

**Development Research Center on  
Citizenship, Participation and Accountability**

**Study on Santal Tribals  
in Jharkhand**



**PRIA**

# Meanings and Identities of Citizenship

## Study on Santal Tribals in Jharkhand

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## **Foreword**

Development Research Centre (DRC) on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability is a research partnership based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex, U.K, which brings together research institutions and practice based civil society groups from India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Nigeria from the South and the U.K from the North. DRC project explores the issues of poverty, exclusion and marginalisation within the framework of rights and citizenship. 'Making rights real for poor people' is what DRC project aims at and it seeks to contribute to this goal through research, dissemination, policy influence and capacity building.

PRIA entered into this partnership in 2001. As part of DRC, PRIA continues to conduct research studies relating to various aspects of citizenship, participation and accountability.

We are happy to bring out this publication as part of DRC study report series and we do hope that the readers will find this exercise beneficial.

**March, 2004**

**Rajesh Tandon**  
President, PRIA  
New Delhi

## **Preface**

The present report is an outcome of PRIA's research study '**Meanings and Identities of Citizenship: Study on Santal Tribals in Jharkhand**'. The study conceptualizes citizenship as multidimensional experience of people as legal-constitutional-political as well as social and cultural. It has explored the understanding and experience of the Santals about their citizenship identities and citizenship rights. The was undertaken in seven villages of Dumka district of Santal Pargana in Jharkhand state.

The report is organized in three sections. **Section I Context** provides background, objectives, conceptual framework, scope, nature and approach of the study. **Section II Key Findings** focuses on Santals' understanding, articulation and identities of citizenship within the legal-political, developmental and cultural contexts. **Section III Emerging Issues** highlights some critical issues, the analysis of which would lead to some action points for making their rights real.

We have been helped by a large number of people during the research and writing of the study report. We take this opportunity to acknowledge this debt. Agrarian Assistance Association (AAA) a local NGO and the local officials of District Primary Education Programme helped and supported us in this study. We are grateful for their support. We are also grateful to our respondents for sharing their experiences and views during the data collection process.

**Nandini Sen**

## **Section 1**

### **Context**

The creation of the state of Jharkhand<sup>1</sup> (part of erstwhile Bihar) comprising 22 administrative districts in November 2001 was designed to fulfill the long-standing aspirations of the people of the region for development and a better quality of life. The formation of the new state was the result of a long struggle led by the tribals who claimed a separate province on the basis of their separate socio-cultural identity and the extent of socio-economic deprivation. Once a predominantly tribal region, today the state's 30 primitive tribal groups and non-primitive tribal groups together constitute only about a fourth of the new state's population (Census: 2000).

Based on the principles of *protectionism* and *isolation* the Indian government's approach to tribal areas has, in part, been a continuity of the British policy towards tribal development. On one hand the state focused on extracting the region's rich mineral and forest wealth while on the other, special policies and programmes were created for the socio-economic development of the tribal and other marginalized communities in the state.

The Constitution's two way classification of tribal areas into Scheduled areas governed by the 5th schedule of the Constitution and the Tribal areas governed by the 6th Schedule of the Constitution, is another area of continuity (ICITP: 1997). With its emphasis on the protection of customary tribal laws and practices, restrictions on the transfer of land to non-tribals, provision for direct intervention of the union government in administrative matters and the welfare of scheduled tribes, the region of Santal Pargana lies within the 5th Schedule areas.

Historically, Santal Pargana came into prominence due to the Santal 'Hul' (rebellion) of 1855. The reasons for this uprising were extreme oppression caused by rack renting, usury and the migration of more resourceful non-tribal 'Dikus' into the region with the introduction of Permanent Settlement. The following year, Santal Pargana was carved out as a separate district, thus establishing direct colonial rule in the region. While the overt purpose was to establish peace and good government by granting the rebellious Santals several legal and social safeguards, the underlying desire was to consolidate colonial control for exploiting the natural resources of the area (Choudhury: 1965).

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1. The demand for a separate Jharkhand state was first raised by the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj. In 1928, a delegation from this organisation put forward the demand for an autonomous state to the Simon Commission. For the next seventy two years this demand was kept alive by various political units and regional parties and received wide public support. The original demand included the adjoining tribal portions of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh also. However, present day Jharkhand consists only of the 18 southern districts of Bihar.

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Today, Santal Pargana covers the north-eastern part of Jharkhand including the six districts of Sahibganj, Pakur, Dumka, Deogarh, Jamtara and Godda. Unfortunately, it remains one of the poorest and least developed regions of Jharkhand. Within Santal Pargana, poverty is widespread amongst the tribal groups, most of who reside in rural areas. The condition of the primitive tribal groups, who live primarily in the hilly regions, is the worst amongst them.

The predominant tribal community in the Santal Pargana region consists of the Santals. This area is also home to the Pahariyas<sup>2</sup> (a primitive tribe), Sadan<sup>3</sup> communities (Khatauri, Ghatwal etc.), and, Marwaris, Biharis and Bengalis who have migrated into the region at various points in history (Singh: 2000). Despite being a large community, most Santals continue to live a life of poverty and misery. Agriculture is the mainstay for the majority. Marginal holdings, poor quality of land and lack of irrigation facilities are some reasons that make it a subsistence occupation. Seasonal food shortages affect most families. While traditional mechanisms for coping with hunger included gathering of edible forest products from the fields and forests, deforestation and widespread land erosion has ensured that this mechanism is nonexistent for many. Chronic indebtedness to moneylenders or traders is a reality. The community has a history of migration as indentured labour, since the early nineteenth century which was later replaced by voluntary migration in search of alternative livelihoods. In the absence of skills and education Santals find low paid employment in brick kilns, railways and road construction projects or as industrial and agricultural labour in other regions of India (Chaudhury: 1965).

As per Article 342 of the Indian Constitution, Santals are classified as a Scheduled Tribe. This entitles them to several Constitutional safeguards - social, cultural, economic and educational such as reservations in public service and educational institutions. In the development strategy, special attention has been given to tribal development. The creation of multipurpose tribal development blocks, Modified Area Approach and the Tribal-Sub Plan approach are instances of such planned efforts. An increasing amount of separate resources and a special administrative structure has been created to facilitate this process. Commissions (like the Dhebar Commission and Shil Ao Committee) have been set up periodically to review the progress of tribal development in the country (Kumar and Jha ed: 2001).

Despite these measures, over time social transformation amongst tribals has

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2 Pahariya: A dwindling primitive tribe, the Pahariyas have the distinction of being the original inhabitants of Santal Pargana. They live primarily in the hills where the resource base is steadily declining. As a result it also happens to be the poorest and most vulnerable community in the region.

3 Sadan communities: non-tribal communities who share many of the socio-economic and cultural features of tribal communities in this region.

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got equated with a few schemes for infrastructure building and so called economic development. Even these schemes are equated with financial provision and expenditure. Increasingly bureaucrats, policy makers and contractors have taken up the implementation of these policies while target communities have got more and more excluded. Many of these policies and programmes are poorly and partially implemented and have failed to reach the most marginalized.

The state's dual policy of protectionism and isolation of tribals on the one hand and its' policy of top down socio-economic development has provided opportunities to only a section of the Santals who constitute the present day tribal elite (Prakash: 2001). On the other hand, ordinary Santals continue to face exploitation at the hands of the state and at the expense of the more resourceful: whether it is the outsiders or the tribal elite, many of whom operate as money-lenders or contractors.

Since the early nineteenth century, the church has played a significant role in bringing western education and a 'civilizing influence' amongst the tribals of Jharkhand. Although the influence of the church in Santal Pargana is not as widespread as in the southern Chotanagpur region of the state, Protestant churches such as the German Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church and the Plymouth Brethren (Prakash: 2001) have played an important role in bringing education, health and other social services to this population. The Catholic Church has also contributed to this endeavour, though later. The relatively better socio-economic condition of Christian tribals is a vital pointer to this fact.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a predominantly tribal political party involved in the movement for a separate Jharkhand was another organization that played an active role in the people's development in Santal Pargana. During the 1960s and 1970s, it used measures for agrarian and social reform such as movements against alcoholism, illiteracy, land alienation of tribals, setting up of grain banks etc., to strengthen its political base in the area (Singh: 1982).

