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**SOCIAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY TRIBAL INDIA:  
OBSERVATIONS FROM CHANGING STATUS OF  
ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGE IDENTITY  
AMONG SANTALS**

**Introduction**

Social transition leads to social transformation, a shift in terms of human aspiration which is readily available, accessible and easy to get with comfort as its ultimate objective. The process of social transformation may restructure the technological, economic, political and cultural patterns in a society. The societal value-normative system can change, often in a way that allows the emergence and stabilization of pluralist institutions (Genevo 1999). Cultural interpretations of historical experience seemed liberating, offering more potential for exciting new avenues to be explored. Cultural history, it rapidly became clear, was much more than the history of culture, be it 'popular' or 'elite'. It was concerned with the search for meanings, and particularly with understanding how people in the past made sense of their world. The emphasis was less on 'society', and particularly not society as a set of structures; it was on individuals, attitudes and beliefs.

According to Coleman and Lowe (2007), social identity conflicts are less about disagreements over resources and needs and more about our understanding of self and other, group dignity, integrity and purpose, security, agency and efficacy, who is included/excluded, values, beliefs, and what is just (Rothman 1997; Coleman and Lowe 2007). The concept of national identity was the only constituting idea of identity till nineteenth century. But the interaction at the level of cultural, regional, national and global level along with the influence of forces like globalization brought increased consciousness and thereby bringing increased confrontations. Language played a very important role in this process both to bring realization and the consequent relinquishment to single national identity. Language use is a character which is socially constituted, a reflexive, dynamic product of the social, historical and political contexts of an individual's lived experiences (Hall 2011). Languages may be invoked and used to signal group membership especially if groups feel that their identities are threatened (Jaspal 2009).

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On the other hand, the rich cultural diversity in India of which language diversity is a part is also a source of explanation to how societies evolve, interact, reciprocate and at the same time maintain distinctiveness. Observing the Indian tribal or indigenous cultures which were once isolated from outer world and which are now in the very process of change and transformation to modern societal structure will give immense knowledge about changing (modern) Indian society. Here it is noteworthy that the idea of independent co-existence has been reflected as an essential character of tribal ethos. The Santali identity struggle around social, religious, language and life style like fronts is an example of changing scenario of tribalism and gives excellent explanations to their idea of struggle for 'Santali' as a community identity.

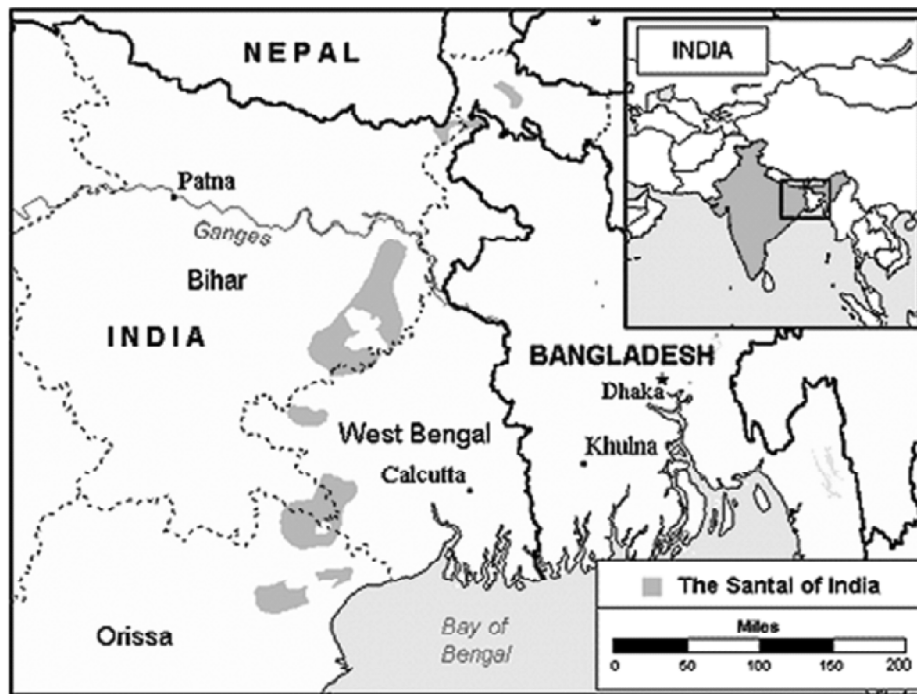


Figure 1: Santal population distribution in India.

