



## Festival as an important role of the life cycle of Santal community

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper studied the annual celebrations and worshiper of festivals in Santal community. Traditionally various kind of festival celebrations are prevailing throughout the year by the Santal tribe. The festival has associated with performative practice of songs, dense, set of musical instruments and rituals. These festivals imitate the socio-religious significance of the Santal Community and also traces the link between tradition, ritual, and peaceful coexistence within the ritual beliefs which become as a part of Indian culture. There are two type of festivals are seen in Santal community. One is family festivals and other is social festivals. The family festivals are held on every Santal family where all the family members, lineage and relatives are assembled at the festival celebrating place. The social festivals are held on every Santal village where all villagers assembled in a secrete place call Jaher Than. The place 'Jaher Than' is adjoining the Santal village with a grove of their national tree. In this place they offer worship to God Marang Buru, Godes Jaher Ayo, God Dhorom-Karom, God More-Ko-Turui-Ko, etc. The festival celebrations day and time will be choosing to depend upon the new moon and full moon. These festivals are established 'life cycle rituals' which are played to important role to construct the santal identity. In this view, the modern era is one of the most important issues because of the chances of the mixing of modern cultures losing their identity. Therefore, we have been challenged to protect the Santal identity by celebrating traditional festivals that are intimately related to their life cycle. In this connection some researcher applied descriptive research methods to acquire knowledge through close participate and observation of the festivals. The study has argued the preoperational development of society which is consummate the measure of solidity in the natural environment. The cultural activities have been make a 'prior discourse' lay out performative practice which are going to a celebration of the festivals and consisted a cultural identity of santal community.

**Keywords:** Santal Community, Festivals, Cultural Identity, God like Marang Buru, etc.

## INTRODUCTION

India is land of multi cultures, religions and languages, yet the people have been living peacefully from long time [1]. Among the population, Santals are living here in their own community, Culture, Religion, Tradition and Language. The festival is an important component of group life of people. So, the festivals are not just occasion but deep rooted traditions and customs waves into the fabric of santal life [2]. The santals have very rich culture which gives us festivals as a rich heritage. The festival has associated with performative practice of songs, dense, set of musical instruments and rituals. There is proverbs in Santali language that '*Taram Gem Luhukag Khan Eneg ar Ror Gem Rahaak Khan Sereng*' the meaning of it is 'Walking is the origin of dance form and speaking is the origin of singing form' [3]. According to the festival there have different type of dance and songs. All the songs and dance will not be perform in each festival whereas songs and dance has created basis on festival. Religion is the most important aspect of culture. It has a manifestation to perform the festival and it has a group of life of santal community [2].

According to the santal, the *Magh* (name of a month) month is the first month of the year. 1<sup>st</sup> *Magh* (name of a month) is call *Akhan* (first day of magh month) in Santali [4]. The santal festivals are held throughout the year. There are two type of festivals are seen in Santal community. One is family festivals and other is social festivals. Since time immemorial, there have many festivals which are celebrated into the santal family as well as family members, lineage and relatives are actively participating at the festival celebrating place. These are '*Jomsim Bonga*' (Jomsim worship), '*Abge Bonga*' (Abge worship), '*Karam Bonga*' (Karam worship), '*Gora Bonga*' (Gora worship), '*Pata Bonga*' (Pata worship), etc. At the time of this festival will celebrate in each family, the priest will be select from each family. Any one may be act as a priest during festival celebration. They wear their own traditional dresses particularly they prefer white colour at the time of worship.

There have many social festivals among santal. These are '*Baha Bonga*' (Baha worship), '*Makmore Bonga*' (Makmore worship), '*Shohoray Porob*' (Shohoray Festival), '*Dansay Porob*' (Dansay Festival), '*Magh Bonga*' (Magh worship), '*Rohoni Bonga*' (Rohoni worship), '*Erok Bonga*' (Erok worship), '*Muchri Bonga*' (Muchri worship), '*Ashariya Bonga*' (Ashariya worship), '*Karam Bonga*' (Karam worship), '*Runda Porob*' (Runda Festival), '*Sakarat Parab*' (Sakarat Festival), etc. [5] Traditionally, all these festivals are celebrated in the sacred place call '*Jaherthan*'. These festivals have associated with performative practice of songs, dense, set of musical instruments and rituals. These festivals imitate the socio-religious significance of the Santal Community and also traces the link between tradition, contemporary ritual, and peaceful coexistence within the ritual beliefs associated as a part of Central Indian culture.

