

ATTITUDES OF SANTAL STUDENTS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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A matched group of 100 Santal and 100 non-Santal undergraduate students was given a five-point Likert Type Social Attitude Scale. The study was undertaken to examine the difference between Santal and non-Santal students, if any, in terms of their attitude towards family, caste, women, social customs, religion and politics. It was found that the Santal students as compared to their non-Santal counterparts were significantly more traditional in their attitude towards family, caste, women, religion and politics. However, insignificant difference was observed in their social customs attitude. Reasons behind traditionality of attitudes on the part of the Santal students have been suggested.

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Santals, the most important and numerically the largest tribe of the Santal Pargana district of Bihar, are passing through a period of transition. Different forces of importance are accelerating the pace of socio-psychological changes happening at different levels of their life. A considerable influence of Hinduism on Santal culture in recent times as well as in the distant past is apparent. Majumdar (1956) has rightly remarked that interaction with Hindu culture has affected all aspects of Santal life (material, economic, social, linguistic and religious) to a great extent. Jha (1968) also notes a significant influence of the non-tribal Hindu castes on the Adivasi of Bihar. He opines that owing to the cultural contact with non-tribal groups tribal people have considerably followed the local ways of Hindu life in many respects. Similarly, Prasad (1971) stresses the impact of Christianity on Santals. Further there are studies (Das and Banerjee, 1962; Das and Banerjee, 1964; Orans, 1959, 1965) which have reported considerable changes in Santals as a result of industrialization and urbanization. Moreover, political awareness combined with increasing education as well as the spread of the means of transport and communication (the radio, cinema, newspaper, magazines) and freedom of expression have not only opened up new vistas, new horizons and new outlook on life to the Santals

but they have also enabled them to come out of their isolation and change their self-image and sense of identity. Superstitions as well as traditional beliefs and values primarily responsible for guiding the Santals' socio-psychological life are gradually vanishing. They are now finding themselves in a new light which has remarkably strengthened their consciousness. Eventually, new cultural transformation initiated by different sources of change has destroyed some of the important traditions and customs frequently practised in Santal culture. Santals are losing the characteristics of primitive tribal societies and are, hence, no more isolated. By and large, they are now generally advancing towards a point of integration with the non-Santal section of the people. However, there are studies (Kochar, 1964a; Mukherjee, 1960) which have posited a view that the Santals still adhere to their traditional culture. They are well known for the orthodoxy and traditionality in their attitudes and behaviour. Of course, they have not lost the essential core of their social and cultural traditions. Thus it appears that the studies meant to see the effects of change in Santals are rather conflicting. They do not seem to be clearly pointing out whether the Santals are traditional in their attitudes and behaviour or they have given them the go by. In such a situation of conflicting data a further in-

vestigation into the attitudes of Santals from a psychological angle appears justified. It will not only help to present a comprehensive picture of Santals' attitudes but will also be helpful to link them with the mainstream of Indian national life. The hypothesis framed for verification in the present study was that the Santal and non-Santal students will differ significantly between themselves in terms of their respective attitudes towards family, caste, women, social customs, religion and politics.

METHOD

Sample: A randomly selected group of 100 Santal and 100 non-Santal students studying in the colleges of the Santal Pargana district of Bihar constituted the sample of the present investigation. The two groups were comparable in terms of their age, sex, education and socio-economic status.

Test Used: The subjects attitude towards family, caste, women, social customs, religion and politics was measured with the help of a Five-Point Likert Type Social Attitude Scale prepared and developed by Singh (1978) in Hindi. The scale consisted of 120 statements equally divided into six sub-scales. The test-retest and split-half reliabilities of the different sub-scales were ranging from .77 to .84. Lower scores on each of the sub-scales were indicative of traditionality and orthodoxy in attitudes concerned and vice-versa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean scores of familial, caste, women, social customs, religious and political attitudes of Santal and non-Santal students were compared by the application of t-test. The summary of the statistical comparison and discussion thereof are presented below in that order.

Attitude towards Family

Significant difference in the mean familial attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students was hypothesized. A comparison of mean familial attitude scores of the two groups is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FAMILIAL ATTITUDE SCORES

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	57.81	7.46	3.82	< .01
Non-Santal	100	62.05	8.21		

Comparison of the mean familial attitude scores of Santal ($M = 57.81 \pm 7.46$) and non-Santal ($M = 62.05 + 8.21$) students reveals that the Santal students being significantly lower on the scale are more traditional and orthodox in their attitude towards family as compared to the non-Santal students.

It may be observed that despite the transmission of significant social, political, economic, religious and technological changes, the Santals firmly believe in the traditional family system i.e., the 'joint family system'. The Santals, as far as is possible, desire that a family should remain united. Therefore, in some cases, a family includes more remote relations such as parents, parental uncles and the first cousins living in the same house. They discharge their kinship obligations sincerely and by and large believe in traditional modes of marriage ceremony (polygamy). They, however, do not believe in family planning and are of the view that increase in the size of the family will increase its earning (working) capacity (Verma, 1970). Thus, it seems that their faith in joint-family not only co-exists with their agriculture based economy but is also

strengthened by it. Therefore, in spite of changes accelerated by socio-eco-technological forces the Santals' belief in the joint family system with all kinship obligations is continuing. However, Das and Banerjee (1962) have observed that the tribals working in industrial sectors are gradually adopting nuclear family and showing their detachment from the extended one. Nevertheless, it is more or less apparent that the changes have only touched the industrial community and not the entire Santal community. Hence, it is natural that the Santal students in comparison with non-Santal students have more orthodox and traditional attitude towards the family.

