

## **Education Of Santals Of Jhargram: An Ethnographic Study**

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**Abstract:** This paper mainly concentrates on the educational status among the Santal, the most dominant tribal community of West Bengal in West Bengal with special reference to Jhargram block of Jhargram district in the Indian state of West Bengal. This paper also explores the views of parents, students and villagers of this community regarding the various aspects of education. Education plays an enormous role for the improvement of a society or a particular community or an individual. Education changes the social status economically, occupationally and to some extent politically. Data was collected through household surveys and as well as informal and semi-structured interviews were used to collect information.

**Key Words:** *Santals, Educational Status, Jhargram block*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The present study is about the education of one of the most distinctive tribe i.e., the Santals in eastern India. According to The Constitution(Scheduled Tribes Order), Second Amendment Bill,2011, "Tribal follow some specific criterion like having primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness." Although this criterion is not spelt out in The Constitution of India but has become well established and accepted. The Santals, need not to say, rightly follow this criterion. The Santals are not only the most dominant tribe in West Bengal but also they have the third largest population among the tribes of the whole country after Bhil and Gond tribe. As per 2001 census in the state of West Bengal the number of Scheduled Tribes was 4,406,794. It was 5.50% of the total population of the state, i.e., 80,176,197. The Santal community share more than 50%(51.80%) of the total Scheduled Tribe population, which clearly shows their strong dominance among the tribal community in the state of West Bengal. Santals have their habitats in all over West Bengal especially in Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum and Burdwan districts. Besides West Bengal, Santal tribe is located strongly in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam and in foreign countries like Bangladesh and Nepal also. Although Santals are the largest tribal community in India, the overall progress and mainly in respect of education, how far they cope up with the speeding growth of the country's development process, is needed to be found out. Education plays an enormous role for the improvement of a society or a particular community or an individual. Education changes the social status economically, occupationally and to some extent politically. Education is an important instrument of social change and modernization. So, the study is mainly going to give focus upon the educational status of this tribal community.

### **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To depict the present status of the Santal community in West Bengal in terms of education with special reference to Jhargram block of Jhargram district in the Indian state of West Bengal.

### **III. STUDY AREA**

The present researcher selected Jhargram Community Development Block in Jhargram Subdivision of Jhargram district (erstwhile Paschim Medinipur district) in the Indian State of West Bengal. Jhargram Police Station serves this block. Headquarters of this block is at Jhargram. Jhargram is located at 22.27°N 86.59°E. Jhargram Community Development Block has an area of 539.64 km<sup>2</sup> (208.36 square miles). Altitude is 81 meters above sea level. Population density as per Census 2011 is 330/km<sup>2</sup> (860/square miles). As per census 2011, Jhargram block had a total population of 170,097 out of which 85,970 were males and 84,127 were females. Jhargram block registered population growth of 10.90% during the 2001-2011 decade. Scheduled tribes