### Material and Methods

The main objective of the paper was to explore the process of social transformation among the Santals and their struggle for social identity and mainstreaming. The paper discusses the various means adopted by the tribesmen to seek national identity. We have placed a major focus on the process of language transformation in the present paper. We have also examined the facts from other aspects considering both historical and

contemporary. A major part of the paper explored the fact that how language played a very significant role in their movement for identity. At the same time I have tried to explore that how modernity diminishes the traditional material culture by taking classic examples from field findings.

In the present research data was collected among Santals of West Bengal and Odisha. Data was collected by interviewing randomly selected members from the tribe. Interview of selected individuals from other cohabiting tribes like Oraon, Bhumij and Bathudi was also taken. Data from secondary sources were collected by review of literature. Detailed ethnography of the tribes was done. Data on socio-economic, family structure etc were collected.

### **Santal: a brief ethno-history**

Santal tribe, with its population of 58, 38,016 (census 2001), is the third major tribe in India after Bhils and Gonds. Originally, Santali people are the inhabitants of Chhotnagpur plateau geographic region in undivided Bihar and now Jharkhand state with further spread through other states like West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Bihar (Figure 1). The number of Santali speaking people is much larger than the number of the people speaking Nepali, Konkani, Sindhi, Kashmiri and Manipuri. Santali language is expressed in Bengali script in West Bengal, with Devanagari script in Nepal, with Latin script in Bangladesh, Oriya script in Odisha along with Ol Chiki script (Figure 2; Paul *et al.* 2015). In 1798 for the first time the Santals were mentioned by Lord Teignmouth as Soontars in his descriptive writing entitled 'Some extraordinary facts, customs and practices of the Hindus' (Teignmouth 1807). The term 'Santal' was first reported in the recommendations of Dunbar submitted to Sudder Board of revenue, Calcutta in 1837 (Gautam 1977; Roy Chaudhary 1965.).

The tribe is considered progressive among other Indian tribal groups. Santali in early literature has been depicted as part of great Kol' language family (Hodgson 1848) of Kolarian group (Cambell 1866). Later classifications placed Santali as one of the major Munda languages belonging to Astric or Astro Asiatic group (Grierson 1906). Other languages like Sora (Tribe Soura), Gorum (tribe Parengi), Gutab (?), Remo (tribe Bonda), Gata (?), Karia (tribe Kharia), Juang (tribe Juang), Korku (tribe Korku), Mundari (tribes Munda and Bhumij), Korva (tribe Korwa) and Ho (tribe Ho) belong to the same Mundari language family (Figure 3).

Santals identify themselves as 'Hor' or 'Man', and they use the term Santal to specify their language Santali. Gautam (1977) in his findings has mentioned that the term 'Santal' came to frequent use among the Santal only during last 100-150 years.

