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Website: www.allindiaaseca.org

E-mail: allindiaaseca@hotmail.com

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Editorial

Sometimes media feed us with funny/distorted news items concerning the tribal community. Most of the time, the news items are mainly on witchcraft, torture, displacement, deprivation and evil practice. The lack of association and understanding has been the bane for many reporters which prohibit them from acquiring knowledge on tribal people and their way of life. What is being talked about is the stereotype to present the adivasi community in a poor light. It is widely believed that most of the time people indulge in such portrayal of a community out of sheer ignorance and ill conceived notion about a section of the population. What is being reported on a particular section of the people is being repeated for the other though situations are different and disjoint. Thus there is a need to overcome such hangover and before reporting something, should have been verified from the concerned section of the population.

There are very few occasions where people are being projected in a sensible and responsible way. One such example can be cited relating to organizing annual Adivasi Mela in Bhubaneswar. Every year, the event is being reported with fair amount of details. The arrangement in and exposure through this Mela has traditionally portrayed different communities before a large cross section of the population fostering familiarization and belongingness.

Recently, Santals in Bhubaneswar observed Baha Bonga (literally it is the worship of the Gods and Goddesses on the onset of Spring). People celebrated on their own way and with the level of understanding and knowledge. Next day, the media flashed the news with the caption "Baha Bonga is the festival of Adivasi - The boys and girls selected their life partners". Prima facie it appears that the report has been generated /manufactured based on limited knowledge about the festival or limited appreciation of the reality. The news item must have generated different levels of understanding of the occasion and in reality it has exposed the newspaper of its inadequacy in reporting such events. It is not known whether the organizers have briefed the press or have released a press note on

the occasion. As such, one should not also come to a conclusion that the media has reported the people in a poor state but it may have happened that media has been briefed like this only. It may be that the reporter has expressed his understanding based on the visual display and has reported based on what s/he experienced on that day and on that occasion. We should also value a third party audit as it is a source of information from the other side which is required for introspection. One need to know whether there was an environment whereby one is naturally feels the sacredness and piousness. Has this occasion created such an aura to give a feeling of religiosity? It, therefore, forces one to rethink and gives an opportunity to review the current approach and attitude towards such events.

The religious festivals are not being organised in the same way like Durga Puja in Kolkata is not the same as being organized in Delhi or Mumbai or elsewhere in the country. The car festival of Puri cannot be equated with the car festivals elsewhere. But even than the spirit is the same and there is not much variation and the essence of religious fervor is maintained everywhere. Likewise, the Baha Bonga in the native places (countryside) may not be equated in toto with the one being organized in the State Capital. The simple question is whether people engage themselves in following the rituals or are being inspired by the occasion and participate with a religious mood. Further, whether they have belief in such activities or they are only participating during the cultural programme only. The people at the helm of affairs as well as the concerned people need to ponder over these issues earnestly to find out a solution. There has to be strong feelings for the religious precincts and the dignity can be kept alive through sacred beliefs.

Another concern is whether the characteristics of the event have been modified to such an extent which has rendered the event beyond recognition compared to the original one and as such is giving a picture what is being reported by the media. This needs also to be taken into account while analyzing.

Unraveling Indian Census Data on Santals

By Sanatan Marandi,
ABU DHABI, U.A.E.
Sanatan.marandi@gmail.com

The religion of Santal is a neglected item so far its development, practice and manifestation are concerned. It is quite evident from the fact that its spelling itself is recorded differently in various census operation and apart from the “SARNA” and six other major religions of India, there are 45 various other minor religions / persuasions are recorded for Santals’ in India during 1991 census operation.

It is needless to say that people from Santal society who are also one of the races of human being, certainly can’t isolate, ignore or distance themselves from the almighty GOD at any stage of their life. In actual, every Santal's living whether in villages or cities has some definitive relation with THE GOD, and in turn practices, profess and manifest some religious activity. Perhaps the lack of awareness in Santal religion “SARNA” and the difficulty to practice it in its original form in the city environment has compelled many Santals in the city to profess other major religions which are reflected in the religions recorded for Santals in various census operations of Government of India. Many Santals, living particularly in cities are influenced by other major religions like Hindu, Christian etc. and start fulfilling their religious requirement by practicing and professing religious activity / rituals as per other religions like Hindu, Christian etc. The religions recorded for ST Santals in West Bengal in 1991 and 2001 Census is tabulated below.

RELIGIONS RECORDED FOR SANTALS IN THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL (In 1991 and 2001 Census)

SL. NO.	NAME OF RELIGION/ PERSUASION	WEST BENGAL			
		1991 Census		2001 Census	
		POPULATION	%AGE	POPULATION	%AGE
1	BUDDHIST	244	0.01%	300	0.01%
2	CHRISTIAN	42,248	2.12%	74,844	3.28%
3	HINDU	1,581,696	79.19%	1,470,559	64.48%
4	JAIN	14	0.00%	109	0.00%
5	MUSLIM	1,219	0.06%	5,490	0.24%
6	SIKH	143	0.01%	531	0.02%
7	SWARNA / SARNA	10,382	0.52%	86,716	3.80%
8	SARI DHARAM	343,912	17.22%	619,847	27.18%
9	OTHERS	13,591	0.68%	15,894	0.70%
10	RELIGION NOT STATED	3,773	0.19%	6,250	0.27%
	TOTAL	1,997,222	100%	2,280,540	100%

Reference: Special Table for SC/ST No 15 & 15 Appendixes, 1991 Census & 14 & 14A for 2001 Census (Electronic Copy, Excel Files)

As depicted in the above Table, in the state of West Bengal, the number of ST Santal populations’ religion recorded for Buddhist has increased from 244 to 300, Christian from 42,248 to 74,844, Jain from 14 to 109, Muslim from 1,219 to 5,490 & Sikh has increased from 143 to 531. The same for Sarna & Sari Dharam has increased significantly from 10,382 to

86,716 and from 343,912 to 619,847 respectively in 2001 Census w.r.t 1991 Census. It is observed from above Table that considerable number of Santals in West Bengal has recorded their religion as Sari Dharam apart from Sarna. It is important for Santal as a Society to identify themselves as a Single religion instead of many irrespective of state domicile and for that religious movement / revolution is the need of the hour like the movement for Language recognition and the movement for separate State formation took place during the past centuries.

