

A Profile of Village Satakanya

Satakanya (also pronounced as Satakania in local Odia language) is a small village under Pratapsasan village administration (Gram Panchayat) in the district of Khordha, Odisha state, India. It is about 12 kilometers away from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha state. On the way to Puri – a coastal town and a major tourist attraction – a narrow motorable road leads to this small habitation. One can find clean and flowing canals as one approaches the habitation. A power transmission centre is under construction in front of the village. Two rivers - Bhargabi and Daya - flow not far from this habitation. People of the village visit the local market at Balakati. They also visit the bi-weekly rural market (haat) that opens on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

Demography

The village (ward no 14) consists of two hamlets as Muslim Sahi and Behera Sahi. Muslim Sahi constitutes about 80-plus households while Behera Sahi consists of 18 families only. There seems to be no “single-person family” in the village. The Muslim Sahi comprises about 80-plus families with a minimum of five members in each family. While talking to the people in regard to the birth registration, it was observed that people are not aware of birth certificate system. The Muslims use Urdu as means of communication among themselves. They speak the Odia language fluently as well.

Housing Pattern and Community Resources

The community is very poor economically. Most houses are built under the housing scheme of the government are *Pucca* houses. However, the houses are not plastered. The people have their own homestead land but no agrarian land at all. The village has constructed a Masjid at its cost. A water tank is installed in the Masjid under the MPLAD scheme for drinking purposes. Similarly, as Waqf property, the community has a graveyard or Qabaristan. The Masjid is managed by the community with contributions from the households. The community is also provided with one tube well. Households are connected with electricity and about 12 families are connected with BPL electricity. People in general use mobile phones. Regarding means of transportation, the village has no large vehicles; available means include one pick-up van; around fifteen two wheelers and two numbers of auto rickshaws.

Around 5-10 families have television sets in their homes. There is no community building except one under-construction. The Imam of Masjid leads prayers and teaches Quran to about thirty children. The Imam gives a talk of five minutes after the evening prayer every day. Around twenty to thirty people attend prayer every day. One person has performed Hajj who is now serving as a Muezzin in a Masjid in Bhubaneswar city.

Life and Livelihood

Life and livelihood of the people is very difficult here. People do not have agrarian land. Nor are they into any traditional business or skill-based activities. There is no instance of migration visible here. Most of the people are engaged in daily wage activities or move

around the city with *chudi* (bangles) and other small merchandize. The average daily earning of such people is around Rs.200 (USD3.00 approx.). There is a huge school dropout problem; and some such children are engaged in chicken, mutton shops and other small businesses in Balakati and nearby places. A few people are also engaged as laborers in cattle business and other micro-businesses of vegetables, garments etc.

Since there is no forestland in the vicinity, there is no chance of any livelihood based on forest produce. Most women are not linked to any income generation activities. During summer, a few women get work in a cold drinks company located near the village. As per the discussion with the people at grass roots, it is revealed that though people have got job cards under MGNREGA scheme of the government, they are not availing the job opportunities under this national employment generation program. People are also not well aware of such national employment generation scheme. A few people have been engaged as laborers in the power transmission centre, which is under construction just in front of the village.

Political Life and Participation in Governance

There is no hardly any political participation of people in governance. Most are not aware of the PRI (Panchayati Raj Institutions) system. There is little awareness of various developmental schemes. Even though the major population of the ward falls under Muslim community, they are far from being represented politically in the ward. There is anger among the people towards the elected representatives and there are complaints that after election is over no elected representative is found in the village.

Health, Water and Sanitation

Sanitation is one of the major challenges here. Even while the country undergoes a massive *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Drive), this habitation just close to Bhubaneswar hardly shows any sign of good hygiene. Open defecation is common in the village. Only a few households have been provided with government-funded toilets while others do not have toilet facilities. From the discussions with the villagers, it is revealed that the people who have constructed toilets of their own, have not been sanctioned the said amount under the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*. The community has a tube well which is used by the members. A few of the households have their own water facility. The water tank of Masjid is also used by the community to avail cold drinking water during hot summer. There are no major health issues except common ailments like cold, fever, paralysis, allergy and others. People move to Balakati for primary treatment. In case of critical health issues, they go to the government-run Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar or to SCB Medical College Hospital, Cuttack.

Education and Related Issues

The community badly suffers from the problem of dropout. There is one Upper Primary school in the vicinity of the village and an Anganwadi Kendra adjoining the school. The children are going to the Anganwadi Kendra and enrolled in the school. The motivation for schooling in the village is very poor. The names of the kids are enrolled just for namesake.

Till date, only three children – one boy and two girls - have passed matriculation. The boy is enrolled in college and the girls have discontinued their education. One boy is studying in a Madrasa outside Odisha.