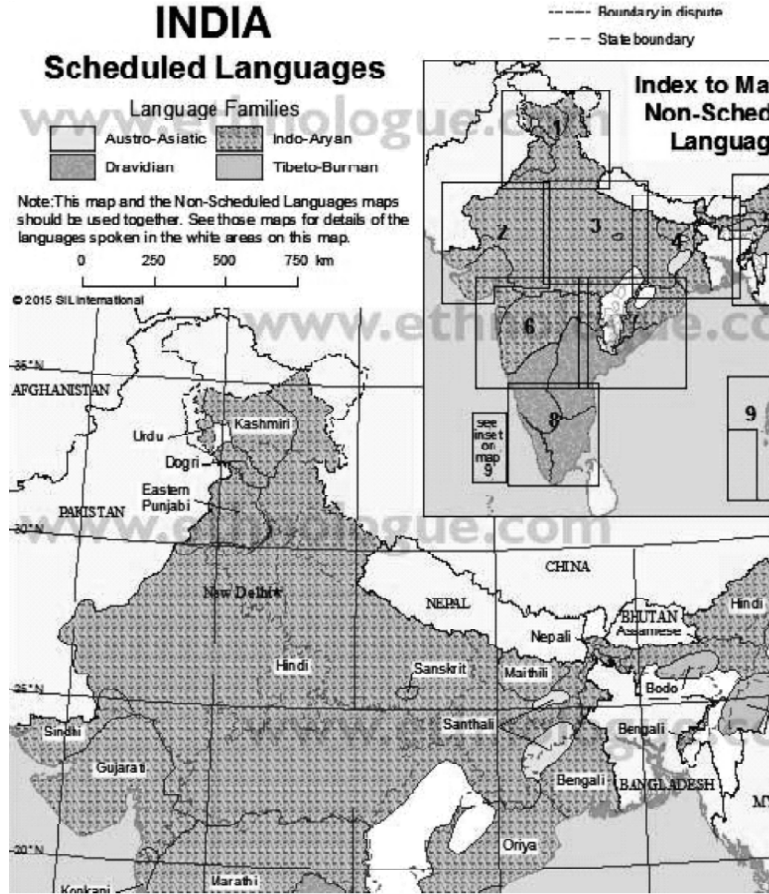


Figure 2: Santali speaker dominant areas (Paul et al., 2015)

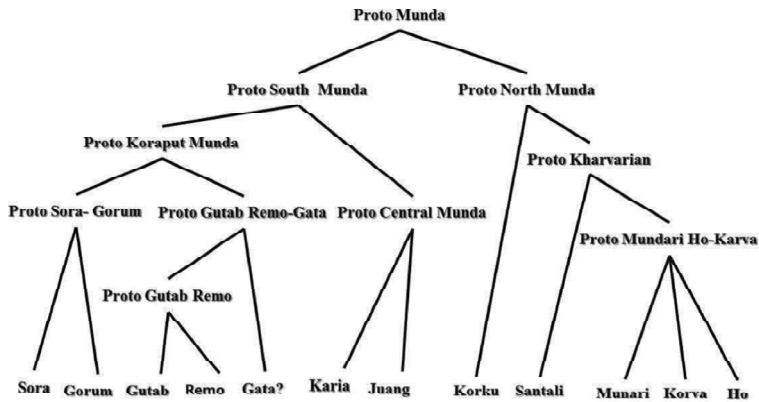


Figure 3: Munda language tree (Grierson, 1906)

### **A brief history of ethnic movement of Santals**

The first Santal movement around tribe's culture and tradition took place in 1855 in the name 'Santal *Hul*' led by Sidho and Kanhu. This movement further inspired the Santal struggle for ethnic identity. This movement was later named as *Kherwar* movement, drawing the name from the old name of the tribe. But interestingly, this *Kherwar* movement for Santal identity in the later course of time, during the period of 1871 onwards, revolved around Hinduised concepts like *Safa hor* (clean Santal) movement (year 1871) and *safa hor Kherwarism* during 1930 (Gautam 1977). This movement around cultural identity further gained ground in following years.

Adivasi Cultural Association was established in 1953. Later realizing the importance of education the association was renamed in 1973 as the Adivasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association. On 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1973 in Calcutta ten thousand Santals came in procession and presented a memorandum to the West Bengal Chief Minister for the recognition of the Santal Script (Cf. Gautam 1977). The association's monthly paper *Sagan Sakam* demanded *Sarna* (the Sacred Groove) be the Santal religion rather than Hinduism. Its leader Pandit Raghunath Murmu also founded the *Sarna Dharam Sammelet* or the sacred groove religious organization (Orans 1965; Mahapatra 1973). So, the ethnographic accounting of Santal rise in the front of identity largely happened only during post-independence period though sporadic reporting took place during pre-independent India. The account of Dutta-Majumdar dates the history of acculturation among Santals back to 1950s and 60s (Dutta-Majumdar 1956; Gautam 1977). Orans in his study on Santals in 1965 referred the 'acculturated Santals' to be dependant on great tradition, a detachment from tribal cultural life; Orans by great tradition identify the industrialized urban society (Orans 1965). Analyzing in the line of rank concession syndrome theory, Orans further explained that Santals have conceded rank to dominant surrounding society and accepted the social inferiority of their own group which further became a basis of reuniting Santals for claiming cultural identity (Orans 1965).

The literature review shows the famine during 1879-90, during 1906-11 and again during 1940 played pivotal roles in migration and settlement of the Santal tribesmen in various parts of the country including the tea gardens in Assam. This migration seeking social security for basic needs might have played a key role towards ethnic identity movement of the tribe.

