

Indian Tribal Religious System of the Santal Society of Northern Odisha: A Historical Analysis

¹Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra, ²Singo Hembram

Abstract

India has been truly considered as a country of various races and tribes in South-East Asia. Tribals are differently known as Jantjati, Adimjati, Anusuchit Janjati and Adivasi. Odisha occupies a special position in the tribal map of India. There are as many as seven hundred and five tribes noticed in different parts of India, but in Odisha the number is sixty-two. In fact, the Santals are leading in the tribal communities of Odisha in Eastern India. The Santals are mostly resided in the Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balasore districts of Odisha in Eastern India. The religion of Santals consisted of prayers, sacrifices and religious dances. The Santals are highly ritualistic people and regard their sprit as their Lords and protectors. The Santals have indistinguishable concept regarding the supernatural being i.e. bonga. The ancestral worship of the Santals occupies an important place in their religious beliefs. For the Santals, the rituals and ceremonies evoke an emotion that goes beyond a mere response to the practical needs. The Santal people bind the community together in their belief and give them a sense of the sacredness. There is no temple for the worship of gods and goddesses of the Santals of Northern Odisha. The sacred places of the Santals of are Jaherthan , Majhi than, etc. The Santals hold a strong religious faith and their religion is considered as “animism” or “Bongaism”. The traditional religious customs of the Santals of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balasore are mostly prevalent in their society till today. In some extent, the psychology of the people of Santal tribe / community is slightly changed due to the impact of modern education, industrialization and Hinduism. The Santals have a number of festivals throughout the year. Some festivals are connected with agricultural operation; some festivals are associated with their religions and a few festivals are observed by them for hunting purpose. The present article aims to focus on the prevalent religious belief, practices, rituals and festivals observed by the Santals of Northern Odisha in East India. For the writing of this article, both the primary and secondary sources are meticulously used by the author.

Key words: Tribal, Religion, Bonga, Festivals, Santal, Community, Mayurbhanj, Northern Odisha , India

I. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the nation states of the world to have elaborated special arrangement for the large numbers of ethnic minorities in general and tribals are in particular. In fact, the tribals are regarded as the initial

¹Assistant Professor, Department of History, KISS, Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751024, Odisha, India

²RGNF Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of History, KIIT, Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751024, Odisha, India

inhabitants of any country. In India, the tribals are locally known as *Jantjati*, *Adimjati*, *Anusuchit Janjati* and *Adivasi*. India can be rightly said as a melting pot of races and tribes in South-east Asia. The tribal religions in India have long been described as animistic (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.236). The form of religion practised by the tribals of India is thus more or less, Hindu (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.238). Different types of beliefs, faiths and isms prevailing among them form their sacred belief whereas the type of the spirits depend upon the form of the effect produced on the action done by the superhuman or supernatural powers (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.239). In Indian subcontinent, there are as many as seven hundred five tribes, and in the state of Odisha the number is sixty-two. Odisha occupies a special position in the tribal map of India. The social, cultural and religious life of the people of Odisha have been considerably shaped and influenced by tribal tradition (Mahaptra, 1993, p.1). The Santals are the largest tribal groups of Odisha. They are mostly resided in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balesore districts and some are in Sundargarh, and Dhenkanal areas of Odisha (Padhi, 2009, p.138). Santals also inhabit in the bordering provinces of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam (Murmu & Dash, Vol.52, No.1 & 2, June & December 2012. p.86). Santal people speak Santhali language, which belongs to the proto Austroloid group of Mundari language. The santhals of Odisha are non-idol worshippers. They have no temple, no image, no holy books, no official founder of religion and no regular worship service. Yet they hold a strong religious faith through their festivals. Really, their religion is considered as “animism” or “Bongaism”. The religious life of the Santals of Orisha is associated with several ceremonies. Among the people of different races and functional affinities the place of honour has been given to the Santals alone who numerically stand foremost in the population of the state of Odisha (Laequddin, 1940, p.11).

