



JUG SIRIJOL AND SANTAL TRADITIONS: JULY–AUGUST 1971

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ABSTRACT:

This paper studies some core questions concerning socio-cultural impact of a comparatively understudied Santali Jug Sirijol quarterly periodical which was started in 1971 in West Bengal. This paper explores how quarterly periodical publication and the notion of aesthetics and culture that progressed over the centuries became intimately tied up with the query of identity and social differentiation in the identity. It delineates how through the periodicals' literary command authors wanted to concentrate the specific target group population about genesis of the tribe, its speech or language, cultural significance, generational oral history of this tribe, Ghost stories, drama etc. To complicate the notion of quotidian practice like reading the literature has not been the part and parcel of Santals' life contrary to which they prefer hunting, singing, dancing, social gathering, drinking etc. This study portrays that educated and well to do families and people with leisure time can devote time for reading.

KEYWORDS:

SANTAL, JUG SIRIJOL, MARE HAPRAM, PIYO CERE, SAKRAT FESTIVAL.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper strives to explore the comparatively lesser known Jug Sirijol periodical which is known to Santal tribe. The printing press was the great innovation in early modern information technology in the world but it was scarcely popular in India and definitely unknown to the tribe so called Santal until the missionaries encountered this periphery. Much has been written about the history of all the continents, but, even now, comparatively little is known of the printed books and periodicals in tribal societies. Such knowledge is essential not only to secure a spatial balance but also to test generalizations offered in a non-tribal cultural context. The study offers an interesting case study to help redress this gap. However, Historians and Scholars have started to explore the rich and complex socio-culture of tribal print literature in 20th century. The tradition of orality, the colonial context of printing and publishing, the coming of age of print contribute to making print cultures in British India a significant.

This paper seeks to analyse the Santali periodical Jug Sirijol's contents and explore the trajectories the authors were pointing to. The core discourse, ideas, and discussions were mainly revolving around identity,

dichotomy between state and non-state societies. The periodical covers wide range of topics that seeks to portrays the awareness and concentrate the readers about preservation and teaching the folk to know own culture and traditions and its current trend.

MARE HAPRAMKOAKKAHNI (TRADITIONS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE SANTALS)

This creation story marks the beginning of Santal history. This story has been collected from different parts of the un-divided Bengal by missionaries and British civil servants. Horkoren Mare Hapramkoak Katha (The Traditions and Institutions of the Santals) was first written by Norwegian missionary Lars Oslenskreftsrud and was first published in 1887. The similar stories can be found in other accounts like "The Annals of Rural Bengal" by W.W. Hunter, Horkoren Mare Hapramkoakkatha by F.B. Bradley Birtand The Story of an Indian Upland by W.W. Hunter.

The critic of the creation story criticises the European authors on their methods employed, the lack of scientific knowledge for judging creation story scientifically and prejudice towards indigenous people. Hunter was a civil

servant and his job was to look after the land and collection of taxes in eastern parts of India. which were documented in a book called Statistical Accounts. T. K. Rapaj makes a scathing attacks on W.W. Hunter for being bias and unjustly formulation of the creation story. However, the critics does not give the original account or supposed to be the actual account. The author critics that W.W. Hunter was a British servant and dislike the indigenous so whatever negative aspects were found in the story he handpicked only those parts of the story. However, the author shows lack of evidence to prove that the Englishman distorted the original genesis of Santal story. He goes on to commit error in logically and theoretically stating that the creation story of Bible and Sanskrit are the same. He tries to tell that Santal creation story is closely connected with the Hindu tradition. Due to his biasness he somehow tries to interlink the Santal tradition with the Hindu religion. Drawing similar belief like Hinduism states that this tribe must have picked a sacred mountain or waterfall for their religious identification while the tribes of North-Eastern have sacred rivers.

PIYO CERE (BLACK-HEADED ORIOLE BIRD)

According to the traditional Santali belief, Piyo Cere (Black-Headed Oriole Bird) has a very significant place in the belief system. It is the messenger of the Santal who passes the message from one person to the another particularly with regard to marriage proposal thus it is called messenger(Raeban Haram/Budhi) and the news about far away relatives could be known by it. Its message could be understood by different noises made during the sad and happy moods.

The author BhoirobMurmu beautifully connects the link in his writing between the Piyo Cere and the Santal. It is revered by the Santals so much and feel emotionally connected. Therefore, a lot of songs are composed and dedicated to it. The author explains in the essay that when a lady was sweeping the corridor and seeing it jumping from one branch to another a thought came into her mind and immediately she composed a song dedicated to it and started dancing. It shows how much the Santals are connected to Piyo Cere emotionally. Hunting is the pastime for the Santal yet killing of Piyo Cere is strictly forbidden because it is closely connected with them in general and for the young in particular. It is because Piyo Cere is Raibar Haram/Burdhi for them and it settles the marriage between bride and groom. Killing this bird would be a disastrous and will have negative impact in marriage life.

GARIBAHU (MONKEY WIFE)

This story is about the Sakrat Festival. Hunting is the part and parcel of this festival. The author has visualised this festival with playful manner linking the festival with fiction to make the tradition easily understandable to the children. Ijikel Hembrom narrates the story of three brothers Soela the eldest among all the brothers, the elder brother Boela and the youngest brother Moyra. All the brothers were expert in sports like running and archery.

While they went for hunting to celebrate the festival. They killed a wild pigs and celebrated the festival. The author also mentions that how this tribe believe in superstition that was part of the religion and culture. Moera was asked to hit the target post with an arrow which he failed. Due to this misfortune and believing in the superstition decided not to get married with any girl. He took monkey and with it wanted to live his whole life. His decision to live with the monkey made him a laughingstock in the locality. Once Jaher Era appeared to him and told him if you obey my word and do accordingly you will be blessed and rewarded. Bonga(God) told him that the monkey you have kept with you is a cursed girl but if you obey the command I have given, you will be blessed and the monkey will become a beautiful girl. At the end the monkey became a girl named Sonamuni. She once belonged to a royal family and because of her sins she was cursed. The author delineates the Santal festival in a fun loving way.

BHUT (GHOST)

Stories and belief of ghost and the spirits among the Santals hold important place. N. Murmu portrays quotidian practice like going to Hatia (market already scheduled once in a week in a particular day in the evening) after hard labour for shopping grocery for cooking food and daily articles. It is very normal in the Santal tradition to talk about ghost and the spirits. So, in this essay the author wants to convey message of weekly chore and encounter with the spirit that haunts the night life of the people. Ghost is the most talked about topic in the remote villages where in the night silence can be felt and fear can be felt outside the home. N. Murmu narrates that after hatia returning at dark is challenging and particularly when you encounter with ghost at the path to home. It mentions about the escapism by defending himself from the ghost and prejudices come up in the mind. At the end author says, most of the time people are suffered due to misconception, miss-judgements and negative imaginations.

CONCLUSION

Jug Sirijo is a quarterly periodical that worked as a mouth piece for the Santal. The purpose of this was to reduce the gap that existed for centuries between Santal and the non-tribes. Its main message is to create awareness among this community through essays, poems and stories. It also aimed to produce literature and used print media to spread indigenous knowledge.

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