### **The language and literary movement**

The universal character of language as a 'vehicle of communication' has made it a local symbol of ethnic identity due to the 'deep rooted' speakers' perceived 'cultural essence' in it. The Santal cultural history of identity movement around language is substantially rich in comparison to other Indian tribes and has got a solid back ground through time. Most importantly, the

dominant language movement in late pre-independent and early post independent period perhaps could catch the Santal imagination. As Lewis and Paul (2015) note, Santali as a language in contemporary India is in vigorous use with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education. So it is worth mentioning that the Santal language movement has maintained its consistent effort towards national identity by idealizing such other language movements in India. In the year 1936, Odisha state was for the first time in India formed on the basis of language identity. The other adjacent state West Bengal also has a high language centric culture. So, the practice of language oriented ethnicity and linguistic based identity is there in the long standing history of Odisha and West Bengal which could have inspired the tribe to make language a way for their social identity. Beyond that, the linguistic based identity movement behind the formation of various major Indian states like Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra etc. explains the deep rooted identity in language among Indian ethnic groups; such close walk of language and identity in Indian socio political history is a significant aspect of Indian society. Further insight explains that 12 out of the 22 languages in 8<sup>th</sup> schedule (8<sup>th</sup> schedule in Indian Constitution recognizes the language as of national importance) are the foundation for formulation of the respective 12 states representing respective language identities. So language as an idea for social movement for claiming cultural identity is a historical process in India. Every such successful movement among major Indian population groups has got language attached to the practices and beliefs regarding political, ethnic and life style like aspects. Such ethno political and ethno linguistic or ethno life style practices have further influenced other such movements around identity among marginalized or minor groups and particularly the Indian tribes. Santal identity movement is a classic case explaining the significant role of these influencing elements with respect to mainstreaming of identity.

So, it can be reiterated that in the history of Santal social movement, the tribesmen could realize the significant role of language in formulation of ethnic identity very early.

They could also realize that their language needed a script to be called a formal language so that the use of the language will be a powerful tool in their struggle for mainstreaming. As Santali like all other tribal languages did not have structured alphabets Mr. Raghunath Murmu (who is also referred as 'Pandit') (Figure 4) created alphabets for Santali language as 'Ol Chiki' (picture 5) in the year 1975.

While Brahmi-derived script is the written format for most of the languages in India with Urdu script derived from Arabic, Santali used independent scripts. (Santali language-Wikipedia). The Constitution (Ninety-second Amendment) Act, 2003, amended the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution so as to include Santali language as a scheduled language.



Figure 4: Guru Raghunath Murmu birth day celebration

୧ [ɔ]	୦ [t]	ୱ [g, k']	ୱ [ŋ]	୧ [l]
୧ [a]	୦ [k]	ୱ [dʒ, c']	ୱ [m]	ୱ [w / v]
ୱ [i]	ୱ [s]	ୱ [h, ʔ]	ୱ [ɲ]	ୱ [r]
ୱ [u]	ୱ [ç]	ୱ [d, t']	ୱ [ɳ]	ୱ [j]
ୱ [e]	ୱ [p]	ୱ [d]	ୱ [n]	ୱ [ʈ]
ୱ [o]	ୱ [ʈ]	ୱ [b, p']	ୱ [ʋ ʔ]	ୱ [h, h']

Figure 5: Ol Chiki script

Santali is the first and only major tribal language from the major tribal groups to be included in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution (Graph 1). It is here noteworthy that by including a particular language in the Constitution's eighth schedule the government is under the obligation to lay down the measures for the development of the languages, such that "they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge". Further, this inclusion of a language in the eighth schedule accredits the language as a national medium of writing an examination conducted for public service at a higher level. This led to the University Grants Commission (UGC) to accept Santali as a separate discipline for National Eligibility Test (NET) for lectureship in the year 2013. Santali language is the first major tribal language

from the non-north-east region to be accepted by the UGC for NET. Similarly the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) before few years has approved Santali as a subject for optional in National Civil Service Examination while the Jharkhand Public Service Commission has also included the Santali language in its examination syllabus.

**Graph 1: Language cloud analysis of Santali language** This graph shows the place of Santali within the cloud of all living languages. Each language in the world is represented by a small dot that is placed on the grid in relation to its population (in the vertical axis) and its level of development or endangerment (in the horizontal axis), with the largest and strongest languages in the upper left and the smallest and weakest languages (down to extinction) in the lower right. The population value is the estimated number of first language (L1) speakers; it is plotted on a logarithmic scale (where  $10^0 = 1$ ;  $10^2 = 100$ ;  $10^4 = 10,000$ ;  $10^6 = 1,000,000$ ;  $10^8 = 100,000,000$ ). The EGIDS level for this language in its primary country is 4 (Educational) — The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education (Paul et al. 2015).

