



ASECA CHANNEL

(A monthly Journal from All India ASECA)

Website: www.allindiaaseca.org

Volume: VII Issue: 4 April, 2008 Annual Subscription Rs50/- Single copy Rs5/-

Editorial

A new euphoria among the Santals in the recent times to pay respect and worship the departed souls who were instrumental in bringing about some positive change in the Society has emerged. A grateful Society is remembering some of the great sons/persons who have contributed significantly towards advancement and revival of the Society as well as safeguarding and enhancing the dignity of the society. Birth centenary celebration of Shri Shyam Sundar Hembram is being organized on 10th April 2008 at Khunta in the District of Mayurbhanj, Orissa. This is perhaps the next one after the celebration of Centenary of Guru Gomke in 2005. During such occasion, dissemination of information becomes an essential introduction tool for enabling the people to know about him. One hundred year is really a long period to remember everything considering the fact that Santali literature is yet to be evolved fully to produce history or preserve biography of persons who during their life time had contributed a lot for the development of the society. The then society, social milieu, state of social and economic condition are important items know to appreciate and understand the situation in a holistic way. Very safely it can be said that Santali literature is nearly one hundred years old in Orissa. The time has come to introspect and judge the level of development in terms of content and marketability of Santali books. It will be evident that a lot of initiatives are required to tide over phases of difficulties in Santali literary movement.

The germination of Santal literature took place during early years of Twentieth Century particularly in the district of Mayurbhanj then a Princely State. Credit goes to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj who graciously appointed Santals as revenue officers (Pradhans and Jaminders) to collect revenues from the subjects. This development had opened up a scope for the sons and daughters of these selected sections to pursue education, as they were the only privileged persons who had access to the education being imparted by the teachers from the Caste Hindus. This very sympathetic gesture was the harbinger of an era in which neo educated class emerged and started thinking afresh about the future of the Society.

Born to illiterate parents in the village Khadisoile Jamuna (then Akhua Deulia Pragana, now under Barsahi Block), Shyam Sundar Hembram availed the opportunity of going to the pathshala (village level school) for being the son of a Pradhan. This is the phase when Santals in general were exposed to the education system perhaps for the first time thereby acquired a spark to know the world through a different perspective and purpose. During the adolescent years, after completion of Middle English School, he participated in the freedom movement by associating closely with the Praja Mandal Sabha. That was the platform, which shaped the

future of this young boy to do something for the society. The pattern of social awakening and medium of spreading awareness during the freedom movement, taught him to apply the same formula for the social emancipation. The staging of drama and use of songs as medium of spreading awareness during the freedom movement inspired him to translate Santal oral tradition into a written down form to emerge as a poet, dramatist and writer.

With the merger of Mayurbhanj in the State of Orissa in 1949, the dedicated social workers were offered jobs and most of them were inducted as teachers in the State run schools. The yearning for creating literature continued as teaching profession helped him in pursuing the same. He was also an active member of Kherwal Jarpa Samiti of Jamshedpur and the same association had a network upto Balasore district as is evident from the foreword message of one of his books. The bond with this organization was so strong that a social organization had been registered at Khunta with the same name. He was instrumental in bringing about social reform and awareness in the Society and Society remembers him for inspiring and motivating people towards acquiring discipline in the social milieu and becoming teetotalers.

There are several books to his credit. "Kherwal Bonso Dharam Dak (Religious Songs)" was published in the year 1938 followed by "Chhotorputi Kisku Raj (Drama)" in the year 1948. Other published books are "Bir Kherwal Akil Bati (Songs 1952), Bonga Dakao (Religious Hymn); Susar Niti Lachha (Verse 2002), Nahag Jug Rin Kherwal Hapan (Story 2002). Another important Drama book "Handi Paura Guman (Drama), which was written in the period 1938 to 1948 is yet to be published. Other unpublished books are Kherwal Binti (Traditional Hymn), Susar Dahar (Drama), Akil Dahar Binti (Torjoma) and Kherwal Bonso Saonta Niti (Philosophy). He left for his heavenly abode on June 9, 1991.

