

Gender, Governance and Land Rights: Navigating Tribal Customary Law in West Bengal

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Abstract: *This paper highlights the intersection of gender, traditional tribal customs, and the participation of local governance in the Balurghat Block of Dakshin Dinajpur in West Bengal. Santal women in this region are primarily engaged in agriculture, but legal control over land till remains a dilemma. Under traditional Santal customary law, women are generally denied rights to the landed property of their father or husband. Despite state policies like the Nijo Grijo Nijo Bhumi (my home, my land) scheme, which mandates that land Pattas (deeds) be issued in the name of the female head of the family, these women are often excluded during actual distribution. Because tribal women are often excluded from the Hindu Succession Act, which grant sequel inheritance rights to daughters, they turned to their local gram panchayat to resolve land disputes; here, the panchayat acts as a local court. Panchayats sometimes provide the right judgment and sometime acts as a source of discrimination.*

Keywords: Gender, discrimination, property rights, Santal, Panchayat, judiciary.

Introduction

As in agrarian economies, arable land is the most valued form of property and productive resource, a wealth-creating and livelihood-sustaining asset. In India, the majority of rural families depend solely on this asset. In rural India, where agriculture is the main occupation, women's status depends on independent land rights, not on other employment. So, land ownership or right to landed property is an important element of women's empowerment, particularly in developing countries like India. So, land ownership or right to landed property is an important element of women's empowerment, particularly in developing countries like India. It also provides a sense of identity and rootedness. In some communities, ancestral land also symbolically stands for the continuity of lineage. Independent land right has positive impact on women's status in our country in the following ways:

- a. Independent land rights ensure welfare for women;
- b. It ensures efficiency; and

c. It provides a sense of equality and empowerment.

But males' larger control over property reproduces males' authority. Here Foucault's proposition of power is relevant. He said power relations are not only established in terms of ruler and the ruled, but in terms of dominant and dominated. Thus, women's non-ownership or lack of control over landed property makes them subordinate in society (Foucault, 1992). In fact, in almost all developing countries, large-scale surveys and agricultural censuses collect property-related information only by households and households are enumerated without disaggregating gender. In most South Asian countries, including India, we still depend on small-scale surveys and village studies to assess women's access to land. These sources show that, typically, few women own arable land and even fewer effectively control some (Agarwal, 1994: 16; Chakraborty, 2016). In many countries, those who have moved to non-farm work are largely men, while women have remained mainly in agriculture. In India, for instance, 58 per cent of all male workers, 78 per cent of all female workers, and 86 per cent of all rural female workers are in agriculture (Agarwal, 2002: 2). As per [the Periodic Labour Force Survey \(PLFS\)](#) 2023-24, 76.95% of rural women are engaged in agriculture. The high participation is often termed the feminisation of agriculture. Women comprise over 33% of India's agricultural workforce and perform 70% of food production tasks, yet lack access to land, credit, & technology. Empowering them is crucial for food security & productivity. UN's 2026 declaration as the *International Year of the Woman Farmer* emphasises this imperative.

So, women contribute magnificently to the economic growth of the country. Despite their major participation in agriculture, they remain "unpaid helper" rather than independent cultivators. According to economist Jayoti Ghosh, only 13% of rural women who are involved in agriculture possess independent land titles in their name. She said even in the case of joint registration women often have zero control over the land's use or the income generated from it (Banerjee, 24 Oct 2025 OFR). It has been evident that in the case of PMFBY, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, only 16% of women were enrolled. The main reason behind it was that, in most of the cases, they could not prove the authenticity of the documents (land in their name).

