Leaders' Commitment to Social Movement: A Study of JMM and AJSU of Mayurbhanj District in Orissa

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Abstract

Commitment of leaders is instrumental in attaining the objectives of any social movement. An attempt has been made in the present study to measure the levels of commitment of leaders of the Jharkhand Movement in the district of Mayurbhanj, Orissa. One Community Development block from each of the four sub-divisions of the district of Mayurbhanj, Orissa was selected based on the intensity of the movement. All the District and Block Level office bearers of two major organizations involved in the Jharkhand Movement i.e. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the All Jharkhand Student's Union (AJSU) were the respondents for the study. Four common characteristics of a committed leader i.e., Assurance, Risk taking, Commitment Generating Event and Level of participation were identified and measured based on operational definition of the concepts. Commitment scores were calculated. The results suggest that leaders of AJSU are more committed than the leaders of JMM and block level leaders have more commitment than the district level leaders.

Introduction

One of the important variables in the study of Social Movement is the personal commitment of the leaders. Commitment is instrumental in attaining the objectives of any social movement. To recognize its importance is one thing but to define or measure it is another. In Social Science literature, the term has been very loosely defined and has different shades of meaning. Mayer & Herscovitch (2001) after compiling a list of definitions of the term defined it as, "Commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target." Hine (1970) after studying a wide range of social movements that included Student Movements, Religious Movements, Revolutionary Movements and Save-the-Environment movement, distinguished five common characteristics of committed leaders. The first is that of Assurance- an unshakable strength of conviction in the ideology, objectives and goals of the movement. The second is the capacity of risk taking i.e. willingness to sacrifice kinship ties, social status and economic security to attain the objectives of the movement.

The third characteristic of committed leaders is charisma- a personal magnetism and authority over the followers. The fourth characteristic is what is described as some 'Commitment Generating Event', an incident or a 'bridge burning act' that cuts off the performer from the rest of the society, identifying him/her with the group in which the act is valued and committed him with the behavioral pattern of the reference group. The fifth is the level of participation or involvement in the organization. Based on Hine's analysis, an attempt has been made in the present study to measure the levels of commitment of leaders of the Jharkhand Movement in the district of Mayurbhanj, Orissa. Commitment for the present study was measured through four equally important dimensions i.e. Assurance, Risk-taking, Commitment Generating Event and Involvement or Participation in the movement. Charisma although is an important characteristics was not included as a part of the study as it could only be measured in terms of the extent of influence that a leader exerts on his/her followers and the scope of the present study was limited to leaders only and did not include the followers. A leader for the purpose of the present study is defined as one who holds any office in the organizations relating to the Jharkhand movement either at the District or at the Block level.

The Jharkhand Movement

The literal meaning of the word 'Jharkhand' is a tract of forest (Sharma, 1982). Its geographical area includes the Chhotanagpur and Santal Praganas of Bihar and other adjacent districts of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Jharkhand is not merely a geographic concept. It was a land of depressed people, a mass of destitute (Sengupta, 1980). The concept of Jharkhand may be traced back to thirteenth century AD, when one Jaysingh Deo declared himself as the king of Jharkhand. During the fifteenth century, Saint Chaitanya had made a religious journey from Puri to Vrindavan and had described that part of land as Jharkhand. The region had experienced a number of social movements in the past that were cultural, religious and reformist in nature. These movements were carried out by native inhabitants, who were invariably tribal with a broad aims of attaining cultural homogeneity and tribal identity.