Since the early 1980s, voluntary development organizations focusing on participatory ideologies have begun playing a significant role in activating marginalized groups like the Santals. In contrast to the conventional top-down mode of development, these organizations have focused on promoting participatory development strategies and the creation of people's organizations.

The creation of Jharkhand has raised expectations about development

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amongst its' long suffering masses, especially the Santals. This, in turn has prompted a contest for the state's limited developmental resources where people are attempting to use various constitutional spaces provided to them to legitimize their access to these resources on a priority basis.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The broad objective of the study is to explore the understanding and experience of the Santals, residing in Santal Pargana, Jharkhand, about their citizenship. The specific objectives of the study are:

- Multiple meanings the notion of citizenship has for Santals.
- Multiple identities, which are associated with these meanings.
- Institutional arrangement influencing the meaning of citizenship.
- The inclusion and exclusion of Santals in matters related to governance, taking meanings and identities of citizenship as the starting point.
- Impact of their understanding and experience on social and political participation in matters related to governance.

### ***Conceptual Framework of the Study***<sup>4</sup>

The study conceptualizes citizenship as a multidimensional experience of people - it is legal-constitutional-political, but at the same time, it is also social and cultural. That is, being recognized as citizens of India gives Santals a legal/political status or identity, but there are also identities that emanate from their being rooted in a particular physical/geographical space, in a certain kind of community, in certain kinds of social arrangements. People thus view their citizenship in many ways and associate various meanings to it. Some times these meanings are complementary, sometimes they are conflicting.

The disadvantaged or subaltern is not a homogenous category - there is both horizontal and vertical stratification amongst them. This stratification gives rise to their differential placement with relation to economic resources, social standing, inter and intra-community relationships and their relationship with the state institutions.

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Active citizenship in matters of governance is based on the subalterns' ability to articulate their needs, concerns and rights. This articulation forms the basis of claim making by the disadvantaged.

Both the state and civil society institutions mediate active citizenship, especially in the case of the disadvantaged. State institutions refer to institutions carrying out the executive, legislative and judicial functions of the state. These include the institutions responsible for formulating the policies and laws, the institutions implementing them and the institutions protecting the policies, laws and rights. Civil society institutions, which play a significant intermediary role in the study area, include the church and development NGOs.

### ***Scope of the Study***

This study was undertaken in seven villages in the district of Dumka, Santal Pargana. Dumka, once the headquarters of the erstwhile district of Santal Pargana, has a large Santal population. The area has a history of social mobilization for the rights of the Santals and thus offered an interesting site for intensive exploration of the citizenship issues. Officials of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and functionaries of the Agrarian Assistance Association (AAA), an NGO working for the upliftment of the Santal and Pahariya tribes in the area for the last thirteen years helped the research team gain access to the community. The villages covered by the study included both AAA intervention areas and non-intervention areas.

### ***Nature and Approach of Research***<sup>5</sup>

The broad approach underpinning the present study is that of participatory research. Herein emphasis is on doing research 'with' people rather than 'on' or 'for' people, with the purpose of undertaking/promoting action or intervention in the future. This is based on an understanding that each individual is capable of critical reflection and analysis and this knowledge is both essential and valuable in any research, educational or developmental intervention. As such, knowledge is generated through a process of collective investigation and analysis and there is a deliberate attempt to promote future action.

The focus is on understanding the issue of citizenship from the vantage

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<sup>5</sup> Based on a presentation at the DRC Workshop on Methodology for Citizenship Studies, New Delhi: February 2002.

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point of the Santals in an intensive and actor centered mode. An effort is made to elicit the community's views about themselves as citizens and their relationship with the state, as well as to understand the issue as they experience and express it. As the concept of citizenship is abstract to the Santal community, issues like livelihood, education, health facilities, infrastructure, law and justice, land tenancy, migration etc., help to provide an entry point for discussions and dialogue.

In view of this approach the process of data collection has involved three kinds of respondents. This includes 'invisible' members of the community and 'articulate' community members\leaders (both formal and informal). 'Invisible' members of the community are those members who have limited exposure to life outside the village and play a limited role at the community level. Articulate community members are those who have been exposed to a way of life that is different from village life, have had some form of sustained interaction with the state, have a larger community role and are able to express themselves in a lucid manner. The third kind of respondents includes NGO functionaries, government officials, academics and advocates having extensive knowledge of the region and the people.

While the invisible group provided experiential evidence of citizenship issues, the articulate community leaders helped to explore these issues further and clarify issues raised by the first group. The third group helped in understanding the larger debates on citizenship (of the Santals in particular), provided responses, points of further exploration and also helped to understand the variations between citizenship as experienced by the community and as articulated by those in positions of influence.

There was an effort to capture the Santals' experience of citizenship in its cognitive and affective dimensions. Hence the perceptions, expectations and feelings of the community members in relation to any particular identity as citizens were as important as the events and circumstances or experiences, which prompted them.

Within the broad framework of participatory research, a number of methods were used for data collection. This included observation, transect walk, group discussions, dialogue, semi-structured interviews, oral history and a review of secondary literature.

## **Section 2**

# **Key Findings**

### *Voices and Experiences of Citizenship*

The study explores the understanding, articulation and identities of citizenship amongst the Santals within the legal-political, socio-economic or developmental and cultural contexts. While there are strands that connect, overlap and influence the different dimensions, each of these contexts shape the Santals' experiences of citizenship in a distinctive manner.

### *Political Citizenship*

Santals relate strongly to the constitutional identity as Scheduled Tribes (ST). Though many of them may not know the term ST, they are aware that as *adivasis* the government has created special provisions for their protection, promotion and upliftment. For example they are aware that seats are reserved for them in the state assemblies, institutions of higher education and in government jobs. They are also aware that the state creates special development programmes for the socio-economic betterment of the tribal community.

For the Santals citizenship is intimately linked with their constitutional right to vote. Their close and continuous contact with the Jharkhand movement has familiarized them with the use of electoral politics for articulating and claiming their citizenship rights. Although the Santals express disillusionment with the present political leadership, its' unfulfilled promises and the short term gains of drink(liquor) and money at the time of elections, there is an underlying understanding that elections are a mechanism to voice people's concerns and influence decision making.

*"If we do not vote someone else will take our 'party'. We vote because we will get more schemes for development and jobs. We give the party our vote but they do not keep their promises."*

*We boycotted the last election. Every time we cast our vote and made them our leaders ('neta') but they did not give us anything, there was no change in our lives. We were so fed up that we decided not to vote."*

*We support Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. After all they fought for a free Jharkhand all these years.*

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The Santals also express a strong sense of belonging to 'Jharkhand'. They attribute the creation of Jharkhand to the long struggle led by a Santal leader, Shibu Soren and his political party, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. This has also reinforced their sense of ownership towards the new state. To them Jharkhand not only represents *their own* separate political and geographical territory but also a symbolic space where they are able to exercise their right to the control and use of natural, and developmental resources provided by the state. Underlying this is a hope that the creation of a separate politico-administrative territory will allow state resources to be used for the *development of the people living in this region rather than mere exploitation of its mineral and natural wealth for national development at the expense of the local populace.*

The *keenness to contest* local government elections<sup>6</sup> indicates a desire for widening participation on issues of local governance amongst the more aware, better exposed and educated Santals. The emerging strata of local leadership includes traditional village leaders, volunteers involved in the state supported literacy campaign (*Saksharta Abhiyan*), field workers and volunteers of development NGOs and active members of the church. While the power bases of these leaders are different, their main emphasis is on assisting *people to get access to government schemes*. Not to be left behind, contractors and middlemen are also *mobilizing Santal candidates*<sup>7</sup> for the elections in a bid to retain their legitimacy and existing control over development resources.

