



## **Demographic Situation of Satar/Santhal in Nepal**

### **(A Case of Surunga VDC, Jhapa, Nepal)**

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#### ***Abstract***

*This study focused especially on the number of Satar/Santhal peoples (an ethnic composition of population) living in Surunga VDC and Nepal. Owing to such, data were collected through secondary sources (VDC Records and National Census Reports), data analysis has been done by incorporating simple methods like numerical figures, tables and bar diagrams. Findings suggest that Satar/ Santhal population of Surunga VDC is shifting from highly marginalized to endangered group by the view point of size of the Satar/Santhal community people. There is negative relationship quantitatively between the number of Satar/Santhal population of Surunga VDC and Nepal. It shows the vast decreasing trend in the Surunga VDC and slight increasing trend in Nepal in Satar/Santhal community. This situation is not the good sign of social, ethnic and demographic inclusiveness.*

**Keywords:** *Satar/Santhal, marginalized, endangered, community, people*

#### **Introduction:**

##### **1.1. Background**

The ethnic/racial composition of the population is very important aspect of any population structure. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (Scott and Marshall 2005), describes an ethnic group as, Individuals who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to share common characteristics that differentiate them from the other collectivities in a society, and from which they develop their distinctive cultural behaviour.

Socio-Cultural studies of the Satar/Santhal community have been studied by various scholars and researchers. HMG Communication Ministry (2031 BS) mentioned about Satar in “MECHI DEKHI MAHAKALI (part one)”. Satar/Snthal are recognized as a distinct ethnic group from the Hindus. They are called “Santhal in India and “Sauntar” in some places. But they are known by Satar/Santhal in Nepal. Major subclans of the Satar are Kisku, Murmu, Hemram, Soren, Hasda, Mardi, Tudu, Besra, Baske etc. (HMG, MOC, 2031).

Santhali is a language of Austro –Asiatic family, distantly related to Vietnamese and Khmer. Satars are one of the most backward ethnic groups of Nepal. They live in the districts of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. Their ancestral are strong hold of the dark-skinned, curly-haired and stoutly built. Australoid Satars or Santhals is the Nepalese Plain and the Santhal Pargana of West Bengal in India. Santhals also call themselves Hor. They have their own unique religion and culture. They are animist. Their ancestral deity is Thakurjiu and their paternal guardian deity is Maranburu. Bow and arrows are their traditional weapons. Their favorite meat is pork. Most Satars are engaged in farming and labour.

Nepal has been since long known as a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural country. Size of various ethnic/caste groups in the total population was hardly known. Various native ethnic groups inhabit scattered in many places of Nepal. They do have their own customs, traditions and culture. There was not a system of keeping records of these ethnic groups in the past. The censuses from 1911 to 1981 AD did not keep any records of population and habitats of these ethnic groups. Largest ethnic groups are the Brahmans and Chhetris. Some of the ethnic groups are very small. Many languages spoken by these groups in Nepal are in danger of disappearing.

The total number of people inhabiting in a specific area is the size of human population. Major Ethnicities in Surunga are Bahmin, Chhetri, Satar, Kami, Damai, Newar, Tamang, Rajbanshi, Dhimal, Sarki, Magar, Rai, Limbu and among others. Out of all the ethnicities, Satar and Rajbanshi are underprivileged in Surunga.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

This study generally aims to investigate whether the Satar/Santhal population of Surunga VDC is decreasing quantitatively or not? Specifically, to assess the available numerical data (size) of Satar/Santhal population of Nepal and Surunga VDC is also the objective of the study.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Various ethnological literatures are available regarding Satar/Santhal community. Some of the relevant literatures can lead the present study. There exist a large amount of literature on Santhali people and language. However, most of these works deal with them from Indian perspectives since India is the place of their origin and accommodates a larger chunk of their population. According to Grierson (1909), Santhali is the most important of all the Munda languages. He mentions in his work about the name of the language, the original home of Santhals, the present home, and dialects of language. He also presents different aspects of Santhali language: phonology, morphology and a framework of Santhali Skeleton Grammar.

