



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

Various issues pertaining to Santals in particular and Tribals in general are being highlighted through this column from time to time. The attempt is to sensitize people on various aspects of life so as to initiate a process of communication/discussion at least among discerning people who have some concern for common welfare as a member of the society.

We learn from the reality and real life situations. The learning from such experience gives us an insight as well as prompts us to act and react. Showcasing a reality means offering opportunity so that the shortcomings can be analysed and suitably addressed. With the passage of time, there is a direct interaction and association of Santals with the neighbourhood other group of people. The participation of Santals in the universal Puja mainly in Durga Puja and Kali Puja is very common. The participation and role have also gradually shifted from mere onlooker to organizer in such events.

With industrialization, the occupation of people has shifted from agrarian to technical and consequently the associated service sector has attracted people of various strata to the urban or industrial centers. The industrial or urban occupation has brought about a change in the association pattern and zone of influence.

For quite some years now, during Durga Puja, one pandal is being erected by rickshawpullars where the Santals took lead role. The stature of pandal speaks about meticulous planning, able organizing skill, absorbing capacity and apt management technique of the organizers. They organize the event truly comparable to others in the vicinity and there is no marked difference compared to others. People appreciate the efforts of these people, but silently are amazed to see these people's potential to organize such event. The Puja is being conducted as per the programme in a pious atmosphere with required

discipline and decency. Due care is being taken to organize the event as per the schedule and along the puja, the organizers, family members and their supporters enjoy a lot also through cultural programmes and social gatherings. It can indeed be a case study to assess the involvement of these people and their dedication and determination to organize such event. Even same practice is being noticed among Santal artisan/mason/technicians who perform Viswakarma Puja.

A comparison can be attempted on similar situation namely the traditional Jaher Bonga (Puja) organized in the same locality where a sizable number of relatively well off Santal family reside. Most of the families from this section are conspicuous by their absence while arrangements are finalised or responsibilities are allotted. They remain neutral or indifferent towards both the realm i.e. participation and organisation. It is highly disturbing to observe that the sincerity with which these less privileged persons organize the event along with their counterparts is missing among the qualified and wealthy persons residing in the immediate neighbourhood. This section hardly shows interest or takes responsibility in organizing the traditional religious/social events. In these occasions also the same group who are involved in organizing Durga Puja etc. takes the lead and the traditional events though organized do not match the level of Durga Puja. In the traditional arrangement, the participation of elite group is limited as spectator of the dance event or it is used as an occasion to interact with one another. The state of traditional sacred worship place speaks a lot about the general concern and co-operation. The dilapidated state due to the absence of caring and sharing among people has thrown open one obvious question how long the culture can sail.

Is there something to learn from these less privileged brethren by better off section of the society?

## Tribal Scheduled and Areas in Orissa

(Continued from August 2008 issue)

### Exceptions and modifications to part IX of the Constitution

4. Notwithstanding anything contained under Part IX of the Constitution, the Legislature of a State shall not make any law under that Part which is inconsistent with any of the following features, namely:-

- (a) a State legislation on the Panchayats that may be made shall be in consonance with the customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of community resources;
- (b) a village shall ordinarily consist of a habitation or a group of habitations or a hamlet or a group of hamlets comprising a community and managing its affairs in accordance with traditions and customs;
- (c) every village shall have a Gram Sabha consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level;

- (d) every Gram Sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution;
- (e) every Gram Sabha shall-
  - i. approve of the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and projects are taken
  - ii. be responsible for the identification or selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes;
- (f) every Panchayat at the village level shall be required to obtain from the Gram Sabha a certification of utilisation of funds by that Panchayat for the plans, programmes and projects referred to in clause(e);
- (g) the reservation of seats in the Scheduled Areas at every Panchayat shall be in proportion to the population of the communities in that Panchayat for whom reservation is sought to be given under Part IX of the Constitution;

(To be continued...)

### INSTALLATION OF STATUE OF LATE SUNARAM SOREN – CLARIFICATION

In the September 2008 issue the approach to implement the project was invited. However, we have received requests to publish different approaches so that views on modus operandi of implementation and willingness of people in general and particularly of other local associations/individuals on this proposal could be known. All India ASECA endorses this view and is bringing out the following possible arrangements. It is also required so that claim of ignorance or no information does not arise from any quarter.

The possible arrangements could be:

1. Intellectuals of Santal community (India/Orissa/Mayurbhanj/Baripada) to form a Committee and take up the job;
2. Associations whoever want to be associated come together and complete the job;
3. One of the local Associations or group of local Associations come together to take the lead and initiative;
4. In case, above arrangement(s) could not materialize, All India ASECA will try its best and take up the initiative

Many a times, for taking up any initiative initial hiccups crop up. It has to be overcome through a collective determination and from the experience it can be safely said that it is achievable.

