PREFACE

After getting the UGC-Research Fellowship in 1995, I communicated postally with Dr. Subal Chandra Biswas, one of the great thinkers of Library and Information Science in India as well as in the world. Receiving the green signal from his side I met with him. He was very much interested in the subject like 'Information Retrieval System' and 'Community Information Services'. After selecting the subject 'Community Information Services', I gave the proposal to do the research work on Santal Community because I live in a Tribal Block where 30 percent population is belongs to this community according to 2001 census report. Besides this, Lodha, Kharia, Ho, Birhad, Munda, Koda, Mahali, Sabar, Bhumij etc. tribal communities live in this block. As Santal villagers live very near villages from my native village so I am very much familiar with their lifestyle, traditional culture, economic status, village organisation etc. They are underdeveloped but their homogeneous culture and special characteristics attracts me to choose this community. Dr. Subal Chandra Biswas’s good advice encouraged me enough to continue the research work and he kindly agreed to guide me on the Santals entitled 'Information Needs and Patterns of Information Seeking Behaviour of the Santal Community of Jamboni Block in West Midnapore District, West Bengal' as a part of Community Information Services. The Santals are one of the largest homogeneous tribes of India, chiefly concentrating in the South-Eastern plateau of Jharkhand (formerly Bihar), especially in the division of Santal Parganas. Most of the Santals live in the sixteen districts of India viz. 1) Sarguja 2) Palamou 3) Hazaribag 4) Giridih 5) Santal Pargana 6) Ranchi 7) Dhanbad 8) Singhbhum (of Jharkhand State) 9) Purulia 10) Bankura 11) East Midnapore 12) West Midnapore 13) Birbhum (of West Bengal State) 14) Sundargarh 15) Mayurbhanj and 16) Keonjhar (of Orissa State). They are well known for their physiological characteristics and bright historical records and distinct socio-cultural background. A large volume of materials is available on the different aspect of their life but very little is yet available in print about their psychological constitution. They are the early inhabitants of India but now they are deprived. In the British period they retrenched from their native place and lost their land as well as jungle property.
A Santal's land not only provides economic security but is a powerful link with his ancestors; and this applies to newly entered areas no less than the old, for he will not take possession till the spirits approve. The land is a part of his spiritual as well as economic heritage. As they belong to a deprived community so I feel interest to do the research work on this community and I hope that my work will help the government to take necessary action for their development.

Research in information behaviour has occupied information scientists since before the term 'information science' was coined. We can take its origins back to the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference of 1948. The term 'Community Information' was originated in 1960s in the Western Countries and now it is a very popular area of research all over the world. This is an interdisciplinary nature of work because various subject like sociology, psychology, economics, history and culture, philosophy, anthropology, geography have a great impact on this community survey. This research work not only shows the Santal community information i.e., information regarding food, shelter, dress, health, sanitation, agriculture, employment, education, politics, religion, culture, leisure but also recommended a set of proposals for every aspect for their development which helps to bridge the gap between other developed communities and enable them to reach in the mainstream of the society.

Information Needs arise when a person recognises a gap in his/her state of knowledge and Information Seeking Behaviour is composed of studies that are concerned with who need what kind of information and for what reasons: how information is found, evaluated and used, and how these needs can be identified and satisfied. The information seeking behaviour is thus concerned with establishing relationship with the people, information and system of an order so as to obtain the best results. That behaviour is the best that yields the highest information satisfaction to users. Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour is ever changing but Santal Community is an underdeveloped community so there is a slight change among their information needs and information seeking behaviour. Most of them are illiterate and belongs to below poverty line so still now they are in the darkness of the society and unable to get the opportunities of modern culture/society.
Due to passage of time some needs at earlier stages have become irrelevant e.g., Village Organisation of Santal community is now more or less abolished and for judgment they depend on political workers/leaders as well as court. Impact of politics or political pressure is the main cause behind the abolishment. Santal political leaders act as catalytic agent towards the transformation. However, it is very difficult to ascertain the interval of time during which it changed. In any case research is an unending process. Nothing can be precisely answered within a specific span of time. During one's lifetime, there may occurred many unprecedented incidents and changes. In every sphere of life there is an unimaginable impact of the enormous development of present science and technology. What was new has become old and what is new will be old shortly. Consequently, for a specific period of time, the traditional nature of information seeking behaviour can be studied, since this is an ever-changing phenomenon and there is no scale to measure the change. So in this study traditional information needs, have been observed and analysed along with the changing nature of information needs. The present information seeking behaviour is also expected to change very soon, if socio-economic development rapidly takes place. Further course of action has to be taken by the future research in the context of their environmental and social situations. The change of information needs can be measured in terms of a specific time span, preferably a very short one, by observing the information seeking behaviour of the respondents, and carefully assessing the same.

It would be right to mention that this study was not done by my individual effort only but also by the active co-operation which I received from various parts. My deepest acknowledgement in this regard is to my guru Prof. Subal Chandra Biswas, Department of Library and Information Science, Burdwan University under whose supervision I could complete the work. His continuous guidance and counselling enabled me to overcome the difficulties that I came across in course of my research work. I acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Manaranjan Mahapatra, Department of Library and Information Science, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa who lent me valuable advice on survey methodology as well as outline of the research work.
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