Learning Teaching Problem of Tribal Children

(Source: Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority)

{Continued from February 2011 issue...}

Kamble, R. P (1992), in his study in relation to 'Effectiveness of Various Interventions for Improving Tribal Education' found that in the opinion of Headmasters 74 per cent students take the advantage of facilities available for tribal children, viz., free textbooks, uniforms, writing materials and nutritious meal and 84 per cent of such students are regular in their attendance. One very significant finding of the study was that the Headmasters opined that the government facilities are useful to arrest wastage in education but they are not useful to increase the "pass percentage of students."

NCERT (1994), studied on Educational Problems of Tribal Children¹. The study aimed at mapping the existing provisions for primary education in the tribal areas as well as their utilization by the recipient population. It has been carried out in seven DPEP states, viz; Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. The aspect studied include status of teachers in tribal areas, status of curriculum and teaching learning materials, use of tribal language, status of school enrolment and school dropout, monitoring, evaluation and community participation. The result stated that the tribal development programme were unsuccessful in Karnataka, M.P and Maharashtra. Poor attendance of tribal children in school for economic reasons, including household duties and working on the farm, low parent motivation is also listed as a significant reason for children not attending schools.

Rath K. B (1995) has conducted a study entitled "A study of effect of house hold, community and school factors on the enrollment, retention and

achievement of schedule tribe children at primary level". The study brings out the need for making tribe as specific unity for planning and decentralization of curriculum development and implementation. It also brings out the need for greater community participation by relating education of the tribes to the community needs.

NCERT (1995), A research study on 'Effectiveness of Various Intervention for Improving Tribal Education'. The study aimed at reviewing the status of various interventions planned for improving education of schedule tribe children in DPEP states, viz; ; Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. In this study an attempt has been made to study various aspects of multiple interventions, viz; nature and administration, organization, target beneficiaries, cost monitoring procedures and effectiveness. There is one interesting trend to note, which relates to opening of educational institutions in various areas. Since there is pressure on higher enrolment in 6 -14-age groups and also on higher institutions like higher secondary schools, the number of such institutions is much higher as compared to the number of middle schools. Therefore, the relatively advance areas with higher number of primary schools have reduced outlays for this sector while backward areas have more outlays for primary education. In residential schools (Ashram Schools) really had positive impact on enrollment, retention and achievement of children. But in language concern, the tribals have their own language but most of them do not have any script. Since, there cannot be a common language for them, it is necessary to teach them through their own language at least at the initial stage. Later on the medium of instruction

could be the state language. Some of the major constraints of planning for tribal education are scattered population, small size habitation, lack of facilities of transport and communication, content, curriculum and irrelevant text books not related to their culture and environment, medium of instruction, non availability of teachers knowing tribal languages and their economic deprivation. However, there are some favourable factors in tribal situation, which could be utilized, e.g., an egalitarian social structure, strong community organization in certain areas, availability of traditional local institutions like youth dormitories and an intimate knowledge of their environment. The dropout rate of tribal children is also quite high in these states. The main reasons for high dropout rate of such children are work at home, helping parents, non-availability of textbooks, ill health, poverty and inability to afford education and lack of interest in education.

Ambasht (2001), in his study "Rights of Tribal Children in India", has very explicitly stated that there is a need to develop curriculum and instructional material in tribal languages at the initial stages.

Kanungo & Mohapatra .(2002), had revealed in their research based article entitled as "Tribal Education in Rayagada : A review of Language, Text book and Medium of Instruction" had revealed that the problems and issues of tribal education may seriously affect the future developments, hence appropriate strategies must be built-up to find out ways and means to mitigate the problems. In their exhaustive suggestion they have stated that the medium of instruction in the tribal areas should be in mother tongue with the use of

bilingual primers. The educated tribal persons are to be encouraged to prepare the text books for their children. They also have emphasized on the improvement of school environment, play materials, and self-learning materials for the children to create interest in them to attend schools regularly. The teachers working in tribal schools should be aware of the heritage and culture of the tribes. They should have enough of patience to bear the tribal children in a class room and act as a friend and facilitator rather than a teacher. Special incentives for non-tribal teachers working in tribal areas should be given as a token of commendation for their valuable services for educating the tribals. The study also revealed that; the village community should be used for the improvement of the educational standards of area.

Sinha (2003), in her article "Linguistic Human Rights in Tribal Education in Orissa", has emphasized on the constitutional provisions made under article-46 of our constitution, which reads the state shall promotes with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the schedule caste and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

From the above reviews it is clear that the education of the tribal children needs special attention. The spoken language of the tribes should be given due importance while planning the education for the children belonging to the different tribes. There is a need for holistic approach whether piecemeal approach to investigate into learning-teaching problem of tribal children. **{To be continued...}**

FROM:

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SFS Flat No. 326, Pocket 10,
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