The field and the methodology

This study is concentrated mainly on tribal women of Dakshin Dinajpur district. The District of West Dinajpur was created out of the erstwhile Dinajpur district in 1947 at the time of the partition of India. The rest of the

Dinajpur district is now in Bangladesh. The West Dinajpur district was enlarged in 1956 at the time of the reorganisation of the State with the addition of some areas of Bihar. The district was bifurcated into Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur on 1st April 1992. Dakshin Dinajpur is a district with no large-scale industry. The first industry in the medium-scale sector got off to a start in the district in November, 2003. The economy is based on agriculture, fishing and export and import of goods. Transport and Communication facilities are not very satisfactory. A new railway line has been laid between Eklakhi and Balurghat very recently. There is one State Highway with only 3 km of National Highway no. 34 falling within the district. Bengali is the principal language of the district. The principal communities are Hindus & Muslims, and they constitute the major portion of the population. There are two subdivisions in this district, Balurghat (Sadar) and Gangarampur. There are eight blocks in this district—Balurghat, Gangarampur, Harirampur, Banshihari, Tapan, Hilli, and Kumarganj. According to the 2011 Census, the Schedule tribe population of this district was 16.08% of the total population. They mainly reside in these eight blocks. Among them, 75% are Santhal, 25% are Oraon and Munda.

The research method can be broadly divided into fieldwork, survey method and documentary method (records at local and state-level public records offices). I had chosen mainly the survey method for the collection of primary data. Through this method, I was able to study the concerned community more systematically and comprehensively. “Survey research focuses on a large number of respondents chosen through a sampling procedure who are systematically interviewed by the investigators or are requested to write down their answers on the questionnaire delivered to them” (Srivastava, 2004:11). Surveys represent one of the most common types of quantitative social science research. In survey research, the researcher selects a sample of respondents from a population and administers a standardised questionnaire to them. The questionnaire, or survey, can be a written document that is completed by the person being surveyed. It can be an online questionnaire, a face-to-face interview, or a telephone interview. Using surveys, it is possible to collect data from large or small populations. I used the interview method for data collection. After choosing this method, a good sample design is needed. Because a good sample design can guide us to choose the right data at the right time. A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population. It refers to the techniques or procedures the researcher adopts for choosing the selective sample. Sample selection is the first step in the survey method.

The study is based on the property rights of Santal women in the above-mentioned district. The study of the population of Santal women has been classified into the following five categories: widow, unmarried, widow and deserted, deserted, and divorcee. To collect the primary data, the study has selected four *gram panchayats* in the district. For the study, I have used a non-standardised questionnaire. In the selected three *gram panchayats* for the purpose of study, the universe population size was around 160, out of which the total number of respondents to the questionnaire was 130. The sample size, thus, was 130.

Since this study points towards a very critical social problem, mere data collection on the basis of a questionnaire was not enough. So, sometimes I became dependent on the oral history of the local people. In my first visit, I had talked with local people, who were obviously conscious politically and socially. I explained my problem to them, and they advised me to look for the voter list in the panchayat office. I went in vain to the local panchayat office; after a few failed visits, I finally met the person. First, I collected the voter list and selected approximately my sample. Apart from that, I interviewed the political leaders of the left party and the anti-left. I personally met with the Panchayat Pradhan and members of the panchayat of three tribal populated gram panchayats. I also interviewed advocates of the Balurghat district court and government officers (BLLRO, DLLRO, OS, District Magistrate, etc.).

Fieldwork in Balurghat block

The term field refers to the place where the investigator collects data from the local people by living with them. Here, investigators visit to talk to people and live with them to collect field information about their lives. In this regard, Luhrmann (1989: 15) argued that compared to other methods, fieldwork yields a lot of data about the lifestyle of the people and the meaning they attribute to their actions. Fieldwork also helps distinguish between 'what people think' and 'what people say'. The fieldworker can alter strategies and techniques of data collection and modify new methods. Madan argues the fieldworker can devise 'on-the-spot strategies to come to grips with unforeseen challenges of fieldwork. (Madan, 1995: 112).

I carried out my fieldwork in three Gram panchayats of Balurghat block, namely, Bhatpara, Danga and Boaldar.

