



ANALYSING SANTAL CREATION MYTH THROUGH THE WRITING OF LARS OLSEN SKREFSRUD

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the creation story of the Santal tribe and its comparison with the creation stories of other faith. It primarily focuses on the role of Christian missionary Rev. Lars Olsen Skrefsrud's effort to transform Santal society through the literary contribution. In addition to the Santal literature contribution, his mission among this tribe enhanced their world view and broaden their horizon and way of life through education and Gospel teachings. The core objective of this paper is to portray and delineate origin and early settlement of the Santals. However, narration of the creation story is not same as different authors penned them down them differently from different sources. This paper also focuses on the historiography of the Santal worldview and Santal culture.

KEYWORDS:

SANTAL, LARS OLSEN SKREFSRUD, THAKUR JIV, MISSIONARY, BENAGARIA.

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INTRODUCTION:

Santals are one of the well-studied tribes in India which belongs to Proto-Austroloid community. They are third largest community in India after Bhil and Gonds tribes. According to Sreferred the word Santal is a corruption of the word Saontar. It was adopted by the Santals when they settled in the area around Saont in Midnapur district of West Bengal. Usually they call themselves as hor(man) and Horhopon (son of man). The Santals have their own independent language known as Santali. P.O. Bodding noted that the term 'Saont' was derived from the Sanskrit word 'Samanta' meaning something like border men. As the Santals belong to the Munda family of languages, they have been classified by Anthropologists as Pre-Dravidians, Kolarians, Dravidians, Proto-Australoids, Nishadies and Austrics. The Santals are mainly found in the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, and Tripura. Accounts of the Santals are found in works by Christian missionaries, colonial administrators, anthropologists and social scientists.

LARS OSLENSKREFSRUD AND HIS CONTRIBUTION

LarsOslenSkrefsrud is one of the greatest missionaries of Norway. His mission among the Santal brought in a remarkable transformation among the community. He left for India mission work in 1863. The pioneering mission he started along with Danish friend Hans Peter Boerreson at

Benagaria flourished significantly. In 1887, he published a book in Santali the "Horkoren Mare HapramKoak Katha"-The Traditions and Institutions of Santal, which overtime became a guide for Santals in customary matters and was referred to by the Indian courts when customs were in dispute. His contribution to the Santal tribe was so much that he gave them hymnal using native tune and a collection to traditional Santal myth. He respected their ancient tradition and he said "It is heathenism that we wanted to get rid of and not the national character. In terms of education, he contributed immensely by founding schools, teaching them farming, animal care, carpentry, and many other useful skills so that they can be self-sufficient. He does also teach them about human dignity and rights. He taught them to fight against money lenders, land owners, liquor dealers and other forms of exploitations. He was a man ahead of his time. He continued to labour until death on December 11, 1910 in the village of Benagaria in Jharkhand, India.

The strategy applied in the conversion of Santal in Benagaria and its vicinity can be divided into two phases. The first phase is the time of courageous and fearless pastors. They travelled into the land of pagan from very far off western counties and tried to gain their permission to set up churches and work in this territory. Seeing the

impactful mission work among the people, Santals supported them because they have been exploited by the ferocious Bengali zamindars. The help of foreign missions helped this tribe to uplift themselves and strengthen themselves. The general conversion of Santal tribe was dominant in the second phase. This was the time of the Santal chiefs and leaders who are given the credit for changing the society's self-perception by implementing laws forbidding pagan customs and enforcing Christian values or practices.

SANTAL CREATION MYTH:

LARS OLSEN SKREFSRUD'S WRITINGS ON THE ORIGIN OF SANTALS

Myths of Creation or Cosmogonic Myths interpret how the world came into existence, how humankind and myriad of objects in this world originate? Cosmogonic myths are the first revelation of human attempts to explain various natural phenomena. Most popular representation regarding the creation story of the Santals is that of Kolean guru told to L. O. Skrefsrud. P. O. Bodding translated this myth into English. The myth penned down to help delineate the world view of the Santal. Since then the scholars have started to deal with the myth. The myth is presented here to let know the world view of the Santal. Santal believe that Thakur Jiv is the creator and supreme deity. The direction from which the sun rises is the birth place of humanity. In the beginning there was water all over and its beneath was the earth. Thakur created all living beings out of water like crab, alligator, the crocodile, the raghop boar fish, lobster, earthworm, tortoise etc. Then Thakur decided to create a pair of human beings out of soil and while giving them life the daylight horse trampled them into pieces. This incident annoyed Thakur bitterly. Following this he decided not to create human being of soil but to create birds Has and Hasil. He saw them they look good then he blew into them and then they flew upward. They flew on and on and found no place to alight finally they alighted on the hands of Thakur. Then Thakur Jiv called alligator and asked it to bring up the earth from the deep water. It went to the bottom of the sea to get soil but the soil dissolved in the water. Thakur Jiv then called lobster and said, could you bring up earth? It replied I can do if you say so. Thirdly to be asked was Raghop fish, in the very same way it went to the bottom of the sea and while bringing up earth some with its mouth and some on its back all dissolved in water. From this time on the Raghop fish do not have scales on them. Similarly, Stone crab was asked the same question and accordingly it went to bring earth from bottom of the sea at its back with the help of its pincers but all the soil dissolved in water. When Thakur Jiv saw that no one was able to do what he asked them, he then called earthworm to do the same. Earthworm replied Thankur Jiv that I can do what you asked me to do on condition that the tortoise must stand still on the water. Thakur Jiv called tortoise and told it to remain still on water. Thereafter, Thakur Jiv chained the legs of the tortoise. The obedient earthworm went down to the bottom of the sea keeping its tail end at the back of the

tortoise raised soil until it suffices the earth. Thakur Jiv levelled the earth with harrow and some place heaped up and these became mountains.

When the earth was put in order the foam of the water got stuck to the earth. On these forms Thakur Jiv and ropogan muricatus seeds after this he sowed cydon grass, then adinacordi folioa tree. Then in the clumps of and ropogan muricatus grass the birds made nest and laid two eggs. Of these two eggs, the first human beings were born, a boy and a girl. As they were growing anxiety grew among the birds as to where to place them. Thakur told them to go to the place where the sun sets and they went found a place called Hihiri-Pipiri. The name of these two human being were named as Pichu Haram (man) and Pilchu Budhi (Woman). They sustained themselves on eating eleusineaegetica and panicum colonum. They had no clothing and were not ashamed of themselves.

CRITICISM OF THE SANTAL CREATION MYTH:

It is true that creation myth of the Santal tribe centers on creation of the world from the perspective of cosmology. Creation myth is part of the human civilization and it is imperative to study the oral narrative on the creation, to trace the historiography of the Santal tribe and their culture and tradition. It is the notion and the world view these people have from the ages. But with the advent of globalization, modernization the tradition narrative and its identity is at crossroads and enigma. As Kolean Guru narrated this myth to Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, in the very same way this oral tradition has been passed on from generation to generation. However, at present one can observe that the educated Santal and their altering state of identity. In the creation myth, one can clearly observe that unlike other Religions like Jews and Christian the person narrating story is directly not related to the creator in communication instead narrating the information which has been passed on from ages to the ages. They believe in a being they called "Genuine God". According to the narration, we get the information that Thakur Jiv is not the almighty for he could not protect the image he created out of the soil. He was not able to make the earth that he needed to instruct other creatures to build the earth. The Santal creation myth is quite similar to that of Bible. The significant difference is that the God of the Bible is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. It is easy for anyone to understand that the creation in the Bible is meticulously planned and executed whereas the creation story of Santal seem unplanned, cook up story and poorly executed.

CONCLUSION:

In this paper, I approached the question of identity formation through the narration of Kolean Guru and translation of this myth into English. Thakur Jiv is the supreme being and there is nothing like him in the world. However, according to my analysis on the myth narrated by Kolean Guru proved that Thakur Jiv is not the almighty. He could not create earth and could not protect the image he created from the soil. There is no chronology in the

creation stories and why he created them unlike Biblical creation story. I stressed on the contribution of missionaries towards Santal for the right to self-determination from several angels.

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