The people of Santal community are highly ritualistic people and regard their spirit as their Lords and protectors. Like all other primitive tribal societies, their religion performs an important social role (Raha, 1982). Religious beliefs help to strengthen the Santal social unity and contribute to the existence and maintenance of the social order. Their ancestral worship occupies an important place in their religious beliefs. For the Santals, the rituals and ceremonies evoke an emotion that goes beyond a mere response to the practical needs. They bind the community together in their belief and give them a sense of the sacredness. The Santal community has very formless concept with regard to the mystical being i.e. *bonga*. *Bongas* are the most important part of spiritual beings and spirits of deceased human beings. These spiritual beings are of various categories. They maintain different degree of affiliation and concern. They are malevolent spiritual agencies to interfere in the course of human affairs when angry and hungry that has to be appeased by sacrifices and incantations. All spirits are not malevolent. Santals are mortally afraid of them. They maintain amiable relationship with them through sacrifices, libations and incantations, etc. The people of Indian tribal communities including the Santals of Odisha believe that spirits inhabit in all over the place (Hasnain, 2016, p.90). Amongst the animistic tribes including the Santals all places are holy as they are the seats of spirits. Such type of conception is prevalent in the Santal community of Northern Odisha.

The Santals do believe in many gods and goddesses like their non-tribal counterparts. They also strongly believe in the unseen supernatural world. Faith in nature has manifested in their religious belief that all the sufferings as well as goodness are attributable to different *Bongas*, in the magical world of belief. It is the appeasement of *Bongas* ushers in prosperity and peace, whereas their wrath brings in misfortune and calamity. For the simplicity of understanding, they have classified their *Bongas* to different sects; each sect of Bonga is

responsible for certain misfortune or hard luck. However, the *Bongas* and Santals' rituals, which are product of long dissociation of Santals with outside society, are undergoing a certain metaphorical change in view of their exposure to outside world. Religion is intimately connected with every surface in the Santal society. Religion is the important allies in the struggle for their being that constitutes the most dynamic truth of their life. According to the Santals "Religion" is belief in the Supernatural beings (Karu, 2014, p.181). The lives of the traditional Santals are bounded by these supernatural spirits or *bongas* determining the course of nature and of human events. These made close relationships between the Santals and their spirits are established in their different phases of life cycles, different agricultural cycles and in seasonal rites and festivals (Das, Vol. IV., Issue-I, July 2015, p.p. 70-75). All the festivals of Santals are celebrated by group of people with certain dances and songs (Mahapatra,1993,p.107). Animal sacrifices are common in the Santal community on various occasions. The flesh of the sacrificial animals, the traditional liquor prepared by themselves, turmeric powders, sun dried rice, etc. are commonly used as the ritual objects in their worship (Mahapatra, 1993, p.107). In fact, the religious systems of the Santals of Northern Odisha are very interesting study for the scholars as well as readers to know about the tribal culture of Odisha. The present article aims to highlight the prevalent religious belief, practices, rituals and festivals of the Santals of the Northern Odisha in East India.

II. METHODOLOGY

The secondary sources have been mostly used in the writing of the present article. The primary data have been collected from *Gazetteers*, literatures, reports, practical observation, hearsay accounts of respondents through the personal interviews, schedules and by taking photographs. The extensive field survey had been undertaken by the co-author for the collection of data with regard to various aspects of the religious system of the Santals of Mayurbhanj of Northern Odisha. The secondary data used in the current article are such as Books, Magazines, Reviews, Journals, Periodicals, Proceedings, and Records. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are methodologically analyzed and applied in the present piece of work.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

3.1 Religious Belief and Practices of Santals of Northern Odisha

The Santals are largely found to be resided in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balasore districts of Northern Odisha. The people of Santal community of Northern Odisha generally believe that the world is populated by spiritual beings of different kinds. They consider that their living beings are of mystical entity. In Santal community, the sacred grove is locally known as *Jaher*, which is an essential part of a Santal village. It is a sacred place for common worship. The *Jaher* is set up for the purpose of special ritualistic ceremony of Santals. It is generally found at the outskirts of the village (Samantaraya, Vol-51, No.1 & 2, 2011, p.45, and See Culshaw, 2013, p.80). The *Jaher* is built around the number of tall sal trees (*sarjom*). The spirits of the *Jaher* are worshipped during the principal festivals of the community. The religion of Santals consisted of prayers, sacrifices and religious dances. Santal's prayer is a supplication to an invisible and powerful spirit to protect them from famine, sickness, to protect their cattle from diseases, protect them from attack of wild animals like