The festivals make a kind of refresh and also escape from dullness of the daily life. Participating in the festival gives a feeling of complete freshness in life. Because of this during the festival, people forget their miseries, problems and worries. All we know is that a festival is a social institution that provides an opportunity for individual or communal worship of various gods and deities and eating special foods, wearing dress. Santal are eating special food is call '*Sore Daka*' at the time of worship. They will wear the own traditional dress call '*Panchi Parhar*' and '*Panchi Dhuti*'. The '*Panchi Parhar*' for female wear and '*Panchi Dhuti*' for male wear. The primary theme of the santal festivals is religion, society, culture and psychology. The festivals promote the felling of fellowship among Santal community. People from the Santal community offer the prayers and rituals that are essential features of the festivals. Feasting is very common during worship the god and deity, and from it feels joy and peace. The animal Sacrifice is also practiced among the Santals, also ritually accompanied in some festivals.

**Who are Santals ?** The Santals are the indigenous tribal community, are found in West Bengal, northern Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam as also in Bangladesh and Nepal. Linguistically they have been classified as kolarians. According to Rev. Skrefsrud, Santal is a corruption of the word Saontar, and was given to the tribe because of their sojourn in the Saont or Samantabhum (modern Silda Pargana of Midnapore district in West Bengal) for several generations. Sunity kumar Chatterjee traces the word from Simanta + al- > Saontal. The appellation has been given to the tribe by aliens, among themselves and their cognates, the term used is 'Hor' which the meaning is 'man' [6]. The Santal is one of the largest among tribe in India, numbering near about 10 millions. They have remarkable oral traditions and folklore. Annually they are celebrating various types of folk festivals.

**Santal Festivals:** The Santal society is a simple society where we found homogeneity and absence of hierarchy. It has been argued that the Santals are totally different from Hindu culture. The proper description of this people is that the linguistically Santali is belongs to Munda group of Austro-Asiatic Sub- family of the Austric family. Physical Anthropology has been denoted theme 'Proto-Austroloid'. Owing to their homogeneity and simplicity the observance of their festival is not complex.

Santal festivals are cultural events that are deeply rooted in the traditions and customs of among Santal community. These festivals provide as crucial occasions for Santal people to gather together and appreciate their ancestry through various rituals, performances, and cultural traditions. They usually involve vibrant displays of song, dance, painting, and storytelling, offering a platform for the preservation and expression of Santal identity. These festivals additionally perform an important role in creating community solidarity, passing down ancestral knowledge, and highlighting the unique cultural diversity that exists within this festival.

The Santal festival has its two aspect, one is sacred and another secular. These two aspects of festival are intimately inter-woven yet analytically distinct. Human behavior can be invested with religious meaning, and with that religious attitude and emotions are not necessarily different from any other secular attitude and emotion. Eating, drinking, music, dancing and singing are the secular thing but they became sacred when they are performed in the place of good worship. In this entire article has been analyzed both aspect- sacred and secular.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The word "Santal community" represents an idea of historical identity and heritage of cultural. It is used to refer to the Santal as a distinct group of people who have their own identity and unique cultural. The Santal people celebrate a variety of festivals that represent their way of life. W.G. Archer has written a book where he discussed about

Santal Festivals. He is only discussed about one festival which the name is Sohrae [7]. Edward Tuite Dalton, also discussed on Santal festival. He merely mentions the names of the festivals and their celebration times, providing little additional information about the festivals [8]. This paper has involve to explore, all the traditional festivals of Santal Society which has not done till now.

## OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to examine the traditional communal festival celebrations of the Santal tribe in order to determine their symbolic implications in relation to ecology. This paper is helps to understand the characteristics of Santal community life which are displayed in the Santal festivals. Santal people have developed and maintained their status which is easily identifiable in their homeland.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied descriptive research methods to acquire knowledge through close participate and observation the festivals. The collecting data has been analyzed to make a clear concept about Santal festivals.

**Area of Study:** The present work was done at the Santal village. Two villages were selected for carried out the research work and has visited frequently for collecting the data. The data from two villages of Vendudahahi and Purnapani were found to be most useful because these villages are pure Santal village. These two villages are located in Gopiballavpur I Block of Jhargram district in West Bengal, India. The present study is concerned with the santal festivals and the cultural milieu of Santal village community. The survey was carried out during 2017-2018 in the following manner:

Direct meet to the Santal community people for collecting the data, observation the Santal festivals those are celebrated time to time in Santal community. The filed survey data has been deeply analyzed.