Amongst state officials there appears to be widespread skepticism regarding the effectiveness of Panchayats, under laid by a resistance to power sharing with the same. NGOs and activists are divided on this issue. Those in favour view it as the basis of people centered development while those opposing it argue that it is contradictory to the consensual form of tribal self-governance. However, at the community level, people *clearly distinguish* between the traditional system that is currently used for resolving petty and social disputes and religious matters while the constitutional Panchayat (which will be constituted only after local government elections are held) as a means of accessing development resources.

To the Santals in Agrarian Assistance Association's (AAA), intervention area citizenship means *making decisions that affect their daily living*. Amongst others, this includes collective decisions over a variety of matters such as the

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6 Jharkhand is the only province that is yet to hold local government elections as mandated by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment (1993) and its extension to Scheduled Areas vide Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA), 1996. In view of this, the Jharkhand government had strongly indicated that local government elections were likely to be scheduled around June 2002. This data pertains to this period. However, since then the government has continued to postpone the elections under various pretexts.

7 According to the PESA, the seats of Panchayat Mukhiyas (head) are to be reserved for STs.

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creation and use of development infrastructure within the village, decisions regarding cropping patterns, gaining access to state initiated development schemes, prevention of exploitation by moneylenders or middlemen or finding a solution to social and marital problems. This is accomplished through a three tier federated system of tribal self-governance that combines positive aspects of the traditional form of governance (For details see annexure II) with the newer elements as envisaged by the constitutional panchayat system. It consists of the village level Gram Sabha and Sakhi Sabha (women's assembly), intermediary level Kshetriya Sabha and district level Zilla Sabha. These institutions not only provide a forum for collective decision making but also institutional structures that can negotiate and hold accountable the more powerful government institutions at the block level. Supported by AAA these people's institutions have managed to regularize the functioning of the government primary schools and primary health centers and reduce the influence of middlemen and contractors in the programme villages.

### **Institutional Strengthening**

AAA mobilizes the community to form Gram Sabhas, which consists of all adult male and female members of the community. All female members also form a separate Sakhi Sabha or a women's Gram Sabha that deals specifically with women's issues and rights.

One male and one female representative elected from the above village level organisation together with the traditional village head form a regional federation known as the Kshetriya Sabha. Similarly selected representatives of the village level Sakhi Sabha constitute a Kshetriya Sakhi Sabha.

One elected male and female representative from each of these Kshetriya Sabhas constitutes the district level Zilla Sabhas. There is a parallel structure for the Sakhi Sabha as well.

At each level, these people's organisations focus on the social and economic issues of the Santals including keeping track of government policies and programme implementations that have a bearing on their lives.

*Source: AAA Annual Report, 2000-2001.*

*Interviews: May, 2002*

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### *Cultural Citizenship*

Cultural and religious factors also contribute significantly to influencing ideas about citizenship. While some of these dimensions deal with variations in the idea of personhood amongst the Santals, some focus on how these factors influence the interactions between the Santals and other communities they are in contact with.

There exists a great deal of religious diversity within Santal society. Santals can broadly be grouped into Christian Santals, Hindu Santals and Bedins

<b>Similarities and Differences between Bedins and Christian Santals</b>	
<b>Bedin</b>	<b>Chrisitan</b>
Main festivals- Magh, Baha, Erok, Janthar, Hariyar and Bandhna. These festivals coincide with various stages of the agricultural cycle.	Christmas, Easter, No participation in Bedin festivals.
Belief System Benevolent spirits (like Marang Buru, Moreko, Turui Ko, Jaher Era) and malevolent spirits and witches or dains.	Jesus
Place of worship-Jaher than (sacred grove), manjhi than ( place of worship of the village head)	Church, home (with the Cross, a photograph of Jesus and Mary). In some Christian denominations there are no photographs or idols.
Story of beginning- Pilchu Haram Pilchu Buri (Santals believe that they originated from this couple and their seven children.)	Pilchu Haram Pilchu Buri
Ceremonial use of liquor and animal sacrifice.	Wine, no animal sacrifice, Pentecostals do not drink alcohol.
Life ceremonies- nimdak mandi (naming ceremony), chacchu chattier (initiation into adulthood), bapla (12 kinds of marriage), bhandan (post funeral ceremonies). Death by burning, belief in telpatta (forecasting) dain (witches), animal sacrifice.	Baptism or naming, wedding (exchange of vows or rings), in some areas the practice of bride price continues, the raybar is replaced by the priest, death by burial. No belief in dain, animal sacrifice or telpatta.
System of naming- children are named according to paternal and maternal grandparents.	Grandparents names are used, Christian names are also given.
Law - Santal law is used to sort village level disputes, marital and social problems, inheritance issues, petty disputes and in religious matters.	Santal laws for village level disputes, Santal and Christian customs in marriage and divorce.
Social taboos present - like women do not touch ploughs or tile the roof etc.	Social taboos present - like women do not touch ploughs or tile the roof etc.

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(followers of the tribal religion).<sup>8</sup> Christian Santals can be further sub divided into groups like Roman Catholics, the Santal Mission of Northern Church, North Eastern Lutheran Church, Seventh Day Adventist and Pentecostals while Hindu Santals include Sapha Hors, Satsangis, Purkha Babas etc.

Although the Bedin belief system has a lot in common with Hinduism and Christianity, the followers of this system find themselves questioned and ridiculed both by non-Santals and non-Bedins alike. As a result Bedins often get labeled as 'backward' or '*junglee*' (wild). In turn, this is translated into a low sense of self worth and a feeling of inferiority. *Self-esteem tends to suffer most when economic deprivations overlap with these cultural meanings.* Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance together with the belief in witchcraft and spirits combine to perpetuate the stereotypical picture of a backward tribal who is alienated from present day reality.

In contrast, Hindu Santals who follow vegetarianism, teetotalism and various forms of brahmin rituals are accorded a higher status and find more acceptance. Similarly Christianity provides acceptance and the comfort of a collective identity where the concept of equal dignity based on theological grounds (the Christian belief that everyone is created in the image of God) is emphasized. Added to this, increased access to education and health facilities, life education and stress on the habit of monetary savings places Christian Santals in a relatively privileged position.

The reason for taking to Christianity is more because of the associated value of obtaining subsidized education, health care or jobs. *The Santals tend to use the existing fragmentation and competition between different Christian denominations in order to get their basic developmental needs fulfilled to the maximum extent possible.*

At one level the tribal belief system is increasingly being replaced by newer belief systems reinforced with a new set of rituals, symbols and practices. At another level Santali language, often regarded as the vanguard of Santali culture, together with traditional Santal practices relating to marriage, divorce and the settlement of petty disputes tend to provide continuity in this state of flux.

There exists a disjuncture between the way Santals view themselves as people or 'Hor' and the stereotypical images of Santals as 'benevolent savages' (Archer, 1984) that continues to persist, albeit to a lesser extent, in society. Roots of this stereotype can be traced to the colonial "western

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<sup>8</sup> Some Santals have also embraced Islam, a fact that is corroborated by the Census data. However, as evidence of this existed outside the study area this has not been dealt with in depth in the study.

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rationalist" discourse. In the colonial context, the image of an isolated, backward tribal at the mercy of hostile economic forces resulted in the consequent creation of a tribal-non tribal boundary. This was essential for legitimizing the colonial presence and their policy towards tribal areas, with the underlying aim of furthering colonial economic interests. In part, the continuities between the patronising attitudes and policies of protective isolation of the British government and the Indian state cause these stereotypes to persist. The impact of such an image is also evident in the indifference and lack of respect shown to ordinary Santals by government officials and institutions, amongst others.