wolves and tiger, to protect their children from the dangers like attack of wild animal's snake bite, scorpion and all kinds of eventualities. The Santals are living in a greater society comprising of supernatural beings. Their universe is inhabited by numerous invisible supernatural beings and power. All these influence them in their whole activities like any other tribal people of India. The relationship between the Santals and these supernatural powers are so intimate that one cannot understand their social structure, unless one understands their religious universe. Troisi, while describing the Santal religion, considers religion as man's relation to the supernatural powers and a variety of structured system of beliefs as well as worships, in which these relations have been articulated.

The Santals are highly ritualistic people and regard their spirit as their Lords and protectors. Like all other primitive societies, their religion performs an important social role (Karua, 2014, p.184). The Santals believe that "*Bongas*" or the spirit exercise power over the contingency of natural world. They worship a number of Spirits which called Bongas. Therefore, Santals have choice to them all the way through supernatural or religious practice. The Santals believe in these personal mystical spirits and the ways of incoming to associate with them to form their religion. This fits with Radcliffe-Brown's vision that religion is everywhere an appearance in one form or another of a sense of trust on a control outside ourselves (Troisi, 2000, p.73). Emotion and pleasure take part a conspicuous element in the religious practices of the Santals of Odisha. It may be said that they have borrowed these ideas from the Hindus (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 286).

3.1.1. Animism

Among the sacred beliefs the faith in spirits is most common with the tribals and thus Animism (Vidyarthi and Rai,1985, p.239). This animism belief is rather a universal features of the religion the tribals have (Vidyarthi and Rai,1985, p.239). The census of 1901 enumerated Santals as 'animistic' while in the census of 1911, they were classified as 'tribal animists' out of wrong belief. Regarding their religion, Triosi states that 'it is true that the Santals believe in a host of spirits and several unseen supernatural powers dwelling in mountains, trees, river and rocks, etc.' However, to describe their religion as animistic appears to be imprecise, if not actually a misnomer, *Santal* religion is essentially social. It colours their economy, laws and customs. There is no individual approach to the spirits. Companionship is preserved through sacrificial offerings made on behalf of a specific social unit, which forms time to time as small as the household through ceremonial eating and drinking. Religious beliefs help to build up the Santal social unity, give to their survival as well as preservation of the social order. Moreover, Santal worship centres around its sacred place like *Jaherthan*, *Majhithan* and *Bhitar*, which are communal in character (Karua, 2014., pp.185-186).

That, the Santal religion contrasts from animism can also be seen in their ancestral worship, which occupies an important place in their religious beliefs (Triosi, 2000, p.142). Moreover, the emotional aspects of Santal religion are conspicuous by its absence in Tylor's theory of animism. For the Santals, the ceremonies and rituals evoke animation that goes beyond a mere answer to the practical desires. They bind the community together in their belief and give them a sense of the sacredness. Santal's major festivals and forms of worship can only be partially understood unless they are seen within the context of religious or enthusiasm. This is interesting to note that S.C. Roy used the term 'Spiritism' in designating the religion of the *Kharia* and *Oran*. The second thought of 'Spiritism' is supported by V. Elwin view that on the *Savara* tribe of Odisha in 1955. The

latest government census report has given up the use of the term animism to designated tribal religion (Karua, 2014., p.186).