Writings on Santhali people and language in Nepal have recently started. These include Niraula (2057), Yadav (2003), Hansdah and Murmu (2005) and Thakur and Shobha (2008) has done a comparative study of verb agreement of Satar and Nepali languages. This study provides a glimpse for the historical background of Satar/Santhal but it has not touched any of the social, demographic and cultural matters.

The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) has categorized of developmental stages of indigenous peoples are:

**a. Endangered group:** Kusunda; Bankariya; Raute; Surel; Hayu; Raji; Kisan; Lepcha; Meche; and Kusbadiya

**b. Highly marginalized group:** Majhi; Siyar; Lohmi; Thudam; Dhanuk; Chepang; **Satar (Santhal)**; Jhagad; Thami; Bote; Danuwar; and Baramu

**c. Marginalized group:** Sunuwar; Tharu; Tamang; Bhujel; Kumal; Rajbansi; Gangai; Dhimal; Bhote; Darai; Tajpuriya; Pahari; Topkegola; Dolpo; Free; Mugal; Larke; Lohpa; Dura; and Walung

**d. Disadvantaged group:** Chhaintan; Tangbe; Tinganule Thakali; Bargaule; Marphali Thakali; Gurung; Magar; Rai; Limbu; Sherpa; Yakkha; Chhantyal; Jirel; Byansi; and Yolmo

**e. Advanced group:** Newar; and Thakali.

According to NEFIN among the indigenous peoples of Nepal Satar/ Santhal ethnic group is fall under the highly marginalized group (category b). But the present situation of Satar/ Santhal population is not improving as compared to the other communities. This is the central focus of the present study.

According to the Act for the establishment of the Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, 2002, "indigenous nationalities refer to those ethnic groups or communities who have their own mother tongue and traditional customs, different cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or oral history" (HMG-N 2002:170). The Nepal Government's definition of indigenous peoples falls short of the definition drafted by experts on indigenous peoples.

Various other books and articles written by researchers and scholars have only introductory and basic information on Satar/Santhal. "A note on the Nepalese Satar festivals of Shoarai and Patamala" by Ghimire (1980), "Ethnic Group of Nepal and their way of living" by Shrestha (1972) "Nepali Janajeevan" by Sharma (1976), "Nepal District Profile" by Aryal (1982) provides the knowledge about Nepali Satar/Santhal population. "Sex Preference and Desired Family Size of Satar Community" by Subedi (1995) has helped to lead and generate ideas for different aspects of Satar/Santhal of Nepal. This study tried to find out Satar/Santhal population of Surunga VDC and Nepal is increasing or decreasing quantitatively.

### **3. Method and Material**

A descriptive and analytical approach has been used to analyze the size of Satar/Santhal community in Surunga VDC. This study covers the total population of Satar/Santhal Community of Surunga VDC. This study is based on secondary data, achieved from VDC and DDC records in various time periods. Required data are collected as per the objectives of the study. Each required tables are drawn as simple classifications, percentage, rate etc. The data for this study come primarily from the VDC record based on the national data organized by CBS. National censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011 AD have become the most important sources of data on the size of the national ethnic and VDC population.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

Historically, it is difficult to provide and receive the reliable information on ethnic/caste composition because the history of unified Nepal begins only after 1768 and there is lack of

demographic, anthropological and linguistic survey in Nepal to up to date of data of the various ethnic/caste groups.

The CBS has remained the single most important reliable source in providing the national-level information on caste/ethnicity and their various socioeconomic characteristics. . The CBS provided data on 59 ethnic/caste groups in the 1991 census, 102 ethnic /caste groups in the 2001 census and 125 caste/ ethnic group in Nepal. Despite these, available information, many agencies provide their own information on ethnic/caste groups and thus the number of ethnic/caste groups and their population size differ from one source to another. Numerically no single group is predominant. Number of Satar/ Santhal population of Surunga VDC and national censuses shows the real and factual situation of the Satar/ Santhal community.

The table 4.1 clarifies that majority of people i.e. 38.76% of the total population of Surunga VDC are Brahmin ethnic group in 2048 BS. Chhetry ethnic group comes in the second position because 18.93% population is fall under the Chhetry category in 2048 BS. The Satar/ Santhal ethnic group of Surunga VDC captured the third position because 8.51% population is Satar/ Santhal ethnic category in 2048 BS. The other ethnic group of population are Rai (4.20%), Newar (4.20%), Limbu (4%), Sarki (3.99%), Magar (3.55%), Tamang (3.51%), Kami (2.72%), Damai (2.34%), Gurung (2.23%), Rajbamsi (0.56%), Dhimal (0.33%) and Other (2.17%) ethnic group respectively according to the records of VDC in 2048 BS.