There are other aspects in the whole scheme, which need analysis at least by the literature lovers. The important fact which needs to be shared is the support of some literature loving or society loving people who had contributed generously for printing the books. Apart from the generous people, the actors who immortalized the Drama "Chhotorputi Kisku Raj" among the masses through their strong and powerful portrayal of the characters were the real gems. Though illiterate, most of them had excelled.

At the time of celebration, we must remember the spirit of belongingness, cooperation, yearning and fraternity among the people which played as stimulus for the continuation and propagation of a feeling that Santals in terms of originality and sensitivity are second to none.

Position Paper

National Focus Group on Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children

Source: National Council of Education Research & Training (NCERT)

{Continued from March 2008 issue}

School Curriculum

- a) Curricular goals must emphasise critical thinking and critical evaluation and appreciation of Indian society and culture. Equal opportunity for intellectual growth, cognitive development, social and emotional development of underprivileged children must be sought. Curriculum must aim at promotion of creative talents, productive skills, dignity of labour, underlined by values of equality, democracy, secularism, social and gender justice.
- b) Curricular content: An approach rooted in critical theory and critical multiculturalism is essential to critique the unjust social order, to indigenize and incorporate diverse cultures and prevent loss of valuable cultural heritage. We must make a commitment to the preservation of all languages as a matter of communities' cultural rights as well as of national pride.
- c) Curriculum should lead to identification and creativity, not alienation. There is need to incorporate all creative arts, crafts and oral expression, especially those rooted in indigenous knowledge and skill systems.
- d) Curriculum must develop a critical social science and humanities; content aimed at the achievement of curricular goals. A balance between curricular subjects is essential.
- e) There is need to develop critical multicultural texts and reading material.

Pedagogy

- a) Incorporation of diverse pedagogic methods and practices towards enhancing learning and democratic classroom practice is essential.
- b) We need to develop constructive critical pedagogy and specific guidance on classroom practices with a view to eschew discrimination against children on the basis of caste, class, tribe, gender, identity/ ability etc.
- c) Improvement is required in the affective climate of school, to enable teachers and students to participate freely in knowledge construction and learning.
- d) There is need to develop pedagogic practices that aim at improving self esteem and identity of SC/ST.
- e) Non-graded instruction with judicious use of tests for evaluation of learning may be considered.
- f) Making available a wide range of texts and other reading and instructional material is absolutely essential.

Language

- a) Home languages must be made the media of instruction / communication in the early years of school education. They must be seen as integral to creating an enabling school environment for children and crucial for the process of learning. The pedagogic rationale is that moving from the known to the unknown facilitates

learning. Language is a critical resource that children bring to school and aids thought, communication and understanding.

- b) Home languages in classroom process is also essential to build child's self-esteem and self confidence.
- c) Transition to regional language will be facilitated through learning of home language.
- d) Where there are more than one tribal languages used in any village, we recommend the use of the regional lingua franca or the majority language after consultation with villagers.
- e) Teacher training must include the stipulation that teachers pass an exam in a local language. Earlier ICS officers posted to tribal areas had to pass exams in one tribal language. This seems to have died out.

Enhancement of Teacher Education, Teacher Competence and Teacher Social and Self-Esteem

- a) There is a great need to strengthen teacher education, its overall knowledge and value base and practical training. Teachers must be thoroughly equipped with subject knowledge and critical pedagogy skills. There is need to incorporate a foundational base of strong critical social science and humanities knowledge which is governed by democratic egalitarian perspectives in teacher education curricula. Special attention needs to be paid to social sciences and humanities including new emergent areas of dalit / feminist critical theory, tribal studies, cultural studies etc. We need to shift from narrow behaviouristic perspectives, and question archaic psychological concepts and constructs, for e.g., the IQ theory.

