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Religion beliefs and customs in Santal society

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Abstract

The socio-economic context of the forest-dependent indigenous peoples and their daily activities are particularly influenced by social beliefs, religions and customs. Indigenous peoples, who depend on nature, have built on their long-standing reforms and traditional customs and beliefs. Among the indigenous peoples, Santal society is different in many ways. Like other indigenous groups, the Santals have undergone a transformation, but they have preserved their culture in particular. Just as gods and goddesses play an important role in the religious life of the Santals, so nature and forest land influence their folklore. Despite living a hard and hard life, they have not forgotten their religion, culture, customs and traditions. The Santal people have highlighted their traditions through various festivals and ceremonies. My main goal in this research paper is to highlight the social beliefs, religions and customs of the Santal community outside of civilized society.

Keywords: Indigenous Santal religion gods beliefs customs

Introduction

Religion, culture and folklore have influenced the life of the forest-dwelling indigenous community in many ways. Nature and their social beliefs work in different ways in the minds of the indigenous peoples who are closely associated with nature. Tribes like Santal, Munda, Kora, Rajoar etc. are very much obsessed with religious consciousness. Different types of festivals are held in different districts at different times of the year, where indigenous people join in the rhythm of religious beliefs. However, it is difficult to say how much the conscious attitude of the tribals is behind the religious influence in all these ceremonies. But they find their own culture and folklore in the stream of joy that pervades the larger masses. This folklore and culture and their religion have established the distinctive status of the tribals throughout the ages. Despite the obstacles in the regional field, they forgot their daily hard struggles and the thought of earning a living, and for a few days, they became happy. A united and greater human relationship brings them to a difficult life.

Among the indigenous peoples, the Santal community deserves special mention. Because the religious sentiments of the primitive society have been transformed among the Santals in their daily life, customs, thoughts and rituals, but its tradition is still maintained. Although the position of Brahmins as the social base of the Santals is above all, the inter-caste communities have remained at different levels of consciousness^[1]. The place of the deities in the religious field of the Santals is particularly significant. They consider 'Singbonga' to be the chief deity among the gods. Apart from the Santals, the Bhumij community also considers 'Singbonga' to be the chief deity. Singbonga is also known as the god of good and peace of the Santals, the god of the sun, the lord of day and night, the owner of the sun and water. They believe that 'Singbonga' cannot protect the Santals from the outbreak of the disease even if it cannot punish the 'Harahapans'. For this, the Santals sacrifice white goats and white roosters near 'Singbonga'^[2].

To the forest-dependent tribes, 'Marangburu' or the big hill is considered as the chief deity. To the Santals, this 'Marangburu' is captivated by both good and evil, imagined as both gods and demons. 'Mandreko' was once the Panchadevata in their kingdom of gods, but over time the Panchadevata merged into one deity. He is known to the Santals as the god of fire, although the worship of 'Bardela' is prevalent among the landlords. Goats are sacrificed in this occasion but chickens are offered as a sacrifice to 'Bardela'. In terms of influence, this 'Bardela' is comparable to 'Zahir-Buru'. The Santals think that Mandreko's sister is 'Jaherera'. A piece of land or a special tree that is carefully preserved in a primitive forest on the

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edge of a village or forest as a sacred place is known as 'Zahir' or 'Jaher-than'. Like 'Maran Buru', 'Zahir era' is popular among the children of the forest. When he gets angry because he is involved in agricultural work, the crop is ruined, drought or heavy rains occur. That is why 'Zahir-Buru' is worshiped with offerings of goat, chicken, rice and ghee^[3].

But the demons are no less powerful than the gods. There are various names for demons in Santal or indigenous society— 'Kudra', 'Bishaichandi', 'Baghut' or 'Baghbhut', 'Pargana-era' etc. Among them 'Kudra' is known to the Bauris as 'Kudrasini' or evil to the people^[4]. So they are worshiped by the landlords in an organized manner. The Bauris try to control the worship of Goddess 'Kudra' on Saturdays and Sundays. 'Kudra' has considerable influence in Santal society. Another deity is 'Baghut' which is known as the tiger god. The Santals worship the 'Baghut' to protect themselves from tiger attacks. This puja method and timing of puja is very dangerous, because this puja is performed on the night of the new moon of the month of Kartik. In addition to these gods and goddesses, there are other smaller gods and goddesses. 'Ikirbanga' or water god, 'Nage era' or agricultural god, younger sister of 'Gonsai Era' or 'Mandreko', 'Chakdiri', 'Nara-Hara', 'Shil Phond', 'Duarsini', 'Bhagwan', 'Chharuya-baru' etc.^[5]

In addition to all these deities, the gods who are in the second stage of nature worship or primitive level deities are the symbols of human form and heroism. Such as— Mansingh of Bauris, Kolom Singh or Kharia Puja of Mundas, Kalubir of Doms, Kalumajhi of cowherds, Mohan Giri and Saheb Mia of Lohar and Moyra, Muchiram and Ruidas of Muchids etc. Needless to say, this level between nature worship and abstract deities is more popular among the worshipers. Through festivals and fairs, gifts of reverence and worship are offered to them, meaning that the main thing here is to please the gods instead of religious observances. Among these pujas and festivals, a kind of worship system is prevalent in the Santal or tribal society. The Santals have been celebrating the Tusu and Vadhu festivals solemnly. As they are worshiped through festivals, they embrace the goddess through joyous songs. Here they become one with the Goddess and their happiness, sorrow, hope, secret humming are echoed in the melody of the self-composed song. Tusu and Vadhu have probably evolved from abstract to mother. At present in some places two goddesses are worshiped by making idols.