To enrich the language as a better medium for the speakers and to popularize it in national and other forums there are more than 100 magazines/newspapers (weekly to yearly) published by different Santal literary foundations every year. Different authors from the community have published books in Santali language. Many literary and cultural societies have been established for the promotion of Santali Art, Literature and Culture all over the country. Hundreds of prose, poetry, novel, stories are being written and being published by many independent writers. A large number of grammar and dictionary books also have been published in this language. Santali language font and translation software, dictionaries in Santali-English-regional languages have been prepared and made available in recent time.

Similarly one can find many blogs, websites, organizations, societies and associations working for the development of the language at individual as well as in group or public capacity. Such activities are mostly driven by enthusiastic young and educated section of the tribe.

Santali authors like Shyam Sundar Hembram, Pandit Raghunath Murmu, Barha Beshra, Sadhu Ramchand Murmu, Narayan Soren 'Toresutam', Sarada Prasad Kisku, Raghunath Tudu, Kalipada Soren, Sakla Soren, Digambar Hansda, Aditya Mitra 'Santali', Babulal Murmu 'Adivasi', Jadumani Beshra, Arjun Hembram, Krishna Chandra Tudu, Rupchand Hansda, Kalendra Nath Mandi, Mahadev Hansda, Gour Chandra Murmu, Thakur Prasad Murmu, Hara Prasad Murmu, Uday Nath Majhi, Parimal Hembram, Dharendra Nath Baske, Shyam Charan Hembram, Damayanti Beshra, T.K. Rapaj, Boyha Biswanath Tudu and their works have been included in the syllabus of UPSC Civil service examination. Such a practice of promotion of



the literary personality will enrich the language tradition among the educated Santali youth, at the same time inspiring them for more contribution towards the very movement.

It is noteworthy that today there are more than 10,00,000 Santali speaking people reside in India, while it is 225,000 in Bangladesh and 49,900 in Nepal (Paul *et al.* 2015; Census of Nepal 2011).

### **Introducing Santali in popular media: state patronage of Santali in radio broadcast**

Radio was the only and most popular medium for broadcast in India regarding news, entertainments as well as other information till nineties. It was the only and most powerful medium for communication in rural populations until the television started to dominant the space starting by late 1990s. On the other hand, radio continues to be a popular medium among the tribes still in the present time. So in the process of Santali movement, Santali language put its first foot in radio broadcasting system and was first broadcast from Calcutta-B radio station on 1st August in 1965. The inaugural broadcast was a speech of then Chief Minister of West Bengal which was translated into Santali. From 15th August 1975, Calcutta-A Radio station started broadcasting in Santali language daily from 6:05 to 6:35 P.M. In the month of November of the same year Hara Parasad Murmu was appointed as Newsreader in Santali for Calcutta-A Radio station. From 1981 December, extra half-an-hour time was allotted for broadcasting Radio-drama in Santali language once in two week (Bera 2012).

The All India Radio latter did recognize Santali as a medium of mass communication. The transmission of programmes is taking place from various centers of All India Radio. The All India Radio is relaying a daily news bulletin in its half an hour news programme from Calcutta center along with broadcasting cultural programmes from Cuttack, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Chaibasa, Bhagalpur, Dumka, Keonjhar, Baripada and other centres. Doordarshan Kendra, Calcutta is also relaying 20 minutes programme twice in a month.

### **Academic and institutional recognition to Santali**

It brought a significant inspiration to the language, Santali, when Dr. Doman Sahu 'Samir' was honoured with Central Sahitya Academy award in 1997 for his contribution to the Santali language and literature. This can be termed as a very significant step in the process of recognizing the language in national forum and particularly in the academic sphere.

Education has always been an immensely important factor in building personal as well as community identity of an individual. Beyond the growth of the language at structural and usage level, the tribesmen have been

instrumental in the mainstreaming of the language and its inclusion in the formal educational system. This strive has led to the growth of the Santali language and its recognition by various establishments. Realizing the growing importance of the language, many universities in India started to introduce the language at university level as a new discipline. University departments in Santali were established in various state and centrally patronized universities like Visva Varati University (year 1977), Ranchi University (year 1983), Vidyasagar University, Mahatma Gandhi Rasthya Hindi Viswavidyalaya and Bhagalpur University. A university named Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University was established in the year 2010 in West Bengal in the names of three Santal heroes Sidho, Kanho and Birsha. The U.G.C. also provides Fellowship for higher studies in Santali language and literature.