During conversation with the Anganwadi didi (sister), she mentioned “the children from Muslim Sahi are coming to school just for Mid Day Meal only; they are crowding the school only during the time of MDM and the the school remains vacant for rest of the day”. The Anganwadi didi mentioned that she has submitted a report to the government on the drop out issue. As high as 40 dropouts are in the age between 10- 18 years in the Muslim part of the village. The parents of these children denied the fact of engagement of these children in any economic activities in response to a query regarding child labor in the village. The researchers observed, however, that children are indeed working and engaged in chicken shops and other petty businesses at nearby market.

Major Governmental Schemes and Role of Voluntary Organizations

The villagers are availing ration card benefits. People with disabilities are availing the pension for PWDs. Similarly, the elderly people are getting Old Age Pension. However, a few elderly people are struggling to avail this national old age pension scheme. People have got benefits of housing scheme as well. There is no presence of voluntary organizations in the village. People are of the opinion that “*we are reluctant to respond to studies or surveys by the NGOs; they just come and note down our issues and problems but don't revert with any developmental schemes at all.*” However, the All Odisha Muslim Women's Welfare Foundation may be an exception and had provided training on tailoring to women of the community as well as two stitching machines to the community members. And another organization had distributed blankets and clothes to some of the people in the community.

Family Life and Status of Women

The family life is nuclear in nature. The male members lead independent lives after marriage. Women in general are confined to homes. They are not connected to any income generation activities. During discussions with leaders of SHGs, it surfaced that the community does faces the evil of dowry system. The girls are married just after 18. There is neither belief nor practice of caste system in the village. In Muslim Sahi, there are seven women Self Help Groups named Arman, Alisha, Sahista, Resham, Bismillah, Chinnayi and Gufran. The Sahistah SHG is a group of people with disabilities including people with mental diseases.

These SHGs organize meetings every month in the school and collect an agreed amount to deposit in the bank. Two finance organizations named Bandhan bank and Bharat Finance are providing loans to these women SHGs. These SHGs are not connected to any income generation activities at all. The leaders of the SHGs opined that they are eagerly waiting to get connected to any income generation activities, which will help the families to grow financially. Members of these SHGs are not trained in any skill-based activities. Women are primarily homemakers taking care of the household and children in the family. Many women are also engaged in taking care of livestock including cattle (cows, goats) and

poultry (hens). Most of the women from SHGs opined that they are taking loans to help their husbands in petty businesses.

Social Institutions

There is Masjid committee, which also works for maintaining peace and harmony in the village. It settles small disputes in the village. The male youths of the village have formed a club, called Madina Cricket Club, which is an active group of cricket enthusiasts.

Special Interaction with Anganwadi In-charge and Ward Member

The research team visited to Anganwadi In-charge Mrs. Mamata Behera and the newly elected Ward Member Mrs. Pramila Behera. Our interaction with these community leaders revealed the following points in regard to the Muslim Sahi:

- a. The over-population of the Muslims has caused the misery of Muslims here.
- b. There are huge numbers of dropouts among the school going kids. Crossing even the secondary level of education is a big challenge for the community.
- c. The parents are not motivated to take care of the education of the children.
- d. There is extreme poverty in Muslim Sahi as compared to the Behera Sahi.

Major development challenges and possibilities

Under development challenges, the following may be cited:

- a. Extreme poverty
- b. Population size
- c. Governmental negligence
- d. Illiteracy and high rate of dropout
- e. No emergence of community leadership
- f. Lack of exposure and connectivity to outside world.
- g. Non participation in political and developmental process.

Suggestive Measures

- a. There is a possibility of organizing the community towards mainstream society. There are energetic women in the villages (under SHGs) with leadership qualities who may be well trained and connected to livelihood programmes.
- b. Special drives on education are the most important call of hour. The “high dropout rate” issue must be challenged immediately by introducing educational initiatives. The attention of the state is to be drawn towards education of the children.
- c. Leadership training programs have to be initiated here for organizing the youths and linking them to different skill development programs.
- d. Special awareness drives are required to sensitize the masses on various minority development initiatives taken up by the government of India.

- e. The community needs to be linked with the governmental schemes like Odisha Livelihood Mission, MGNREGS, Fourth State Finance Commission Award, Fourteen Central Finance Commission Award and others.
- f. Awareness generation for reducing family size may be helpful in smoothing lives of the people.

Special Note:

- The researchers have used Focus Group Discussions, community meetings, key informant informal interviews, observation, transit walk, discussion with youth, children and women SHGs to understand the community.
- A public meeting was organized in the Masjid.
- The Anganwadi did not allow researchers access to any records of the Anganwadi.
- There has been no instance of alcoholism in the village but recently few people have started taking alcohol as informed by the Imam in the meeting. The prevalence of tobacco consumption is high.
- While talking to the people of both the communities (Muslims and Hindus), it was found that there is hardly any element of communal tension. There is peaceful coexistence in the village.

Reported by: Md. Imran Ali | Field Work by: Md. Imran Ali and Smruti R Sahoo