The Santals in Dakshin Dinajpur

The distribution of the Santal population in different districts of West Bengal has resulted from the process of migration. In their own folklore, the Santal

are described as wandering hunters and cultivators. There are many theories regarding the course of their early migration. They have no definite idea of where their ancestors came from, as their subsoil of tradition was thought to be thin and poor (Hunter, 1968: 147). Santal mythology correlates the great Mountain with the first creation. In the next generation, due to population pressures, they are thought to have shifted from their original home, Hihiri-Pipiri and moved toward Chai Champa, Silda, Shiker, Sar and further onwards (Chowdhury, 1987: 120). Tradition also speaks that Santal king Jayra destroyed himself and his family due to Muslim exploitation and aggression. Continuous migration is supposed to have taken place from Chae and Champa to the present-day Santal Pargana.

According to the writings of Waddell (1893), the place names in the santal tales referred to the central alluvial valley of the Ganges and the santal migrated south-west wards to the Hazaribagh hills as a result of the Aryan onslaught (Duyker, 1987: 27). Sankarananda Mukherji said, according to linguistic evidence and santal tradition, the santal led an insulted existence during Muslim period in hilly region of Birbhums and Santal Parganas (Mukherji, 1975).

The tribes - Ho, Munda, Santal, Oraon, Bhumij and the Paharia of Chotanagpur - the raiding hillmen, enjoyed an autonomous life in the past. British attempted to destroy the autonomy of these hill people through the enforcement of alien land tenure. The main object of this system was the division of the population into landlords and tenant farmers. Before that, in Chotonagpur, land was common property, and they paid minimal revenue for that. This system encouraged a rapid growth of land as a commodity and the money-lending business. The changing system of agriculture and the fluctuating market pushed them into debt. Acute landlessness and land alienation became perennial problems of Santals, Ho, Munda and Paharia people. In this way, they lost their autonomy. As a result, they had to move out for employment. They were physically strong. The colonial administrators had transformed them into figures of docile and hardworking coolie labourers for the prosperity of tea and coffee plantations in different parts of India and abroad. They are known as Dhangars or hill coolies. In the same way, they started to work at a coal mining factory in the western part of Bengal. They were the new figure in the history of labour and the civilisation of plains (Ghosh, 2000).

Mackay, an indigo planter, estimated that at least 50,000 Dhangars were employed by indigo factories after a good harvest. Mackay himself had hired 'as many as 500' Dhangars (Mackay, 1837). In this way, massive numbers of men and women from the Chhotanagpur plains migrated to

different parts of Bengal. They served as cheap labour and were therefore in high demand. They became the dependable labourers, and they started to get ready for employment even in the non-tribal areas. Migration from Midnapore and Birbhum had started towards Murshidabad, Burdwan, Hoogly, and Howrah districts to work as labourers in agriculture and brickfields. In Dakshin Dinajpur and Uttar Dinajpur, they came in search of work, and they worked as agricultural labourers. However, they came to Dinajpur directly, not from Chotonagpur; probably, they came via the tea estates of the northeastern part of India. They were also involved in the work of road and rail construction. This is a short history of tribal migration from Chotonagpur to different districts of Bengal and Assam. However, this migration brought many problems into their life. First, they started to lose their own identity and cultural heritage. They got separated from their home and kin-group.