3.1.2. *Bongaism*

Dutta Majumdar in his work religious beliefs and practices of the Hos, and that their religion is based on the theory of *Bongaism* (Triosi, 2000, p.243). In the Boddington's, Santali-English Dictionary the word *bonga* is defined to mean a spirit, godling demon, which is correct without any question. But Majumdar has discussed in his work and comes to a different conclusion, which is also justified. He states that the meaning of *bonga* is a 'power or a force'. It pervades all spaces and is believed to take any shape or form (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.241). Its power is impersonal and supernatural and the Hos have derived the idea of *bongas* or spirit, originally from a vague and mysterious power. The vague idea of power later on evidences itself and is identified with things and objects of his environment, as the later is regarded by primitive man as part of himself (Majumdar, 1953, p.278). Majumdar identifies it with the concept of 'mana' as it is found in Melanesian tribes. He has extended this concept of *Bongaism* to the religion of all other major neighbouring tribes of the Chhotanagpur region like Munda and Santal. The *bongas* are the most important part of spiritual beings and spirits of deceased human beings. These spiritual beings are of various categories. They maintain different degree of affiliation and concern. They are malevolent spiritual agencies to interfere in the course of human affairs, when angry and hungry; they have to be appeased by sacrifices and incantation. However, all *bongas* are not malevolent. Santals are mortally afraid of them. They maintain amiable relationship with them through sacrifices, libation, incantation, etc.

The concept of the origin of all *bongas* has been consequent to their ancestral worship. The Santals have a saying *Horgebonga, dah gehandiparua*, meaning men are *bongas* and water is beer and spirit, and they use it to express the belief that all the *bongas* were essentially men. Moreover, their *bongas* are different from *mana* of Melanesian tribe. Because in Santal vocabulary, there is no such term, which is equivalent to *mana*. The Santal grammar distinguishes between animate and inanimate. The distinction is not between living and dead matter, or between the spirit and matter, but between what according to Santal ideas has a soul and what has not. They regard all those beings are animated, which form their experience and arguing from the analogy of human behaviour appear to be interdependent agents; those entities which either in fact or in myth display what may call 'personally'. *Jiwi* or soul is always considered as inanimate, which is apparently regarded as 'stuff', but when *hormo* (body) and *jiwi* (soul) are joined together, an animate being is formed. Accordingly, certain word may be constructed with either form; an instructive instance is the word *buru* when referring to spirits, this is animate, but when meaning is mountain, it is inanimate, if there were any evidences in construction. However, *bonga* is always constructed with the animate form of *Bonga* being regarded as impersonal and therefore a Santal as inanimate, we would expect to find it reflected in the way, in which the word is constructed in speech. When a Ho dies, it is said that he is *bongaia*, which is interpreted to mean the union of a fraction of *Bonga* with the whole. The meaning of the phrases *bongaiajana* meaning 'to die' is contrasted with *menaia* meaning 'to exist'. In the Santal meaning of *Meanaca* is 'he exists', is opposed by *banugiea* meaning 'he does not exist' or 'he is not present'. The root of the verb is negation in Santali. The corresponding form in Ho is *banakea* one is tempted to wonder whether the similarity in form between this word and *bonga* has misleads (Karua, 2014, pp.186-187). Malinowski has appropriately said 'Theism of religion must be given up for religion not clinging to

any one, object of class (Triosi, 2000, p.245). Some scholars suggest that Santals religion is known as *Sarnaism* or *Sarna Dhoram*, but it cannot be popular may be due to its characteristics as observed by Briggs. As Radhakrishnan rightly says’ “Religion must be catholic, universal, and applicable to all classes and conditions of men. Nationalism militates against this spirit. No religion can claim to follow the right way, unless it ceases to be a function, of a group class or a nation”. Santal religion is basically a men’s religious conviction. The Santal women are strictly prohibited to approach any gods and goddesses. The religious functions are found to be performed by the men. Now-a-days, the women of Santal community want equal right just as much as the men possess. The people of Santal tribe / community worship a number of deities, which are mentioned below.

