

Pathalgarhi Movement

July 24, 2020

Recently the supporters of “Pathalgarhi” movement, armed with lathis and axes, kidnapped seven villagers and later killed them in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand for allegedly opposing their stir

What is it?

- **Pathalgarhi is a name given to a tribal protest which seeks autonomy for village sabhas (gramsabhas).**
- **Those demanding Pathalgarhi want no laws of the land be applicable** on the tribal people in the area.
- **They reject government rights over their forests and rivers.**
- **Its supporters carve their diktat on rocks in their areas of influence.**
- **The name ‘Pathalgarhi’ is derived from the practice of carving the edicts of the leaders of the movement on large stones called ‘pathal’ in local language, while garhi means carving.**
- **Usually placed at the entry points of tribal villages, these stone plaques have provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA written on them. These are meant to serve as warnings to the outsiders. The stone plaques and signboards also contain “orders” prohibiting outsiders from entering the tribal village.**
- **Demarcating every Pathalgarhi village is one such megalith. Meetings go on for days to arrive at a consensus on what each Pathalgarhi should say. Inaugurations of the slabs are grand affairs.**
- **In the initial days of the movement, the villages would send out invitations even to the President, Prime Minister, governor and chief minister**
- **Gram sabhas, governing councils for villages in areas**

administered under the Fifth Schedule are the final word in areas that have adopted Panchayati Raj, rejecting government intervention

- While traditional gram sabhas did not admit women, the movement in its present form makes **no such discrimination.**
- **They proclaim allegiance to the Constitution but reject any authority except their gram sabhas (village assemblies)**