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Social Life of Santal People

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Introduction

Santal experiences an event like family, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth, festivals, and divorce and so many. Santal lives community living, as the nature of philosophy is found in their community thus Santal Society is casteless, there is no person superior or inferior by birth, family or clan community living means where all people of village help each other and have connection with all people, whether it be their festival or any worship they all together gathered and celebrate it.

They also worshiped Bonga for village's peace; agriculture is done by villager's altogether. The organization of Santals Society is not based on any individuality, based on all people who live in village. Santal, the social organization has very interesting characteristics. It contains flexibility in rigidity. Men and women both are equal in their society and women are independent. All of life of villagers revolves around agriculture; it is the main Source of living for them. They do Erok Bonga's a worship to Bonga (an Ultimate form of nature) is done before plantation of crops so that their crops remain healthy and for good production. The house in villages are made in a Such manner that it cooperates with each house in linear, also in mind of the village a wide space is left and 'Akhara' is created, it is a place where all people gathered, together, they sing, dance and enjoy all festival together.

Family

Among the Santals, a family is the smallest social unit. It is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal in nature. Father is the head of the family and he manages all the family affairs. After marriage, the son is separated from his father and they establish a new house. After marriage, the daughter goes to her husband's house. Though, invariably the family structure is nuclear sometimes. Extended families consisting of parents and their married sons and grandchildren are found. Kinships relationships are classified into two groups, viz. *Bandhupela*, i.e., the affinal kins related by marriage and *kutumpela* i.e., the consanguineal kins related by blood. Both the kin groups participate in all socio-religious functions of the family. The tribe is divided into a number of exogamous clans, called Paris. Each clan is divided into sub-clans (khut). Marriage between sub-clans is strictly prohibited. Violation of the rule is punishable by way of social ex-communication called as bitlaha. Totemic worship is also found. A sexual relationship between the clan members is tabooed.

Marriage

Marriage (Bapla) is one of the most significant events in Santal society. Marriage is considered as the sacred event of life in Santal society, Marriage ideologically, the reasons given for marriage are to place offspring under the ancestor spirit (Bonga) of the husband's clan and to secure labour for the land. Marriage unites a man and women in a special relationship. When a man and women marry, they promise to share their love, their life wealth and if they have children, their responsibilities as parents. A marriage is a reason for celebration; marriage is also the beginning of a unique legal relationship. It is called 'Bapla' in Santali which adds up a considerable respect for society. There are many customs and traditions to be followed in doing so. It makes an individual a full-fledged member of the community. From the economic point of view, a man obtains a life partner who can help him in all economic pursuits. For marriage, some customary rules and regulation are followed. Marriage within the same clan and cross-cousin marriage are prohibited. In Santal marriage, there is no restriction of age. The bride may be younger, older or of an equal age of the bridegroom. Different types of marriages, such as marriage by negotiation (sangebariyat), marriage by mutual consent, marriage by capture (ipitut bapla), marriage by elopement (gurdaonapam), widow re-marriage (sangebapla), son-in-law in house (ghar-de-jamai), Hindu type of marriage (diku bapla) are prevalent in the Santal society. Marriage by negotiation (sangebariyat) is the common practice in the Santal community. Levirate and sororate types of marriages are also permitted in their society. Marriage negotiations are first initiated by the boy's side. The elder of both the parties exchange several visits to fix the customary bride price. The most important are bride-price and bride-service variants. The bride price is paid by the boy's side in both cash and kind. Consisting of few rupees. Cow/ Bullock, three sari – one for the bride's mother, one for her paternal grandmother, and the third one for her father's sister. A day is fixed for the marriage. On the wedding day, the bride with a party arrives at the boy's place where marriage ceremony is held. The expenses of the wedding depend largely upon the form of marriage. Marriage is a communal affair and members of both the villages and also neighbouring villages participate in it. The parents of the boy and the girl and the village officials play very important roles in this affair.

Pregnancy, Childbirth and Naming Ceremony

A Santal couple always welcomes the birth of a child. There are certain taboos and prohibitions which a Santal woman observes during her pregnancy. The husband of a pregnant woman never kills any animal nor participates in any funeral ceremony. He is also prohibited to touch a dead body. The pregnant woman is not allowed to go to the forest alone and to weep on the death of her relative. Except for some hard works, a pregnant woman does all types of simple and easy works. These are restrictions are

imposed only to protect the baby from the evil spirits. The traditional midwife called 'mukhi' is called for delivering the child. After the childbirth, she cuts the umbilical cords and puts the placenta in a pit at the right corner of the door in the same room. On the day moon eclipse, she will not come out of the room she should not sit on a courtyard with her hair or cloth hanging downward. After the birth of a child. The house is considered polluted. So the Santals performs the Janam chatiar ceremony. Until it is done, no other activities can be undertaken like hunting etc. The usual day for the ceremony is 5th day for male and third day for a female child. After the ceremony, the men and women and children of the village who have assembled at the house each a son born, he takes the name of maternal grandfather and thus third from paternal grandfather's brother and fourth from maternal grandfather's brother and soon. The same procedure is followed for girls the female relations being in the same order.