The condition of tribal women

The condition of women in the tribal society of Dakshin Dinajpur district is not different. Both males and females in the tribal family work on their own land or others' land. Both work as wage labourers on others' land. However, women's role in the tribal economy is very important. It is said that tribal women constitute the economic backbone of their society as far as their crafts, household industry, agriculture and forest-based economy are concerned. The participation rate of tribal women in the workforce is higher than that of non-tribal women. While the ratio of male and female workers in the general population of the country is 5:1, in the case of tribal women, it is 3:1 (Report, Rural Development Institute 2002). In rural West Bengal, because of divorce, desertion, widowhood, and migration of male members, many households are female-headed. Consequently, women's participation in agriculture is high. (Buvinic and Youeffl, 1976). But, tragically, most of the time, women have to work as wage labourers. They hardly ever hold or control the land they cultivate. Although the percentage of female participation in agriculture is increasing, they are now the most vulnerable group. Despite progressive legislation, few women own land; even fewer effectively control any. Different social, administrative and ideological factors created the persistent gap between women's legal rights and their actual ownership of land and between ownership and control. However, here I intend to qualify my discussion on the subject with a few concrete cases of ownership, non-ownership and deprivation. First, I deal with cases where women figure as deprived of inheritance, i.e. denial of their right to inherit their husbands' or parental property. And secondly, I

turn to cases of deprivation resulting from the West Bengal Government's land distribution programme under local panchayats where lands have been largely distributed and registered in the name of male members of the households. Rarely, if ever, do women emerge as joint owners of the lands. When I turn to cases of deprivation resulting from inheritance, we see panchayats as the adjudicator trying to resolve cases of denial successfully or unsuccessfully. But when we turn to cases of deprivation resulting from faulty registration of distributed lands, we see the panchayat itself as a source of discrimination against women. Thus, the present article presents the cases of deprived Santal women documenting their negotiation with their respective families on the one hand and local panchayats on the other. I have conducted my fieldwork in the Balurghat block of Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal. I have selected only single women from the Santal community in this block. For the study, Santal women have been classified into the following five categories: widow, unmarried, deserted, widow and deserted¹, and divorcee. To collect the primary data, the study has selected three *gram panchayats* in the district. In the selected three *gram panchayats*, for the purpose of study, the universe population size was around 160, of which the total number of respondents to the interview schedule was 130. Therefore, the sample size had to be restricted to 130. Table 1 gives the distribution of the sample respondents according to their marital status.

Table 1: The respondents by marital status

Widow	Deserted	Unmarried	Widow + Deserted	Divorcee	Total
62	40	12	10	06	130

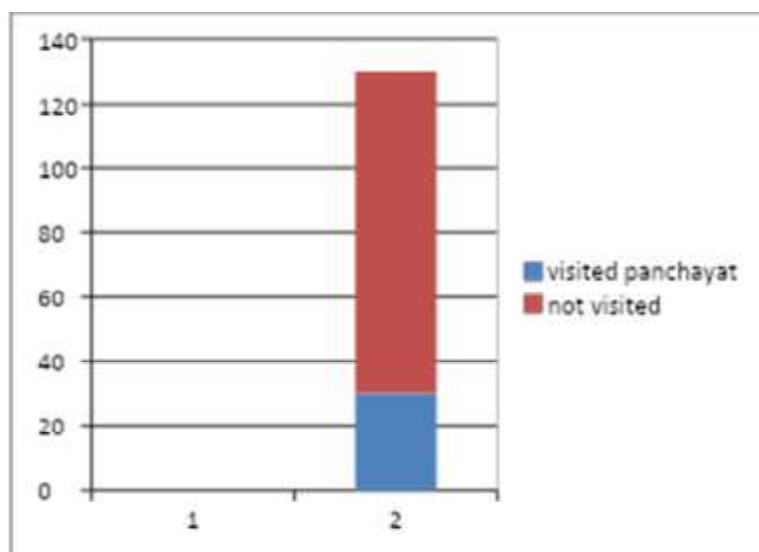
Source: Field data

Rebirth of Panchayati Raj under the Left Front Government

The role of panchayats in changing the rural landscape in West Bengal after the Left-front government came to power cannot be exaggerated. The Left Front consciously adopted the policy of using the panchayats as a platform for fighting rural vested interests and changing the correlation of class forces in favour of the working people. Panchayats played an important role in the implementation of land reforms (Rawal 2002). The twin programme of implementation of land reforms and reorganisation of panchayats constituted one thing that was later called the policy of walking on two legs. This historic idea laid the foundations of a unique path to rural development in India, a path that led rural West Bengal out of economic

stagnation and a large proportion of its rural population out of deprivation and poverty.

