CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
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6.1 Summary

Chapter 1 entitled ‘Introduction’ covers the concept and importance of information, objectives of studying information needs, methodology for assessing community information needs, process of identification of information needs; statement of the research problem which is warranted to be answered, a set of interlinked questions for the purpose of this study; the objectives of the research study; hypotheses for the answers of the interlinked questions; the causes behind the choice of community; research methodology (literature search, visit and tour programmes and community survey); the importance of this study; definitional analysis of the terms information needs, community, community information and information seeking behaviour; identification of the various types of information needs of Santal community; the origin of community information services and community information studies and services in India and abroad; the problems regarding information needs assessment; the processes associated with the information seeking behaviour in order to fulfil the information needs.

Chapter 2 entitled ‘Background of the Santal Community’ explains the origin of the term ‘Santal’; their tribal group and language group; statistical data of Santal population in India and West Bengal; socio-cultural background; Panchashil policy for tribal development; origin of the Santals; general characteristics and community life of the Santals (includes good temperament, love for music and dance, community working, drinks habit, vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet, variable occupation, mud house, artistic mind, unity, strong religious and superstition faith, non-existence of caste system, keeper of traditional values, family structure same to other Indian communities, father is the supreme authority of any family property, women is inferior to men, freedom of women, traditional political institution, oaths, marriage and divorce; dress, ornament and furniture; economy, education, sports activities, language and scripts, taboo and totem, festivals, birth and naming of the child, disease and treatment, death and funeral rites); geographical location of Jamboni block; historical background of Jamboni block; statistical data of Jamboni block; statistical data of each mouza under survey, nearest market place for each mouza; banks, co-operative societies and post offices for mouzas under survey; health centres for mouzas under survey; schools, colleges and research institutions for mouzas under
survey; rural library facilities of mouzas under survey and other available facilities of mouzas under survey.

Chapter 3 entitled 'Methodology of Data Collection' discusses the total sample population for Santal community information needs survey; sample characteristics (include range of age of male and female respondents in each mouza, number of male and female respondents (i.e., sex) in each mouza, head of the household, size of the household in each mouza, religion, nature of occupation, educational qualification, owned/leased cultivated land or landless labourers, drinking water and sanitation, cooking fuel, sources of lighting, language or languages known, nature of the family, economic condition of the household); methodology (questionnaire-cum-interview) followed; basis of designing questionnaire to assess the different kinds of Santal community information needs; nature of collected data; and techniques of data compilation.

Chapter 4 entitled 'Data Analysis and Findings' explains the information needs analysis and findings [includes distribution of information needs (group and sex wise), distribution of information needs (age group and sex wise) frequency of information requirement (group and sex wise), preferential ranking of information requirement (group and sex wise)]; information service requirement analysis and findings [includes distribution of information service requirement (group and sex wise), distribution of information service requirement (age group and sex wise) [prioritization of different types of information sources use for specific information of Group A mouzas respondents (sex wise), prioritization of different types of information sources use for specific information of Group B mouzas respondents (sex wise), prioritization of different types of information sources use among male respondents for different types of information (age group wise), prioritization of different types of information sources use among female respondents for different types of information (age group wise)]; information seeking behaviour towards library [includes what is leisure, leisure time utilisation by the Santals, library consciousness of the Santals [includes distribution of Santal persons having information about library (group and sex wise), distribution of Santal persons having information about library (age group and sex wise), distribution of Santal persons requiring information about library (group and sex wise), distribution of Santal persons requiring information about library (age group and
sex wise]) and leisure time utilisation by the library members of the Santal community.

Chapter 5 entitled 'Community Information Services' discusses what's and how community information services; monitoring and evaluating performance; conditions for success in community information; necessity of community information services in developing nations; community information services for non-user disadvantaged community; community information studies and services in abroad (e.g. USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Scandinavian countries, Denmark etc.); community information studies and services in India; arrangement of public libraries to serve as community information centres; and findings of survey regarding the maximum use of particular information source for receiving community information service and proposal for community information service from that source/centre.

6.2 Conclusions

The study examines the information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Santal.

Community study is an inter-disciplinary approach. The search for psychological bent of mind is coupled with social and economic perspective including their traditional culture, history, and distinct ethnographic account.

The demand for information is closely related to the level of development of the community concerned and this demand also increases with the passage of time. Development implies economic and social improvement. Santal as a distinct isolated tribal community need information on various dimensions to raise their livelihood and living standard. The areas of information seeking of this community people have been identified in this study and it is revealed that they require information on every aspect of life. Though the numbers of respondents vary from item to item, still it is found that the need for information is rising among them.