Attitude towards Caste System

It was hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in the mean caste attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students. Table 2 presents the distribution of the mean caste attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students.

TABLE 2
CASTE ATTITUDE SCORE

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	64.41	11.56	4.72	< .01
Non-Santal	100	71.29	12.82		

A look at Table 2 shows that the mean caste attitude score ($M = 64.41 \pm 11.56$) of Santal students is significantly lower as compared to the mean caste attitude score ($M = 71.29 \pm 12.82$) of the non-Santal students. Thus, it was confirmed that the Santal as compared to their non-Santal counterparts are more traditional and orthodox in their attitude towards the caste system.

It may be seen that development and

change in attitude occur through contact and commerce of ideas. It is well-known that caste was unknown among the Santals. They believed in different clan and subclan systems and there was no idea of superior and inferior clan among them. However, the concept of clan system in Santal community life is now no more in practice and it appears that owing to the extended contact with the non-Santal section of the people (Hindus) the Santals are openly accepting and following the caste hierarchy prevailing in the orthodox Hindu society. Griffiths (1946) has also observed that the tribals are apparently forming a miniature caste system within the tribe, modelled somewhat after the Hindu caste system. Acceptance of the caste-hierarchy of the Hindu social order provides them not only with an opportunity to identify themselves with Hindu subcastes but also breeds the feeling of status enhancement in them. This process of cultural and social mobility has been referred to as Sanskritization (Srinivas, 1962), which is used as a means of vertical mobility of groups. On the other hand reference or a fidelity to caste hierarchy is gradually abating and apparently becoming a source of embarrassment and nettling among the non-Santals (Hindus). They are developing ambivalent attitudes towards caste as it is considered detrimental to social upliftment and the principle of social equality and justice. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are now not considered as deviation from existing norms in Hindu society, however, they are getting considerable support even from the non-interfering section of society. Of course, caste has gradually become more or less an unstable means of determining inferior and superior social status by the Hindus. Thus, it appears clearly that whereas the Santals are moving towards accepting the caste-hierarchy prevailing in the Hindu society, non-Santals are reflecting aversion to it.

Attitude towards Women

Further significant difference in the mean women attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students was presumed. The summary of the results is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
WOMEN ATTITUDE SCORES

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	57.86	14.07		
				2.34	< .05
Non-Santal	100	62.24	12.41		

An inspection of Table 3 indicates that the mean women attitude score (57.86 ± 14.07) of the Santals is significantly lesser than that of the mean women attitude score (62.24 ± 12.41) of the non-Santals. Hence, the present result reveals that owing to lower score on social attitude scale the Santal students as compared to the non-Santals are significantly more traditional and orthodox in their attitude towards women.

The type of Santal family is patrilineal and patrimonial. The female does not inherit property in actuality. They can at most acquire a maintenance allowance or may act as custodians of property on behalf of their minor male offspring who are real inheritors. A piece of the father's land is kept in reserve to finance the marriage ceremony of the unmarried girls if the father is not alive. Thus it seems that women are considered intrinsically inferior to men in the Santal community. Such a concept is only the hangover of their tradition with its emphasis on the docile, faithful wife, her life centred around her husband and home. So far as the division of labour in the San-

tal family is concerned the females are also free to work outside their homes to supplement the earnings of their family and thus to some extent both men and women in the Santal community enjoy equal rights as far as jobs are concerned. However, the males are generally dominant in social life owing to patrilineal society where emphasis is on "pleasure" and on the maintenance of reciprocal and obligatory relationship (Sinha, 1957). It may be clearly seen that despite the impact of different Socio-cultural movements following women's lives at different levels, the Santals strictly like to follow the above mentioned principles generally prescribed for the status of women by their ancestors. Hence, it is not surprising that the Santal students in comparison to non-Santals are significantly more traditional and orthodox in their attitude towards women.

Attitude towards Social Customs

Another hypothesis framed for verification was that there will be a significant difference in the mean social customs attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students. Table 4 presents the comparison of Santal and non-Santal students with regard to their social customs attitude.

TABLE 4
SOCIAL CUSTOMS ATTITUDE SCORES

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	65.18	9.56		
				.51	NS
Non-Santal	100	65.94	11.27		

The comparison of the mean social customs attitude scores of Santal ($M = 65.18 \pm 9.56$) and non-Santal ($M = 65.94 \pm 11.27$) students demonstrates insignificant

difference ($t = .51$) between them in terms of their attitude towards social customs. Thus the hypothesis of significant difference in the social customs attitude of the two group was not substantiated.

Attitude towards Religion

It was expected that there will be a significant difference in the mean religious attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students. Table 5 presents the summary of results.

