



ASECA CHANNEL

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Editorial

Quite often, voices are heard within tribal society on the desirability to streamline the prevalent social systems and procedures particularly with regard to the observations of various religious and social festivals. The tribals in general have not been able to project their social leaders or any social or religious occasion to find a place in the regional or national platform. Tribals in general and Santals in particular are not being able to prevail upon the concerned authorities to take cognisance of the importance of their festivals and declare the day as closed holiday or at least a restricted holiday. Due to this fact, we do not find mention of any tribal personalities or god/goddesses or festivals in any official calendar. The requirement or desirability of a demand flows from the fact that the tribal religion or social affairs are yet to be recognised by the concerned authorities. There are issues which remained to be in the exclusive ambit of social life only. But this has to go. Time and again people raise these questions and term it as step motherly attitude on the part of the concerned authorities for not according due recognition to the tribal affairs or tribal way of life. The people who are still pursuing the way of life are treating it as their personal affairs. It is not being projected as having virtues or significance.

Due to such neglect, people have developed general impression that tribals are not having any religion or they are not bound by a particular religious belief. They worship nature and so on. But in reality, these groups also have their independent own system of belief. While others are being facilitated through sanction of holidays on different occasions, these indigenous people of different groups are denied of this opportunity and facility. The very aim of giving off day is to facilitate people participating and involving themselves in festivities and thus help them in pursuit of spiritual excellence. By denying these groups of desired recognition, officially it is conveyed that believers of nature or any other religious/social format do not qualify to avail any off day in their life.

The responses in some occasions have been positive from some official quarters. One impediment on this account is cited as non uniform way of observing an occasion i.e. same occasion is being celebrated in different dates. The cause of this variance is economic rather than social. This emanates from the fact that people are poor and according to their capacity they fix a date so that they find time to prepare themselves for organising the celebration of that occasion. It can be seen that in the Official calendar, we do not find a mention of any occasion pertaining to tribals or tribal personality. It will not be out of place to mention that as per official arrangement/understanding this section of 8% population of our country does not have a date/personality worth to be mentioned. It is high time to raise this question so that a beginning can take place where on pan Indian context, they can have their presence felt among other people of India. The instances are many, birthdays of Baba Tilka Majhi, Heroes of Santal Hul - Sido, Kanhu etc., Dharti Abba Birsa Munda, Pandit Raghunath Murmu etc. can be included in the official calendar. The freedom fighters from other states should also be figured in the official calendar. Like Jharkhand, other states should also start declaring holidays to celebrate tribal festivals. The states of West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat should follow the example immediately through demonstration.

A move is becoming clear that people are showing anxiety to preserve their religious practices and expressing their concern for the neglect. As this continuing neglect has contributed towards instilling a sense of inferiority mindset, this has to go. When one continues to be neglected, he loses confidence and gradually thinks that there is nothing worthwhile which needs to be protected or propagated. Recognition is equivalent to acknowledging their existence.

In order to bring order in the tribal life and to protect

the little culture, govt must come out with concrete plan of action so that these groups could be supported to maintain their social system. It is unfair on the part of any govt. machinery to neglect some groups whereas covertly or overtly supporting other groups.

Some voluntary groups are being organised to consolidate a forum to press the demand before the

Govt. machinery for accepting their genuine demand of considering/ extending support to the deserving groups so that this move can contribute positively and accord some recognition to people pursuing little traditions towards enriching great traditions as well to ensure integration with great Indian culture.

APPEAL TO ALL READERS OF ASECA CHANNEL AND WELL WISHERS OF ALL INDIA ASECA

In 2002, All India ASECA started programme to organise conferences so as to establish a platform to exchange/interchange views and ideas on different issues among various strata of the society. Soon we realised that in addition to holding an annual programme, there is a need to continuously maintain dialogue among the people for better understanding as well as to appreciate each others point of view on various issues. Thus ASECA CHANNEL was started from May 2002 and is being published without a break till to date. Holding of annual conference was put on hold due to problems created by people with vested interest. We thought it fit to address various issues through some other formats which are in fact underway and soon will be brought to the general notice.

From the inception, commercial aspect of this journal was not the prime concern. We knew that the necessity was to be fulfilled and for making that to happen voluntary support is the only solution. It is almost 7 years now, this journal is being published and from time to time our indeavour is to publish such articles/information which has a bearing on tribal /Santal life. It is with satisfaction we look back and gather inspiration to move forward.

We have been collecting feedback from our discerning readers on the further/future course of actions. We have been occasionally surprised to find that in very remote villages also people have the knowledge about this magazine. We can proudly mention that during the Guru Gomke Centenary celebration year 2005, this little magazine had contributed a lot in organising people and eliciting their support. That experience is unique and really unforgettable. This experience has strengthened our belief to continue publication of this magazine.

As it is almost being circulated free of cost, people have the notion that it is being supported through some government aid programme. But it is not so. We would like to mention that the cost of

publication is being borne by the members of the All India ASECA and it is being supported by the contribution of hard earned money of few people. For addressing social concern, direct or indirect involvement of a large number of people is very much required. We are currently in the process of undertaking some ambitious projects for the welfare of our society. In addition to that we have been receiving enquiry whether we need money to run this magazine at least from those who have been receiving this magazine uninterruptedly since 2002. Also, we have been advised by some of our well wishers to bring these facts to the notice of the readers eliciting their support and involvement. Under such scenario, we earnestly appeal public in general and our esteemed readers in particular to help us in pursuing these programmes. Had there been no such endeavour, we would not have asked for any support for maintaining ASECA CHANNEL. Let us make it happen and maintain this as a going concern.