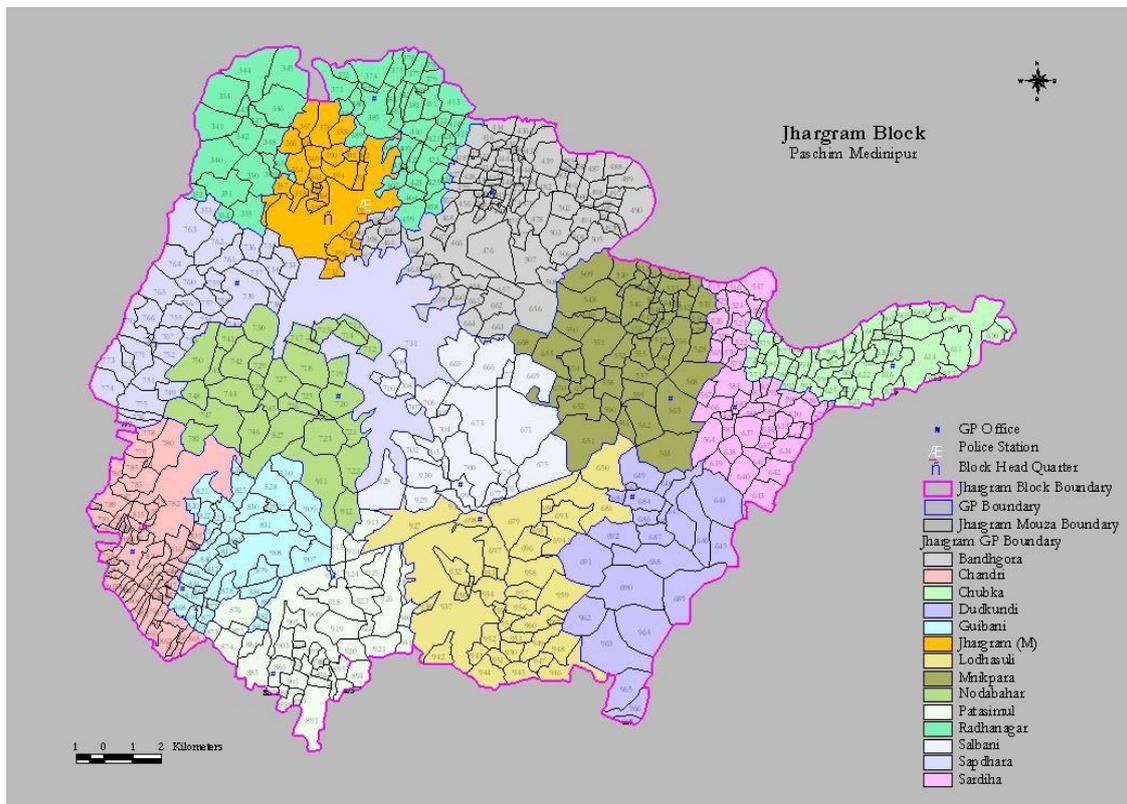
population were 22.7% of total population in this block. Jhargram CD Block has 1 Panchayat samity, 13 gram panchayats, (namely Aguiboni, Bundhgora, Chandri, Chubka, Dudhkundi, Lodhasuli, Manikpara, Nedabahara, Patasimul, Radhanagar, Salboni, Sapdhara and Sardiha ), 604 mouzas and 489 inhabited villages. Among these 13 gram- panchayats, the researcher selects 4 gram panchayats where the Santal population density is very high. Among this 4 gram-panchayats, the researcher selects ten villages where the Santal population have 100%. An overview of selected ten villages from four gram-panchayats has given below:

**TABLE 1: SELECTED VILLAGE LIST**

NAME OF GRAM PANCHAYAT	VILLAGE NAME	PERCENTAGE OF SANTAL POPULATION
BUNDHGORA	ANTAPATI	100%
	CHANDRA	100%
NEDABAHARA	KAJLA	100%
	BRINDABANPUR	100%
	GAJIPUR	100%
	KALABANI	100%
RADHANAGAR	PANCHAKHALI	100%
	TALMETAL	100%
	KUTUSGERIYA	100%
SAPDHARA	KASHIA	100%

A purposive sampling technique has been used to select gram-panchayats and as well as villages from the study area. Certain criteria have been adopted for selecting gram-panchayats and villages, this includes:

- i) Easy access of location and density of the Santal population was the utmost criteria to select gram-panchayats.



Map: Jhargram Block, Source: www.jhargram.org

- ii) Those villages were selected where the percentage of the Santal population is 100% and then easy access of location got priority.

#### IV. METHODS

The primary data were collected by (1) participatory rural appraisal (PRA), (2) participant observation, (3) focus group discussions (FGD) (3) informal and semi-structured interviews and (4) household surveys. Total one hundred household surveys, which covered 496 santals people from selected ten Santal villages conducted as well as the researcher also covered in-depth interview of 50 parents of school or college going children and 40 villagers whom the researcher would be able to rapport building and school or college going 40 students who are presently studying among them 14 students were hosteller. A purposive sampling technique has been used to select the household, parents, villagers and students. Certain criteria have been adopted for selecting household, villagers, parents and students, this includes:

- i) For selecting household easy access of location in the selected villages
- ii) For selecting parents, villagers and students criteria was openness, very frank to talk.