*"You outsiders are only interested in showing us as naked tribals who dance. Leave us alone. At the time of our ancestors we ate in leaf plates, today the government has installed tube wells and dug wells. We are better off. We don't want anything more".*

Source: Interviews, May 2002

There is a visible *lessening of animosity between Santals and non-tribal settlers or Dikus*, especially in AAA intervention areas. This can be discerned from the changing connotations of the word 'Diku'. In the pre-Independence period 'Diku' was infused with the connotation of 'outsider-exploiter'. This meaning emerged in the context of economic and social exploitation suffered at the hands of resourceful non-tribals operating as moneylenders, traders and landlords. Today, this meaning is being increasingly replaced by a more *neutral cultural connotation* to refer to people of a different ethnicity who can be delineated by means of a separate language, physical features and socio-cultural habits. There is also no sense of fear or oppression associated with the term. This change can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, migration, education and the interventions of the development NGOs and the church have provided multiple forums of continuous interaction with non-tribals, many of which have been positive. Second, it is a reflection of the demographic reality in Jharkhand where tribals no longer constitute a majority. Third, similar economic stratification between both Santals and non-tribals has removed the image of a resourceful non-tribal exploiter. Fourth, the Santal elite, on account of being educated, employed or moneyed relate easily to non-tribals with a similar socio-economic status.

### Meanings of Diku

- The difference between a Santal and a Diku is cultural - language, customs, surname - way of greeting - for Santal men or the tattoos for a Santal woman. It is not possible to distinguish a Santal from a Diku

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when both are educated and have been to college. They dress similarly and have the same manners. 'Hor'- (human being) Santal is like a caste group.

- Those who do not know the Santal language. Their identity, lifestyle, facial features and colour (lighter skinned) are different from Santals. We are Santal- *Hor Kanali*.
- We do not face discrimination as Dikus speak to us in Santali. However, we do not make them our friends easily. We like to keep within ourselves. We are not afraid of them anymore.
- Those apart from Pahariya, Bhuriya and Adivasis.
- In the time of our grandmothers we (Santals) used to be scared of Dikus. We have heard stories of Dikus stopping their trucks when they saw Santal girls. Now it is no longer true. Initially when we saw AAA workers we did not come out. Today we are friends.
- Other' outsiders (migrants). 'Bhojpurias'(people from North Bihar)
- We generally do not face discrimination as a Santal from outsiders. However, educated Santals do not wish to recognise or talk to non-educated Santals. They prefer to associate with the 'general' (caste).
- When women marry Dikus their children also become Dikus.

Source: Interviews Nov 2000, February 2001, April 2001

## Development and Citizenship

A crucial issue facing Santals today is that of socio-economic deprivation and marginalization.

A lack of secure livelihoods is the major development issue confronting the Santals at present. The dependence on subsistence agriculture, the pressure on land and the lack of alternative economic opportunities prompts massive seasonal agricultural migration to adjoining West Bengal and long term migration of unskilled labour to urban/ industrial sites all over India. At another level, the lack of livelihood security often results in chronic indebtedness to moneylenders or traders. Indebtedness causes the Santals to lose their land and other assets. In turn, this leads to their gradual pauperization.

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The *Dhan Katia* movement of the 1960s and 1970s (a movement to restore alienated land to the Santals through forcible harvesting of crops), NGO efforts to restore alienated land through legal means (in intervention areas), increased awareness amongst the Santals together with the existence of protective provisions such as the Santal Pargana Tenancy Act (SPTA) of 1949<sup>9</sup> has managed to partly restrict the alienation of tribal land by non-tribals. However, "*tribal moneylenders*" belonging to the relatively affluent section of Santal society are gradually replacing non-tribal moneylenders in some areas. Herein, a number of different tenancy and leasing arrangements for mortgaging land like *miyadh*, *kut*, *bhag* etc. for money are common (Rao, 1999). However, while the relationship with the non-tribal moneylender was perceived as being exploitative, the *same arrangement with a tribal moneylender was not perceived to be exploitative.*

### Tenancy and Leasing Arrangements for Mortgaging Land

*Mortgage of land in return for loans:* Known as *miyadh*, this is the most common form of land transfer found in the area.

*Leasing land on a fixed cash rent (kut):* In this the owner, if a Santal, virtually loses control over the land in return for a fixed sum of money per season. At present, the rate varies from Rs. 300-900 per bigha per year, depending upon the quality and size of the field.

*Sharecropping (bhag):* In this system, the owner of the land (lessor) and the tiller (lessee) share the costs of production and the produce equally. The tiller contributes the labour. However, it is being replaced by the *miyadh* system in recent years.

*Leasing on fixed rent in kind:* Depending on the relationship between the owner and the tiller, this can work both in an exploitative and non-exploitative manner. In general, the owner of the plot is given a fixed amount in kind (*paddy*) while the lessee tills the land and takes the rest of the produce.

Source: Interviews February, April May 2002; Rao N., 2000

9 According to the SPTA tribal land in the santal parganas is a non-transferable among the tribals and/or with non-tribals and outsiders. This is based on regulation III of 1972, which prevents the transfer of land "by way of sale, gift, mortgage, lease, exchange or an other contract or agreement" and includes transfer of holding by way of "an exchange"

10 The Ghar Jamai system is a traditional Santal system of inheritance in families where there are no male children. In general, ancestral land is passed from father to son/s in the Santal community. In case there is no son, the father can choose to keep a Ghar jamai (house husband) for his daughter who then becomes the father in law's legal heir. This is decided at the time of marriage itself by means of a community announcement and acceptance. The rituals followed in this form of marriage are also different from those in the non-Char jamai form of marriage. A Ghar jamai is expected to live in his wife's house and give up all claims to his patriarchal property (Besra, 1995).

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Within Santal society, old women, widows and Ghar jamais<sup>10</sup> are the most vulnerable to forcible eviction from the land by their own kin and the members of their own community. Santal law does not permit women to inherit land. This combines with the subordinate position of women in Santal society to deprive them of their land. Widows are also evicted under the garb of being "witches". According to Santal law, men married in the Ghar jamai form are entitled to ancestral land belonging to their father in law. This is based on the understanding that in the absence of sons they represent their wife's interest in ancestral land. However, the claims of the Ghar jamais are bitterly and often violently contested by the male agnates of the girl.

There are three primary institutions engaged in providing development services. These include the state, development NGOs and the church. Each of these highlights certain identities and defines the Santals' inclusion and exclusion in matters of development differently.

In the context of state sponsored development, Santals experience a duality. On one hand they find themselves enveloped with a proliferation of state-sponsored schemes of socio-economic development. On the other hand they find themselves alienated and exploited by these state institutions, especially in the context of law and justice.

The state runs a number of programmes for the socio-economic betterment of the Santals such as anganwadis or pre-schools, schools, old age pension schemes, polio campaigns, primary health services, provision of ration cards and red ( BPL) card, loan schemes, roads and culverts, tube wells and dug wells, housing for the homeless etc. In this context people strongly identify themselves as the beneficiaries and dependents of government programmes. Herein the state is largely seen as a provider and giver whose duty is to look after the people.

Limited percolation of state sponsored development efforts, along with education and employment have contributed to the formation of a relatively affluent and influential Santal elite. However, a majority of the people express difficulty in asserting their rights to the state's development resources in the face of a politicised, weak, irregular, corrupt and delayed delivery system. A lack of information about the programmes, embedded corruption, the presence of middlemen and the physical distance from the block have also contributed to the sense of animosity, resignation and helplessness amongst people.

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In the context of law and justice, ordinary Santals find themselves completely estranged from the institutions of the judiciary and the police. According to them the judiciary is expensive, complicated and time consuming. Instead of being viewed as a forum for justice, it is viewed as an instrument of deprivation that is frequently used by the rich and powerful to deprive the poor of their meager assets, especially land. Similarly the police are not associated with maintenance of law and order; rather they are viewed as instruments of state coercion, which 'locks up' poor people for the smallest offence.