On the other hand, the local tribal political movement has made it possible to make Santali language either the mode of education or a compulsorily taught language at school level in tribal dominated areas in certain states like West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand. The Higher Education Department, Government of West Bengal, has started publishing text books in Santali language in Ol Chiki script and 600 Santali teachers were trained to teach Santali Language in Ol Chiki script. Besides, the Govt. of Orissa, by the year 1999, has also started teaching 'Santali' Language in Ol Chiki script in 30 primary schools.

### **Claiming ethnic identity**

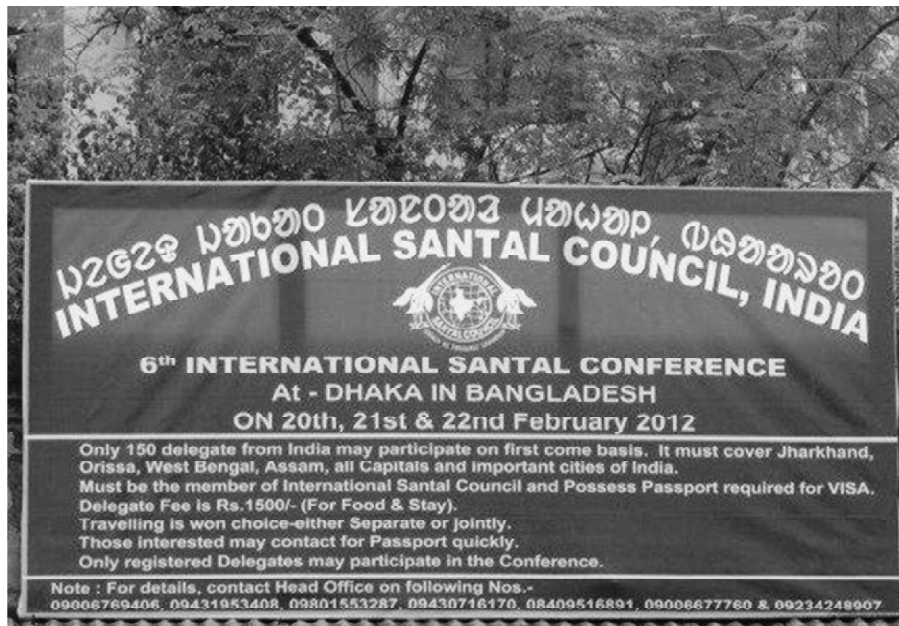
During our recent field research in Odisha and West Bengal it was observed that the Santali social movement is also playing a key role in local development, road and railway communication process in various sectors at local, regional and state level.

In Mayurbhanj, a Santal dominated district of Orissa, it was also witnessed that the only local train named Bhubaneswar-Bangiriposhi Express running between Bhubaneswar, the state capital and Mayurbhanj has been named in Santali language (*Ol Chiki*) along with Oriya (the state language), Hindi and English (Figure 6).

Similarly, Santal forums, associations and conferences are being arranged at regional, national and international level to popularize as well as to discuss various aspects of the community for the growth and mainstreaming of the Santalis (Figure 7). Such activities are creating natural interest among others by stimulating them to understand and explore Santali culture and traditions with further exhibiting such essence for public. Recently a month long exhibition on Santal musical tradition was arranged by National Museum, New Delhi in collaboration with Museum Reitberg, Zurich, Crafts Museum, New Delhi, and the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal. (The Indian Express 2015).



Figure 6: Picture shows Bhubaneswar-Bangiriposhi Express train named in Santali



Picture 7: Picture shows international Santal conference organized by Santal international council

Promotion and felicitation of community achievers, highlighting the talents etc like activities are increasingly taking place among Santals. The authors personally witnessed such a felicitation programme of a Santal youth who made it to go to a foreign university for higher studies. It is also observable in most community meetings of both political and nonpolitical nature that issues pertaining to cultural and social promotion are the predominant topics of discussion and speeches for the leaders. An important finding came out while observing political rallies during the general election that mainstreaming of Santal identity is a matter of high emphasis over development related issues.

On the other hand, to popularize Santali culture, movies and music albums are being made in Santali language in recent time by selecting the plots from Santali society (Figure 8). Such movies and music albums are amply being available in social media like youtube, facebook etc.