Janam Chhatiar

The mother is considered ritually unclean remains secluded in the lying- in room till the janam chhatiar or the purificatory rites are performed. During this period she is not allowed to enter the kitchen or to touch anybody. The ceremony takes place on the seventh or night day of childbirth. On this day, the midwife bathes the newborn baby and mother. All the family members take a purificatory bathes clean clothes and houses. And throw away used earthenware pots.

The rite is completed after cleaning their head with soil collected from the crop field. On the same day, name-giving ceremony(nyutum) is performed. On this occasion, the midwife takes the child and with the consent of all the members of the family, a name of the dead ancestors is selected either from the paternal or maternal side for the newborn baby. All the elders present there to bless the child. They are entertained with festive meals and drink.

Chacho Chhatiar

Chacho Chhatiar is one of the most important ceremonies of the Santals which initiates a person into adulthood and the membership of the society. It enables the individual to take his place in Santal society and participate in its rites and ceremonies. Without this, no Santal can be married or cremated.

Puberty Rites

In case of the girls' child, when she attains puberty, she is not allowed to enter into the cowshed and the bhitar, the sacred place of the house. Pollution is observed for a period of 7-9 days. After completion of the period, each room is smeared with cow dung for purification of the house and the girls clean her clothes and take a purificatory bath to come out of pollution.

Festivals

To propitiate their Gods and Goddesses, the Santals observe a number of festivals around the year. As the Santals are agriculturists, their festivals are mainly connected with various agricultural activities and a few are connected with the hunting and collection of forest produce.

Their most important festivals are Erok- sim, Harihar-sim, Iri-Guldi-sim, Janthar, Saharai, Magha-sim and Baha, which are associated with agricultural operations. Erok-sim marks the beginning of sowing the seeds in the fields. Harihar-sim is observing at the time of the sprouting the seedlings. People pray to mother god to protect the plant from destruction. Women are not at all associated or permitted to joint these ceremonies though major agricultural works are done by them. Iri-Guldi-sim is observed for the offering of the first millet crop to the deities. Jantal observed during the month of September is a celebration of the first fruit-eating of the winter crops to appease the hill, God. Saharai festival of the observed in the month of November after main agricultural season over is one of the main festivals of the Santals.

This is a festival for love between the people and their cattle. They worship cattle for an increase of cattle wealth. Ancestors, deities and other spirits are worshipped in this occasion. People have plenty to eat and drink. They purchase new clothes for everybody. The festival continues for five days in a particular village. They decorate their animals and let them play with drum hitting. Delicious foods are served to their animals. Women have to work hard before and during the festival. They have to clean the house completely, throw out all the old earthen pots, purchase new pots for the next year, prepare Handia, prepare rice flour and delicious food for people and for their animals. Even then, they do work with great charm. They never feel monotonous. A married girl is taken to her parent's house. After a long gap, she meets her parents, relatives and friends. Throughout the month a cheerful noise and sound of Tumba are heard from the distance all around the Santhal belt. The following song explains the greatness and importance of the festival. Elder sister,

I will catch it by hand
I will catch it by leg,
The festival-like elephant is going away.
A leaf cup of meat
A bowl of rice bear
You have invited
You daughter and sister

Now- a- days women are restricted to go outside the village for taking part in music and dance. So they dance and sing and enjoy other marry making inside the village whereas men's group go round the village with dancing and singing.

Magh-sim observed in the month of Magha (January-February) marks the end of the year. It has great importance in Santhal life. All male members of the village gather in a certain place. First of all, they worship Chando by offering a chicken and Handia. Handia is an essential ingredient of any rituals. After worship Chando the meeting starts. The village office bearers present before the meeting an account of their works and resign from their respective posts. People again elect new officials for the next year. They may elect again the old one if his performance is highly appreciable. Then all male members including newborn male children of the village are counted because only male members are considered the member of the village. After counting the new elected members make a plan for the New Year. Then the meeting ends with a feast. The feast is only meant for the male members. No woman or girls child is allowed to take part in it. Baha festival is the Santal it helps in the month of Fagun (February- March) with the coming of the flower of Sal tree. It is the spring festival and has great importance not only for the Santhals but other tribes too. It is not only the worship of nature but also makes union with nature. Every man and woman adorns with flowers and adorns the nature. As the Santhal are great lovers of music and dance, together. Young girls and boys use to select a partner. Some time lovers use to fix the flower to their beloved's hair and ensure the union, offers the first fruit of *mahua*, wildflowers and fruits to the *Jaher* deities. Jaher era and More turke are worshipped in Jaher than. Karama festivals are the only festival which is performed by women. It is celebrated in bhado not only by the tribal people but also by Hindu castes of Jharkhand region.

