



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

Indian labour policies need a review as far as construction labourers are concerned. The division of labour and dignity of labour is not uniquely balanced and it is a common practice that dignity of labour is inversely proportional to the division of labour. It means in general practice the person doing hard menial job is not adequately compensated through job security and tenure. He is always under constant threat and in fact less protected in spite of all safeguards available under laws of the land. Whereas a person with less exposure to hard work and hostile environment is provided with job security and other related benefits to lead his life in a more meaningful and dignified way. The glaring example is the construction/infrastructure sector. People (read contract labours) who are toiling hard day and night are not in pink of their health. Common sight is a sea of frail framework of skeletons at the work places. It is a paradox that for undertaking construction work even in mega scale, companies do not have/retain minimum permanent labour force. All the works are being undertaken through outsourcing, contract or in most of the cases with people sourced from different parts of the Country. One common question arises, if the structure can be erected through temporary work force, then why the companies are maintaining a large posse of qualified people. Clearly it is the outcome of the bargain power of the respective groups.

These labour forces predominantly hail from the weaker sections of the society and particularly from adivasi communities. The malls, metro rail, Common Wealth Games buildings/infrastructures, roads, or any other infrastructures are the result of the hard work this labour class rendered during the construction work. They are the unsung heroes and heroines who do not have or earn the official admiration or remain in the people's memory for a short period of time.

On casual survey of the adivasi locality, one can find many semi skilled, un skilled, semi literate or literate adivasi boys and girls have left their villages and are engaged temporarily in various highly risky

areas/fields but are paid meager salary which if spent will not be sufficient to maintain themselves in metro cities. The savings become their primary responsibility so they could not afford to have minimum quantity of nutritious food nor minimum quality of life. In metro cities or even in small cities, the presence of these section of people is common. One may see the hard bound reports showing statistics of labour related figures, but is that the only solution to the problems faced by the large section of people who are engaged in the nation making activities all along their life. It is not the policies alone which make the large section of this labour force in fighting fit condition, but their health is required to be maintained to enhance their productivity so as to accelerate the growth rate of economy and health of the country as a whole.

Considering the fact that labour forces contribute immensely in the nation building process and undoubtedly are the key players in moving the country's economy in the right trajectory, their fate need not be allowed to rest in the hands of very few who are highly agile, educated and equipped with management jargons, skills, modern tools and equipments. The terms and conditions of their appointment need to be deliberated at the highest level. It may be required to continue with the practice being followed in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to appoint labour class employees on permanent basis. Now PSUs are also managing most of their activities through outsourcing citing the alibi of core and non core business. In a business core and non core issues are subjective and it is open to perception and individual understanding. But as a national policy, it should be mandatory to have a minimum level of workforce in the lower category by the PSUs as well as the Private Companies which would directly protect the weaker section of the society and adivasis in particular. The on going neglect to this section will be counter productive as one cannot manage to remain peaceful by keeping other section of people perpetually poor and in a precarious state.

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

(Source: Planning Commission)

*{Continued from July 2010 issue}*

Consequently, ethnic consciousness and contradictions assume primacy in the perception of social development and change.

Given this theoretical orientation, we argue that it is useful to analyse entire communities in a stratification scheme similar to that of Weberian class analysis in an innovative way. Within this perspective we propose to profile the scheduled communities we have studied in terms of their earning and earner status.

In this scheme of class stratification we have categorised five layers of classes. The lowest layer comprises scheduled communities with *low* earning status in combination with low to highest level of earner status. Second category from the bottom, comprises scheduled communities with *moderate* earning status in combination with different levels of earner statuses. Likewise, the next three class categories in the ascending order combine, *high*, *very high* and *highest* earning statuses with different levels of earner status.

Our findings indicate that amongst the Scheduled Castes, the Chamar and the Konai of West Bengal are at the bottom of our class stratification. There are no tribal communities in this class.

In the class next to the bottom we have the Chamar and Chaupal of Bihar; and the Dom, Mal, Bagdi, Bauri of West Bengal. Amongst the tribal communities, those who belong to this class are the Lohara and the Ho of Jharkhand; and the Mahali and Oraon of West Bengal.

In the next higher class are the Musahar of Bihar, the Dom of Jharkhand, and the Patni, Sarki, Bhuiyan and Kami of West Bengal. The tribal communities in this class are the Munda of Jharkhand; and the Santhal, Lodha, Bhumij and Munda of West Bengal.