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

(Source: Planning Commission)

{Continued from September 2008 issue}

### Scheduled Castes

#### Bihar

In Bihar, as many as 57 households of Scheduled Castes (14.5%) have taken loan from money lenders. Of these, 52.6 percent have taken loan for social consumption such as expenditure on birth, marriage and death; 38.6 percent, for health reasons and 8.8 percent for house construction and repairs. As for institutional loans only 10 households (2.6%) have taken loan from credit society/ bank for agricultural purposes. In all, 17.6% of all households have entered the credit market, most of which is non- institutional. This is not an insignificant proportion and the large component of non- institutional loans suggest the presence of ties of 'attachment' with the creditors in some form or the other.

- With respect to individual castes, 22 households (13.8%) among the Chamar have taken loan from money lenders. Of these, 17 households have taken loan for social consumption, 3 for medical treatment, 2 for house construction/ repairs.
- The Chaupal in comparison, are much more into the credit market with 17 households having taken loan from money lenders. Of these 6 have taken it for social consumption purpose (58.6%), 8 for medical treatment and 3 for house construction/ repairs.
- With the Dusadh borrowing goes down to only 5 households (4.2%), all having taken loan from money lenders. 4 of them have taken loan for social consumption purposes and 1 for medical treatment.
- Only 3 Musahar households have taken loan from the money lender, exclusively for medical treatment.
- Only one Dhobi has sought for loan from money lender, that too for medical reason.
- Among the Nat, with only 10 households in our sample, (who do not figure in our general analysis) as many as 9 have taken loan from money lenders, mainly for medical reasons (6 times) and also for social occasions (3 times).

- As for institutional loan, out of a total 10 households 8 of them are from the Chamar. All of them have taken it from cooperative society/ bank for agricultural purposes.

Our data shows that most of the borrowing households have preferred to take loans from the money lender / landowner and that too for domestic reasons related to social consumption, health imperatives and construction and repair of their homes. The loans taken for agricultural purposes, are from a few households, mostly from the Chamar and confined to banks and credit societies as sources. *This clear demarcation of domestic needs being met from money lender / landowner, whilst agricultural requirements being met from institutional loans is significant.*

It is quite possible that loans for domestic purposes coming from the money lender/ landowner is indicative of a new trend by landowners to extend soft or interest free loans to ensure a moral obligation towards labour supply by debtors particularly during labour scarce periods. This is a new kind of obligation structure under pressures from scarcity in the free labour market, in which a situation converse to bondage has come into existence. The money lender / landowner is constrained, and even eager, to extend soft loans or loans without interest to households who usually engage in labour in their cultivation.

*Often an interest-free loan is tagged to assured labour supply commitment on less than the prevailing wage rates. In that sense, the difference between the prevailing and actual wage rates can be interpreted as the 'hidden interest', on the so-called interest-free loans. This is an area that opens up scope for further research.*

Another interesting detail, in our Bihar sample is that 53 out of 57 households who have taken non-institutional loan in Bihar, are from the panchayat in the district of Saran in North Bihar. It may be noted

Patna has witnessed strong extremist agrarian movements.

### ***Jharkhand***

None of the households of Scheduled Castes in Jharkhand have taken loan from any source. The urban-based SC households are endowed to an extent that does not entail informal dependencies.

### ***West Bengal***

The situation in West Bengal is somewhat different. The extent of borrowing itself is very low at 3.4 percent, and borrowing from money lender is even less. In fact, there are more borrowings from relatives and friends. Only 15 households have taken loan. Of these, 6 have borrowed from the money lender, 7 from amongst relatives and 2 from the bank. 6 have borrowed for agricultural purposes, 2 for business, 4 for social consumption, and 3 for house construction and repairs.

- With respect to individual castes, 3 households of Bagdi have taken loan, of whom 2 have taken it from the money lender for house construction/ repairs and 1 from relative for agricultural purpose.
- 3 households of Mal have taken loan, of which 1 from money lender for social consumption, 2 from relatives for agriculture and business purposes respectively.
- Among the Bauri, 4 households have taken loan, 1 from money lender for house construction/ repairs; 1 from friend for social consumption. 2 have taken loan from credit society/ bank for agriculture purpose.
- 1 household each of Dom, Patni, Chamar have taken loan from friends/ relatives for consumption purpose.

from money lender for agriculture purpose.

Although the percentage of borrowing households is much less in West Bengal as compared to Bihar, the purpose for borrowing is directed more towards agriculture and business and house repairs. Loans for social consumption are taken by few.

*Our findings suggest that social consumption loans for Scheduled Castes have greater priority in Bihar, and perhaps a cultural reason for structural dependence. This too is an area for further research.*

### **Scheduled Tribes**

#### ***Jharkhand***

Loan-taking among the Scheduled Tribes of Jharkhand is insignificant.

- Only 9 (1.7%) households of Scheduled Tribes have taken loan. Of these, 3 households belong to Ho, 5 to Santhal and 1 belongs to Mahali.
- All the 3 households of Ho have taken loan from money lenders for agricultural purposes.
- 4 households of Santhal have taken loan from money lenders, 1 for health treatment, 2 for livestock, and 1 for agriculture.
- 1 each of Mahali and Santhal have taken from the bank for business and house construction respectively.

This indicates that the tribal communities in Jharkhand do not seem to be much into loan dependency.

**(To be continued...)**

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