In the case of natural resources like forests, the existence of archaic, colonial laws, which are in conflict with more progressive and people friendly policies, deny the Santals in villages in the forests from accessing forest produce. While the timber contractors in active connivance with forest officials engage in unrestricted felling of timber, the subsistence needs of local communities remain unmet.

### **Whom do the Forests belong to? A Legal View**

The Indian Forest Act 1927 and its provincial counterpart the Bihar Forest Act seek to establish government control over forests. Herein, all rights to forests are intermediated by the Forest Settlement Officer.

The Wildlife Protection Act and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 tend to establish nature as the major stakeholder in this conflict. This view advocates an attitude of respect and care towards nature. This view supports state control over forests.

The National Forest Policy of 1988 emphasizes that individual and community interests have priority in the management of forests. This is supported by a central government circular on Joint Forest Management in 1990, which says that local communities should be involved in the management of forests. This can be ensured by providing minor forest produce as well as benefits that would accrue to harvested timber through the formation of Village Forest Committees (VFCs) by the District Forest Officer (DFO). This view is validated by the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993 and its extension of Schedule V areas via Panchayat Extension to Schedule Areas Act (PESA) in 1996, which makes local communities primary owners of locally available natural resources.

## **Meanings and Identities of Citizenship**

Peoples' aspirations in a new state revolve around overall development including jobs, food security, irrigation and other inputs to improve agriculture, access to health, education and government schemes and improved infrastructure. The impact of the creation of the new state was not found to be uniform. While some immediate positive outcomes like the regular attendance of primary school teachers (they have been granted postings in their home blocks), access roads to villages, digging of ponds and wells and increased wage employment opportunities for villages near Dumka had generated hopes for some, most people including those living in remote villages continued to remain untouched by these new developments. Overall, the Santals are adopting a cautious 'wait and watch' attitude towards the long-term changes that are yet to be brought about by the new government.

In the context of NGO intervention there is an attempt to a bottom-up and participatory mode of development by collectively involving the community in prioritizing its needs, planning, implementing, monitoring and sharing part of the investment in all development programmes. Herein, there is an effort to create *an inclusive community based on collective functioning*.

### **Forms of Support Provided by AAA**

#### **Fulfilling Socio-economic Needs**

Programmes for socio-economic development centre on the fulfillment of basic needs and immediate concerns of the community. Traditional multi-cropping practices together with land and water management, provision of agricultural and consumption credit support, technical assistance and training support for aquaculture, agriculture, forest regeneration etc., are provided.

#### **Service Support**

Service support includes the setting up of non-formal education centers, legal support for victims of land alienation and witch hunting as well as relief support at times of emergencies (such as destruction caused by wild elephants).

#### **Public Education Campaigns**

Public education campaigns against practices such as witch hunting, child labour, tribal land alienation; gender issues and Santal women's right to property are carried out from time to time.

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### Advocacy Support

Advocacy efforts center around public protest measures aimed at the proper implementation of existing policy provisions by the district authorities, the demand of right to information, highlighting corrupt practices and the creation of health and education services in remote areas.

*Source: Fieldwork, December 2001, February, April, May 2002*

In addition to state and NGO interventions in development, the church is involved in running schools and health services, especially in remote areas. While these services are open to all, they are provided at a subsidized cost to Christians. Santals, irrespective of their religious following have due regard for these institutions.

*"All schools and hospitals run by missions are good. Those who work in missions are honest. People come from far to avail of these services. They do not ask for bribes ("percentage or PC") like the block. Mission people speak 'Saheb Boli'. When they say yes, it is yes and when it is no, they do not change their minds."*

*Source: Interviews, March 2002*

### Emerging Claims: Competing for Access to Development Resources

The creation of Jharkhand with the associated expectation of access to increased development resources has led to the emergence of a number of contestations and conflicts. These contestations are seen at three levels. First, conflicts amongst members of the marginalized community. Second, the emerging contests between the various communities residing in the region. Third, the emerging tensions between the state and dominant groups on one side and the marginalized group on the other.

### Christian vis a vis Non-Christian Santals

Following the creation of Jharkhand, the differences between Christian and non-Christian Santals has been highlighted. In fact, there has been a politically supported move to project that Christians are non-Santal and hence have no legitimate claim over the state's protective provisions for Scheduled Tribes. This is linked to the state's reservation policy for STs, which entitles them to concessions and reservations in public sector jobs and educational institutions. Underlying this move is a fear that Christian Santals, on account of greater access to education will become major beneficiaries of the reservation policy depriving the rest of the community.

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### Pahariyas vis a vis Santals

In the new state, educated Pahariyas are attempting to mobilize the community with an aim to secure resources for the community's development from the state. This is driven by a fear that owing to their small and gradually dwindling numbers, the development interests of the Pahariyas will be marginalized and overwhelmed by the Santals who form the major tribal group in the area. The factors being used to create a sense of community amongst the Pahariyas are similar to those used during the Jharkhand movement. These include glorifying aspects of their past, establishing geographical belongingness as the 'oldest residents' of Santal Pargana, establishing their socio-cultural distinctiveness with the Santals, while highlighting their historical marginalization<sup>11</sup> at the hands of the Santals.

*Now that the Santals have got their Jharkhand, there might come a time when they stop us from taking wood or datun from the forest. As in history they may say everything is ours and force us from our land. Our voice also needs to be heard. We want a separate party who will represent us in the government.*

*Santals are Adivasis. We are Yugoasis.*

*Why so they call this area Santal Pargana. It is not only the land of the Santals. It should be called Aranyanchal (forest land). That is more neutral."*

Source: Interviews February 2002

### Local vs. National interests

In the wake of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment and its extension to the scheduled areas (PESA 1996) the residents of 150 villages bordering Dumka and Pakur districts, with support from certain members of the church, have been mobilized to form gram sabhas (village assemblies) and assert their rights over local resources. The point of contest involves the attempts by the state to bring a local coal mine under state control. This mine is the main source of livelihood for the local population for most of the year.

### Peoples' Argument

*"If there is coal or even gold under the city of Calcutta (any large metropolis), would the government remove the people from the area and excavate? Why was it that only when poor tribals are involved that they are asked to give up their land?"*

11 The Ghar Jamai system is a Pahariyas are the oldest residents of Santal Pargana. As such they were the principal occupants of Santal Pargana when the Santals entered the area in the early eighteenth century. One school of thought says that Santals migrated into this area from Singhbhum (southern Jharkhand). The colonists were also instrumental in encouraging large numbers of Santals from the adjoining Birbhum district of West Bengal to settle here. Underlying this was the Santal skill in clearing forests and practicing agriculture. Fierce battles with the Pahariya residents of the area ensued. Beaten by the Santals, the Pahariyas were forced to seek refuge in the hills where they have remained till date (Choudhury)

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*Every time we are told that we will be given jobs and compensation but we have seen what is left of Lalmatia and what will happen to our land if we give it up. When the US asked India to give up Nagaland, Indira refused. Today we are also refusing to give up our land."*

Source: Interviews April 2002

The key issue raised by the marginalized local communities, who have no alternative source of livelihood is: Whose development and at whose cost? Herein, the efficacy of development policies that seek to protect the interests of the powerful at the cost of the poor and powerless communities is being questioned. At the same time the unfulfilled promises of the state and improper implementation of rehabilitation policies for the displaced is also hinted at. However, assertion of the rights of the local communities over *priority use of local resources for their development* brings them in *direct conflict with the interests of the larger community or the claims of those citizens who are at a distance from these resources*. It also highlights the tension involved when the state tries to reconcile the competing claims of different interest groups and the trade offs that are involved in this process.

