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Editorial

In the time and age of religious consolidation, Santals are yet to organise themselves into a common identity. Data from various sources including the Census operations reveal that they have expressed themselves in different denominations. It is observed that the religion recorded as Sarna or Sari Dharam as per 2001 census for Santals in Orissa is 37%, Jharkhand is 30.5% and West Bengal is 17.7%. As such, still 62% Santals in Orissa, 61% in Jharkhand and 79% in West Bengal record their religion as Hindu.

This has been a source of conflict as well as subject of introspection for this group and ponder over their existence and future. The variety in their expression makes it clear that situation is not being handled properly or scant attention has been given towards this aspect. The puritans in the society are anxious after knowing the reality and the absence of reaction or response to the reality really puzzle them. Many a times, it is observed that people are being grouped or categorised based on some traits, practice or way of life. The peculiarity in Santals or for that matter in the case of Adivasis, the characterisation is based on immediate influence of neighbourhood religious practices which make them a part though not in belief but in practice. As the practice and other norms are not being standardised, people tend to believe that theirs is in the stage of infancy and as because others is nicely packaged with some kind of standardisation, institutionalised arrangement and structural edifice, it appears that it is superior in content and approach. The basic idea of spiritual realisation sometimes becomes secondary on the face of fierce competition through religious propaganda, networking and displays.

The adivasis fail in grouping themselves through a well established network. The religious belief among them has been preserved in the countryside practices and it is being observed and practiced in the original form and regularly. The practice and observance of religious practices are being undertaken through mass participation and cooperation. The basic need of sacred complex, sacred texts and sacred performers are the pillars of any religion. Most of the Adivasi communities, however, are yet to document their religious practices and norms. It is commonly seen that some researchers do collect the information and document it for their work and disseminate for public information. This, however, does

not form part of a strategy to form a formidable foundation of self realisation and actualisation.

The outcome of Census categorising Santals in different religious formation has been a serious issue. The issue is being continuously deliberated in various forums and it is expressed time and again to retain the original identity and try to dissociate from the acquired identity. But there seems to be lack of a process of consolidation and realisation. The least informed people remained to be educated and suitably or adequately informed people continued to be swayed by different influencing practices. But there is a vacuum and the gap is increasing day by day.

The generation next is not able to identify themselves with the group. The proletariats remain as original as possible or even in their case also there is a process of acculturation and assimilation with other groups. Though it is widely believed that the Adivasis cannot be categorised as such as part of major religious groups, the Census report point to a fact that they have been counted to belong to a group knowingly or unknowingly. The issue needs a larger and bolder process of consultation and wider dissemination. The groups need to ponder over the issue and need to come out with a solution. Otherwise, there would be a wide gap in belief and counting.

The anxiety over the outcome of the Census 2011 is rising. From the experience of 2001, attempts were taken by many in the respective groups to sensitise people on religious practices and issues concerning religion. The outcome will be seen in the days to come. Though persistent attempts were taken to introduce a column in the format of enumeration, the option was kept to specify in other religions only. The option to tick the religion is available to the recognised religions in India and others did not have that privilege to put a tick mark against their religions. The less privileged people are to specify their religion and in a situation where the enumerator and the enumeratee belong to different faith, the misinformation is bound to creep in. Apart from other consideration, it is experienced that people are not in unanimity in their expression. Time may come this confusion would be institutionalised and people would be categorised in different denomination. The roles and responsibilities of the religious headmen of the respective groups as well as the educated mass become more in coming to a conclusion otherwise there would be a chaos and confusion in the days to come.

Unraveling Indian Census Data on Santals (Education)

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I started the title series five months back and shared some of the facts on the Santals in India, particularly their religion status. In coming editions, I will be sharing another most important factor of human development i.e. education, of Santals in India. The subject of education, in this 21st century modern civilized society is extremely vital, for any individual or society to live in or survive.

The mother tongue education through Santali with Ol Chiki script initiative of Orissa and West Bengal Government are well known. In recent times, West Bengal's new revolutionary chief minister, Didi Mamta Banerjee has announced much sop in the area of Education for Santals in West Bengal. The Chief Minister has announced that "*The medium of instruction in 900 primary and 33 secondary schools in the tribal areas of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia will be made Santali in the 2011-12 academic year*", Books have to be printed in Ol chiki and the scheme would create around 1,800 teaching jobs.

In light of all these recent developments I will like to highlight the past effort of W.B. Government in this direction.

The Left front Government in the State of West Bengal vide their resolution No. 57 CMS of dated 05.03.2001 had formed a 6 member Committee named "**Committee on Santali Language**" under the chairmanship of Dr. Pabitra Sarkar, Ex VC, Rabindra Bharati Viswa-Vidyalyaya
The terms of Reference of this Committee was

1. To examine the entire issue of teaching of Santali language from the primary level up to the college and the University Levels;
2. The feasibility of introducing Santali language (in Ol Chiki script) both as a medium of instruction as well as language subject in the secondary and higher secondary schools; and
3. The possibility of introducing Santali language (in Ol Chiki script) in the college and university curricula.