The Dusadh of Bihar; the Chamar of Jharkhand; and the Dobha of West Bengal are the Scheduled Castes, which belong to the second highest class category.

Among the Scheduled Tribes, in this category belong the Oraon and Santhal of Jharkhand.

The only caste to belong to the upper most class is the Dhobi of Bihar; and the only tribal community, is the Mahali of Jharkhand.

What comes out conspicuous is that the tribal communities which span both Jharkhand and West Bengal, except for the Munda, all the others have a better earning status in Jharkhand.

**Table 7.1: Earning and earner status of Scheduled Communities in the States of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal (Ascending order of earning status and descending order of earner Status).**

Earning status (class category)	Earner status (Worker participation)	Scheduled communities				
		Caste			Tribe	
		Bhr.	Jhk.	WB	Jhk.	WB
Low	X Mode			Konai		
	X Low			Chamar		
Mod	X Highest					Oraon
	X Very High	Chaupal		Bauri	Ho	Mahali
	X High	Chamar		Dom Mal Bagdi	Lohara	
	X Highest			Kami		Munda
High	X Very High	Mushahar		Sarki Bhuiyan		Lodha Bhumij
	X High					Santhal
	X Mod		Dom	Patni	Munda	
	X Very High				Santhal	
V. High	X Mod	Dusadh	Chamar		Oraon	
	X Low			Dhoba		
Highest	X High				Mahali	
	X Low	Dhobi				

Note : 1. Ascending order of Earning status is as follows : Low = Rs. 2000 - 2500; Moderate = 2501 - 3500; High = 3501 - 4500; V.High = 4501 - 5500; Highest = 5501 and above.

2. Decending order of Earner status is as follows : Highest = 61% and above; V.High = 51% - 61%; High = 41% - 50%; Moderate = 31% - 40%; Low = 20# - 30%.

We have already noted the distribution of scheduled communities within the five class categories ranging from 'Low' to the 'Highest' earning status. What

becomes even clearer, by intersecting earning status with earner status, is the ranking of these communities within each class category. The logic of ranking that is followed is simple.

Given the same earning status, the community which has a higher earner status, will have a lower rank within the same class. This is so for the simple reason that a larger number of earners per household will have to be supported with the same earning. For example, the Konai and the Chamar of West Bengal belong to the lowest class category.

But within this class, the position of the Konai is worse than that of the Chamar as it has to support more number of earner (and their dependents) as compared to the Chamar. In this way we have been able to arrive at a more precise ranking of communities.

We must not lose sight of the fact, that our categorisation of class will not bear resemblance with the class categorisation of the wider society. At best, the highest class of the scheduled communities will be comparable to the lower-to- middle class status of communities in the wider society. Therefore, the class differentiation within the scheduled communities presents a reality confined to the universe of the scheduled communities.

**Gender Gap in Work Participation:** While discussing earner status, it is important to draw our attention to the difference between male and female work participation.

Barring exceptions, female work participation is lower than that of the male. The question arises, how large or small are the gender gaps amongst the scheduled communities? Smaller the gap, greater the gender equity in earner status. In our study, the Musahar and Chaupal castes of Bihar are exceptional in as much as, gender differentials in earner status are in favour of female earners; while among the Mahali of Jharkhand and Oraon of West Bengal, there is no gender differential.

Among the tribal communities the gender gap varies between zero percent and 21.4 percent. The Munda of Jharkhand (21.4%) and West Bengal (17.3%) have the largest gender gap. The Santhal of West Bengal (12.6%) and Oraon of Jharkhand (12.0%) come next. The rest have gender gaps between zero percent and 7.2 percent. {To be continued...}

## **Celebration of 45th Annual Conference of ASECA, Rourkela B.O. and Election of New Office bearer for the years 2010-2013**

The 45th Annual General Body meeting of Adivasi Socio Educational and Cultural Association (ASECA), Rourkela Branch was held on 27th June 2010 at Guru Gomkey Bhawan, Rourkela. Many Majhies, Santal social loving members were invited to grace the meeting and celebration. Mr. Ram Chandra Hansdah, MLA, Saraskana, Constituency Odisha was invited as the Chief Guest of the Annual General Body Meeting.

