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WELCOME NEW YEAR 2008

ASECA CHANNEL AND ALL INDIA ASECA WISH HAPPINESS, PEACE, PROSPERITY AND QUALITY LIFE ON THE EVE OF NEW YEAR TO SUBSCRIBERS, WELLWISHERS, CONTRIBUTORS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

Editorial

From time to time we hear official announcements particularly in the States of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal on introduction/implementation of primary education to the tribal students in their mother tongue. Governments in these States always reiterate the proclaimed policy framework of imparting education in mother tongue to eradicate illiteracy among the tribals. However, this ritual of announcement has become a routine affair. The official willingness though appears to be there, but in reality nothing is visible due to the absence of proper and efficient implementation mechanism. The Governments must understand, non-implementation of mother tongue education will certainly affect the ambitious Universal Education Mission targets. The general official apathy towards primary education system and institutions perhaps is also contributing for not pursuing seriously this special scheme. The Governments must see reasons and implement the schemes of primary education through mother tongue with desired enthusiasm and pace.

During an interaction with primary school teachers in Orissa who are being appointed by the Government of Orissa (presently 27 Nos.) to impart primary education in mother tongue (read Santali in Ol Chiki scripts), they shared some of their experiences, which are worth quoting in the present context. These are:

1) Initially, there was an attempt to discourage these teachers to give full attention to the students studying in Santali and in some cases they are being lured not to impart mother tongue education with an aim to establish the failure of this scheme.

other students in regional languages also. Only one Santali teacher is made responsible for classes upto 3 standard. This is the latest attempt aimed at overburdening these teachers so that they cannot pay required attention.

3) Notwithstanding official negative approach, absence of backing/support from social as well as political formations, these teachers have continued and are continuing their mission.

The policy makers should take note of these for improvement and utilize the experiences of these teachers for the implementation of the scheme in a practical way.

Letter to the Editor

Dear dada, Johar. Are we mentally strong enough and ready for new struggle to be faced by all minorities and lower strata of societies/groups as well as nations in the eve of global warming? Now a days, our Earth mother becomes too hot and the Sun father also as everything becomes extremely polluted. What we can do is to resolve a firm decision that we all are brother of samwe father (marangburu) to be united in a soul conscious way. It never be done by satisfying ego as on caste, race religions, sex/creed and professional /educational sects of the society.

So please try for a inward journey in personal practical lives to lead people and not to repeat the scene as happened in Assam/Guwahati this year. All such sensational issues reflect that RAVANS are in every family who are ready to unwrap the clothes of sisters as per their needs. So such pictures carry a very bad psychic effect on youth generation of backward classes who are ready to take revenge of such events. This is happening in every tribal dominated states now in various names. In MP, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, Assam and West Bengal the young ladies and boys are being used and exploited by influential groups such as ULFA, MAOBadi and other formations. So let us use our brain in this matter. With reagrd and love Dr D Hansda, CDRI, Lucknow.

Position Paper

National Focus Group on Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children

Source: National Council of Education Research & Training (NCERT)

{Continued from December 2007 issue}

The 'cultural discontinuity' between school and home draws attention to the rigidity of school organization and the emphasis on discipline and punishment in contrast with socialization practices and the lives of children, as reasons for non-attendance. Sujatha cites the case of community schools in Andhra where there was closer interaction with parents, weekly holiday was in tune with the local weekly bazaar, and school holidays coincided with tribal festivals. The school was observed to show positive results (Sujatha 2001, cited in Sundar, n.d; see also Singh, 1995).

The Language Question:

Despite several policy documents and a constitutional provision (350A) recognizing that linguistic minorities should be educated in their mother tongue at primary level, there is practically no education in Scheduled Tribe languages. This includes even those like Santhali, Bhili, Gondi or Oraon which are spoken by over a million people (Nambissan, 2000).

Although states in India were organized on linguistic grounds, political powerlessness of Scheduled Tribes prevented the formation of states based on tribal languages. They are confined to minority status within large states and are compelled to learn the state language in school. Primary teachers are predominantly from non-ST communities. And despite the pedagogic significance of initial instruction in the mother tongue, teachers do not bother to learn the tribal language even after several years of posting (Kundu, cited in Sundar, n.d.; Saxena, 1995; 1975; Toppo, 1979; Furer-Haimendorf, 1989). The general picture at primary level is often one of mutual incomprehension between ST students and their non-ST teachers.