3.1.3. Chando Bonga or Sing Bonga (Sun or day Spirit)

Sun or Day Spirit (*Chando Bonga* or *Sing Bonga*) is the supreme deity of the Santal community. He is the architect of the mankind (Vidyarthi, Ray, 1985, p. 236 , And see Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p.20). Although any definite celebration is not pragmatic for Him , but in every tenth year He is found to be worshipped by the Santals (Mukherjea, 1962, Reprint-2017, p.274). Their primeval ancestors were worshipping only *Thakur-Jiu*, when they got *bonga*, gradually they have forgotten *Thakur*. Dutta Majumdar says the application of Hindi word ‘*Thakur*’ to their superlative divinity as an example of reinterpretation. Without offering is made to him but was worshipped in every tenth year. He is believed to be a generous deity. Since the Santals had wandered from one place to another, prior to their settlement at Chhotanagpur, their language was influenced by the people with whom they came in contact. Sun God is not only worshipped as the supreme deity, but also is an appearance of action, an indication of the heavenly relation of man with Him(Sun), for which east -the place of rising Sun has great implication in their rituals and practices (Karua, 2014, pp.188-189). Therefore, when worshipping their spirits, they always face towards the east. The east is associated with life. In such cases *Chandobonga* is called upon to act as witness, while the man taking the promise stands facing towards the east. Though *Chandobonga* is worshipped in every tenth year but no sacrifice is offered to him (Triosi, 2000, p.75 and Karua, 2014.p.189).

3.1.4. Jom-Sim Bonga

J. Gausdal records the name of fifty-five different kinds of *Jom-Sim-bonga* (Karua, 2014.p.189). Bodding states that *Jom-Sim-bongas* have several names viz.Panhar, Anhar, Boerangi, Seowani, Baran-Baran and others Badha Ahan (Bodding, 2001, p.134). The *Jom-Sim* festival is not a regularly observed in Santal community. In a family,the festival is observed once in five years. There is no specific date but only when harvest in the Santal’s home is full of grains, they perform this festival on a suitable date (Mohanty, 2008, p.66). The festival is the occasion to remember and celebrate the purity of his clan blood. Santals are always conscious not to enter into a marriage with his family, lineage or clan members. So, they marry with members of different clans (*gotras*). The traditional rituals are performed and the villagers along with the kith and kin are entertained with feast, in which any irregularities and violations detected is reminded and rectified (Mohanty, 2008, pp.66-67). An animal used to be sacrificed in the evening in honour of *Jom-Sim-bonga*. Only male members are allowed to partake the sacrificial meat. In the next morning, another animal is sacrificed in the honour of *Sim-bonga* and *Marang Buru* and here everybody eats the sacrificial meat.

3.1.5. The *Bonga* (Spirit)

In Odisha, the Santals worshiped a number of Spirits, which are called Bongas. In the Santal community, it is said that fear is the father of religion, for which Santals worship a number of *bongas* (Karua, 2014, p.189). Gausdal records, the names of one hundred and seventy-eight different *bongas* prevalent among them (Triosi, 2000, p.77). They are found to be worshipped at the time of all the festivals and socio-religious occasions (Karua, 2014, p.189). *Marang Buru* is the chief presiding deity of Santal pantheon and is supposed to be the most powerful one (Karua, 2014, p.190). They are supposed to preside over the areas, wherein they live. Santals have classified their *Bongas* into ten categories. The bad spirits as well as detached power are not object of worship, but have to be frightened all the way through exorcisms or magical practices. Some of these mischievous spirits are *Curins*, *Rakas* and *Ekalgudias*. Santals are not directly related with their religion. In this regard the help of benign *bonga* is needed to deactivate their evil effect.

3.1. 6. *Marang Buru (Lita Kuttree)*

Marang Buru is the chief presiding deity of the Santals and is supposed to be the powerful. *Maran* means great and *Buru* means hill, he is the great Mountain of the Santal traditions (Mukherjea, 2017, p. 275 and Karua, 2014, pp. 189-190). It is said that he possesses the widest possible powers and is associated both with benevolent and malevolent (Mukharjee, 1962, p.275). Offerings and worship for *Marang-Buru* are made in the *Jaher-than* by the village priest on behalf of the village (Kochar, 1966, p.248. Also see <http://www.jstor.org/stable>). As per their ritual, the Santal people offer a white fowl, white and uncast rated goat, rice, flowers, fruits, rice-beer in his festival as mentioned by Mukherjea (Mukherjea, 2017, p. 275). He should be appeased first with a liberal offer of rice-beer, during their festival, birth, marriage ceremonies, death rituals (Mukherjea, 2017, p. 275). According to Santal mythology, he is supposed to have instructed the first Santal couple, *Pilchu haram* and *Pilchubudhi* how to brew rice beer drinking of which create excitement for sex. He is worshipped as national God (Karua, 2014, p.191).