TABLE 5
RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE SCORES

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	54.42	8.17	7.70	< .01
Non-Santal	100	65.16	10.36		

From the perusal of Table 5 it is apparent that the mean religious attitude score (54.42 ± 8.17) of the Santal students is significantly lower as compared to the mean religious attitude score (65.16 ± 10.36) of the non-Santal students. Thus it appears that Santals being lower on the scale are more traditional and orthodox in their attitude towards religion as compared with the non-Santals.

The present finding may be comprehended on the basis of the Santals' religious life and activities which are commonly considered as the axis of their life. Eventually, their convictions and beliefs in religion shape their lives from the cradle to the grave. The religion of the Santals is centred around the worship and ceremonies of numerous gods, deities and spirits whom they propitiate on different occasions and festivals (Kochar, 1963, 1966; Prasad, 1972b). They sincerely

observe different religious festivals; and fasting on those occasions is more common among them. Singh (1979) has characterized them as more orthodox and fatalistic in their outlook. In an earlier study Majumdar (1956) has noted that despite the cultural contact with the alien people (known as Dekoos among the Santals) the basic character of Santal religion i.e., the belief in Bongas or spirits is still intact. Similarly, Das and Banerjee (1962) have also observed a slight change in the religion of Santal inspite of the considerable impact of different forces. Besides, in the studies of Pandey and Singh (1971) and Singh (1969) it has been reported that the tribals are more religious than the non-tribals. Thus it seems abundantly clear why the Santal students are considerably more traditional and orthodox in their religious attitude as compared to the non-Santal students. Furthermore, several facts of interest mentioned below are also important in indicating the traditionality and orthodoxy of Santals in their religious attitude. Bhowmik (1971) and Kochar (1964b) have posited a view that despite their belief in different *Bongas* or *Subbongas* the blind faith of Santals in numerous evil spirits, locally known as *Bhut*, *Rakas* (ghosts) etc., is well known. The importance of the concept of *Ojha* or medicineman and witchcraft has not yet diminished in the general life of the Santal people. They even have faith in amulets and magical formulae which are not based on any scientific principle. In addition to the above Sachidananda (1965) and Sinha (1957) have recorded their blind faith in many of the religious ideas like immortality of the soul, its transmigration, concept of heaven and hell and reincarnation which are not within the value of contemporary Hindu community life. In describing the present result it is also interesting to note here that a look at the literature organized by Archer (1975), Culshaw (1949) and

Guha (1958) confirms the notion that the Santal's tradition about the creation of the world and the origin of mankind is no more than a figment of the imagination considered in the light of current knowledge. Thus from the analysis of the Santal's religious thought and activities it appears clearly that the Santals, in general, still foster their deep inclination to traditional modes of thinking and behaviour related to religion and hence, it is evident why in comparison with non-Santal students the Santal students have a significantly more religious attitude.

Attitude towards Politics

Lastly, a significant difference in the mean political attitude scores of Santal and non-Santal students was expected. A statistical comparison of political attitude score of the two groups is presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6
POLITICAL ATTITUDE SCORES

Sample	N	Mean	SD	t	P-Value (df = 198)
Santal	100	71.26	10.44	2.62	< .01
Non-Santal	100	75.22	11.02		

It appears from the inspection of Table 6 that the Santal students have obtained significantly lower scores (71.26 ± 10.44) on political attitude scale as against the scores (75.22 ± 11.02) obtained by the non-Santal students. Hence, it was concluded that the Santals as compared with their non-Santal counterparts have more traditional and orthodox attitude towards politics.

It has been frequently said that the tribals, in general, are now more politically aware and conscious than they were before and are openly accepting the new challenges

and innovations appearing in political spheres. Nevertheless, like in other spheres of life, their orthodoxy in political life too may be verified. This idea is well supported by the study of Sachidananda (1972) who is of the opinion that the tribes of Bihar have still a well-developed pattern of traditional leadership consisting of secular (Manjhi) and Sacerdotal (Jok-manjhi) village headmen who are known by different names among the different tribes. The office of the secular headman is hereditary while the sacerdotal headman is chosen from a particular family by a method of divination from the dominant clan of the village. They wield enormous influence among the villagers and guide the deliberations of the village Panchayat. It is another facet of importance touching on modern political life that the Santals are pacifists and believe in democracy, socialism and the value of civic liberty. They hardly try to come in conflict and interfere with others' business unless they themselves are deprived of their rights and recompense. Speaking about the village administration of Santal Biswas (1951) and Prasad (1972a) have mentioned that the village administration or Panchayat system of Santals is akin to that of the modern democratic institutions and Panchayati Raj 'Three Tier System'. However, it is evident that they do not like to follow the new administrative policies imposed by the government and want to maintain and carry on their separate entity. It may be vividly observed that the organization of village administration and emergence and selection of leadership in Santal community life almost follow the traditional rules and regulations primarily determined at the time of the settlement of a new village. Thus the significantly more traditional and orthodox attitude of Santal as compared to the non-Santal students towards politics may be clearly comprehended in the light of the above depicted arguments and observations.

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