**Significance:** The Santal Festivals has diverse significance in socio-religious elements. The Santal community worship their God. The nature is their god who is paid honour through celebrate the festivals. The god is offering the flowers of secret tree. Santal people are prayer to God for prosper their family. Santal Festival traditions are symbolizing dedication life of the Santal people. The Santal festivals are marked as it rich heritage of Santal culture. The main purpose behind this festival is to respect their cultures as well as attempt to preserve Santal culture. Santal ritual is associate with belief and mythical idea, it is express deeply during the festival celebration. Furthermore, during the offering sacrifice the music instruments are playing, where the indigenous craft and product exhibit the artistic skills of Santal people.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Naturally, Santal community had created various kind of festivals. These festivals are continuing to celebrating throughout the year (Table 1 & Table 2). Once upon a time their culture, religion and language had totally denied from the upper-class. So, the exploitation, deprivation had alarmingly increased on Santal tribe during British era. They have always tried to preserve and protected their society, culture and language. Santal people are very much joyful for the celebrating and worshipping of festivals annually, yet they are economically and socially backward due to always has been neglected not only of their human resources but also their cultural heritage. Since time immemorial, the festivals are celebrating in Santal society. These are '*Baha Bonga*' (Haha worship), '*Makmore Bonga*' (Makmore worship), '*Shohoray Porob*' (Shohoray Festival), '*Dansay Porob*' (Dansay Festival), '*Magh Bonga*' (Magh worship), '*Rohoni Bonga*' (Rohoni worship), '*Erok Bonga*' (Erok worship), '*Muchri Bonga*' (Muchri worship), '*Ashariya Bonga*' (Ashariya worship), '*Karam Bonga*' (Karam worship), '*Runda Porob*' (Runda Festival), '*Sakarat Parab*' (Sakarat Festival), etc.. These festivals have been inextricable connected to the nature. The people has a responsibility to appreciate and protect nature. We must give up personal interests and willingness for the benefit of the society in order for us to coexist peacefully as a community. The idea of coexisting peacefully with everyone has a strong connection to Santal culture. The festivals are discussed below.

**Sakarat Parab (Sakrat Festival):** Sakarat is a social festival of Santals, which it is celebrated each year in January month (Table 2). The Sakrat festival is held two days. The Push Sankranti is generally celebrated by the Santals as their spring festival. Because the Santal new year will be start from 1<sup>st</sup> Magh (Magh is a month according to the Bengali calendar) month.

**Table 1: Family festivals among santals.**

Sr. No.	Month/Season	Festivals	Place of worshiping	Worshipping object
1.	March	Jomsim Bonga	Near to house	Peace leaving
2.	December	Abge Bonga	Near to house	Peace leaving
3.	August	Karam Bonga	Each House	Wealth & corps

4.		Gora Bonga	Each House	Domestic Animals
5.	February	Pata Bonga	Each House	Leaf, flower & Fruit

**Table 2: Societal festivals among santals.**

Sr. No.	Month/Season	Festivals	Place of worshiping	Song and Dance attach
1.	January	Sakrat Parab	Each family	Lagre, Gari ashen Song
2.	February	Magh Bonga	Beside the village	Dahar, Lagre song
3.	March	Baha Bonga	Jaher Than	Baha, Lagre
4.	April	Rohoni Bonga	Border of the place	Hunting song, lagre song
5.	May	Erok Sim Bonga	Beside the village	Hunting song, lagre song
6.	June	Muchiri Bonga	Beside the village	Pata, lagre
7.	July	Ashariya Bonga	Jaher Than	Pata song
8.	August	Karam Bonga	Each family	Karam, rinjha, lagre
9.	September	Janthar Bonga	Beside the village	Langre song and dance
10.	October	Danshai Parab	In the village	Danshai
11.	November	Shaharai Parab	In the village	Shaharai, Langre, Danta
12.	December	Runda Sakarat	Each family	Langre song and dance

They prepare from few days ago to welcome the Sakrat festival in a proper manner. Santals are usually live in mud houses. These houses walls and veranda are beautifully decorated by the different soil color. Different type of rice cakes are prepare at the time of Sakrat festival. Meet rice cake is made with atap rice powder. Everyone wears new dresses on this day. Sakarat festival is held on two days. First day is call ‘*Bawdi*’ (the day for collection materials for observing sakrat festival) and 2<sup>nd</sup> day is call ‘*Sakrat*’ (main day of festival).

On the first day, they give various kinds of rice cakes and rice beer to the god and deities. At this time, ancestors are regarded as God among santals. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day at after noon, target throwing ceremony was organized by ‘*Majhi Baba*’ (Village head man). All the male members of santal community will participate to it [9].