Figure 8: Picture shows the cover of a Santali video album

Similarly, Santali boys and girls are getting the opportunity and exposure to participate in various sports activities at national and international levels (Figure 9).

It is observable that recently the movement for the own religion 'Sernaa' is at its high particularly among the Santali youth. Though the spirit and practices in *Sernaa* are perceived by many other tribes like Bhumij, Kol, Munda etc, Santals are at the fore front in the *Sernaa* movement to make it a formally recognized religion in India. This activity for recognition of *Sernaa* in various forums has moved hand in hand with Santal identity.

Further from field experience, it was observed that to create and to strengthen the community feelings, the Santal tribal councils were observed



**Figure 9: Picture shows Santali girls getting trained in football by foreign coach**

of instructing the people empathetically to maintain the traditions like wearing the traditional ethnic clothes of their own, during public as well as private ceremonies, festivals and rituals (Picture 10).



**Picture 10: Picture shows Santali women and men dressed in traditional Santali clothes**

Adherence to own socio-cultural values and morals has been the conventional wisdom of the tribal men and women. Strict prescriptive moral governance of society is rarely witnessed among tribes that mostly believed in individual freedom with a liberal stance, until recent time. So, it can be iterated that metaphors of unity are the means of suturing the social realm (Gergen 1999).

### **Changing life style: an indicator of socio-cultural transformation**

Life style and socio demographic changes are the important indicators of social transformation explaining the process of modernization and their pursuance for mainstreaming in any given population. Santal which is one of the populous tribe in India is at the forefront among most of the tribes in the formulation process of new identity. The adaptation of modern life styles, an identified character of advanced culture stimulates the less advanced cultures for their repositioning attempts to claim ethnicity as one among the advanced ones. Our recent study involving six different tribal groups (Kora and Oraons in West Bengal, Bhumij and Bathudi in Odisha, Santals of Odisha and West Bengal where we considered Santals of Odisha and West Bengal as separate population groups) shows Santals with highest monthly income than other tribes in both the states. This increased income status is a stimulant to adaptation to modern life style among Santals which further exposes to other socio-cultural changes. Similarly, it was observed that males and females among Santals marry at a comparatively late age than that of four other studied tribes. This gradually increasing average age at marriage among Santals is a demographic indicator symbolizing their adherence to non-indigenous practices. Our study further revealed that though the rate of literacy was less among the Santals in comparison to other tribes, Santals largely dominated the socio-educational space and employment sector, privileged to the tribal population in the states like Odisha, West Bengal. It explains the better informed status of Santals among other tribal groups with increased access to external agencies. The study found that there is a significant change in their life style, food habit and living practices among Santals. A new trend as a part of the observation came from the field in the form of a dominant practice that video show, in recent time, is replacing traditional community dancing and singing. It is a favorite choice in the younger and middle age generations though elderly people show serious reservations against it. Such generational gap is a clear reflection that youth culture among the tribe is increasingly moving away from age old practices by accepting western pattern. So, considering above factors, it can be inferred that the tribe's socio-cultural and behavior changes are rapidly moving towards the modern life style, indicating the quest for new identity among this one of the advanced tribal groups in India.

### **Conclusion**

A marginalized culture in comparison to a dominant one, while transits from its existing status to the mainstream, the process of such transition is most of the time pursued in the form of a movement for rights. On the other side of this ethnicity politics, the dominant culture is prone toward objectification of the Other- the marginalized culture, forcing it into identity traps that confirm the dominant culture's sense of superiority. Or the marginalized culture in reverse develops its pattern to justify an 'indigenous own' which is actually a reflection and positioning of parallels to the dominant culture. The idea of social change at cognitive level is always borrowed from or influenced by pre-existing knowledge, though the patterns may be different. Most of the time, the borrowing practice follows the patterns that were once followed in past or perceived in present to be the right procedure by the dominant culture during its own point of transition. It is a historical practice in human civilization.

In the present context among Santals, following are the few of the observations that strongly indicates the very process of modernization driven identity movement among the Santals.