Teachers also require experiential knowledge through field work about the lives of SC, ST and other marginalized groups, to understand cultures, school-home linkages and ensuing facilitators and constraints. Together this would help confront unfounded beliefs and stereotypes as well as gain sensitivity towards SC and ST communities. Teachers' attitudes need to be challenged on a scientific, historical, sociological and experiential basis, to help them understand their own socialization.

- b) Teacher education curriculum needs to incorporate an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversities in particular the history of rich cultures and traditions of marginalized communities, histories of their protest and struggles and their constructive contribution to nation. An understanding without essentialising diverse identities and the recognition of the interplay between identity of child, culture and learning will enrich curriculum. (To be continued...)

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

(Source: Planning Commission)

{Continued from March 2008 issue}

Jharkhand

Among the Scheduled Castes from Jharkhand, except for two households of Domand one household of Bauri, there is no migrant household.

West Bengal

Compared to Bihar, the migration of SCs in West Bengal is from only 9 households, constituting 2 percent of the total households. There are 15 migrant workers from these 9 households. They include the Mal, Bhuiyan, Bauri, Bagdi and Chamar.

Scheduled Tribes

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, amongst the tribal communities the picture is somewhat different. Out of 544 households, 74 (13.6 percent) are migrant households, comprising 183 migrant workers. The Santhal provide the maximum migrant households (41.3%). As many as 62 households of the total migrant households (83.8%), 143 are migrant workers (78.1 percent). Significantly, almost the entire migration (95 percent) is to the district of Burdwan in West Bengal. The other destinations being Bankura and Hoogli.

West Bengal

The tribal communities in West Bengal are less migratory. Out of 557 households, there are migrants from 25 (4.5 %) with as many as 39 migrant workers.

Once again, the Santhal with 19 migrant households (76.0 %) comprising 30 migrant workers (70.9%) constitute the bulk of the migrants. However, only 6.4 percent constitute migrant households among the Santhal. The majority of migrant workers also move to the district of Burdwan .

The important point to note is that the migration in West Bengal is intra-statal whilst in Bihar and Jharkhand, it is inter-state. Amongst the castes and tribes the Santhal are the most mobile.

Asset Position

While analysing the various kinds of assets, namely, agricultural implements, livestock, vehicular and

consumer goods etc., the unit of analysis is the household. To assess the economic status of the caste groups, their asset position, it is assumed, will give a better understanding of their livelihood situation, than income data, which is notorious for its inexactitude. It should be noted that the distribution of each asset item relates specifically to the households owning it. A household may possess more than one asset item. The same household will figure as many times as the variety of items it possesses.

Land and Agricultural Assets

It is expected that those households which are engaged in cultivation of their own land or of leased-in- land, will be generally in possession of some agricultural implements and assets such as plough, thresher, fodder chopper, bullock cart, oil press, diesel/electric pumpset, tractor, etc. Yet this is not true of all cultivating households. Depending upon the kind of asset(s) owned by households, one can make some assessment of their economic position. We have also attempted a valuation of the assets.

Scheduled Caste

Bihar

In Bihar, out of 392 Scheduled Caste households, 72 (18.4 %) own cultivable land, and 44 (11.2%) possess agricultural assets. That is, 61 percent of cultivable landowning households own agricultural assets.

With respect to different types of agricultural assets amongst all cultivable landowning households, 18.1 percent households possess plough; 6.9 percent, bullock cart; 2.5 percent, diesel pumpset; 20.8 percent, oil press/flour mill; 16.7 percent, fodder chopper; and 6.9 percent, thresher. Only two households own tractor.

Table: 4.17 Selected agricultural assets of Scheduled Castes in Bihar (Not reproduced)

- With respect to individual castes, among 28 Chamar households (17.6 percent of all households) owning cultivable land, 20 (12.6 percent) own agricultural assets. Of these, 10 own plough and 9 own pump-set, 4 own oil press/flour mill and 5 own bullock cart.
- Among the Dusadh, 35 households (31.0%) own cultivable land, of whom 15 (13.5%) own agricultural

assets. Only 3 of these households possess plough, but 11 have oil press/flour mill and 7 have diesel pump-sets.