Santal Women Approaching Panchayat for Inheritance



Women visiting the Panchayat

Cases Resolved: The above Figure indicates the percentage of women visiting the panchayat in Dakshin Dinajpur district. The figure shows that only 30 per cent of the total female population had visited local gram panchayats in matters concerning their land rights issues. They normally went to the panchayat for collecting old age pension, stipend for students, etc. Very often, they went to the panchayat for seeking help in matters concerning domestic violence, but rarely to settle land disputes. Still, I came across instances when women did approach the panchayats and local judicial agencies in matters concerning their land rights. I discuss some of the cases below.

Mulan Hebram is a 32-year-old widow who belongs to village Bhusla in Vatpara gram panchayat. After the death of her husband, she had been deserted by the male agnates of her husband with her two sons. She did not have agricultural land and lived in a mud-built house. But the house was in the name of her father-in-law. According to Mulan, if the house were in the name of her husband, then her two sons would inherit it. After

her husband's death, she came back to her parental home and went to the tribal headman (Majhi Haram) for judgment. But the headman was not able to give any satisfactory judgment. After a month or two, she informed the local panchayat member about her problem. The panchayat member suggested her to go to the gram panchayat. As the house was not in the name of Mulan's husband, the panchayat could not decide on this matter. After a week of investigation, the Pradhan gave Mulan an heir certificate and instructed the local panchayat member to help her to reach the BLLRO. Mulan, with the help of this certificate, got the design (khatian) of her homestead land. She also had to clear all remaining taxes concerning the land. She had to pay Rs. 2000 as a bribe to the concerned officials and staff. After getting the design (Khatian) of the land, the panchayat helped her to get her husband's portion registered in her name.

Anati Soren, a 21-year-old respondent and resident of Vatpara Anchal, had similar experiences. After the death of her husband, she had also been deserted by her husband's kin. She had a child. She knew that in tribal society women had no right to property, but her only son had the right to his father's property. She pleaded for her son's rights from her father-in-law. But the property, though very small, was in the name of her father-in-law. He disagreed with giving it away. She went to the Pradhan of the concerned gram panchayat. Within a few days, the Pradhan gave her an heir certificate through which she got the share of her son. Now she lives in her husband's house and owns two bighas of land.

The case of **Jaba Murmu** was different from the previous two cases. She was a resident of Vatpara Gram Panchayat. At the age of fifteen, she was married to Soren, who was a resident of Hilli Gram Panchayat. After three years of marriage, she was deserted by her husband and in-laws. The reason behind the desertion was that she was unable to bear a child, and her father did not pay the dowry at the time of marriage. She returned to her parental house. After a week, Jaba's parents paid the dues to her in-laws. But her husband did not take her back. Jaba first went to Hilli Gram Panchayat. But one of the members of the panchayat was from Jaba's husband's family, who exercised a lot of clout in Hilli panchayat. However, the panchayat did not pay adequate attention to Jaba. She returned to her parents' house in Vatpara. She went to the Vatpara Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat Pradhan and other members gave the case due attention. Panchayat convened a Salish Sabha³ where they invited Jaba's husband's family. But they did not turn up. Failing this, the Pradhan of Vatpara and Hilli gram panchayats, unitedly convened a Salish Sabha for negotiation. Both Jaba's and her husband's families were present. Jaba insisted on

separation and claimed agricultural land as maintenance. Both the panchayat Pradhans convinced her husband to provide her maintenance. Jaba got a divorce. Jaba's version was that "we were poor, we did not have the money to go to the court; if the panchayat had not given me that support, I would not have got a divorce and maintenance.