Several studies have pointed to the significance of the language question at the primary levels. Quite apart from the pedagogic problems this creates – such as destroying the child's self esteem, and reducing the possibilities of successful learning in later years, the denigration of Scheduled Tribe languages amounts to denigration of Scheduled Tribe worldviews and knowledge. The education system with its insistence on a common language as a means of achieving a common nationhood has been instrumental in the destruction of tribal language, culture and identity. Even outside the school, educated youth often speak to each other in the language of the school, perhaps to mark themselves off from their 'uneducated peers'.

Several languages, especially those spoken by small numbers, are dying out. Loss of a language means the loss of a certain way of knowing the world. Experiences of schooling of tribal children in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have revealed the displacement of Bundelkhandi, Gondi and Warli by Sanskritised Hindi, Telugu and Marathi respectively (Sundar, n.d.; Saxena, 1995; 1997; Furer Haimendorf, 1989; Saldanah, 1990; also Karnataka teachers' experiences).

Depending on levels of cultural absorption and adaptation however, several Scheduled Tribes may not look to schools to teach in their home language. Indeed, for many Scheduled Tribe parents, the main advantage of schooling is that it gives access to the new languages, new occupations and a new life and enables interaction with the non-tribal world (Grigson, 1993; Patwardhan, 2000; Saldanah, 1990). But wherever Scheduled Tribes have been politically mobilised to celebrate Scheduled Tribe identity, they have been more clear and open in their demand for education in indigenous languages (Patwardhan, 2000; Nambissan, 2000).

The Alienating Impact of School Regimen: The school regimen of timing, discipline, hierarchy is especially alien to tribal children socialized in a world where individuality is respected from early on, and where parent-child interactions are relatively egalitarian (Sarangapani 2001). Kundu (1994) points out that testing procedures too are based on urban middle class values – the competitiveness and system of rewards that examinations represent is often culturally anomalous to Scheduled Tribe children who are brought up in an atmosphere of sharing. Furthermore, learning among ST children is usually intimately connected to the work process – children learn the names and medicinal uses of many plants and trees while accompanying their parents on foraging trips in the forest [Sarangapani, 2003(a)]. When children are away at school, especially when they are sent to residential schools, they lose connection with this world of labour and their capacity to learn from it.

Several studies have attested the alienating effects of language, school structure and ethos.

(To be continued...)

Scheduled Communities: A social Development profile of SC/STs (Bihar, Jharkhand & W.B)

(Source: Planning Commission)

{Continued from December 2007 issue}

Scheduled Castes, Bihar

In Bihar, we have as many as 966 workers out of 392 Scheduled Caste households who have identified their main occupation.

Table 4.12 : Main occupations for the Scheduled Castes in Bihar (not reproduced)

The pattern that emerges is the following:

- Of the total workers, 68.7% are agricultural labourers. Only 7.9 are ownercultivators and as few as 2.2% are tenants. Thus nearly 79% are engaged in the agricultural sector.

- Within the agricultural sector 87.2% are agricultural labourers.

- Apart from agricultural labourers, as many as 8 percent reported nonagricultural labour as their main occupation. Thus 76.7 percent of the Scheduled Caste belong to workers in the class of labourers whether they are agricultural or non-agricultural.

- Interestingly, the service sector employs 10 percent of the workers. An insignificant number of workers are engaged in business, artisanry and animal husbandry.

- The overall scenario suggests that Scheduled Castes overwhelmingly, remain at the bottom stratum of the occupational stratification. Hence, the little diversification that is indicated outside agricultural sector remains, by and large, confined to petty business, animal husbandry, artisanry and nonagricultural labour. They remain more or less at the level of coping strategies for minimum level of living. The exceptional few strive and enter the middle class.

- Of the very small proportion of 8 percent owner-cultivators, as many as 94.5 percent are small and marginal farmers, and 79.1 percent own land upto only 1.5 acres.

- Coming to individual castes we find that the Musahar (94.1%) and the Chaupal (91.7%) belong preponderantly to the class of labourers.

- The Musahar caste is conspicuous by not having a single household as owner- cultivator and with hardly any diversification in their occupational pattern. As many as 84.7 percent workers are engaged in agriculture sector. Within the agricultural sector, 98.3 percent are agricultural labourers.

- Both the Chaupal (17.7%) and Musahar (10.9%) are significantly into nonagricultural labour.

- When compared to the Musahar, Chaupal and Chamar, the Dusadh have the least worker participation both in

agricultural and non-agricultural labour. They reflect a much greater diversification of occupations with 14.1 percent as owner-cultivators and 21.4 percent in services.

- The Chamar caste, which is the largest in our sample, are predominantly in the agricultural sector (84%). Within the agricultural sector, 87.3 percent are agricultural labourers.

- Among the Dhobi, there is a significant difference in their occupational pattern from the other Scheduled Castes. All households have cultivable land and at least one member of each household is involved in self-cultivation. They are either owner-cultivators (45.0%) or are engaged in service (55.0%). They do not figure in any other occupation.