Similarly, table 4.1 indicates that again Brahmin (38.76%), Chhetry (18.93%) and Satar/ Santhal (5.65%) of the total population of Surunga VDC are first, second and third position respectively in 2053 BS. Brahmin and Chhetry ethnic group captured the same number (percent) of the total population but Satar/Santhal population decreases 2.86% from 8.51% to 5.65% even though the total population of Surunga VDC is increases 18% from 16,747 to 19,761 between the period of 2048 and 2053 BS. The other ethnic group of population Rai, Newar, Limbu, Sarki, Magar, Tamang, Kami, Damai, Gurung, Rajbamsi and Dhimal occupied 4.20%, 4.30%, 4%, 3.99%, 3.36%, 3.51%, 2.72%, 1.57%, 1.42%, 0.59% and 0.34% population respectively. The other ethnic group of population also occupied the remarkable (6.46%) population in 2053 BS (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Population Composition of Surunga VDC According to Ethnicity in 2048 and 2053 BS

SN	Ethnic Group	2048 BS			2053 BS		
		HHs	Population	Percent	HHs	Population	Percent
01	Brahmin	1325	6491	38.76	1630	7660	38.76
02	Chhetry	610	3171	18.93	750	3742	18.93
<b>03</b>	<b>Satar/Santhal</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>1425</b>	<b>8.51</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>5.65</b>
04	Rai	095	704	4.20	116	830	4.20
05	Newar	097	703	4.20	119	851	4.30
06	Limbu	096	670	4.00	118	790	4.00
07	Sarki	090	667	3.99	110	788	3.99
08	Magar	084	595	3.55	104	703	3.56
09	Tamang	080	587	3.51	098	693	3.51
10	Kami	056	456	2.72	069	538	2.72
11	Damai	044	392	2.34	050	310	1.57

12	Gurung	040	373	2.23	040	280	1.42
13	Rajbamsi	013	093	0.56	015	117	0.59
14	Dhimal	012	056	0.33	016	066	0.34
15	Other	062	364	2.17	197	1276	6.46
Total		2996	16747	100.00	3692	19761	100.00

Source: Records of Surunga VDC

Table 4.2: Population Composition of Surunga VDC According to Ethnicity in 2058, 2063 and 2068 BS

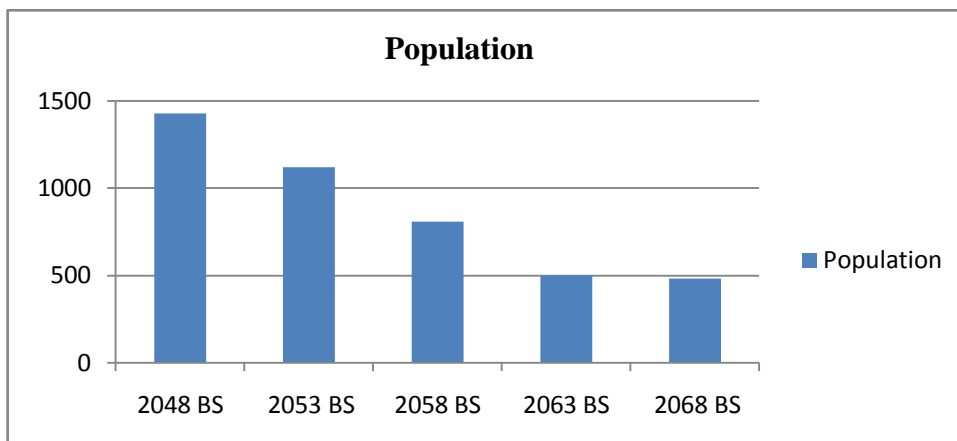
SN	Ethnic Group	2058 BS		2063 BS		2068 BS	
		Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Percent
01	Brahmin	7710	35.67	8687	34.04	11032	34.20
02	Chhetry	4677	21.64	6654	26.07	8451	26.20
<b>03</b>	<b>Satar/Santhal</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>1.49</b>
04	Rai	913	4.22	990	3.88	1257	3.90
05	Newar	936	4.33	1139	4.46	1440	4.47
06	Limbu	819	3.79	925	3.62	654	2.04
07	Sarki	806	3.73	580	2.28	734	2.27
08	Magar	738	3.41	719	2.82	909	2.82
09	Tamang	724	3.35	778	3.05	980	3.04
10	Kami	550	2.54	748	2.93	943	2.93
11	Damai	481	2.23	584	2.29	742	2.30
12	Gurung	319	1.48	483	1.89	502	1.56
13	Rajbamsi	77	0.36	110	0.43	140	0.43
14	Dhimal	71	0.33	120	0.47	152	0.47
15	Sanyasi	115	0.53	185	0.73	185	0.57
16	Majhi	131	0.60	191	0.75	191	0.59
17	Tharu	114	0.52	164	0.64	164	0.50
18	Other	1629	7.54	1962	7.69	3298	10.22
Total		21616	100.00	25519	100.00	32254	100.00