The case of **Tippni Murmu** was different from the above three. She was a 36 years old widow, lived in Chakkashi village of Vatpara Gram Panchayat. At a very early age, she was married to Vaiya Soren of the same village. Vaiya had no house or land. So, after marriage, Tippni and her husband started living in her in-laws' house. After two years of marriage, her husband died. Tippni had three daughters. Her father gave her a portion of his house to live in and part of his agricultural land without making a will. After a year, her father also died. Then Tippni's three brothers threw her out of her parents' house. Tippni was illiterate, but she was aware of her daughter's equal share in parental property. So, she went to the gram panchayat. Gram Panchayat first convened a Salish Sabha where members were in her favour. But her brothers were not ready to give her dues. Then the panchayat gave her the legal heir certificate. With this certificate, she went to the BLLRO and got her share of the parental house and the plot of agricultural land transferred to her name.

Anuva Mumru was a 24-year-old unmarried daughter who lived in the Vatpara Gram Panchayat. She was the only daughter of her parents. Anuva lost her parents in her childhood. From then on, she was looked after by her only uncle. Due to a physical problem, she remained unmarried. Her uncle had two sons. After the death of her uncle, she started facing problems. Her two brothers disagreed on giving her agricultural land. They only permitted her to live in a portion of their house. She then went to the panchayat and explained her problem. The panchayat convened a Salish Sabha and instructed her brothers to give her share of the property. Thus, the panchayat was directly involved in settling diverse cases of the Santal women. Sometimes the panchayat had helped the women by giving the legal heir certificate or by giving judgments in their favour. In the case of Milan Hembram, Jaba Murmu and Anumati Soren, the panchayat helped them by giving them legal heir certificates. In the case of Jaba Panchayat called Salish Sabha, it helped her to get a divorce and land property as maintenance. These women gained substantially from the panchayat's direct intervention in their cases. They said that they did not have the money and education to go to the local district court. If they had not got the required help from the panchayat, they would have remained deprived forever.

Unresolved inheritance cases

However, it is also important to note cases where women did not get justice from the panchayat.

Sujata Murmu was a 38-year-old deserted lady. Sujata's experience with the panchayat was significant in this regard. She lived in the Boaldar Gram Panchayat. Like many others, her husband and in-laws had also deserted her. Sujata, along with her parents, went to the gram panchayat office. The Pradhan was absent on the first day, but on the second day, they met the Pradhan. He first tried to solve the problem at Salish Sabha. But this was unsuccessful. The Pradhan sent her to the district court and suggested that she should file a case at Balurghat. The court ordered her husband either to readjust or to give her maintenance. In the court, Sujata's husband pretended as if he were willing to take her back. Actually, he did not take her back. Sujata came back to the Pradhan. The Pradhan called Sujata's husband and in-laws to solve the matter. They did not seem to be in the mood to arrive at an amicable solution. After that, Sujata requested the Pradhan to give her a written document about the meeting resolution, which could help Sujata to get justice from the court. But the panchayat couldn't provide her with such a document. Sujata did not have enough money to go to court claiming her right to divorce. The function of the local body seemed very unsatisfactory to Sujata. The case remained unresolved.

Laxmi Mardi, a 58-year-old inhabitant of Bhusla Gram Panchayat, also shared her experience. After marriage, she started living in her husband's joint family. She did not have any children. After the death of her husband, she was deserted by the male agnates of her husband. She was forced to live in her parents' house. Her mother was in favour of her living with them, but her brother did not want her to live with them. She went to the panchayat office and explained her problem. Initially, the panchayat showed interest in her case. But later, Laxmi realised the panchayat was not with her. According to her, one of the members of the panchayat was from her husband's family. He exercised clout in the panchayat. As a result, she did not get the legal heir certificate. She lived in her own house. She works as an agricultural labourer on others' land and, in the lean seasons, works as a daily wage labourer in construction. In the evening, she sells rice beer which she made at her house. She also ran an illegal rice beer pub (Cholai thek) inside her house.