### Section 3 Emerging Issues

The Santals voices and experiences are manifestations of some critical emerging issues, a deeper analysis of which will lead to action points for making their rights real. These can be broadly categorized as meanings and identities of citizenship, institutions and access to opportunities and resources.

#### *Meanings and Identities of Citizenship*

The Santals express a multi-dimensional understanding of citizenship that includes the political, cultural and developmental (socio-economic) dimensions. This understanding is associated with multiple identities in each context.

In all three contexts viz. political, cultural and development, identity politics amongst the Santals revolves around the *access to development resources of the state*. This is rooted in the recognition that since independence, the *state* has

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and continues to *play a major role in the socio-economic development of the people*. In the political context of a new state, the creation of a separate politico-legal territory is seen as a mechanism for the effective implementation of the development policy. In the cultural context, the stereotypical image of 'backwardness' attached to a tribal can be traced to the colonial policy vis a vis the region and its people. At present, the poor economic condition of the Santals and in particular the Bedins overlap with the image of 'backwardness' to further marginalization. Access to developmental resources thus becomes essential for improving the daily lives of the Santals and overcoming this given label. In relation to Christianity, the Santals negotiate their denominational and religious identities to make the best possible bargain in terms of access to education, health, employment and a better standard of living. In the context of development, the aspirations of the Santals in a new state are a clear pointer to the developmental goals of the population.

The meaning of citizenship is derived from the daily lives, experiences, interactions and aspirations of ordinary people. In socio-economic terms, ordinary Santals are *marginalized citizens* as is evident from their daily experiences of widespread poverty, lack of economic opportunities, chronic indebtedness, and the loss of control over livelihood resources, injustice suffered in court, police coercion or corruption in government service delivery. Their experience of citizenship highlights the *gap between the formally ascribed rights as granted by the Constitution and the way they are actually experienced* by the disadvantaged community. However, for the Santal elite the degree of marginalization is much less, mainly because of their increased access to socio-economic resources for their development.

Identities are formed in a certain context and *those become powerful when they have the maximum potential for fulfilling the claims that arise in that context*. Similarly, *hierarchy of citizenship rights* (political, socio-economic and cultural) is *determined by the potential of particular citizenship rights to fulfill the immediate needs of the marginalized community*. In the period before the creation of the new state, the goal was the creation of a separate politico-legal space within the nation state. Therefore the identity that was projected was a *regional one* based on the economic exploitation of the people of Jharkhand. There was a belief that a separate political space was the only way to achieve effective implementation of the development policy for this region. Hence, the focus was on securing some level of *political autonomy*. Post-state formation, this has given way to *splintered claims* by the constituent interest groups like non-Christian Santals, Pahariyas etc. In this period the securing

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of *socio-economic rights* for ensuring a better standard of living for the ordinary people has become the primary aim.

Citizenship is linked to the experience of multiple identities. Though distinct, *multiple identities influence each other, especially in terms of determining the inclusion or exclusion of Santals in matters of governance*. When economically marginalized Bedins try and access state welfare schemes they are treated with disrespect and often turned away contemptuously or are regarded patronisingly, at the individual and group level. Herein, the overlap between cultural stereotypes about the Santals and their economic exclusion is responsible for creating distance between government institutions and the citizen. At another level, frustrated by the attempts to access basic services from the state, some convert to that denomination of Christianity that is most 'profitable' in terms of access to such services. Similarly, Santal traditional law prevents a Santal woman from asserting her right to landed property even if she is deserted or thrown out of her marital home by her husband. Here, social marginalization is rooted in gender related reasons. Also the woman's cultural identity as a Santal who is governed by traditional law prevents her from the right to inheritance.

Citizenship is not just about individual rights. It is also about *community rights* as defined by *inter-community and intra-community relations as they evolve historically*. These relations are dynamic and are continuously defined and redefined by the twin processes of defining self-identity and defining the identity of the 'other'. Amongst other reasons, differences in belief systems and economy have been responsible for creating several smaller communities within the larger Santal community. Though religion has been an underlying factor in Jharkhand politics for a long time, this has become the basis of claim making in the new context. This is evident in the contest for resources between Christian and non-Christian Santals.

Citizenship is a *dynamic process*, which can be understood as a continuum of identities that are created, crystallised, subsumed or dissolved and redefined over a period of time according to the changing context.

*Crystallization of new identities is linked to the use of new symbols, rituals and lifestyles*. marginalized groups use elements such as socio-cultural distinctiveness, distinctive history, belongingness to a geographical area and the history of marginalization for crystallizing their distinctive identity such that they can assert themselves politically. This is evident in the nascent forms of mobilization taking place within the dwindling Pahariya community in the new state.

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In multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities, *hardening of identities* and the resultant social fractures *take place when ethnic divides correspond with causes of marginalization* (economic, social, or political). When different forms of marginalization accrue across the same ethnic divide it causes the formation of exclusive identities, which are distant (and in opposition to each other). Alternatively, the *softening of identity divides occurs when similar opportunities and resources are provided across ethnic divides, along with increasing opportunities for interaction* between the different identity groups. In the past, the tribal-Diku fracture was caused by the economic and social oppression of the Santals by the Dikus and encouraged by the colonial state. Ethnic differences and differences in geographical origin helped to further deepen this fracture. However, with time a section of Santals (the present day Santal elite) also began to avail of the opportunities and resources that were earlier restricted to the Dikus. Continuous opportunities for interaction and contact helped to bring the two communities closer. Over time this has contributed to the reduction of the tribal - Diku fracture to a considerable degree.

Constitutional provisions and spaces highlight the *status* dimension of citizenship. For marginalized communities like the Santals, formal *Constitutional spaces* like the Scheduled Tribe or Gram Sabha or the right to vote are extremely vital for providing *enabling conditions necessary to secure their socio-economic rights* within the context where resources are inequitably distributed. These spaces grant legitimacy to the claims of disadvantaged communities and also force the state to recognize these claims and civil society assertions based on such claims.

*The existence of legal-political Constitutional provisions is a necessary but not sufficient condition for active citizenship.* Though the Santals have the requisite political rights and Constitutional safeguards they are unable to fulfill their socio-economic needs or access the institutions of the state. In the absence of systematic opportunities for articulating concerns and participating in public decision-making the Santals find themselves excluded from governance.

Civil society interventions in the study have emphasized the *practice* dimension of citizenship based on *citizen articulation and responsible citizen action*. Herein, the church and the voluntary development agency have followed slightly different approaches. The church has propagated *formal education* and emphasized on awareness building activities, which in turn have enabled Christian Santals access existing citizenship rights. On the other hand, AAA has facilitated the creation of peoples' organizations based

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on an ethos of *collective functioning*. Nurturing a sense of community within marginalized villagers and providing them with opportunities for collective learning and decision making are crucial to the process of *conscientization*. This has helped them participate in political, economic and social decision-making, especially in matters of local governance.

## ***Institutions and Access to Opportunities and Resources***

The Santals access opportunities and resources mainly through the medium of state and civil society institutions.

Issues of socio-economic marginalization and the *right to development* define the Santals' interface with the new state. For them, the new state represents a space where they have a "*Right to have a Right*". Given the context of their marginalization, this is linked to having a space where they are able to exert their *right to priority use over development resources* for improving their daily lives.

*The state, its policies and the manner in which they are implemented play an important role in defining citizenship, especially in the case of marginalized communities. On the one hand, the daily struggle for survival leaves little time and energy for the marginalized Santals to fight for their citizenship rights. The implementation of socio-economic policies through a state delivery system that operates essentially on colonial lines, is weak, corrupt, politicized and where people have little or no role to play reinforces this distance between the state and the people. On the other hand, Constitutional recognition to the Santals' 'tribal identity' provides an instrument to bargain for and claim a share of the development resources at the disposal of the state.*

In the case of marginalized communities, the *daily struggle for survival and its associated vulnerabilities and risks leaves little time and energy to stake a claim on citizenship rights*. Thus, helping such communities overcome extreme poverty is the foundation for promoting responsible citizen participation.

