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Editorial

The group of people waiting at the court premises in any district headquarters or at the sub division level is a common scene all over the country and particularly in the tribal dominated places. The expectation of people to get some kind of reprieve has been the driving force which make them knock at the door of the administration and its associated institutions. The plain looking persons without having much knowledge about legal procedure or law still hopefully come to the doorstep of the institutions is really a point to appreciate. Some days ago at a function, discussion emerged on the need of the legal support to the tribal people considering their level of education and complexity of the legal process and provisions. It is always commonly asked whether a common person with little education or no education could understand the legal process of the country. Or they only depend upon the integrity of a lawyer who could pull them out of the tragedy or even chance is that he can put someone in trouble.

Particularly for Tribal people, the opinion emerged that it should be endeavoured to know about the number of such people who are languishing in the jail without even being tried. Many a times it is seen that people are continuing to remain in jail as no one is there to pursue their cases. Instances are many where people are being exonerated as they have already served the period in jail prescribed for such crime even without being tried. The natural question comes on the nature of issues for which they knock the doors of the administration or judicial establishments. They disputes are mainly land related, personal matters like marriage, divorce or minor difference of opinion. The agony of the family members compound as they are also less or even not equipped to handle the complexities of the process and procedures. They simply come and wait till the time the court is adjourned. They simply come in anticipation of happening something and at times they only are being briefed by their learned counsel. The experience turned out to be so bitter over a period of time that persons once subject to such legal processes take a vow not to think of coming to court premises once again. The friendly side of law seldom penetrates to various strata of population and in most cases tardy process of legal proceedings put general public in greater embarrassment and wider misunderstanding. The lawyers also need some support

so that they could help the needy who really need legal counseling and legal understanding. In the tribal society, gone are those days when people resolve their differences through mutual consultation and intra community dialogue. The system of traditional administration is very simple and even less costly compared to the established modern legal system. Traditionally, tribal community administer justice through local and intra community interventions. As the society is progressing and is influenced by external forces and considerations, cohesiveness in the society has become the casualty.

Due to non existence of some kind of organised institutional arrangement to look after the affairs of the traditional community, they look up for some institutional interventions even for very petty disputes which otherwise would have been settled amicably, locally. As there is nobody to redress grievances or there is less intra community initiative, they are compelled to pursue the matter in higher institutional arrangements. They face difficulty is pursuing the matter in a defined and structured way due to their ignorance of the same. Also due to illiteracy, they cannot read and understand even very simple things. There is also no ample time so that they can understand the process and procedures. As a result, they end up in soliciting the advice of some middle men who in turn help them to pursue their matters.

There are certain issues which attract the provisions of the personal laws and the modern system also refers the provisions as well as rules and regulations of the concerned community. There are ample scope in settling issues within the community. There is also lack of initiative from the government to educate the officials on the issues and provisions of the personal laws. The gap in understanding still exists. The people whose issues are being dealt with and the people who are dealing with the issues should be educated and trained on various provisions and their applicability. There is no structured institutions in the community and even though they exist, they are not being supported, recognised. The need of the hour is to look into the conditions of the traditional institutions and to consider extending support for their strengthening structurally and financially, so that they would be able to deliver intra community justice to bring in peace and stability in the respective society as well as to lessen the burden on the administration.

Unraveling Indian Census Data on Santals (Education)

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I was born and brought up till 12 years age in a remote village of Amdabeda in the district of Mayurbhanj Odisha. In the village Santal jargon, far distance country (Dishom) like West Bengal is called Namal Dishom (country). The geographical characteristics of the districts in West Bengal where Santal population is more, is different than the other two Santal populated states (Odisha & Jharkhand). In Odisha and Jharkhand, Santals' original population is mostly concentrated in hilly districts like Mayurbhanj, Kendujhar, Dumka, Singhbhum, where as in West Bengal, apart from partly hilly districts like undivided Mednipur, Puruliya and Bankura, Santal population is largely spread over villages of many other districts like Bardhaman, Birbhum, Dinajpur, Maldah, Hugli, which are situated in plain plateau region.