The household heads provided household information and in case of their absence the senior and /or responsible adult members have replaced them. Secondary data have been collected from local administrations, relevant documents, journals, government websites and reports. The data collected by interviews were cross-checked with people of diverse strata of the society. At the stage of data analysis, qualitative and semi-quantitative analysis methods were carried out.

#### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. **EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SANTAL IN WEST BENGAL:** The Santal in West Bengal is the largest and most dominant tribes. Their educational status from 1991 to 2011 in West Bengal is given below:

**Table: 2 Literacy Rate Among The Santal Of Six Above Age Group In West Bengal From 1991-2011**

SANTAL LITERACY RATE IN WEST BENGAL,1991					SANTAL LITERACY RATE IN WEST BENGAL,2001				
		Males	Females	Total			Males	Females	Total
RURAL	POPULATION	9,62,842	9,43,530	19,06,372	RURAL	POPULATION	10,87,385	10,75,659	21,63,044
	0-6 POPULATION	1,88,954	1,85,734	3,74,688		0-6 POPULATION	1,86,761	1,83,347	3,70,108
	6+ POPULATION	773888	757796	1531684		6+ POPULATION	9,00,624	8,92,312	17,92,936
	LITERATE	314152	102615	416767		LITERATE	5,12,964	2,34,662	7,47,626
	% OF LITERACY	40.59	13.54	27.21		% OF LITERACY	56.96	26.30	41.70
URBAN	POPULATION	47,115	43,735	90,850	URBAN	POPULATION	60,270	57,226	1,17,496
	0-6 POPULATION	8,175	8,183	16,358		0-6 POPULATION	8,596	8,460	17,056
	6+ POPULATION	38940	35552	74492		6+ POPULATION	51,674	48,766	1,00,440
	LITERATE	17751	8295	26046		LITERATE	32,920	19,234	52,154
	% OF LITERACY	45.59	23.33	34.96		% OF LITERACY	63.71	39.44	51.93
TOTAL	POPULATION	10,09,957	9,87,265	19,97,222	TOTAL	POPULATION	11,47,655	11,32,885	22,80,540
	0-6 POPULATION	1,97,129	1,93,917	3,91,046		0-6 POPULATION	1,95,357	1,91,807	3,87,164
	6+ POPULATION	812828	793348	1606176		6+ POPULATION	9,52,298	9,41,078	18,93,376
	LITERATE	331903	110910	442813		LITERATE	5,45,884	2,53,896	7,99,780
	% OF LITERACY	40.83	13.98	27.57		% OF LITERACY	57.32	26.98	42.24

Source: Census report, 1991 & 2001

**Table: 3**

SANTAL LITERACY RATE IN WEST BENGAL,2011*			
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
POPULATION	11,73,369	11,88,634	23,62,003
0-6 POPULATION	1,62,646	1,59,305	3,21,951
6+ POPULATION	10,10,723	10,29,329	20,40,052
LITERATE	6,64,764	4,41,518	11,06,282
% OF LITERACY	65.77	42.89	54.23
POPULATION	75,001	75,327	1,50,328
0-6 POPULATION	9,403	9,184	18,587
6+ POPULATION	65,598	66,143	1,31,741
LITERATE	46,950	35,129	82,079
% OF LITERACY	71.57	53.11	62.30
POPULATION	12,48,370	12,63,961	25,12,331
0-6 POPULATION	1,72,049	1,68,489	3,40,538
6+ POPULATION	10,76,321	10,95,472	21,71,793
LITERATE	7,11,714	4,76,647	11,88,361
% OF LITERACY	66.12	43.51	54.72

Source: www.adibasikalyan.gov.in

Table: 4

DECADAL CHANGES OF LITERACY RATE AMONG THE SANTAL IN WEST BENGAL FROM 1981-2011*						
YEAR OF CENSUS	LITERACY RATE					
	MALE	CHANGES	FEMALE	CHANGES	TOTAL	CHANGES
1981	20.77	0	4	0	12.48	0
1991	40.83	20.06	13.98	9.98	27.57	15.09
2001	57.32	16.49	26.98	13	42.24	14.67
2011*	66.12	8.8	43.51	16.53	54.72	12.48