People of Chhotanagpur region differ from the people of the rest of India in matters of their tradition, mythology and culture. They consider themselves as the original settlers of the country before the invasion of the Aryans (Abdi, 1979). Although these movements were localized in the beginning but increased interaction between different tribal groups broadened the geographical boundary of the movement and now it covers a much bigger area comprising of 21 districts located in four states within the Indian Union. It was not long for the tribal elites to realize that establishing a cultural identity was impossible without getting a share of political power. It was argued that real prosperity of the tribal mass would not be brought about as long they were ruled and administered by the non-tribal. Demand for a separate state of Jharkhand under the banner of 'Jharkhand Party' over shadowed the movement for a tribal identity. It was no longer an ethnic movement but a movement for political space. The union of India carved out the state of Jharkhand by bi-furcating the old state of Bihar on the 15th of November, 2000. The struggle however continues for a larger Jharkhand state by incorporating the tribal areas of Orissa, MP and West Bengal.

Area of Study

The choice of Mayurbhanj district for the present study was obvious. It is one of the twenty-one districts of the proposed larger Jharkhand state. Nearly 60% of its population belongs to the tribal community and they have always identified themselves with the adjoining tribal population of Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Although the impact of Jharkhand movement is felt in four tribal districts of the Orissa, the intensity of the movement in Mayurbhanj was much greater in scale compared to the other three districts. Mayurbhanj for the purpose of administration has been divided into four subdivisions. All the four subdivisions were selected for the study. Next, one CD block from each of the four subdivisions of the district was selected for the study based on the intensity of the movement as per newspaper reports for one year prior to the study. The selected CD blocks were Barasahi Block of Sadar Subdivision, Udala Block of Kaptipada Sub Division, Rairangpur block of Bamanghati Sub-Division and Karanjia Block of Panchapur Sub-Division.

Selection of Cases

Two major organizations involved in the Jharkhand movement i.e. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the All Jharkhand Student's Union (AJSU) were selected for the study. These two organizations have a formal structure of leadership and have their presence throughout Mayurbhanj. The respondents i.e. district and block level leaders from JMM and AJSU were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule exclusively prepared for the purpose during the summer of 2008. All the members of the executive body of both these organizations (JMM & AJSU) at the district level numbering 40 were selected for the study. Of these, 23 were from JMM and 17 were from AJSU. The block level leaders selected for the study numbered 71 of which 38 were from JMM and 33 from AJSU. The backgrounds characteristics of the respondents are presented in table-1.

Table 1: Background Characteristics of the Respondents

	District Level Leaders		Block Level Leaders		TOTAL
	JMM	AJSU	JMM	AJSU	
SEX					
Male	26	21	44	48	139 (94.6%)
Female	00	00	08	00	08 (5.4%)
AGE					
15-25	00	13	05	33	51(34.7%)
25-35	12	08	23	15	58(39.4%)
35+	14	00	24	00	38(25.9%)
COMMUNITY					
SC	01	00	05	00	06(4.1%)
ST	19	18	36	42	115(78.2%)
Non Schedule	06	03	11	06	26(17.7%)
TRIBE					
Santal	17	13	24	32	86(58.5%)
Ho	00	02	05	04	11(7.5%)
Bhumij	02	03	07	06	18(12.2%)
Tamaria	01	00	05	00	06(4.1%)
Kurmi	06	03	11	04	24(16.3%)
Others	00	00	00	02	02(1.4%)
RELIGION					
Hindu	09	07	21	19	56(38.1%)
Sarnaisi	17	14	31	29	91(61.9%)
RESIDENCE					
Urban	07	10	11	25	53(36.1%)
Rural	19	11	41	23	94(63.9%)

EDUCATION					
Illiterate	00	00	00	00	00(0.0%)
Below Matric	06	00	39	17	62(42.2%)
Matric	08	03	00	13	24(16.3%)
Below Graduate	01	13	05	16	35(23.8%)
Above Graduate	11	05	08	02	26(17.7%)
OCCUPATION					
Wage Labour	00	00	12	00	12(8.1%)
Cultivation	09	00	32	17	58(39.5%)
Business	08	03	00	04	15(10.2%)
Legal	09	02	08	00	19(12.9%)
Others (students)	00	16	00	27	43(29.3%)
INCOME					
500-1000	00	00	19	07	26(17.7%)
1000-1500	05	04	19	28	56(38.1%)
1500-2000	08	06	05	13	32(21.8%)
2000+	13	11	09	00	33(22.4%)