It may be informed that the members of All India ASECA are few and are scattered in different parts of the country. It is not possible to physically contact people seeking their support in various places for various projects. The only option remains is to establish contact through this medium only and solicit their support and advice. We believe in doing things and as such seek your association and partnership in serving the society to make our existence meaningful and create a bright future worth emulating and inspiring.

We, therefore, earnestly appeal to send us your donations/contribution through Money Order, Demand Draft favouring All India ASECA in the following address:

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

(Source: Planning Commission)

{Continued from January 2009 issue}

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, among the urban-based SCs, 87.5 percent houses are selfconstructed and owned, 7.1 percent are offered by maliks and 5.4 percent are rented . As many as 2.2 percent houses are constructed under IAY. Most of these houses, (91%) are pucca/semi pucca .

Table: 5.2 Housing: Ownership Status(Jharkhand SCs)- Not reproduced

- As many as 75.0 percent houses of Chamar are self-constructed and owned; 12.5 percent, rented; another 12.5 percent are provided by the malik.
- In comparison, the Dom mostly live in their self-constructed and owned houses (95.2%) and only one household lives in accommodation provided by the malik.
- All the houses of Chamar, and Dom are pucca/semi pucca.
- The IAY programme has had little role to play in the largely urban setting of Ranchi.

West Bengal

The housing situation in West Bengal is markedly the best in terms of ownership of housing, with 96.6 percent houses self-constructed and owned. However, when it comes to the type of construction, Indira Awas Yojana, West Bengal scores the lowest, with 78.6 percent of all houses as katcha. Housing dependence on malik is the least at 3.4 percent.

Table: 5.3 Housing: Ownership Status: (West Bengal SCs)- Not reproduced

- All the houses of Bauri, Kami, Dom and Konai are self-owned and self constructed.
- The type of construction also reveals a pattern of differentiation among the castes. The Kami and Sarki,

all have pucca houses. The Dhobi, is next best with 50 percent pucca housing.

- It can be presumed that land reforms have paved the way for self-ownership of housing but the quality of housing remains overwhelmingly katcha amongst the SCs. Besides, the Indira Awas Yojana has hardly played any significant role.

Scheduled Tribes:

Jharkhand

Tribal households in Jharkhand are largely self-constructed and owned (90.6%). However, a large percentage of all housing are katcha (67.6%). The contribution of IAY is insignificant (2.2%). The rented housing is reflective of the predominant presence of Oraon, Munda and Lohora in Ranchi town (5.3%). The dependency factor is negligible (1.8%).

Table: 5.4 Status of Housing among the STs in Jharkhand- Not reproduced

- The Ho and the Santhal have very high percentage of self constructed and owned houses (99.4% and 96.7% respectively).
- Almost all houses of Ho and Santhal are kutcha. In comparison 70.8 percent housing among the Mahali are self-constructed and owned. Of the total houses, 68.8 percent are kutcha. It is mainly for the Mahali that the IAY has provided housing support (25%).
- The urban-based Munda and Oraon have less than average percentage of selfowned housing, with 75.5 and 81.0 respectively. This is on account of a higher incidence of renting (21.6% for Munda and 17.5% for Oraon). All the houses of Munda and Oraon are pucca.
- A more or less similar pattern may be observed among the Lohara, with as many as 82.8 percent houses self owned and 17.2 percent houses rented. The 12.1 percent houses which are katcha are likely to be located in the rural area.

It may be recalled that nearly 86 percent Lohara are in Ranchi.

The overall pattern that emerges suggests that tribal rural housing is selfowned and katcha. Only among the Mahali do we find a significant percentage (31.2) having pucca houses, primarily as beneficiaries of IAY. Tribal urban housing (Munda, Oraon and Lohara) is almost invariably pucca, with a substantial component of rented housing.

West Bengal

The status of housing amongst the STs in West Bengal is similar to that SCs, with 93.5 percent owning their houses; 5.0 percent dependent on maliks and 1.4 percent houses constructed by IAY. Of the total houses, 66.8 percent houses are katcha. There are no rented houses.

Table 5.5: Status of Housing amongst the STs of West Bengal – Not reproduced

- It is only among the Lodha that 16 percent housing comes from the malik. otherwise, housing is almost entirely self-owned (91% and above).
- Mahali and Oraon have cent percent pucca housing, followed by Munda (91%) and Lodha (54.4%).
- In sharp contrast, the Bhumij with 95.8 percent and Santhal with 93.3 percent, have katcha houses.

Housing Infrastructure

In order to get some idea of conditions relating to housing among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in all the three States, we have collected information relating to certain facilities like, (a) sources of water for drinking and other domestic purposes; (b) toilet; and (c) cooking arrangements. It would be instructive

to know the extent to which these basic facilities were available inside their homes.

(a) Source of Water Scheduled Castes

Bihar

- In Bihar, as many as 112 households (28.5%) of scheduled castes have hand pumps installed in their premises. Nearly 72 percent have to reach out for water outside.
- Amongst the scheduled castes, the Dusadh is better endowed with this facility than the Chaupal and the Chamar. As many as 52 households of Dusadh (46%), 9 of Chaupal (31%) and 43 of Chamar (27%) have handpumps in their homes. The Dhobi is at the other extreme, with all their households having this facility.

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, strangely, out of 56 households, only 6 have well/handpump in their premises. As we are aware, 47 of all scheduled caste households are in the urban capital town Ranchi. In spite of this, only 3 Chamar households have well/pump, and not a single Dom has this facility. Water is a common resource for the entire settlement where they reside.

West Bengal

In West Bengal, this facility is available in only 27 Scheduled Caste households (6.1%), of these 21 are wells. There are 3 hand pumps and 3 tanks, in addition to the wells. Of the 34 households of the Dhobi, 11 have wells (32.4%); followed by Chamar with 5 households (10.4%) and Kami with only 2 households (8.7%).

(To be continued...)

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