery, etc.
3. Attractive: Haats are attractive place to those who want to buy second hand durables and to those who prefer barter transactions. Further the freshness of the produce, buying in bulk for, a week and the bargaining advantage attract the weeklong hard working rural folk to weekly haats.

Allotment of stalls

The land for the proposed Village Haat must be owned by the Gram Panchayat/Government. Weekly haats on private lands should not be considered. Initially, the Village Haat may be constructed at Panchayat Headquarters or at a place which has the potential for attracting large number of visitors. This is unanimous consent over the idea to come first and grab the space. Gradually it becomes a permanent stall as stall holder put their shade in the same place. An open-raised platform is the space where vendors sell their surplus agriculture or other handmade product.

Management of Haats

Drinking water facilities, separate toilets for women and men are being made available to Haat visitors and vendors and also some time warehouse.

The central and state governments of India manage haats in a way which is beneficial to everyone. Some state governments have taken much initiative to develop rural Haat bazar through funding as “Funding Pattern Funds will be released for the creation of such Village Haats for an amount of up to Rs.15.00 lakhs which will be shared between Centre and State in the ratio of 75:25. However, funds will be contributed in the ratio of 90:10 for North Eastern States.”²¹ Co-operation among central and state government brings

positive changes in traditional Haat bazars that are beneficial to these traditional Haat bazars as well.

Village Haats could be developed by the government with the suggestion given by village communities. Because villagers are the members who know the needs of their Haat. In Jharkhand any rural Haat is being maintained by the members of the village where market is organised. Sometime few villages jointly look after the matters of a rural Haat known as Bazar (market) samitee (organization). This bazar samitee comprises of village panchayat, village development officer etc. These bazar samitee charges some tax like fifty rupees through levy from each stallholder or vendor. Collected amount of tax later used in the maintenance of the market and meet other expenses.

Findings

The majority of Ho community lives in villages in the West Singhbhum district, of Jharkhand, therefore. Daily needs of villagers are being fulfilled by these taluka Haat bazars. It would be much costlier to move to town markets to get their needs as the question of transport, consuming time etc.

Present shopping in mall trend has introduced organic food and crafts products in different style of packaging and selling at a high price and the availability of a large number of products attracts the consumer. These modern mall has become one of the reasons for the diminishing of traditional Haat bazar system. The barter system is partially lost but somehow it is survived due to the unavailability of sufficient money to villagers.

Even in the time of mall marketing system, the village Haat system has been of tremendous use for accessing organic food products, handicraft items, and also as a meeting point for community members in one place. Transmission of news is still possible in these village haats through simple communication in the absence of mobile networks. Still the importance of Haat is prevalent for forming narrative for their social, political and economic aspects of life. Wherever government is unable to reach out to villagers Haat provides the best and cheapest way of communizing information and other facilities easily. Meeting of Political parties takes place and government schemes are introduced to villagers in these Haats.

Suggestions

Government should know the traditional Haat system in order to promote the slogan of 'local to vocal' for the growth of the country. Government should consider the old mechanism of marketing without demolishing its basic structure but improving it. Keeping basic structure and values will increase faith in the government. Geo-location of markets should be

provided for the identification. The district website should include and updates the information on village Haats. Bazar samitee (market organizer) should be regularized and financial aid should be given by the concerned government bodies. Village Haat should not be modernized to sustain its traditional spirit. Government should reach out to the individual villagers so that they could get registered through MSME (Micro small medium enterprises) for the betterment of product distribution and local products would get public hype. It would also help in capacity building through that village haats would get recognition in the national level.

Masses need to be introduced to the village Haat mechanism so that consumer would get products in cheaper price with the opportunity of getting informed about village culture and ideologies.

CONCLUSION

Haat bazar bind communities in one thread through exchanging views and fulfilling one another's need. Along with the growth in the agricultural sector, various artisans get identified like bamboo work, natural painting and political exchange. Today Ho's Haats is losing its old glory as it is totally becoming a place of economic activity. But on the other hand, various community members have successfully exchanged ideas and kept alive the tradition of Haat.

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