The respondents are mostly male (94.6%). There are only 8 (5.4%) female leaders and all of them were from JMM. The respondents are relatively young, 74.1% in the age group of 15-35. All those who are above the age of 35 are from JMM. AJSU leaders are relatively younger than the JMM leaders. Almost all (98.6%) the leaders belong to tribal community, mostly Santal tribe (58.5%). A large number of people (61.9%) follow the Sarnami religion while the rest claim to be Hindus. Agriculture and Wage Labour are the two important occupations. Nearly 18% leaders are students and all of them belong to AJSU. There are also leaders who are from Business or in legal professions.

Commitment of Leaders

As discussed earlier the term Commitment is multi dimensional and includes four equally important aspects namely: Assurance, Risk-taking, Commitment Generating Act and Involvement. Assurance refers to unshakable strength of conviction regarding the goals of the movement. At the same time, the goals should be realistic and attainable. A leader in a movement should know in clear terms, what s/he is fighting for. In operational terms, Assurance refers to (a) awareness about the objectives of the movement, (b) conviction about the attainability of the objectives and (c) Goals of the movement should be an end in itself i.e. there should be no underlying motive in joining the movement.

I. **Assurance**

All the leaders were asked if they could state the objectives of the Jharkhand Movement. Three options were provided: (a) Attaining separate statehood, (b) Cultural identity of the tribal population and (c) Not sure or Not Aware. Those who stated that the objective of the movement was to attain separate statehood score '1' were assigned else the score was '0'. The responses along with the average score are presented in Table-2.

Table 2: Awareness of Leaders about the Objectives of the Jharkhand Movement

	Attaining Separate Statehood		Cultural Identity		Not Sure / Not Aware		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	23 (88.46%)	40 (85.11%)	3 (7.69%)	6 (12.76%)	1 (3.85%)	1 (2.13%)	0.85
AJSU (Dist)	17 (80.95%)		3 (19.05%)		-		0.85
JMM (Block)	38 (73.08%)	71 (71.00%)	9 (17.31%)	24 (24.00%)	5 (9.61%)	5 (5.00%)	0.73
AJSU(Block)	33 (68.74%)		15 (31.24%)		-		0.68
TOTAL	111 (75.5%)		30 (20.4%)		6 (4.1%)		

As may be seen from the data, 85.11% district level leaders as against 71.0% block level leaders stated that the objective of the movement was attainment of separate statehood. Comparing the responses made by JMM & AJSU leaders we observe that 75.5% of leaders consider that the objective of the movement is to attain separate statehood. District level leaders are more concerned about attaining separate statehood than the block level leaders. About one fifth (20.4%) of the leaders continue to feel that cultural identity is the prime objective of the movement. Such a feeling is more prevalent among the block level leaders.

About 4% of leaders are not sure as to what is the main objective of the movement. This is more so among the block level than the district level leaders. After the formation of the Jharkhand state, there has been a demand for the merger of tribal dominated areas of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in the formation of a greater Jharkhand. We asked all the leaders, irrespective of the response to the previous question, if the formation of the Greater Jharkhand was attainable in near future. To this, three possible answers were provided: (1) 'Yes attainable', (2) 'Not attainable' and (3) 'Not sure'. Only when the responses were 'Yes Attainable' score '1' was assigned. For all other responses the score was '0'. The responses along with the average scores are presented in Table-3.