Source: Records of Surunga VDC

As indicated in table 4.2 the population size of two ethnic/caste groups (Brahmin and Chhetry) shows the opposite trends. The percentage of Brahmin population has declined 4.72 % (38.76% in 2048 and 2053 BS (table 1), 35.67% in 2058 BS and 34.04% in 2063 BS) between 2048-2063 period. In 2068 BS Brahmin population has increased 0.16% from 2063 BS. In the contrary the Chetry population has increased 7.27% (18.93% in 2048 and 2053 BS (table 1), 21.64% in 2058 BS, 26.07% in 2063 BS and 26.20% in 2068 BS) between the period of 2048 to 2068 BS. The substantial and continuous decline of the population is noted in Satar/Santhal ethnic group. Satar/Santhal population has declined 6.02% between the period from 2048 (table 1) to 2068 BS which is the main concern of the present study.

Some ups and downs (not significant and remarkable) trends are found in the Rai, Newar, Sarki, Magar, Tamang, Kami, Damai, Gurung, Rajbamsi and Dhimal ethnic group in the data of 2058, 2063 and 2068 BS. From 2058 BS Sanyasi, Majhi and Tharu ethnic group has come in the remarkable numbers in Surunga VDC as national census figures (Table 4.2).

Fig. 4.1: Bar diagram of Satar Population of Surunga VDC (From Table 4.1 and 4.2)



Among the total population of Surunga VDC Sanyasi ethnic group has occupied 0.53%, 0.73% and 0.57% population in the period of 2058, 2063 and 2068 BS respectively. Similarly, Majhi ethnic group has occupied 0.60%, 0.75% and 0.59% of total population in 2058, 2063 and 2068 BS respectively. Tharu ethnic group has occupied 0.52%, 0.64% and 0.50% population of Surunga VDC in 2058, 2063 and 2068 BS respectively. Other ethnic group has also remarkable and increasing number of population. This category has occupied 7.54% in 2058 BS, 7.69% in 2063 BS and 10.22% in 2068 BS (Table 4.2).

In the latest censuses CBS has collected the information about ethnic composition of Nepalese population. However, people claim that there are still some more ethnic groups to be recorded and recognized by the government. The 9<sup>th</sup> (1991 AD), 10<sup>th</sup> (2001 AD) and 11<sup>th</sup> and last (2011 AD) censuses have collected the Satar/ Santhal ethnic composition of population separately.