Source: [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in)& \*[www.adibasikalyan.gov.in](http://www.adibasikalyan.gov.in)

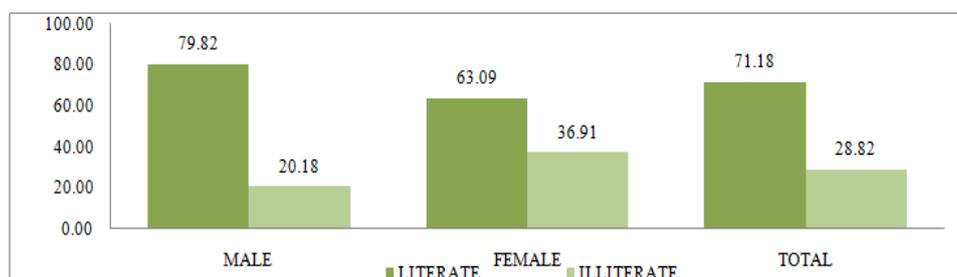
According to the Census, 2011 the overall literacy rate of Santal in West Bengal is 54.72%, male and female literacy rate is 66.12% and 43.51% respectively and the entire figure is below with respect to national and state average literacy rate. A decadal change in literacy rate from 1991 to 2001 is high in comparison with the changes made from 2001 to 2011. Whereas literacy rate changes among female population of Santal in West Bengal is very satisfactory in the decade 2001 to 2011 with respect to previous census decades.

2. **EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE SANTAL IN THE STUDIED AREA:** The educational status of Santal in the studied area is given in the following tables below:

**Table: 5 PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY RATE AMONG THE SANTAL IN THE STUDIED POPULATION**

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
LITERATE	79.82	63.09	71.18
ILLITERATE	20.18	36.91	28.82

Source: Field Work



**Figure: 1.** Percentage Of Literacy Rate Among The Santal In The Studied Population, (Source: Field Work)

It is found that the literacy rate among the Santal in study area is 71.18%, in which male and female literacy rate is 79.82 and 63.09 respectively and entire figure is high with respect to literacy rate among the Santal in West Bengal.

Table: 6

PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT LEVEL OF EDUCATION AMONG THE SANTAL IN THE STUDY AREA			
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
ILLITERATE	20.18	36.91	28.82
I-IV	15.14	17.17	16.19
V-VIII	29.36	26.18	27.72
IX-X	18.35	10.30	14.19
XI-XII	12.84	8.15	10.42
UG	3.67	0.86	2.22
PG	0.46	0.43	0.44

Source: Field Work

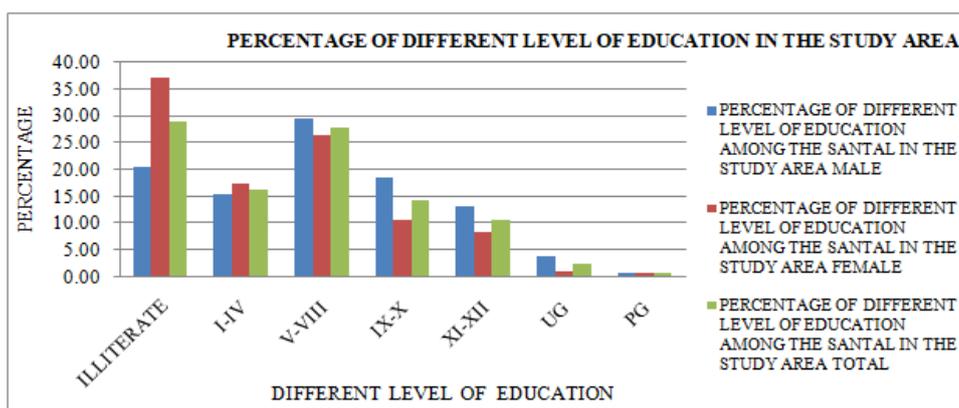


Figure: 2, Source: Field Work

From the above figure and table it is evident that the rate of higher education among the Santal in study area is extremely low. Only 2.22% and 0.44% have attained UG and PG degree respectively. The rate of male and female in Class I-IV level education is 15.14% and 17.17% respectively and in the level of V-VIII education is 29.36% and 26.18% respectively and in the level of IX-X education is 18.35% and 10.30% respectively and in the level of XI-XII education is 12.84% and 8.15% respectively. It clearly indicates that most of the Santal girls do not continue their education after completion of primary education.