Civil society institutions (CSOs) like development NGOs and the church, play an active role in intermediating citizenship rights, especially where the state cannot reach. In the study CSOs such as church groups, which are engaged in education and awareness building activities create enabling preconditions for marginalized groups to claim their existing citizenship rights.

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Development NGOs play a crucial role in organizing and mobilizing marginalized communities through community level citizens' collectives. The creation of this space not only allows for *nurturing alternative citizen leadership but also provides a training ground for the sustained articulation of the citizens' voice*. The presence of strong community based organisations acts as a check on the local administration and makes it more accountable to its constituency's demands and needs. Such community-based organizations are best organized around daily life necessities and the immediate concerns of communities.

Collectives of marginalized citizens' not only struggle for the implementation of existing policies and programmes relevant to their daily lives, but their articulations help redefine and *enlarge the space for citizens* in matters of governance. In other words, *partnerships in citizen action become the means of a larger and continuous political struggle for socio-economic rights* of the community.

*In addition to the state, civil society institutions (CSOs) like development NGOs and the church play an active role in intermediating citizenship rights*. With their emphasis on *citizen articulation and responsible citizen action* civil society interventions *enlarge the space for citizens* in matters of governance. Herein, formal education as well as the nurturing of opportunities for collective learning, reflection and decision making is extremely important.

Aspects for a more *inclusive form of citizenship practice* as revealed by the study include: *participation in public life (social, economic, cultural and political), education and collective consciousness, access to development resources and greater co-ordination between citizen leaders, citizens organizations and the state*.

## Section 4 Conclusion & Suggestions

The way people view themselves as citizens and act upon this understanding significantly impacts the practice of citizenship. People's participation in various contexts is defined by the multiple identities that people have and the associated perception of rights. Multiple meanings and identities of citizenship emanate from being rooted in particular political, social, cultural or geographical contexts. In fact, the articulations, expressions, experiences and interactions in the daily lives of ordinary citizens form the basis for their citizenship. Understanding of these different meanings and associated citizenship identities is important in

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facilitating the creation of social, political and institutional arrangements to promote greater congruence between the state and the marginalized citizen.

For the Santals in the new state of Jharkhand, the *over arching* citizenship issue is the access to development resources, mainly provided by the state and to a lesser extent by civil society organizations like the church and development NGOs. The Santals understand that the state plays an important role in overcoming this state of marginalization. However a lack of material, information and educational resources, a lack of cohesiveness within the community along with a 'beneficiary' psyche prove to be major obstacles that exclude them from claiming their citizenship rights.

In its legal, political and constitutional dimension, the state is seen as the sole creator of citizenship ideas. For marginalized communities in India, identity politics involved in claiming citizenship rights does revolve around constitutionally recognized identities to a large extent. However as the study has shown, institutions of civil society also mediate the idea of citizenship in equally important but, alternative ways that are based on active and responsible citizen participation. The former is a 'reactive' form of citizenship practice where the onus of initial action is on the state. Alternatively, the latter encourages a more 'proactive' manner of practicing citizenship that is based on the agency of the citizen. In reality, the rights claims by marginalized Santals include both forms. The socio-political context and dynamics between the two forms determines whether and to what extent the Santals are able to access their citizenship rights. This also highlights the need for examining inter-institutional relationships at greater length and look for ways to promote greater congruence and co-ordination between the various institutions working with marginalized communities.

Formal education and the process of *conscientization* are extremely important for making the shift from viewing citizenship as a status to citizenship as a practice, especially from the vantage point of disadvantaged communities. As shown by the study, these two processes enable marginalized citizens to articulate their rights in their own terms and take greater control of their lives and by doing so citizenship becomes an empowering experience.

In conclusion, for the marginalized sections of the Santal community in Jharkhand, inclusion in matters of governance within a new state means increasing opportunities for participating in their own development, the direction and substance of which is defined by the people themselves.

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### ***Suggestions***

*The sharing and dissemination of research findings, to highlight the issues of the marginalized. Participatory research perspective believes that people have the knowledge and ability to reflect on their social reality and devise strategies for their own development. Hence, it is not only important to help them articulate their concerns but also share these with the community members themselves. Disseminating these articulations beyond the primary stakeholders also ensures that the perspectives and voices of the marginalized reach policy makers.*

*Strengthening community based organizations, citizen networks and citizen leaders to coalesce around shared citizen concerns. These citizen organisations will serve as "incubators" for active citizenship. Bringing together citizens' collectives, which are based on different identities and on issues that affect daily living is a step towards promoting greater inclusion.*

*Coalesce different stakeholders (from state, civil society and community) around emerging issues of concern and support issue based partnerships and networks.*

*Encourage systematization and scrutiny of competing and conflicting laws that exist such as the traditional Santal system of governance and the constitutional system of local self-governance, and women's rights to land in traditional Santal law.*

## **Section 5**

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**Annexure 1**

**Details of Methodology of the Study**

Initially, an exploratory visit was undertaken to Dumka district in order to develop a preliminary understanding of the area and citizenship issues in the region. Based on field visits and preliminary discussions with the officials of the District Primary Education Programme and the Agrarian Assistance Association (AAA), a local NGO, the following villages were identified for the study.

The selected villages included a combination of AAA intervention villages as well as non-intervention villages. These are as follows:

Category	Name of Village	Dominant Features
Category 1	Hemantpur, Block Jama Nishchitpur, Block Jama	Proximity to Dumka town. On link road to Dumka town ( 10-15 km from Dumka)
Category 2	Chirudi, Block Gopikander Bhitra, Block- Kathikund Shilangi, Block- Gopikander	Villages where some developmental intervention has taken place - by NGO, government and/ or church. Has road link to block headquarters. (50-55km from Dumka town)
Category 3	Hirudi, Block- Kathikund Belboni, Block- Kathikund	Remote, largely inaccessible villages located inside forests and on hills. (55-60 km from Dumka town and 15-20 km off metalled road)

It is important to note that the above categorization is not for analytical purposes or purposes of comparison. Rather the categories need to be seen as a continuum of the kinds of villages that exist in this district. Also, what appears to be a dominant feature in one village may also be present in another village, albeit in a less apparent form. In other words, these categories are representative of the features that are present in the Santal villages in the district and are expected to provide a kaleidoscopic view of Santal life and the citizenship issues in the area.

All sub-themes/issues were explored using a combination of observation, group discussions, dialogue and a review of secondary literature. Reality is

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complex and rich in its totality. Given that each method can only hope to capture a part of this totality, an effort was made to use a combination of methods in order to capture the different dimensions of this totality. However, the sequence and frequency of use of the different methods varied across the different sub-themes. A point of note is that no method was used in exclusion or one after another in a linear fashion. Different methods were interwoven and interlinked in order to enable a holistic understanding of a sub-theme.

This period of data collection was also useful for picking nuances in the local language, which made it simpler to frame questions and issues in a manner that was understood by the community. This also provided a pointer in understanding the various connotations of a phrase or word as used by the community, for example the word 'Dosti' (friendship) or 'Dalpati' (a village level government functionary) etc.

Transect walk proved to be a useful tool during the rapport-building phase as it helped to familiarize the researchers with the layout of the village and the people. Preliminary observations provided a starting point for further exploration and discussion, especially on the issue of service provision and delivery, both by the government and NGOs. In addition, observation was used extensively to understand and analyse intra and inter community interactions as well as to delineate the different cultural sub-groups within the Santal community.

Group discussions were extensively used to discuss issues of common concern such as the relationship with the state, the relationship with NGOs, traditional institutions of the Santals, emerging social issues, the meaning of Diku, amongst others. The Santals have traditionally used this method to discuss and resolve community issues. As a result this approach was perceived to be a non-threatening one, especially by the women, and helped to elicit diverse opinions on any subject. In fact, it proved to be an important step in identifying potential resource persons or individual case histories, which could be explored in depth through interviews. However, in certain instances group discussions tended to be dominated by the articulate and expressive. To offset this, individual interviews were carried out with those who were rarely heard from in a group.