The Delegate Session was presided over by Mr. Ramrai Majhi, President of the Association. Mr. Arjun Marandi, Secretary read out an eight pages "Ol Chiki" Annual Report along with the Audited Annual Accounts. Participating in the discussion many majhies urged that ASECA should organize frequent Majhi Mapanje Meeting to solve many social problems. The Chief Guest, in his address cited social problems as well as difficulties being faced in introduction of education system in Ol Chiki. He suggested the ways how these problems could be over come. He informed that Govt. of Odisha is taking positive initiatives to implement the "Ol Chiki" at all level of education system. In his reply to a question of Majhi how to protect the Jaher Than, he informed that he is committed to release MLA LAD Fund to protect Jaher Than though it is not sufficient. He assured that he would follow up the matter with other Santal MLAs to extend such support.

Concluding the 45th Annual General Body Meeting President Sj. Ramrai Majhi thanked the Chief Guest who had taken a lot of pain to attend the Annual General Body Meeting and all the people who were present in the meeting.

On this occasion an election was conducted by the President to elect new Office Bearer for the years 2010 to 2013. Following office bearers of ASECA, Rourkela were unanimously elected:

- (1) **Pargana Rourkela: Sj. Hemo Charan Marndi, Pargana Secretary : Sj. Sanatan Marndi**
- (2) **President : Sj. Ramrai Majhi, Vice-presidents : Sri Ram Chandra Hembram, : Sri Saiba Majhi**
- (3) **Secretary: Sri Arjun Marandi, Asst. Secretaries : Sri Dhana Beshra, Sri Lakhai Marndi**
- (4) **Treasurer: Sri Arjun Murmu, Asst. Treasurer : Sri Jadumani Murmu**
- (5) **Education Secretary : Mrs. Dikumoni Soren, Asst. Secretary : Sri Champai Murmu**
- (6) **Cultural Secretary : Sri Gajendra Murmu, Asst. Secretaries : Sri Bhagrathi Tudu,; Mrs. Dalma Murmu**

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## Contemporary Tribal Situation and Issues of Broad Based Discourse at various levels

B.K. Roy Burman

{Continued from July 2010 issue...}

Advisasi Administration and Governance Opportunities and Challenges Even if there is legitimate skepticism about the vanguard role of adivasis and indigenous peoples of India and other parts of the world, their right of self regulated internal and external social relations cannot be denied. Some friends try to project the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution as providing the frame of adivasi self-rule. It beats all ordinary logic to accept this claim. In operationalizing the Fifth Schedule the adivasis come into the picture to an extremely limited extent through the Tribes Advisory Council. The council consists of not more than 24 members three fourths of which must be representative of the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State. Though the council is called "advisory" it can advice only on matters referred to it by the Governor and even such advices are not binding. The Governor may make regulations for the peace and good government of any area covered by the Fifth Schedule. In particular such regulations may prohibit or restrict transfer of land by or among members of Scheduled Tribes, regulate money lending and allotment of land to members of Scheduled Tribes. In promulgating such regulations the Government consults the Tribal Advisory Council but the regulation thus promulgated shall have no effect until the assent of the President is obtained. It should however be noted that the foregoing provisions in the Fifth Schedule do not foreclose the power of the State Legislature to enact similar legislation anywhere in the State. In fact on all the foregoing matters all the State having Fifth Schedule have enacted legislations. It is a matter of special interest to note that the Governor may by public notification direct that any particular Act of Parliament

or of State Legislature shall not apply to a Scheduled area or shall apply subject to such exceptions or modification as he may specify. In issuing such notification the Governor is not required to consult the Tribal Advisory Council or to obtain the assent to the President. As the Governor can set aside legislation enacted by the State legislature it is obvious that in the exercise of the foregoing power the Governor is not expected to be guided by the Ministry. But the Governor is not omniscient or omnipresent. Obviously he will have to be depend on state bureaucracy for situational assessment. An analytical appraisal leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Fifth Schedule contains within its ambit the scope for bureaucratic self-rule. The Working Group on the Tribal Development during the Seventh Five Year Plan had characterized the Fifth Schedule as problematic in thrust. The Tribals of India who had provided a Speaker of the Lok Sabha or a candidate for the post of President of India do not require paternalistic protection. They require frame for authentic self-management. As mentioned by the Seventh Plan Working Group on Tribal Development, the Sixth Schedule contains the grains of the same. Through broad based consultation it should be modified and extended to all ITDP/ITDA areas all over the country. Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 is an enigma. It has not defined village but indicated approach to the identification of village. While Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, Santal Parganas Tenancy (Amendment) Manual define village primarily with reference to land.

{To be continued...}

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