1. More political participation and representation
2. Active socio-cultural movement for mainstreaming
3. Pushing Santali language and Sernaa religion to the fore front
4. High representation of Santalis in higher education and job sectors
5. Participation of Santali youths in national and international programs
6. Migration to cities and industrial areas
7. Increased practices of building and living in concrete houses replacing typical Santali house type
8. Better communication facilities to Santal dominated areas
9. Birth control practices
10. Changing health practices: preferences to modern health system and adherence to nontribal health beliefs (like practicing stigma towards leprosy and tuberculosis)
11. Sporadic cases of flesh trade

On the other hand the increasing mainstreaming of Santal society has influenced the other neighboring tribes to a great extent. Individuals from other tribes like Bhumij which is another major tribe and cohabiting in the Santal inhabiting areas are also striving in the same path seeking own tribal identity. Particularly, social media has come up as the primary way of expressing identity among such other tribal groups. Hoardings of music albums

and films in Bhumij language can be witnessed in local bazaars of even interior areas with broad tags like ‘first film in Mundari language’ or ‘Mundari music album’ (Picture 11).



**Figure 11: Picture shows a music album prepared by individuals belonging to Bhumij tribe**

The process of identity politics around language has also taken root in other tribes like Kondh with *Kui* as the language, Oraons, Ho tribes with *Warang Chiti* script, etc in Odisha and central India region. Another aspect at the same time needs to be looked into that the non-Santali tribes that are motivated by Santali movement but are having no such exposure in educational, linguistics and political fronts may fail miserably to project their tribal identities. Santals' identity movement around *Ol Chiki* script is more a movement of 'symbolic identity' (Breakwell 1986), a marker of distinct identity reflecting membership of a particular subculture, and endowing members with a sense of distinctiveness from other (e.g. the ethnic and dominant) groups



(Jaspal 2009). Any language that is a characteristic of collective identity of a larger social category may lead to hamper the very existence of minor languages around, which will threaten such minority identity since an important self-aspect, namely language, is often at stake (Jaspal 2009). From this point of view, the backward tribes around Santal dominating areas, no matter their population sizes may finally end up adopting the imitative forms of either Santali language culture, or the most influential or closely residing caste population. As Bourdieu (1977) notes, the ascribed value of speech and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships. So, the dominant Santali ethnicity will definitely bring changes to indigenous life style, both material and non-material culture and practices to the other tribal cultures around. Further this movement around ethnicity and identity among Santals is increasingly being perceived by other tribes in the same pattern as Santals perceive the modern societies and their values, beliefs and practices. The idea of 'modernity as superior to traditional indigenous culture' is a significant outcome of such perception among the tribes around, striving for their own ethnic identity. So, this idea, and the practices driven by such idea are rapidly driving towards the significant loss of traditional and material culture among such imitating groups. For example, while working among Bhumij tribe, I was interested in collecting the traditional musical instruments and utensils. As there is an overlap in instrument and utensil types among Bhumij and other tribes, I tried to collect few of the musical instruments which are typical of Bhumij tradition. After a strenuous effort and a lot of search, I could find only few numbers of two to three types of traditional instruments kept unused or in broken condition. Later on, I got very simple reasons from the owner regarding such abandoned condition of these instruments.

*'Modern musical systems are now available for use in festivals which looks more portentous and gracious. Again, as it is being used by nontribal societies extensively, it is increasingly being preferred by new generation of the tribe.'*

Further observation from the elderly members of the tribal group came out while collecting data on the status of material culture in the form of traditional instruments and utensils that they either disposed them off or put them in seclusion. It was because their educated children wished so. From elaborate discussion with the children of these families, I understood that the way of projection of tribal culture, artifacts etc at present higher education systems particularly at college and university level are creating a perception of prejudice while they are comparing themselves with non-tribal students. The identity of being tribal with such traditional practices is realized as a socio-cultural stigma by educated tribal youth while dealing with modernity. It was observed that only few passionate elder persons have kept such instruments in functional state and play in private. Such a view about own

material cultural tradition among tribal groups around Santals has a strong inter-woven relationship with same ethos of pursuit of ethnic identity in modern world as believed by Santalis.

Coming again to Santali dominant influence in local set ups, it was understood that the recognition of Santali language and its script in education is paving way for the expansion of the language from school to university levels. Such developments are definitely going to boost the social and educational position of Santals among rest of the tribes, particularly the cohabiting ones. Along with it could influence the language, culture and other socio-cognitive patterns of other tribes living in Santal dominated areas. In a sense, it leads or will tend to lead to dominance of Santals on the socio-cultural and political front among other tribes which in long run will help them establish this leading tribal group as the Dominant Tribe.

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