- In sharp contrast, all the 8 households of Dhobi own cultivable land and agricultural assets. Of these, 2 own diesel pump-set and 2 households have tractor.
- There are several households amongst the three castes owning thresher and fodder chopper.
- The Musahar and Chaupal have neither land nor any agricultural assets.
- *The pattern of landownership and assets in Bihar clearly indicate a differentiation process at two levels : (a) between castes with land and agricultural assets (Chamar, Dusadh, Dhobi), and castes without these (Musahar and Chaupal); (b) and within castes: suggestive of the formation of a small elite group within the Scheduled Castes.*

Jharkhand

In the State of Jharkhand, our Scheduled Caste sample population being overwhelmingly urban, they do not own any agricultural land, hence, no agricultural assets.

West Bengal

- In West Bengal 108 households of Scheduled Castes (24.4%) own cultivable land, of these 90(83.3%) possess agricultural assets.
- With respect to the distribution of different types of agricultural asset amongst cultivable landowning castes, 75.9 percent possess plough; 11.1 percent, bullockcart; 13.9 percent, paddy pounder: and 17.6 percent our fishing nets. A very insignificant number of households possess fodder chopper (4), thresher(5), oil press/flourmill(2) and pumpset(2).

Table: 4.18 Selected agricultural assets of Scheduled Castes in West Bengal (Not reproduced)

- At the level of individual castes all the 11 castes own cultivable land. The land ownership ranges from 17 percent of all the households among the Bauri and the Mal, to 80 percent among the Bhuiyan, and a substantial percentage of households among the Sarki (46.6%), Kami (43.3%) and Bagdi (40.0%).

- The main agricultural implement owned by the Scheduled Castes is the plough. Other assets like bullock cart, pump-set, oil press are confined to a few castes amongst very few households (14).
 - The differential ownership of plough points to the differentiation among the Scheduled Castes. On the one hand, we have the Bhuiyan, Bagdi, Kami and Sarki with 53.3 percent, 43.0 percent and 33.3 percent households respectively, owning plough. On the other hand, we have castes like the Chamar with 8.3 percent, Bauri with 12.7 percent, Konai with 14.2 percent, and Mal with 7.1 percent of their households owning this implement.
 - The Bagdi emerges clearly as the agriculturally most endowed caste with 5 households owning bullock cart, 10 having fishing net, 5 owning thresher, 6 possessing paddy pounder, 2 having fodder chopper and the only caste to own two pumpsets. All cultivating households own the plough.
 - The Chamar emerge as the least endowed in terms of possessing agricultural assets. Only 4 households have plough and one has bullock cart.
 - Land holding asset among the Scheduled Castes in West Bengal is better than in Bihar. The basic instrument of production, the plough, is available to 18.1 percent of land-owning households in Bihar, whilst in West Bengal this is available to a much larger proportion (75.9%). When it comes to higher order infra-structure like bullock cart and pumpset, 31.9 percent of land-owning households in Bihar own one or both of these, whilst in West Bengal only 13.0 percent have these assets. This is further corroborated by 2 only flour mills in West Bengal, as against 15 in Bihar.
- The larger land-owning base demonstrates a more even an extensive minimum infra-structural support in West Bengal, whilst in Bihar a relatively smaller landowning base gives evidence of a sharper class stratification. This suggests a low-level egalitarian model in West Bengal, vis-à-vis a stratified elite generating model in Bihar.*

(To be continued...)

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ALL INDIA ASECA,
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 Sector 11 (Extension), Rohini,
Delhi - 110 085.

• **Editor:** Purna Chandra Hembram • **Published and Printed** by Barisa Kisku on behalf of All India Adivasi Socio Educational and Cultural Association (Registered), New Delhi • **Printed** at S. K. Enterprises, B- 975, Mangol Puri, Delhi 110 083 and published from **SFS Flat No. 326, Pocket 10, Sector 11 (Extension), Rohini, Delhi 110 085.**