Interviews and inter-personal dialogue were a good way of exploring specific experiences, events, and case histories. At the community level, this was the preferred mode when the issue was controversial or sensitive like a land dispute or sexual harassment, respectively. However, the willingness of the individual to be interviewed and the accuracy of information exchanged depended on the extent of the rapport and mutual trust between the

## Meanings and Identities of Citizenship

respondent and researcher. The interview mode was widely used in the case of the third category of respondents. Herein, care was taken to interview a number of people with varying views on any particular subject, in order to get a balanced view of the issue. One such issue was the influence of Christianity on the Santal community, where there were respondents who believed that the influence was positive and others who believed that it was negative.

The two sub-themes - points of interaction with the state, and the provision and actualisation of citizen rights were explored using a combination of all three strategies. A preliminary survey of literature provided a starting point for discussions on land tenancy and the socio-cultural identity of the Santals. The observation of cultural signs and symbols (*thrishul*), visits to places of worship and festivities (*jaher than and majhi than*) helped to explore the elements of Santal religion, culture and festivities. This was followed by group discussions where comments and explanations were invited on various preliminary observations of the researcher. Interviews with key persons like the nayake (priest) helped to clarify rituals, beliefs and deepen understanding of the same.

Competing and complementary claims for citizenship rights amongst actors within the Santal community was a sensitive theme which required indirect methods of study. There was heavy reliance on observation and the interpretation of various kinds of inter-intra community interaction to unravel this issue. Empathic listening was of great importance in this process. The way people were seated in a group during a discussion/ during informal interaction, comparing the value people attach to an individual's opinion and his/her background, the deference meted out to certain individuals, the way people dressed, objects in their household, the transport they use etc. were useful indicators of status in the community, the perception of these actors towards the community and the community's perception of them.

Experiences of actively engaging in demands for inclusive governance were limited to communities where there had been some form of NGO intervention. In the other villages studied one had to rely on interviews with individuals who had tried to engage the government at an individual and personal level. Given the extreme marginalization faced by many of the communities (especially in non-NGO intervention areas) it was difficult to overcome the community's resignation and elicit responses on the issue of expectations and institutional frameworks required for more inclusive governance. Here, focussed group discussions with various age groups of people helped to move the issue further.

## Annexure 2

# Contemporary Status of Customary Form of Santal Self Governance

Under customary law, the Santals have a three tier system of administration and social justice. The lowest tier consists of the village assembly headed by the Manjhi Haram and supported by the Paranik (assistant headman), Nayeke (priest), Godait (village messenger) and Jog Manjhi (youth affairs). While the council holds the primary responsibility for settling disputes, all adult male members of the village are part of the village meetings where the disputes are discussed, and decisions taken. The second tier is the *More Manjhi* where the functionaries of five neighbouring villages settle disputes. The highest level of Santal administration is the Loh Bir Baisi, which combines an annual hunt with a people's assembly for solving difficult disputes. In this assembly even cases against the village headman or other functionaries can be brought for settlement. While the entire process of providing justice is extremely democratic and based on consensual decision making, it has no place for women as decision makers.

While the study found instances where the village council had settled disputes and heard of instances of *More Manjhi* in neighbouring villages (outside the study area), it was found that the Loh Bir Baisi had been reduced to a mere sporting event where youth from a number of villages gathered at a pre-decided date for the hunt. The date was decided by the *Dehri* (head of the hunt) and the villagers were informed using the traditional system of communication known as *Darwak*. This is a stick to which a number of leaves are attached, which is then carried around in the local haat. The number of leaves signifies the number of days later (after the *darwak*) the event is to be held. Usually a cyclist is seen carrying this kind of a message and people get the details from him. This kind of messaging was also used to mobilize people for political meetings.

In the case of petty disputes, family and marital disputes, divorce, cases of trespassing, overgrazing animals, stealing vegetables and drunken behaviour, the Santals preferred to use their customary laws and the traditional dispute redressal system as it is inexpensive, easy and uncomplicated. It was only in Nishchitpur that there was a conflict between Christians and non-Christians regarding dispute redressal, where non-Christians had refused to solve a petty dispute involving a Christian Santal and had referred him to the church instead.

## Meanings and Identities of Citizenship

The traditional system of governance of the Santals is gradually weakening. This is due to a number of reasons. Historically, the British dealt the first blow to the traditional system of governance amongst the Santals. Till then, the Majhi or headman was perceived as a leader of his people and in most cases shared equal privileges as the other members of the village. Under colonial rule the headman became a rent collector of the village. In lieu of this he was given additional rent-free land. Not only did this ensure that the headman owed greater allegiance to the colonists but emphasis on individual gain transformed his role to that of a *landlord* and dealt a severe blow to collective village interests.

Traditionally, the performance of the village functionaries of this traditional system was reviewed annually during the Magh festival. Based on this, the community decided whether to let the functionaries continue in their offices or whether they needed to be changed. However, in recent years this practice has been discontinued and it has become a hereditary system. As a result, in certain areas the functionaries are not capable of taking up the responsibilities and do not have the community's support. Also, there is no place for women in this system. Women can come to this forum with a dispute but they cannot be part of the decision making process.

A more important factor is the emergence of multiple centers of power within the Santal community. These include education, money power and the power of a permanent job. Consequently, the community finds itself stratified and differentially placed with regard to access to resources and benefits. As a result there are a number of opinion makers in the village, each with a group of supporters, who may or may not agree with the decisions of the traditional authorities. The educated youth rather than the traditional leaders tend to dictate decisions. For the Santal elite the court acts as a parallel body taking up a number of cases, especially those regarding land.

## About PRIA

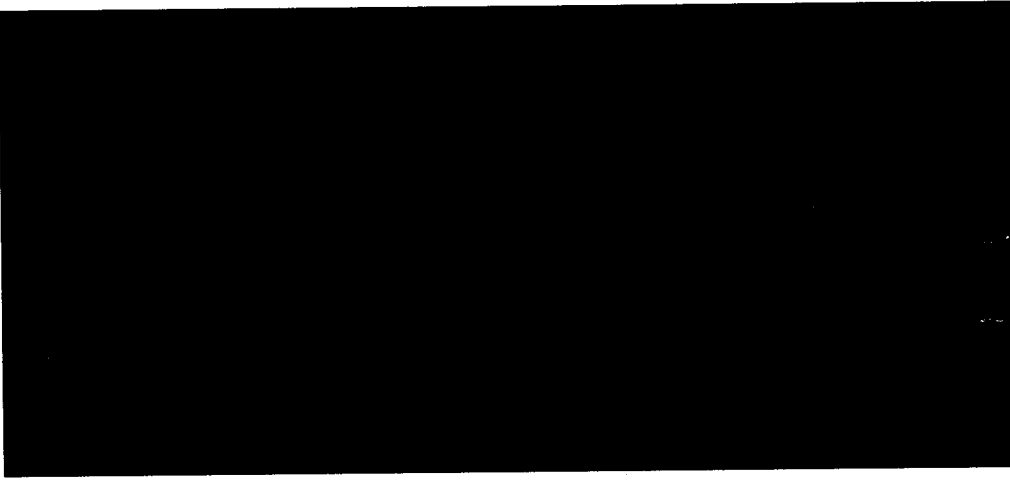
PRIA is a civil society organization, that undertakes development initiatives to positively impact the lives of the poor, marginalized and excluded sections of the society, by encouraging and enabling their participation in the processes of their governance. It strives for achievement of equity and justice, through a people centered approach, focusing on 'Citizens'- 'their participation and inclusion', 'awareness and empowerment' and 'their democratic rights'.

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PRIA is an International Centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance.



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