The function performed in Manjhi than where only ancestral spirits reside. Branch of Karam tree is planted at Majhi than. Unmarried girls of the village sow different kinds of seeds in an earthen pot, pour water in it for seven days with singing and dancing. No sacrifice is done in this ceremony. Women prepare cakes in their own family. They bring the cakes in Manjhi and eats together. Manfolk also participates in dancing. The music and dance continues for whole night. The social significance of the festival is very important. The month of Bhado is the harvesting season of Bhado crops. These crops are the supporting food for them at least for three to six months. Women usually do all works for Bhado crops. As the women are not permitted to worship deities so they take an initiative to perform this ceremony. In this festival, they enjoy with full of zeal. Meanwhile, Karma festival is losing its glory due to the Makar Sankranti are also celebrated with pomp and ceremony for the prosperity and happiness of their community. The Sakrat²⁷ is the last day of the month of Pus. On the day two days before this day

they have a village council and talk together, saying: To-morrow we shall catch fish and crabs, the day after we shall have the Sakrat. Consequently next day they catch fish and crabs. On the day of the Sakrat, they at cockcrow kill a fowl in every house. When they have prepared rice and curry and have returned from bathing, they eat the rice and flesh curry, curry of fish and crabs or any other stuff. When the sun is up, the men go hunting. They hunt in a near forest. They bring Sal- leaves home with them; they go to bathe and return. In the meantime, the women have prepared flattened rice and cakes. This the men offer to the bongas in every house, they offer it to the ancestors, and they pour out beer as a libation to these and to Maran Buru.

Later they make invocations in the name of the Sakrat, like the invocations at other times. They eat the cakes and the flattened rice. When they have eaten, the Jog Manjhi invites them to come along and shoot at a target. He cuts down a plantain tree or a ricinus tree and takes this along. In the open place at the end of the village street, he fixes it in the ground. Now the village priest first shoots at the target post. After him, all the village men shoot until it is hit. Then when someone has hit it, the Jog Manjhi goes and cuts the target post down with a battle-axe, and the Jog Manjhi carries the one who hit it on his shoulder from there to the assembled people. And they both salute all the people, commencing from the village headman. Now the young men dance the sword-dance and make many kinds of show. When they have finished acting in this way, they return to the village.

The target post that the Jog Manjhi cuts down, two men use to carry that on their shoulders like an animal. They enter into the village headman's house. This target post they call the headman's piece of hunt meat. The village headman gives them beer and flattened and parched rice. At this time the headman speaks, saying: As you were so many tenants, you felled the hateful enemy and saved me, otherwise he might have eaten me. When they have drunk there, they move away to the house of the Parantik.

Here they also get flattened and parched rice and beer. From there, urging each other, they go here and there to hospitable people and drink beer. The young men and girls dance large in the village street outside the house of the village headman. When they have done dancing, they go to their respective house to lie down and sleep. Patta Parab and Chhata Chhata Parab performed by the Santhals. These festivals are not performed in every village The Santhal women in a group visit the place but they do not dance or sing in this occasion. All these festivals are invariable components of the Santhal lifestyle. The natural environment of life which a man is born and brought up compels him to believe on certain omniscient power who reveals himself through several deities.

Divorce

Divorce is a common sequel to Santal marriage. Divorce is the end of the legal relationship. Whatever their feelings or religious beliefs, when a husband and a wife get divorced, their legal relationship is over. In the eyes of law, they are free to marry another person. It is interesting to note that still after divorce, the former husband and wife may continue to have some legal responsibilities with each other and with their children. It is granted at the wish of either husband or wife.

The husband can demand the divorce if his wife is proved to be a witch or doesn't obey him or always goes to her father's house. The wife can claim a divorce if her husband cannot provide her adequate food, clothing as well as ornaments. If the woman divorces her husband to remarry another man of her choice, then the new husband has to return bride price and other expenses to her former husband and if the husband divorces his wife, then he must pay the woman the compensation fixed by the village council.

As Santals have community living, the villager especially 'more hor' participates in all events of their lives. The presence of Nature is also found in their social events. The divorce is affected in the presence of the assembled villagers in the following way. The husband is made to stand facing the sun on one leg. He has a cloth rounded his neck each end which is held in the hand along with three Sal leaves. Then taking the name of sin-Banga he tears the Sal leaves in the token separation and upset a brass pot full of water wife repeats this too. There is be a life that it the Sal leaves are not fully torn or the lotta (Brasspot) are not wholly emptied then the couple must come again together.

Death Rites

In the Santal society after the death of a person, the kin members are invited and the bury the corpse. After returning from the burial ground they take a smoke bath burning the straw at the entrance of the village. The bereaved family members of the deceased do not take non-veg items during the period of death pollution. The purificatory death ritual is performed within 2/3 days because the Santal believe that the spirit of the dead remains in the house and may cause harm to family members and villagers until the death rituals are performed. Therefore they hasten to perform the obsequies as early as possible.

Both burial and cremation are in vogue in their society. The bone of the deceased is collected and kept inside an earthen pot and left in the hole of a tree. Before the makar festivals they immerse the bone in the 'Gaya River' which is called Damodar Jatra Now-a-days, they immerse the bone of the deceased in the Ghats of nearby river of their own locality.

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