The forest means the primitive touch of nature, with it there is horror mixed with fear, there is the nuisance of snakes, the snakes of the west are poisonous. Cultivation is started on the first day of 'Rohin', 'Rohin' from 13th to 19th of Jaistha month. According to the tradition, it must rain on this day and if it rains, the venom of the snake washes away and if it is bitten by a snake, it does not stick to the skin. Sowing grain at this time does not fail. A proverb has been circulating in the Santal society in this regard for a long time - "Rohin tole na kapal tole" (Lacks failed but Rohin not failed). Eating 'Kelekandra' or 'Asadhi fruit' in this Rohin does not allow poison to enter the body of the snake bite, so the fear of death is less. There is also a belief in the Santal community that snakes do not enter the house if there is rain-soaked soil in the 'Rohin'^[6]. It can be seen that the Kharowars do not cut the 'Karam' tree. Again, none of the tribes and tribals want to cut down shawls except Lodha. Because their belief is that the gods reside in the shawl tree.

Moreover, if anyone have a dream about a loved one among the Santals, he can make rice on the back, wrap it in shawl leaves and roast it, or the dream will be cut short.

Outside of civilized society, far away from the locals, in the primitive society surrounded by forests and hills, the Santal tribes have found refuge. Superstitions, ancient traditions are inherent in their culture and folklore. They have preserved this tradition in their own way and have incorporated various reforms and superstitions in all spheres of life. There are various reforms in their food and drink. On the day after Bhim Ekadashi, many families have introduced Betha branch curry food with berry. It is forbidden to eat Mula in the month of Magh and Ole' in the month of Kartik, it is forbidden to eat radish on the back after Sri Panchami. When anyone sit down to eat and sneeze, he has to pick rice from the ground and drink some water. Then he has to get up and start eating again. There is also a folklore in Santal society that if a cat gets a cat flower or 'pasenta' after childbirth, then he is a king. And barren girls become childish by playing a small part of that flower in the banana. There is a social belief that Santal women's sari, which is known as 'tape', is bad for children when the air of 'tape' touches them. In this case, if the child's body is bad, the fault will be removed only if the area is touched on the ground. If the baby in the lap touches the head of a boy standing nearby, then the baby in the lap has to stand on the ground for a while. When a pregnant woman pulls the rope at the foot of the bed, her daughter is born. To protect the child from witchcraft, one has to hang flowers, mustard seeds, kadal vines, etc. on the rope at the head of the bed. Even in some cases the sickle is kept on the bed. And if she fall out of bed while sleeping, she must take a bath the next day^[7]. Moreover, during the lunar eclipse and solar eclipse, various reforms are prevalent in the tribal society. If there is food cooked at this time, it should be discarded, but if it is covered with basil leaves at the time of taking it, the defect will be removed. There is also a custom in their society that in the evening or after sunset when the evening lamp is shown there is no place to go, no work to start. Similarly, there is no need to lie before washing their face in the morning. If anyone bake his hands and feet in the fire of Injoy of pijoy on the night of Diwali, they will not get scabies. It is also seen that there is a reform among the Santals, if husband and wife call each other by their names, their son becomes deaf. Calling the name of the elder sister of the brother-in-law or wife does not want to burn the body at the time of cremation after death. So no one calls anyone by name, in general, if anyone wants to call someone in their society, they have to call them 'Kalu's mother', 'Kalu's father'.

It is this reform and social folklore that has led to the proliferation of 'Danko' or witches in Santal society, which has created horror in the social sphere. From the social beliefs, the daily events of the social life of the Santals are believed to have been done by witches in many cases. In many cases, the responsibility of breaking the discipline in the social sphere is placed on the shoulders of the witches or Dunkos, for the happiness and sorrows of the Santals, good and bad, personal and family separations, even natural conditions like droughts and floods. It is customary in the society that this witch or dankos takes the broken 'Kulo' to 'Jaher-than' at night, in the forest or in the field, after sweeping. There he worships and eats chicken, khichuri, prepared on his back and collects disciples from house to

house with lamps. Teaches them mantras and broom songs. But those who are taught mantras as witches or dankos have to harm their own parents, grandparents or anyone in the house as a condition. Housewives do not name wives as family deities so that they do not become witches, because when a wife becomes a witch and harms everyone in the family. However, there are 'Ojhako' and 'Janko' to protect from the hands of witches or dankos^[8]. If a witch commits 'tuk', she is selected from the village or sentenced to death. Thus it can be seen that there are indications of seeds and conversion of religious consciousness in Purulia district among the historical trends, population formations and nature. Indigenous peoples' livelihoods, social beliefs, religious customs and folklore depend on the role of mountains and rivers in the settlement. These Santals and other indigenous communities have been protecting them with utmost care. Though the touch of modern civilized society has entered them, they have not yet allowed their primitive truth to be ruined in any way. That is why we see the Santals' own customs and religious rites even today. But for this the Santals have to live in dire straits. The forest has shrunk to them; the right to the forest is not in their hands. So with great difficulty the Santals have somehow survived by clinging to their primitive customs. Perhaps in this difficult and arduous life, the celebration of their own world brings a stream of joy to the mind and soul, even if only for a short time.

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