I would like to mention the first 3 recommendations of this Committee which are as under:-

Recommendation - 1

The Santali language may be used as the medium of instruction for Santal students, in either (1) the Ol Chiki script, or (2) any other script in which Santals have been reading and writing their language in this state

As to the medium of instruction, anyone who offers any other medium available in the state may be allowed to do so.

Reason for the option "Since it is the citizen who ultimately decides on the language and script in which his / her ward should be taught, and the Constitution of the country has given him / her a choice, no Government, the Committee feels, can withdraw options already available to him. It will then be legally answerable for imposing a straightjacket of one single option on a community." Also, an abrupt change will make a number of people, literate in other scripts, suddenly illiterate in Santali, including teachers and parents who could crucially help the Santal children in their first learning of their language.

Recommendation 2

A continuous support may be given to the Ol chiki script so that it can, if it may, gradually replace the other scripts in which Santali is written.

Comments. "Once again, the committee does not know if the Government can impose a single script or a single medium on a community by a fiat. In all likelihood it lies with the community itself if it will use a single script or a single medium of instruction.

Recommendation 3

Santali knowing teachers may be provided a thorough training in the Ol chiki script in order that they may give the necessary instruction in Ol chiki script Santali

Special arrangement may be made so that Santal students from a cluster of schools in the same neighborhood may together have matters of their texts explained to them in their own language, even in higher classes.

The Survey for choice of script in the education in Santali was conducted by the above Committee and it' summary is tabulated as under.

Opinion in Support of Following Scripts Received by the Committee through questionnaire

Sl. No.	Districts	Ol Chiki	Roman	Bengali	others	Total
1	Bankura	585	-	-	-	585
2	Birbhum	35	80	-	-	115
3	Burdwan	1,270	4	-	2	1276
4	Coochbehar	-	-	-	-	0

5	Darjeeling	67	-	-	-	67
6	Uttar Dinajpur	6	135	-	-	141
7	Dakshin Dinajpur	21	112	-	-	133
8	Hoogly	2,834	34	-	-	2868
9	Howrah	50	-	2	-	52
10	Jalpaiguri	1	-	-	-	1
11	Kolkata	107	7	-	-	114
12	Midnapore (Purba+Paschim)	1,648	1	-	-	1649
13	Murshidabad	12	1,008	-	-	1020
14	Malda	100	173	-	-	273
15	Nadia	582	1	-	-	583
16	Purulia	1,720	-	-	-	1720
17	24-Pargana (N)	315	-	-	-	315
18	24-Pargana (S)	-	-	-	-	0
19	Jharkhand State	62	-	2	-	64
	Overall	9,415	1,555	4	2	10,976
	Percentage	85.78%	14.17%	0.04%	0.02%	100.00%

From all the above citations, it is clear that, education medium, script and policy as a whole will be successful by participation of individual, community and the Government, not only by persuasion from each different entity (individual, community or government).

Also as a part of the effort by the Government of Orissa (Department of Education) vide their resolution No. XIXEM 15/91-7710 dated 25-02-1991 had long back

decided to introduce the “teaching of Santali language in OL CHIKI script on a experimental basis, as an additional language at the primary stage” in 30 primary schools of Mayurbhanj (20), Keonjhar (5) and Sundergarh (5) district from May 1992. The impact /status of this experiment by Government of Orissa will be published in the coming editions of the series.

Learning Teaching Problem of Tribal Children

(Source: Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority)

{Continued from July 2011 issue...}

Subjects

634 students of Class-II and Class - V, from 40 primary schools of four Tribal Communities of Orissa were selected for this study. Ten (10) schools from each district i.e. Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Malakanagiri and Gajapati were selected purposefully.

ANALYSIS RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the present study has been organized in four sections.

Section – I deals with the analysis of the needs of children belonging to different tribal categories. In

relation to objective – I of the study the children’s response is as per the questionnaire given.

SAORA

Children's Response During Oral Interaction

Observation reviews that children have obstacles in the approach to school, there is a kind of regular stream moving on their habitation and location of the school, as such their access to school have been a problem, this is a need which has to be squarely met.

However, the condition of the road, availability of space in the school premises blackboard and

furniture, mid-day meals and sufficient teachers are available as perceived by these children. Except the facilities for drinking water which is not very satisfactory (58.33%).

Responses regarding teachers

Difficulties in relation to their specific needs of teachers and curricular transactions.

Nearly two-third of the children are happy about regularity of the teachers, willingness to come to school, availability of required books but there is a need for increasing in support to all the three variables mentioned here. One good thing that is seen is mother tongue (MT) as a medium of instruction has been found acceptable and easier by Saora children but over 80% of them felt the absence of adequate TLM.

Subjects in which students found difficulty

The difference encountered by children while learning in different school subjects. Except for mathematics the difference in learning exists in Language, Social Science, Environmental Science and Science. In mathematics however students find it comparatively less difficult as a subject to learn. This illustrates that teacher are to focus their attention in fulfilling the learning difficulties in variably in all subjects of the school even though the necessity of using mother tongue is a felt need.

BONDA

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{To be continued...}

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