Table 3: Attainability of Greater Jharkhand State in near future

	Yes Attainable		Not Attainable		Not Sure/ No Response		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	15 (57.69%)	28 (59.57%)	9 (34.61%)	15 (31.91%)	2 (7.69%)	4 (8.51%)	0.55
AJSU (Dist)	13 (61.90%)		6 (28.57%)		2 (9.52%)		0.65
JMM(Block)	40 (76.92%)	76 (76.0%)	8 (15.38%)	18 (18.0%)	4 (7.69%)	6 (6.0%)	0.77
AJSU (Block)	36 (74.99%)		10 (20.83%)		2 (4.17%)		0.75
TOTAL	104 (70.75%)		33 (22.45%)		10 (6.8%)		

The results indicate that nearly 71% leaders are optimistic about the attainability of greater Jharkhand. Block level leaders are more optimistic about the attainability of greater Jharkhand than the district level leaders. Although AJSU leaders are more optimistic about greater Jharkhand compared to JMM leaders, the difference is marginal. A significant number of leaders (29.3%) are either not optimistic or preferred not to comment on the attainability of greater Jharkhand. The respondents were asked to state the reasons behind joining the movement. The responses were classified under three heads: (1) 'Welfare of the Community', (2) 'Build a Political Career' and (3) Any other Reason. If the response was 'welfare of the community' score '1' was assigned else score '0' was assigned. The responses along with the average score are presented in Table-4. Analyzing the data we observe, majority of the leaders (78.9%) had joined the movement with the objective of welfare of the tribal people in mind. Block level leaders are more concerned about the welfare of the people than the district level leaders. Building a political career was more important for district level leaders than the block level leaders. The data also suggests that JMM leaders particularly at the district level have joined the movement for attaining political objectives.

Table 4: Motive for Joining the Movement

	Tribal Welfare		Build Political Career		Others		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	20 (76.92%)	37 (44.68%)	4 (15.38%)	4 (42.55%)	2 (7.69%)	6 (12.76%)	0.77
AJSU(Dist)	17 (80.95%)		-		4 (19.04%)		0.80
JMM(Block)	43 (82.69%)	79 (79.00%)	4 (7.69%)	8 (8.00%)	5 (9.62%)	13 (13.00%)	0.82
AJSU (Block)	36 (74.99%)		4 (8.33%)		8 (16.66%)		0.75
TOTAL	116 (78.9%)		12 (8.2%)		19 (12.9%)		

II. Risk Taking

Risk taking is the willingness to sacrifice kinship ties, social status and sometimes economic security for attaining the objectives of the movement. A committed leader places the goals of the movement higher than his/her personal goals. The measurement of Risk taking was based on the analysis of responses to three statements. Respondents were given five options ranging from 'Absolutely Don't Agree' to 'Absolutely Agree'. Weights were assigned and weighted mean was calculated. The responses along with the mean score for each statement are presented in Table-5. The final 'Risk Taking' score for each category of leader was calculated by calculating the average individual scores. For the JMM (Dist) leaders the score was 0.62 For the AJSU (Dist) it was 0.78. Similarly the score for the JMM (Block) & AJSU (Block) were 0.72 and 0.80 respectively. The data suggests that AJSU leaders are greater risk takers than the JMM leaders both at the district and the block level.

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Table 5: Response to Questions on Risk Taking

Statements		Absolutely Don't Agree	Don't Agree	Not Sure	Agree	Absolutely Agree	Mean Score
A good leader should be prepared to continue with the movement even if others back out	JMM (Dist)	0	1	4	17	4	0.80
	AJSU (Dist)	0	0	1	17	3	0.95
	JMM Block	0	3	6	37	6	0.82
	AJSU (Block)	0	0	1	42	5	0.97
I am ready to sacrifice my family obligations for the sake of the movement.	JMM (Dist)	1	2	8	15	0	0.57
	AJSU (Dist)	2	0	6	10	3	0.61
	JMM (Block)	2	3	15	30	2	0.61
	AJSU (Block)	2	6	9	24	7	0.64
My life's dream will be fulfilled by the creation of the Jharkhand state.	JMM (Dist)	1	4	8	13	0	0.5
	AJSU (Dist)	0	1	3	15	2	0.8
	JMM (Block)	2	3	8	32	7	0.75
	AJSU (Block)	0	2	7	37	2	0.81