District wise Education profile of Santals in Villages of West Bengal as per Census 2001

Sl. No.	District	Total Population			Illiterate					
		Total	Male	Female	Total	g=f/c	Male	i=h/d	Female	j
a	b	c	d	e	f	g=f/c	h	i=h/d	j	k=j/e
1	Medinipur	490,717	247,757	242,960	295,250	60.2%	114,851	46.4%	180,399	74.3%
2	Puruliya	300,155	152,037	148,118	193,176	64.4%	74,011	48.7%	119,165	80.5%
3	Bardhaman	282,990	141,461	141,529	186,503	65.9%	77,061	54.5%	109,442	77.3%
4	Bankura	268,152	134,988	133,164	153,377	57.2%	56,237	41.7%	97,140	72.9%
5	Birbhum	173,884	87,095	86,789	131,650	75.7%	56,830	65.3%	74,820	86.2%
6	Dakshin Dinajpur	149,319	75,220	74,099	103,430	69.3%	44,325	58.9%	59,105	79.8%
7	Maldah	145,614	72,122	73,492	113,048	77.6%	49,166	68.2%	63,882	86.9%
8	Hugli	143,982	71,418	72,564	86,928	60.4%	34,461	48.3%	52,467	72.3%
9	Uttar Dinajpur	92,650	46,646	46,004	73,618	79.5%	33,171	71.1%	40,447	87.9%
10	Murshidabad	44,432	22,556	21,876	31,516	70.9%	14,011	62.1%	17,505	80.0%
11	Jalpaiguri	32,182	16,342	15,840	20,947	65.1%	9,122	55.8%	11,825	74.7%
12	Darjiling	14,378	7,224	7,154	10,726	74.6%	4,656	64.5%	6,070	84.8%
13	Nadia	11,035	5,626	5,409	6,762	61.3%	2,872	51.0%	3,890	71.9%
14	North Twenty Four Parganas	6,917	3,481	3,436	4,125	59.6%	1,704	49.0%	2,421	70.5%
15	South Twenty Four Parganas	3,083	1,624	1,459	2,006	65.1%	926	57.0%	1,080	74.0%
16	Haora	2,708	1,339	1,369	1,912	70.6%	826	61.7%	1,086	79.3%
17	Koch Bihar	846	449	397	444	52.5%	191	42.5%	253	63.7%
18	Kolkata	-	-	-	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
TOTAL		2,163,044	1,087,385	1,075,659	1,415,418		574,421		840,997	
					Percentage		65.4%	52.8%	78.2%	

The Table above depicts that the overall state level literacy of Santals in West Bengal villages are better than Orissa and Jharkhand, but the percentage of higher educated Santal are less. The state level average village Santal literacy is 34.6% in West Bengal which is more than Orissa (31.6%) and Jharkhand (26.3%). Also the literacy rate in most village Santal populated district Medinipur (39.8%) is more than state average (34.6%).

In Memory of Siddheswar Hansdah

In the April 2012 issue, the date of death was inadvertently typed as 3rd February 2012 in stead of 3rd March 2012. The error is sincerely regretted.

Report on celebration of Birth Anniversary of Saonta Guru Shyam Sundar Hembram (Year 2012)

Adivasi Socio Renaissance Association(ASRA) (Registered) celebrated 104th Birth anniversary of Saonta Guru Shyam Sundar Hembram and organised a grass root level one day Conference on 10th April 2012 at village Khadisole Jamuna, Badsahi block in Mayurbhanj district, Odisha.

