

Need to recognise Khetowrie and Ghatwals as Scheduled Tribes

DR. NISHIKANT DUBEY (GODDA): I want to place a piece of great historical record -- a book titled: "The Little World of an Indian District Officer", written by R. Carstairs and published by Macmillan & Co., London, in 1912. In this book, there is a detailed, historical record of the fact that the Santhal Parganas was created and named in 1855, and thus was the youngest of the Bengal districts. The writer provides a wonderful account and description of the Ghatwals (guardians of the passes) and the Khetowrie (Khetauri) and how at the time of the Permanent Settlement in 1790, every part of the territory was occupied. This details that at the time of the Permanent Settlement there was not a single Sonthal in the whole of this area. "Bhunyas, Khetowries, Hindoos, Mahomedans, Highlanders -- yes, but Sonthals, no?". It is a fact that when these findings were recorded and when the book in question was published, the dispensation of Scheduled Castes and Tribes did not exist in the context of what it means administratively today. Thus, the aborigines of the region are the ones who are deprived of their rightful status and claim to be recognized as Scheduled Tribes.