3.1.7. *Jaher Era*

This spirit, as the name implies, is said to be the lady / goddess of the Sacred grove (*Jaher than*) over which, she presides (Debnath, 2003, p.90). Her real name is *Ram Salgi*. The cult of the old lady as tribal spirit is also prevalent among the other tribals. The Santals believe her as a helpful spirit who does not harm to them. On the contrary she is anxious to her physical requirements. A fowl is sacrificed to her in almost all the festive occasions for the wellbeing of the village, particularly to obtain good crops as well as for the good fitness of the villagers along with their livestock. During festival, she is worshiped in a hut. They regard Her as a individual spirit one. She is the younger sister of *Maran-buru*. The three spirits namely *Maran buru*, *Jaher era* and *Moneko-Turuiko* are related with one other (Karua, 2014, pp.191-192). In view of that, in the 'Jaher than', where they are believed to abide, there are as many as three *Sarjom dare* (Sal trees), which should be in a line, the tallest two: the one for *Maran Buru*, along with that for 'Jaher Era' being close up jointly, while the 3rd is for *Moneko-Turuiko* (Triosi, 2000, p.82). A stone representing each spirit is noticed at the foot of each tree, here the Santals believe that it is deposited by the individual spirit itself (Triosi, 2000, p.82). During the field survey in the study area it has been observed that in the *Jaherthan* (sacred grove), there are two 'Sarjom dare / trees', which should be in a row the one of the *Maran Buru*, *Jaher Era* and *Moneko-Turuiko*. These stones representing each spirit are found at the foot of the two trees.

3.1.8. Moneko-Turuiko

Though the *bonga* is addressed in plural (literally five or six but represents only one God) but the God, but is worshipped only as one deity whose identity is shrouded in mystery, is worshipped only as one deity. It is believed that they are five brothers and sisters. From another myth cited by C.L. Mukharjee that five brothers, married to six sisters namely *Dangi*, *Pungi*, *Hisi*, *Dumuni*, *Chhita* and *Kapura*. They are supposed to supervise the wellbeing of the village and have power over rain, crops as well as epidemics. Whenever a severe epidemic ravage a village, the villagers calm down the spirit by promising him special sacrifice to be offered on a special occasion, on *mah-mone* (Karua, 2014, p.191).

3.1.9. Gosae Era (Her ladyship)

During *Baha* festival (Flower festival) another hut is made in the *Jaherthan* in honour of this spirit and is worshipped along with the other spirits of the sacred grove. Santals propitiate her against sores. A white fowl is sacrificed in her honour by the *Naeke*. Regarding her identity, it is said that she was a girl of blacksmith. Some say, she is the younger sister of *Jaher era*. When a Santal boy wanted to marry her, his mother objected. Being in passionate love with that girl, the boy makes up his mind to have a separate hut for his own (Karua, 2014, p.192).

3.1.10. Manjhi halam bonga

Manjhi halam bonga is sometimes called *Majhi halam Bonga*, this spirit is thought to control the village council. *Manjhi* is worshipped at the *Manjhithan*, a separate shrine in the village (Mukherjea, 2017, p.276). As in the traditional Santal village of their ancestral land, the spirit does not reside in the *Jaher than* but lives inside the village in the place known as *Majhi than*, specially constructed by the side of the house of *Majhi* or the headman of the Santal village (Debnath, 2003, p.91). In some areas, *Majhi halam bonga* is also worshipped in the third hut.

3.1.11. Pargana bonga (Headman of the group of villages)

This spirit also resides in the grove, where he is presented at the foot of the *Sarjom* tree (*Sal*). N. Dutta Majumdar states that, this spirit seems to be a spiritual counterpart of the social institution of the *pargana*. He has an unusual power over the witches. When there is any general illness in the village, caused by witches, at that time this spirit is worshipped. The Santals perform sacrifices at the time of main festivals (*parav*) named the *Sohrae*, (produce), the *Baha*, *Hariar Sim* (sprouting), the *Eroh Sim* (sowing), the *Janthar* (First fruits Festival), etc, while *Maran Buru Moneko-Turuioke*, *Jaher-Era* and *Gosae-Era* propitiated by the village priest, (*Naeke*) the *Kudam-Naeke* (the assistant priest) propitiate the *pargana bonga* through a blood offering from his own thigh called *Bulumayam* (Karua, 2014, p.192).