The Association has constituted Awards **viz. Shyam Sundar Hembram Award, Jagannath Hembram Award, Raghunath Soren Award, Dharanidhar Hembram Award and Jogendranath Hembram Award after the notable personalities of the village. The recipients of the Awards for the year 2011 are:** Mr. Narendra Hembram, Editor, Sandhayni, Mr. Kaluram Murmu, Notable Ol Chiki campaigner, Ms. Chhita Besra, National Football player, Shri Gajendra Nath Soren, Eminent Social worker, Shri Rabindra Nath Murmu, President, Kherwal Uthnou Foundation, Baripada and Shri Surai Hembram, well known social and santali language activist. Awardees were felicitated with a shawl, a certificate and a memento. The coach of Ms. Chhita Besra, Mr. Sudam Charan Soren was also felicitated.

A panel of local social leaders discussed the emerging issues which have a direct impact on the society and social affairs. A resolution was taken to work together for timely celebration of various Santal festivals.

The Awardees and Senior Citizens also spoke about their expectations and shared their experiences. There was a unanimous opinion to remain united as well as progressive to face the changing social life and emerging challenges. They expressed their high level of expectations and participation from the new generation, expressed their happiness and thanked the organizers for such an event.

The Guests and other speakers reminisced the contribution of Shyam Sundar Hembram in Social affairs and his invaluable contribution to Santali literature as a Writer.

At the end, Mr. Sadashiba Soren, Secretary read out the Annual Report of the Association and Mr. Suratha Murmu, President thanked the Awardees, media, other associates and the audience for their whole hearted participation for making the event a success. He expressed that people of all age groups are being benefited from this kind of social gathering and cultural activities. He also solicited their continued support in this effort of organising this grass root level event.

In Memory of Ramdas Soren (13th May 1964 - 24th April 2012)

Ramdas Soren left for his heavenly abode on 24th April 2012. The news was shocking and many could not believe that such a tragedy had happened. The people who knew him immediately reacted that apart from personal loss of the family, the society lost an able and a dedicated son. He was actively associated with the activities pertaining to social consolidation and deeply a cultural enthusiasts - a perfect Rusika.

Late Soren was born in village Dhansula nearby Dukura which is approachable through Baripada - Udala road, in the district of Mayurbhanj on 13th May 1964. He had a B.A. degree from BJB College, Bhubaneswar. Since his childhood, he had a strong inclination towards Santali literature, culture, song, dance, drama etc. During his college period, he co-authored a Santali drama "Ror Land Tege" in 1981 (unpublished) and edited 'Banphool' a magazine published from Bhubaneswar during 1980 to 1982. His sincere and close attachment with socio-cultural activities impelled him to delve deep into the Santals' life and outlook which resulted in composition of more than seventy poetry with the use of simple and natural vocabulary. The collection of poetry was published as a book titled 'Chirgal Sakwa' in December 2006.

He had earned a niche for himself in the social and cultural arena and quickly emerged as the highly acclaimed lyricist, singer, actor, Maestro in Banam (Ektara), story writer and columnist. He had rendered his voices in a number of Santali cassettes and albums. Between 1982 to 2006 he wrote over fifty literary

articles in reputed Santali journals. In recognition of his amiable behaviour and dedication for the promotion of art, culture, language and literature, All India ASECA, New Delhi awarded him in 2005 during the Guru Gomke centenary celebration.

As far as the professional life is concerned, late Soren started his career at Orissa Legislative Assembly Secretariat in 1984 and later on moved to Defence Accounts department, Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India in 1987 and was with the Defence Accounts department till date. He was placed at Balasore and was waiting for a promotion. He was enjoying his job and hobbies with equal gusto and gesture. He rendered his service as General Secretary of Marshal Dahar (A socio cultural Association) based at Balasore.

All India Santali Writers' Association honoured him as the best poet of the year in 2007.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Late Soren was the main organiser for holding an all India conference by All India ASECA at Balasore in the year 2003. He was also one of the main organisers for organising Guru Gomke Pandit Raghunath Murmu Centenary celebration including installation of a life size bronze statue of Guru Gomke in the year 2005. He contributed immensely for the grand success of both the events. All India ASECA remembers him as a dependable, dedicated and duty bound colleague and pray for his soul rest in eternal peace. We also pray God to give enough strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

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