3. **EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JHARGRAM BLOCK:** There is 13 gram-panchayats in Jhargram CD block, gram-panchayat wise list of various kind of Educational Institute is given below:

Table: 7 GRAM-PANCHAYAT WISE DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JHARGRAM BLOCK

Sl. No.	Name of GP	Primary School	SSK	JR.HIGH SCHOOL	MS K	H.S. SCHOOL	NGO runed Primary School	National Child Labour Project School	GP WISE TOTAL SCHOOL
1	AGUIBONI	14	7	1	0	3	0	0	25
2	BANDHGORA	23	15	5	1	1	0	0	45
3	CHANDRI	12	11	1	0	2	0	0	26
4	CHUBKA	16	8	2	1	2	0	0	29
5	DUDHKUNDI	11	2	1	0	1	0	0	28
6	LODHASULI	18	3	2	1	1	0	1	26
7	MANIKPARA*	22	13	1	1	5	0	0	42
8	NEDABAHAAR A	13	6	3	1	0	1	0	24
9	PATASHIMUL	10	7	1	1	2	4	0	25
10	RADHANAGAR**	23	13	5	1	2	2	0	46
11	SALBONI	15	8	2	0	1	0	0	26
12	SAPDHARA	12	8	4	1	1	0	0	26
13	SARDIHA	12	12	3	1	0	0	0	28
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>201</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>383</b>

\* 1 General Degree College in this GP      \*\* 1 ITI & 1 Polytechnic Institute in this GP

Source: Office of the Block Development Officer, Jhargram CD Block

It is found that no high or higher secondary school exists in Nedabahara gram-panchayat though this gram-panchayat area has the highest density of tribal population like Santal, Lodha etc.

4. **VIEWS OF PARENTS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN THE STUDIED AREA:** I have in-depth interviewed of 50 parents whose children presently are studying and some case studies have also taken during field work. It is very hoping that in response to 'why you give education to your child' about 32% Santal parents say that they want to educate their children, 34% say for self-

establishment, 20% say for getting any government job and 10% say 'to see as a good man'. About 88% Santal parents said that they send their children to school regularly. It clearly indicates that Santal parents' awareness towards the education of their children is increasing. Those parents who are not sending their children regularly to school, the researcher asks them 'why then do not send their children to school regularly', in response about 50% Santal parents cited that transportation problem and fear of elephant is the main cause, 16.67% said for economical problem and 16.67% said for help them in their work. The researcher saw that the all village road of study area is surrounded by deep forest from where elephant sometimes enters into village. Two of villagers said that the pathetic story of death of one child by elephant in two month ago. About 32% parents want to see their children as teacher, 16% each see to their child as doctor and government officer respectively, 8% each see their children as engineer and police, 4% each want to see their children as nurse and as a good person, 8% parents have no such expectation from their children, 2% each say that for marry to a good person and depends upon their study. In response to the question, 'What you see the attitude of teachers towards your children's education', 68% parents said that teachers are caring, 8% said that very much caring, 20% said that moderately caring and 4% said that teachers are not caring to their children. It is found that 28% parents expend 21%-25% of their total income for the education purpose of their child. Only 2% parents expend about 46%-50% of total income for the purpose of their child education.

**5. SOME CASE STUDIES OF PARENTS:** Some case studies taken from parents are given below:

**Case 1:** Suroj Moni Hansda, age of 30, a female illiterate married woman resides at Kajla village has one son who is studying at class XI in arts stream at Kharbandi SC High School. She studied her son if that he will get a government job after completion his education but she does not send his son to school regularly due to her poverty. Her gross monthly family income is Rs. 1800/- and she expends Rs.400/- for her son's education purpose. She expressed that teachers of her son's school are not dedicated to her son and even do not care her son's educational progress.