It is found that illiteracy and ignorance are the main obstacles for which the desire and urgency for information have become unexpressed. The study confirms that their requirement of information demands more information in some cases, so that their needs are properly fulfilled.
Though the Santals live in an isolated way, now they are not trying to be alienated from the outside world. They are mixing with the people of other communities. A large number of non-Santal people live in the Jamboni block. Moreover many outsiders including businessmen come to this area for different purpose and the Santals also move to the adjacent town areas reciprocally. Hence interaction with the outside world is not undesirable by the community members. Socio-economic development and their integration with the main stream and the outer world can generate demand for information for better life.

As majority of the community members are economically very poor and they are disadvantaged in all respects, the community should endeavour to raise their quality of life by providing information on different socio-economic activities of the world at large.

The opinions of persons associated with the public library movement in West Bengal are to be taken into consideration in this regard. Most of them are of the opinion that Public Library should act as community information centre to provide information services to the rural ignorant people on employment and self-employment, housing, loan and savings, agriculture and related activities, small scale cottage industries, health education, sanitary measures, pure drinking water, legal aids, communication tourism facilities, hospital services, fishery, piggery, cattle rearing, dairy activities, co-operative societies and so on.

But my research findings go for Village Panchayat as a community information service centre because Santal community use the Village Panchayat maximum for their fulfilment of information needs. As most of the Santal people of the surveyed mouzas are illiterate, so they do not use the Public Library. But the study has explored the efficacy of the Village Panchayat to cater the information needs of the community. The existing system of Village Panchayat, if slightly restructured, can serve as an information centre by encouraging the use of Village Panchayat among the members of the Santal and other communities. The influence of Rural Library is less compared to the Village Panchayat in the rural areas. Mass literacy and library extension programmes are necessary for increasing rural library use among the underdeveloped communities and then it will be possible to transform the rural libraries as community information centres.
It is difficult for an investigator to ascertain the needs of the Santal people due to the less popularity of their own script and decaying language. Their script should be properly developed to encourage them to come in contact through their own language and information should be provided in their own language which would act as a catalytic agent to improve their quality of life.

The researcher recommends that

1) Governmental direct contact is necessary to make aware the underdeveloped communities (e.g. Santal) people with all types of information because they are very shy in nature and unwilling to go to the government office, library etc. to fulfil their information needs;

2) Establishment of primary, secondary, higher secondary schools and colleges in the remote area and introduction of teaching in Santali language for Santal people;

3) Efficiently organized informal literacy mission and mobile library service will be helpful for education of the tribal people as for example ‘Ekal Vidyalaya’ (school with one teacher) project [which was established in 1988 with 60 schools, in 2004 the number is 10,100 and proposed growth in 2007 is 30,000 and in 2011 is 1 (one) lakh] already running successfully in Nepal, North-Eastern India like Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Eastern India like Jharkhand and South India like Kerala. The main motto of this project is to educate (including primary education, professional education, health education and awareness education) the backward community people in the easiest way considering ‘education with play’ as well as medical treatment by the Arogya Sevika (Nurse) for the backward class in the primary stage of disease and to involve the backward people in various types of self-employment programme like agriculture, warm culture for bio-fertiliser etc.

So establishment and continuation of ‘Ekal Vidyalaya’ or similar project is necessary for tribal or backward class upliftment (Source: Ekal Vidyalaya CD. Contact: Ekal Vidyalaya: A People's Movement, 5-A, Link Road, Jangpura Ext., New Delhi-14. E-mail: ekalvidyalaya@vsnl.net). Education is the main source of knowledge and knowledge is power so education accelerates the progress of mankind;
4) Santali (Alchiki script) language and literature should be recognized by the Government from Nursery level syllabus to highest educational level to attract them for education because a community will be developed through education with mother language support;

5) At least one Village Development Officer (agriculture) in each Gram (Village) Panchayat should be appointed to act as a mediator between agricultural research centre/Agricultural Development Officer (Block Level) and village level farmers [specially of underdeveloped communities (e.g., Santal)];

6) More direct contact is necessary among multipurpose workers/anganwadi workers/veterinary workers and underdeveloped communities (e.g., Santal) people for better health, child care and cattle care of underdeveloped communities (e.g., Santal) people;

7) Government should pass the Traditional Culture Preservation Act for easy maintenance of traditional culture without disturbance from the outsiders;

8) To motivate the Santal community with other community people for free exchange of information and culture;

9) Village Development Officer/Anganwadi workers/Gram Sevak (Village Social Worker)/Health Staff etc. should be trained with Alchiki script for working knowledge in Santali language for conversation as well to convey information to Santal and other underdeveloped communities people;

10) To give the opportunity to Santal and other underdeveloped communities people in employment through sports quota and other State and Central Government employment to uplift themselves and bridge the information, cultural and economical gap between the developed communities people and underdeveloped communities (e.g., Santal) people which will help to remove their poverty, anxiety and improve their personality dimension and academic career;

11) Organization of various fairs, festivals, observation of famous Santal personalities/freedom fighters, seminars on Santal history, origin, role of Santals in freedom movement from Governmental financial support to preserve the traditional values of Santals.