III. Commitment Generating Event

Commitment to a movement may be traced to a specific event or series of events. These commitment generating events has two basic components. Firstly, a subjective experience in which the individual's image of himself was completely altered. The second component of commitment generating event was an observable act that distinguishes the performer from the rest and identified him/her with the group in which the act is valued and committed him/her to change attitude and behavior pattern consistent with the ideals of the reference group. The respondents were asked to recall any experience or incident they have had in connection with the Jharkhand movement that is worth mentioning. Some respondents had nothing to share. Others had interesting stories. One respondent told us he became a hero in no time when he snatched the *lathi* from the police and strike back at him. Another respondent told us that the kind of reception he got from the public on being released from police custody, being arrested while demonstrating on the streets made him a committed leader of the movement. If the respondent had a commitment generating incident to narrate, score '1' was assigned. Otherwise no score was assigned. The score for each group of leaders is presented in Table-6.

Table 6: Recall of Commitment generating incident during the Movement

	Had a commitment generating incident to narrate		Had no incident to narrate		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	7 (26.9%)	15 (31.9%)	19 (73.1%)	32 (68.1%)	0.26
AJSU(Dist)	8 (38.1%)		13 (69.1%)		0.38
JMM (Block)	18 (34.6%)	35 (35.0%)	34 (65.4%)	65 (65.0%)	0.35
AJSU (Block)	17 (35.4%)		31 (64.6%)		0.35
TOTAL	50 (34.0%)		97 (66.0%)		

IV. Involvement or Participation in the Movement:

Involvement in a social movement may range from casual participation to hard core involvement in strikes and demonstrations and decision making.

Table 7: Frequency of Participation in Public Meetings

	Always		Sometimes		Occasionally		Never		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	14 (53.8%)	29 (61.7%)	8 (30.7%)	12 (25.53%)	4 (15.4%)	6 (12.76%)	0	0	0.84
AJSU (Dist)	15 (71.4%)		4 (19.0%)		2 (9.5%)		0		0.90
JMM (Block)	24 (46.15%)	51 (51.0%)	22 (42.31%)	39 (39.0%)	6 (11.54%)	10 (10.0%)	0	0	0.88
AJSU (Block)	27 (56.24%)		17 (35.42%)		4 (8.33%)		0		0.91
TOTAL	80 (54.42%)		51 (34.69%)		16 (10.88%)		0		

For the present study, involvement was measured by the frequency of participation in (1) public meetings, (2) discussion of plans and programmes with the fellow leaders and followers to mobilize public support and (3) participation in strikes and demonstrations organized as the part of the movement. The leaders were asked to state the frequency of participation in the public meetings organized by the party. Those who participated 'always' or 'Sometimes' score 1 was assigned, those who participated occasionally or never participated, score '0' was assigned. The average score for each category of leader is presented in Table-7. The data suggests that block level leaders have greater participation than the district level leaders. Further, AJSU leaders had greater participation than the JMM. There was no leader who never participated in any of the public meetings.

The respondents were asked to state how often they discussed plans and projects about the movement with other leaders and followers to generate public support. The answers to this question along with the assigned scores ('1' if always or sometimes discussed. Else '0') are presented in Table-8.

Table 8: Discussion of Plans and Programmes of the Movement

	Always Discussed		Sometimes Discussed		Occasionally Discussed		Never Discussed		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	12 (46.15%)	24 (51.06%)	10 (38.46%)	17 (36.17%)	4 (15.38%)	6 (12.76%)	Nil	Nil	0.84
AJSU (Dist)	12 (57.14%)		7 (33.33%)		2 (9.52%)		Nil		0.90
JMM (Block)	23 (44.23%)	50 (50.0%)	17 (32.69%)	32 (32.0%)	6 (11.54%)	10 (10.0%)	6 (11.54%)	8 (8.0%)	0.77
AJSU (Block)	27 (56.25%)		15 (31.25%)		4 (8.33%)		2 (4.16%)		0.88
TOTAL	74 (50.34%)		49 (33.33%)		16 (10.88%)		8 (5.44%)		