**Case 2:** Laxman Hansda, age of 38, a married Santal male who resides at Kajla village and his occupation is cultivation. He has three daughters and one son among them two daughters are studying at class-VII and III respectively and his younger daughter goes to ICDS and his son's age is one year. He gives education to his children if that they will get any government job in future and desires to be seen them as nurse or teacher. He regularly sends them to school. His monthly income is Rs. 3000/- and he expends Rs. 1000/- for his children's education. He feel moderately caring attitude of teachers towards the education of his children.

From the above case studies it is found that Santal parents of this area are try to give education to their children and their attitude towards education is now positive.

**6. VIEWS OF VILLAGERS REGARDING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THEIR COMMUNITY'S EDUCATION:**

During field work the researcher has in-depth interviewed of about 40 villagers regarding various aspects related to his research objectives. The researcher asks the villagers, 'are students in this area regularly attend school' - in response to this 82.5% villagers said that students in this area attend school regularly, 5% said moderately regular and 12.5% said that students in this area very irregular to attend their school. During interview the researcher asks the villagers 'what is the educated male/female of your community doing in this area?'; about 65% villagers said that educated santal in this area are fully unemployed, 7.5% each said day labour, seasonal worker, some got government service. All indicate that educated unemployment exist in the Santal society in the studied area.

**7. VIEWS OF STUDENTS REGARDING THEIR EDUCATION:**

The researcher have in-depth interview of 40 santal students among them 14 students were hosteller. It is found that about 19.23% and 3.85% students travelled 1 K.M. and 2 K.M. every day to attend their school. 11.54%, 15.38%, 11.54%, 3.85%, 15.38%, 7.69% & 11.54% of students travelled 3K.M., 4 K.M., 5K.M., 6K.M., 8K.M., 12 K.M. & 15 K.M. respectively every day to attend their school. This is totally against as per the provisions laid down in the R.T.E. Act-2009. There are so many festivals among the Santal but about 90% students of this area said that their school remain open during their festival; only 10% students who are mainly hosteller said that their school remain close during their festival. The researcher asks the students who are irregular to attend their school that 'what are the main causes in behind their irregularity', in response to this 75% students said that due to engage so many works in home like the works related with agriculture etc. and 25% students said that transportation problem and fear of elephant in the jungle road is the causes in behind their irregularity in school. When the researcher wants to know their favourite and tough subject the students freely shared their favourite and tough subjects, about 20% said History is their favourite subject, 22.5% each said Bengali & Geography, 12.5% said English and only 5% said Santali is their favourite subject. About 53.85% students said that Mathematics is the tough subject to them, 12.85% each said English and History is the tough subject to them. All the School in the studied area are Bengali medium except only one Primary School at Kajla Village, namely Kajla F.P. School under Nedabahara gram-panchayat is Santali medium. Students in this area almost all bilingual they speak Santali, their

mother-tongue as well as very fluent in Bengali. Only 5% students feel problem regarding the instruction of language in their school. During interview the researcher asks them 'do they get any help from their teacher outside of normal classroom teaching-learning'; in response to this question only 15% students said that they get help and much guidance from their teacher but 85% student said they do not get any help from their teacher outside of normal classroom teaching-learning. Students in this area whom the researcher has interviewed they said all that they do not face any bad behaviour from their teacher. About 27.5% students of this area do not get any type of scholarship. Who are get scholarship they do their scholarship money to buy books and other study related matters, it was said by 65.52% students, 6.9% students said that they give private-tutor fees, 13.79% said they buy book and also paid private tutor fees from their scholarship money and 6.9% santal students said that they give their scholarship money to their mother. About 62.5% Santal students have private-tuition teachers, even the students who stay at different hostel they also take private tuition and pay tuition fees from their scholarship money. The researcher interviewed 14 hosteller among them 92.86% students said that they do not face any problem to stay at hostel and the education atmosphere is good there. But 7.14% students said that they have face problem related to their study. They said if school provides special coaching class at hostel it would be helpful to them and they need not necessary to go to private tuition teacher. All of hostellers do not feel any problem regarding the issue of safety at hostel. About 42.86% students are satisfied to the hostel menu but 21.43% and 35.71% students said they are not satisfied and partially satisfied respectively. 62.5% students complain against food type of hostel and 37.5% students said they are unsatisfied due to mainly lack of cleanness and hygiene at hostel kitchen and at dining hall. About 32.5% students in the studied area deeply express their emotion to want to be teacher in future. 20% students want to join in army, 15% ,12.5%,10% students want to be nurse, doctor and police respectively. 7.5% Students wished see them in so many professions like air hostess, singer, tailoring master etc.