**Dansai Parab (*Dansai Festival*):** The people of civilized society in India, when they celebrate rejoice in the victory festival (Durga puja), at the same time the santal tribe celebrate a cultural festival is naming ‘*Dansai Parab*’ (*Dansai Festival*) [11]. It is celebrate October month in every year. This festival is performed through various dances and songa and usually male members of the santal community are participated in the dances and songs. The songs and dances practice starts near about a month before the ‘*Dansai Parab*’ (*Dansai Festival*). It has been propagated from the ancestors of the santal people that this event was created around a defeat incident in the past, so this is a sorrowful festival of santal. In this festival male member are wear women’s dress, cloth, etc for the participating in the dances and songs. These dances and songs are performed in every house in the village. The special music instrument ‘*Bhuwang*’ (Fig. 1) ‘*Tiriyaw*’ (*Flute*) and ‘*Banam*’ etc, are used in this festival [9].



(Source: Collected by Sabitri Soren)

**Fig. 1.** Image of Dansai Festival music instrument.

**Baha Bonga (*Baha Festival*):** Flower is call ‘*Baha*’ in Santali language. We all know that in the spring season, trees are full of flowers and leaves. In the forest of ‘*Shimul Palash*’, there is a stream of red opulence. The southern breeze fills the surroundings with the intoxicating scent of ‘*Sal*’ and ‘*Mahua*’ flowers and leaves and brings everyone’s

mind happy. The sweet melody of cuckoo birds makes nature more charming. At that time the '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) was held on the full moon day. '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) is a religious festival of santal community [11]. It is celebrating in the month April every year (Table 2). This festival has associated with performative practice of songs, dense, set of musical instruments and rituals of santal community.

During the celebration of '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) all villagers are assembled in a secrete place call '*Jaher Than*' (*worship place*). The place '*Jaher Than*' (*worship place*) is adjoining the Santal village with a grove of their national tree. '*Sal*' tree is the secret tree according to the santal philosophy (Fig. 2). In this place they offer worship to God *Marang Buru*, Godes *Jaher Ayo*, God *Dhorom-Karom*, God *More-Ko-Turui-Ko*, etc, The main objective of the '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) is to provide full respect to the nature.

Santal people do not use new leaves and branches until the '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) is taken place. It even they stop cutting trees. The '*Baha Bonga*' (*Baha Festival*) is held for three days. The religious festival consist of the mental attitude regarding the supernatural, yet the attitude is shape of beliefs and rituals [12]. Santal community is practicing from the long time ago.



**Fig. 2.** Image of Baha Festival (Source: <https://images.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?>).

**'Erok Sim Bonga' (Seed Planting Festival):** Cultivation is the main livelihood of santal community. They are planting paddy seeds in their own lands at the beginning of rainy season. The '*Erok Sim Bonga*' (*Seed Planting Festival*) is celebrating among the Santal community. It is held at the time of June month in every year (Table 2). This festival is mainly worship for appease the harvest god [11].

**'Shaharai Parab' (Shaharai Festival):** As already stated, Santals are depend on agriculture and they plowed the land tillage operation in traditional away. Domestic animals such as oxen are played a major role in traditional agriculture (Fig.-3). They helped people in farming. The Santal people are offering respect to the domestic animals through the festival [11]. The '*Shaharai Parab*' (*Shaharai Festival*) is held in the month of November every year. All the people of the village participate in the dance and song in groups and this festival continues for five days [10].



**Fig. 3.** Image of Shaharai Festival (Source: Collected by Sabitri Soren).

On Santal society and culture, globalization has both positive and negative effects. The Santal people are vulnerable to displacement, have low literacy rates, suffer from sickness and malnourishment, and live below the poverty line.

The pressure from contemporary politics and the economy has made it worse. There for their, indigenous knowledge and wisdom are getting lost and also traditional festivals are facing grate challenge to sustain alive.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the above discussion, the traditional Santal festivals has profound significance social and cultural life of Santal tribe and people are gating knowledge form these festivals where the valuable socio-ethical practice related to respect the nature, respect to the land, and respect to the people. The Santal festivals significantly impact the social and religious life of Santal people. It is important for people to value and respect their own society, culture, and religion. The festival provide the occasion to worship together as a community with a religious identity. As a result, these festivals preserve the Santal rituals, dance, musical instrument, songs, dress and religious belief. Therefore, Santal festivals are one of the most important part for the whole life cycle of tribal community.

## FUTURE SCOPE

As we know about the valuable information of santal festival to respect the nature, land and people, we can protect our environment from deforestation, other communities are to be enriched and researchers are also to be helpful for running their research in respect of land, water and earth management in future.

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