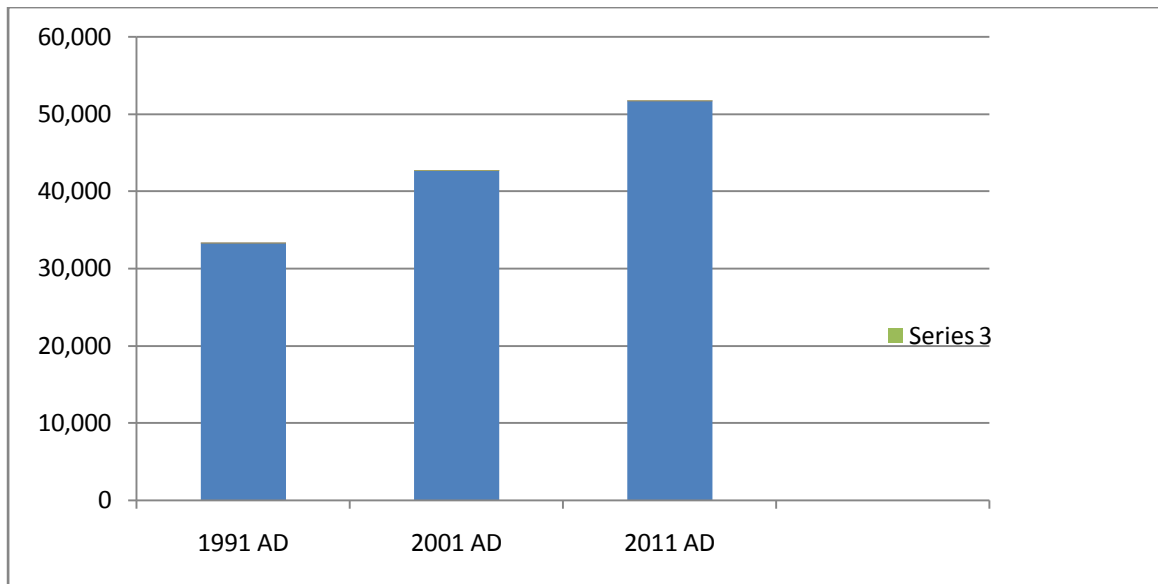
Table 4.3 shows that 0.18% (33,332) population is the Satar/Santhal population to the total population of Nepal in 1991 census. The both censuses of 2001 and 2011 showed that Satar/Santhal population of Nepal is 0.19% i.e. 42,698 and 51,735 to the total population respectively.

Table 4.3: Number and Percentage of Satar/Santhal Population in Total Population of Nepal

Census Year	Total Population	Satar/Santhal Population	Percentage
1991 AD	1,84,91,097	33,332	0.18
2001 AD	2,31,51,423	42,698	0.19
2011 AD	2,64,94,504	51,735	0.19

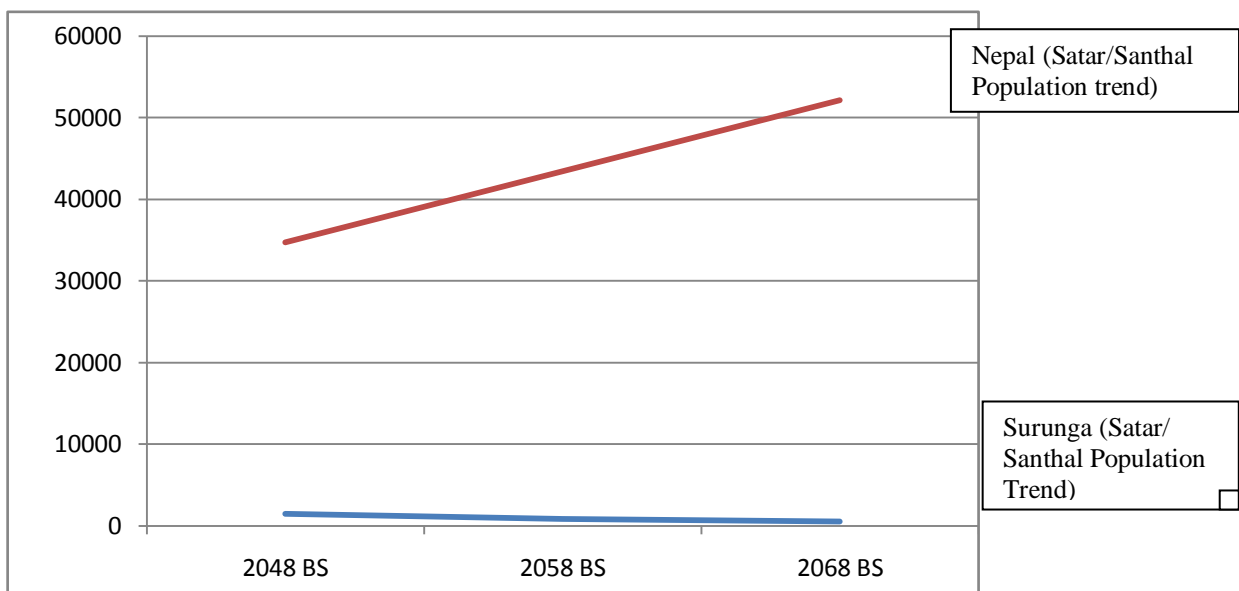
Source: CBS, Reports of National Population Census of 1991, 2001  
CBS, 2012, Population Census of 2011, Table 20 P. 164