**8. SOME CASE STUDIES OF STUDENTS:** Some case studies taken from Santal students are given below:

**Case 1:** Baburam Murmu, age of 14, a son of a day-labour, is presently studying in class IX at Baroshol Vidyatan by staying at hostel of this school. He said that their long vacation in school is during summer and durga puja and school also remains close on Santali festivals also. His favourite subject is history and his tough subject is Sanskrit. He is very shy in nature when i interviewed him and he does not take part actively in any programme of school. But he is very much like to play football. He is very fluent in Bengali and he does not feel any problem regarding the medium of instruction in school as Bengali is the medium of instruction in his school. But he talks Santali when he goes to home. He does not face any bad behaviour from his teachers. Playground of his school attracts him so much. He expressed that school authority should be take initiative to plantation to make the school environment better. He does not get any scholarship. Though he stays at hostel but he takes private tuition. He does not face any problem to stay at hostel but he moderately satisfied to the food item provided them at hostel and he wants fish should be provided them at least one day in a week. He wants to be a doctor in future.

**Case 2:** Jayanti Murmu, age of 18, a girl of an illiterate driver, reeds in class XII at Rani Vinod Manjuri Rashtriya Balika Vidyalaya, a Bengali medium school and she travels 6 K.M. every day to go top her school. Her school opens on the festivals of Santal and long vacation of her school is during summer and durga puja. Her favourite subject history and tough subject is philosophy. She takes part in Swaraswati puja in her school. She likes to see television outside of her study. She does not face any problem regarding the medium of instruction of her school. During interview with the researcher she fluently talks in Bengali but her mother tongue is Santali. She gets scholarship and she spends this scholarship money to buy her books and dress. She wants to be a nurse in future.

From the above case studies it is found that they all are studying at Bengali medium school and they do not feel any problem regarding the instruction of language. Students and santal people of this area are bilingual they speak both Santali and Bengali very fluently. Santal students of this area participate Saraswati puja in their school.

## VI. CONCLUSION

According to Census, 2011 the literacy rate among the Santal in West Bengal is 54.72% in which male share 66.12% and female share 43.51%. The decadal changes from 2001 to 2011 in total, male and female literacy rate among the Santal in West Bengal are 12.48%, 8.8% & 16.53% respectively and it is seen high among female population with respect to male. The literacy rate among the Santal in the studied area is 71.18% in which male share 79.82% & female share 63.09%. The rate of male and female in Class I-IV level education is 15.14% and 17.17% respectively and in the level of V-VIII education is 29.36% and 26.18% respectively and in the level of IX-X education is 18.35% and 10.30% respectively and in the level of XI-XII education is 12.84% and 8.15% respectively. It clearly indicates that most of the Santal girls do not continue their education after completion of primary education. No high or higher secondary school exists in Nedabahara gram-

panchayat though this gram-panchayat area has the highest density of tribal population like Santal, Lodha etc. Santal parents' awareness towards the education of their children is positive. Santal parents prefer to hostel (ashram) school. Poverty, transportation problem and fear of elephant are the main cause in behind the irregularity of students to their school. Educated unemployment is very much prominent among the Santal in the studied area. Most school remain open during the Santal festivals in the studied area as a result most of the Santal students don't attend their school during this period or on that day. About 62.5% Santal students have private-tuition teachers in the studied area. They expressed their need of special coaching classes in school or at hostel. History, Bengal & Geography is top most favourite subjects among the Santal students in the studied area. Mathematics and English is tough most subjects among the student in the studied area. About 27.5% Santal students of this area do not get any type of scholarship. Students who are hosteller are unsatisfied to the menu, cleanness and hygiene at hostel. The literacy rate among the Santal is satisfactory but the attainment of higher education among the Santal population in the studied area is alarmingly very low and most educated santals are unemployed.

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