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, altogether seven Scheduled Castes with a total of 56 households, provided 129 workers. In view of the fact that 84 percent of the households are urban workers, only 7.0 percent are agricultural labourers, whereas 32.6 percent are non- agricultural labourers, 37.2 percent are in service, 12.4 percent are in business and 10.1 percent are in artisanry and animal husbandry. The urban concentration of SCs in our sample explains the high percentage of non-agricultural labourers, as well as high worker participation in service and business.

In view of the small and scattered distribution of households of the seven castes, we have selected only the Chamar and the Dom with 16 and 21 households respectively, for analysis. The remaining castes have 7 households or less in our sample. *Our rapid appraisal field work leads us to suspect that the participation of the Musahar in animal husbandry has been under reported. One of the symbols of the Musahar caste is their rearing of pigs, both for self-consumption and for sale. This is reported in their ownership of pigs as their livestock asset in a later section.*

Table 4.13: Main occupation of Scheduled Castes in Jharkhand.(Not reproduced)

As between the Chamar and Dom castes, the Chamar seems to be marginally more diversified in the occupational structure.

West Bengal

In West Bengal there are 20 Scheduled Castes with a total workforce of 1021 in our sample of 443 households. The occupational pattern of West Bengal is markedly different from that of Bihar and Jharkhand. Of the total workforce,

27.7 percent are agricultural labourers, 18.9 percent are cultivators and 2.4 percent are tenants. Thus the total agricultural workforce is less than 50 percent. In sharp contrast to Bihar and Jharkhand, within the agricultural sector, a sizable number of owner-cultivators (nearly 39 percent) are engaged in cultivation. It needs to be clarified that the number of workers who have declared themselves as owner-cultivators is greater than the number of households involved in own cultivation. This is because a single household may have declared more than one owner-cultivator.

Table 4.14 : Main occupation of Scheduled Castes in West Bengal.(Not reproduced)

- The Konai have 51.1 percent of their workers as agricultural labourers and substantial percentage of workers (40.4%) are involved in petty business. They are not into non-agricultural labour, service, animal husbandry and artisanry. There is, however, a small percentage of owner-cultivators (6.4%). The occupational diversification among the Konai is the least.

- The Bauri have the largest proportion of agricultural labourers (59.2%). At the same time, they have a substantial percentage of workers involved in petty business (23.3%). They have a small proportion of owner-cultivators (5.8 %) and even fewer tenants (3.3%). None of the Bauri households is involved in non-agricultural labour.

- The Bagdi have the third largest proportion of agricultural labourers at 39.8 percent. They can be distinguished from the Bauri and Konai in having a significant percentage of owner-cultivators at 28.3 percent. They are more or less evenly distributed amongst the non-agricultural occupations at 27.2 percent. The Bagdi, too, are not into non-agricultural labour.

- The Bhuiyan (54.5%) and the Kami (41.3%) have the largest concentration of owner-cultivators. Their participation as agricultural labourers is 14.3 and 4.0 percent respectively. Among the Bhuiyan, a significant percentage of workers are involved in petty business (24.6 %), whilst the Kami are concentrated in the service sector (45.3 %).

- The Chamar are largely concentrated in the non-agricultural sector (64.6 %). A significant percentage of workers, however, are agricultural labourers (23.2 %). In the non-agricultural sector, as many as 37.8 percent are in petty business. None of the households are engaged in non-agricultural labour.

- The Sarki, like the Kami, are mainly owner-cultivators (46.2 %) and in service (40.6 %).

- The Patni are overwhelmingly in the non-agricultural sector (87.9%), with 36.2 percent in petty business, 22.4 percent in service, 29.3 percent in animal husbandry and artisanry.

- The Dhobi reveal a similar pattern to that of Patni with 83.3 percent in nonagricultural pursuits. As many as 31.4 percent are in service, 22.2 percent are in business and 29.7 percent are in animal husbandry and artisanry.

- The land ownership in agriculture and diversification in non-agricultural occupations are presumably a reflection and a spin-off of the State Government's consistent efforts in land distribution through land reform measures, initiated through operation Barga in the late seventies. It remains to be seen how consequential these changes have been with respect to the level of living of the Scheduled Castes in West Bengal. **(To be continued...)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

A National Level Santal Conference is being organized at Keonjhar Town Kalipadia, Orissa on 10th and 11th February 2008. The Organisers request to participate in large numbers in this Conference. The arrangement for the same has already started.

Contributions may be made by local cheque / demand draft in favour of National Santal Confernece payable at Keonjhar.

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