Deprivation resulting from lack of joint ownership: Faulty land distribution

Having discussed the cases of inheritance, successful or unsuccessful cases resolved by the panchayat, now I turn to the panchayat as a distributor of land under the Land Reform Programme and guarantor of ownership. The cases discussed earlier demonstrated the panchayat's role as adjudicator. At another level, the panchayat should also be seen as a source of discrimination itself, especially when we see the way in which the panchayat distributed land among the landless and granted *patta* to the owners of the redistributed land. During my fieldwork, I encountered cases where women had been exploited by this local body at the time of the distribution of joint title. I met some women who were not fully satisfied with the *patta* distribution. There is dissatisfaction among these women with the panchayat's role in the distribution of vested land.

Rasuni Hansda, 60 years old, an inhabitant of Jangalpur village of Danga gram panchayat, was a widow who did not receive any property from either side of the family and lived in poor condition. Originally, her husband's family did not have land. They received it from the government in the year 2000. But the land was registered in the name of her husband. After a year, her husband passed away. She was deserted by her son. Then she went to the panchayat to get the land transferred in her name. The panchayat did not pay heed to her appeal. I met Santal women who received the government-distributed land but did not have any registered deed (*patta*). In Boulder, the majority of the villagers received government-distributed land without a registered deed (*patta*). Very few had received land jointly. Women of Madhabpur village in Danga gram panchayat said that they did not have direct contact with the panchayat. They expressed their problems to their local panchayat members. Accordingly, there always remained a gap between their wants and the panchayat member's version. Promila Marddi of the same village reflected her poor condition arising out of her non-inheritance of property. She was married and deserted by her husband. She had a son and a daughter. She lived in her mother's house. At the time of selection of beneficiaries, the panchayat had only selected her husband and distributed the vested land in the name of her husband. Her husband was an alcoholic and sold the land to buy alcohol. Promila had no clue about how to regain the lost land. Now she makes rice beer at her home and sells it publicly. I found women selling rice beer under the shade of a bamboo tree in Madhabpur village even in the afternoon. At night, their house becomes a pub where the female of the house entertains the visitors and earns a livelihood. It demonstrated the economic condition of the tribal

women in this village. Saraswati Soren had similar complaints about the panchayat's role in Danga Gram Panchayat. She was a widow and lived in her husband's house. They did not get any land from the government. According to her, the beneficiary selection process of the panchayat was not neutral. Those who had a connection with the panchayat officials and members only received land.

Conclusion

The panchayat's role in addressing women's inheritance in different gram panchayats of Balurghat block in Dakshin Dinajpur is not very satisfactory. I have shown how the panchayat occasionally intervenes to solve cases of deprivation satisfactorily. In some cases, the panchayat was not able to resolve women's cases. Though the panchayat is a forum where rural women could go and ventilate their demands, women were often the victims of poor judgments. I have also shown how the panchayat was a source of discrimination itself when it came to distributing lands and granting of *patta*. In the three blocks, the panchayat, at times, was not transparent in the selection of beneficiaries. Women have grievances about the panchayat's role in the distribution of vested land. Most of the women I met did not receive a joint *patta* from the panchayat. It can be said that though the Hindu Succession Act 1956 was gender neutral in principle, in practice it discouraged women's inheritance. Even the traditional land reform program, which was a major tool of land distribution to poor women, was male-biased in practice. As noted, the male household head was the typical recipient. Sons get special importance at the time of fixing the ceiling and redistribution of land. As a result, in most of the cases widow, single women, unmarried, and deserted women are totally excluded. In Santal society, the traditional Headman known as Majhi Haram or Jog Majhi plays an important role in settling different problems. Very few go to the local judiciary – panchayat for justice. But we have seen that panchayats sometimes gave satisfactory verdicts, but sometimes became discriminatory rather than adjudicative.

Note

1. Women who became widows first and then were deserted by the male agnates of the husband's family are called widows and deserted.

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