Fig.4.2: Bar diagram of Number of Satar Population in the censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011 in Nepal.



In the 9<sup>th</sup> (1991 AD), 10<sup>th</sup> (2001 AD) and 11<sup>th</sup> (2011 AD) censuses total Satar/Santhal population of Nepal is numerically increasing in nominal numbers (Fig.4. 3) but the percentage share in the total population of Nepal is constant (0.19%) in the both censuses of 2001 AD and 2011 AD. But the contrast trend i. e. decreasing trend is found in the in the number of Satar/Santhal population from 1991(2048 BS) to the 2001 (2058 BS) and 2011 (2068 BS) in Surunga VDC.

Fig. 4.3: Line diagram of Number of Satar/Santhal Population in the censuses of 1991(2048 BS), 2001 (2058 BS) and 2011 (2068 BS) in Nepal and Surunga VDC (From Table 1, 2 and 3).



**Major findings of the present study**

The overall Satar/Santhal population of Nepal is not in endangering position but in the situation of Surunga VDC Satar/Santhal population is in endangering position. Some specific findings of the present study are summarized as follows:

- Satar/Santhal ethnic population lives in the districts of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari.
- In 2048 BS 8.51 percent population are Satar/Santhal among the total (16747) population of the Surunga VDC.
- In 2053 BS 5.65 percent population are Satar/Santhal among the total (19761) population of the Surunga VDC.
- In 2058 BS 3.73 percent population are Satar/Santhal among the total (21616) population of the Surunga VDC.
- In 2063 BS 1.96 percent population are Satar/Santhal among the total (25519) population of the Surunga VDC.
- In 2068 BS 1.49 percent population are Satar/Santhal among the total (32254) population of the Surunga VDC.
- In 1991 census 0.18 percent population are Satar/ Santhal among the total (1,84,91,097) population of Nepal.
- In 2001 census 0.19 percent population are Satar/ Santhal among the total (2,31,51,423) population of Nepal.
- In 2011 census 0.19 percent population are Satar/ Santhal among the total (2,64,94,504) population of Nepal.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

This study is a descriptive study carried out in order to examine the numerical trends of Satar/Santhal community of Surunga VDC and Nepal. This study tried to analyse whether the number of Satar/Santhal population is endangering or not by the view point of local as well as of national level. It attempts to describe numerical facts by using VDC records and the national census results. In this context, some simple calculations like numbers (figures), percentages including bar diagrams has been used to clarify the objectives of the study.

Satar/Santhal population of Surunga VDC and is going to endangering from highly marginalized group according to the NEFIN grouping categories is the main conclusion of this study. In the national context, Share of the Satar/Santhal population among the total population of Nepal is constant (0.19%) between the two last censuses (2001 and 2011 AD). They are becoming in ethnic minorities in Nepal.

### **Recommendation for Policy Implication**

Satar/Santhal ethnic population is one of the deprived and backward groups among the ethnic community of our country. So some recommendations are given below for the increase of the quantitative and over all conditions the Satar/Santal community.

- The Government has to ensure all kinds of fundamental rights such as political and legal rights for the Satar/Santhal community people.
- Safe Drinking Water, Clean Sanitary Latrine and Medical facility will have to provide to the Satar/Santhal people.
- The Government has to sanction special budget for the development of infrastructure of Santal/Santhal community.



- Different kinds of Governmental facilities as like VGF, Old Pension, Widow Pension, Food for Work and Social Safety Network will have provide for the people of Satar/Santhal community.
- Developing consciousness among the people of the Satar/Santhal community, due to the eradication of racial discrimination on them.
- The government has to take the responsibility of the development of Satar/Santhal community people.

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