The data suggests that: 94.56% of leaders discussed plans and programmes to generate public awareness. District level leaders discussed the plans and programmes of the movement more often than the block level. It may also be observed that there was none among the district level leaders who never discussed the plans and programmes. Compared to the JMM, AJSU leaders discussed more frequently the plans and programmes of the movement. *Participation in Strikes and Demonstrations:* The leaders were asked to state their extent of participation in strikes and demonstrations organized as a part of the movement. Three possible answers were provided (Always participated, Sometimes Participated, Occasionally Participated and Never Participated) and the respondents were asked to choose any one. If the response was Always or Sometimes score '1' was assigned, otherwise the score was '0'. The response to this question is presented in Table-9.

Table 9 Participation in the Strikes and Demonstrations

	Always Participated		Sometimes Participated		Occasionally Participated		Never Participated		Average Score
JMM (Dist)	8 (30.7%)	21 (%)	12 (46.2%)	17 (%)	6 (23.17%)	9	0	0	0.77
AJSU (Dist)	13 (61.9%)		5 (23.8%)		3 (14.3%)		0		0.86
JMM (Block)	18 (34.61%)	46 (46.0%)	22 (42.31%)	35 (35.0%)	12 (23.07%)	19 (19.0%)	0	0	0.77
AJSU (Block)	28 (58.33%)		13 (27.08%)		7 (14.58%)		0		0.88
TOTAL	67 (45.58%)		52 (35.37%)		28 (19.04%)		0		

It may be observed that: About 46% of leaders always participated in demonstrations and strikes while about 35% participated but sometimes. There were none who never participated in the movement. About 19% participated occasionally. Comparing the district level leaders with the Block level leaders we find that participation of District level leaders in strikes and demonstrations were almost equal with that of the block level leaders.

Comparing the JMM with AJSU we observe that AJSU had better participation rate in strikes and demonstrations than the JMM.

Conclusion & Analysis

Analysing the data we observe that majority of district level leaders of JMM consider attainment of separate statehood as the objective of the movement, although they are skeptical about the attainability of this objective and their motive in joining the movement is political. In comparison with JMM (Dist), AJSU (Block) are more in favour of cultural identity of the tribal population, they are more optimistic about its attainability and their motive in joining the movement is less political. AJSU in comparison with JMM and Block level leaders in comparison with District level leaders are greater risk takers. Similarly, Commitment generating incidents were more prevalent among the AJSU in comparison with JMM and among the block level leaders in comparison with the district level leaders. When it comes to involvement in the movement we find that district level leaders are more involved that the block level leaders and AJSU leaders are more involved than the JMM.

Table 10 shows the average scores for Assurance, Risk Taking, Commitment Generation Incident and Involvement. This was arrived at by calculating the average of all the components within it. For example, the Risk Taking score was calculated by averaging the scores relating to each of the three statements. Similarly the involvement score was the average score of participation in meetings, Discussion with followers and participation in strikers. No weights are assigned as all the four factors i.e. assurance, Risk Taking, Commitment Generating Incident and Involvement were considered equally important. The Final Commitment score was a sum of Assurance, Risk Taking, Commitment, and Involvement.

Table 10: Commitment Score of Leaders in Jharkhand Movement

Category of Leaders	Assurance Score	Risk Taking Score	Commitment Generating Score	Involvement Score	Final Commitment Score
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5=(1+2+3+4)*
JMM (Dist)	0.72	0.62	0.26	0.82	2.42
AJSU (Dist)	0.76	0.78	0.38	0.89	2.81
JMM (Block)	0.77	0.72	0.35	0.81	2.65
AJSU (Block)	0.72	0.80	0.35	0.89	2.76

The scores in Table 10 suggests that commitment levels of district level leaders of AJSU is the highest followed by block level leaders of AJSU. The lowest commitment may be assigned to JMM leaders at the district level.

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