3.1.12. Orah Bonga (House hold spirit)

The *bongas* as numerous as the *abge bongas* and as benevolent, are the *orah bongas* (household *bonga*). Like the *abge bongas*, the *orah bongas* are considered to be the most personal spirits of the Santal family (Troisi, 2000., p.90). Each *bonga* has a different name and a definite *dane* (the sacrificial animal or bird) of specific size, sex and colour. The name of the *Orah bongas*, the nature of *dane* and the incantations are secret. Confidential information about these gods is passed by the father to the eldest son before the former's death. The *Orah*

bongas in this sense, are inherited Patri lineally, so that the domestic groups belonging to the same family line are likely to have the same set of *Orah bongas*. The names of the *bongas* are not disclosed to the female members of a household but they can partake the sacrificial offering to these spirits. The *Orah bonga* are, therefore, not a single *bonga* but a class of *bongas*, which are acquired by the respective families for regular worship within *bhitri*. Every family maintains liaison with only a selected few of them. According to Hunter, the names of the *Orah bongas* are *Baspahar, Deswali, Sas, Goraya, Barpahar, Satanawdi, Thuntatursa*, etc. The name of most of the *orah bongas* refer to forests, hillocks or rivers or sometimes to some Brahmanical gods or goddesses, some have suffixes like *mai, dibi, chandi* which has given them Brahminic like appellations, through most of the proper names are Santali origin. It is said that the high caste people have borrowed the village God (The *Gram Devata*) and house hold God (Sal Gram) from the primitive races, whom they enslaved.

The *Orah bongas* are not represented by any shrine or symbol in the *bhitri*. The mode and manner of sacrificial ritual in *bhitri* for *orah bongas* is similar to that adopted in *Jaherthan* by the village priest. A simple circle *khond* is made with some cow dung and a vermilion mark is applied to it. A small flat piece of stone may also be sacrificed (*dane*). Generally, a red fowl or a goat, which is marked with vermilion on its head, stomach and right forelimb and is fed upon some sun-dried (*adwa*) rice grains, is placed within the circle. While doing so an incantation is uttered by the priest, which is similar to the incantation used for the ancestor spirit or spirits. The *bonga* is addressed by its specific name and protection of the 'house' from headache, stomach and fever is begged for in the prayer. The *bonga sare* regarded and addressed not only as a malevolent, but also as a benevolent being (Karua, 2014, pp.193-194). After this the animal is beheaded with a weapon which has been purified by sprinkling some water on it and marking its blade with vermilion. The head is placed within the cow dung circle and a few drops of blood from the trunk are allowed to fall on the rice, placed within the circle. The same incantation is repeated by the same person (Kochar, , Vol.V, No. 3 & 4, 1963, pp.63-66).

The code, personnel of the participant group, and the mode of consumption of the sacrificial meal, all these follow the same pattern as narrated above for the ancestral spirits. However, sacrificial meal is not offered to the *bongas* as in the case of family spirits. The families belonging to the different clans and sub-clans do not necessarily have the same *bongas* though they may overlap. The affiliation with *Orah bongas* is irrespective of the clan or sub-clan status. But the families belonging to the same lineage may often have some *orah bongas* in common. A family belonging to the sub-sect (*Naeke- khili*) of the *Manrdi* clan was found to worship the *Jaher bongas* (*Jaher era* and *MonekoTuruioke*) within the *bhitri* as its *orah bongas*.

Although, their custom lays down that the family deities should be worshipped at the principal festivals, and this is agreed in theory by the elders, the actual usage is strikingly different. Some families worship *orah bongas* and other family deities at *baha, eroh* and *sohrae* festivals every year. Some are found to worship *orah bongas* in alternate and some after three or five years and some families neither worship nor participate in any *bhitri* worship. A variety of usages are current in different regions with regard to the worship of *orah bongas* and other family deities. Such laxity is a local phenomenon. The families acquire certain *bongas* as *Orah bonga* and these deities are inherited patrilineally like other family duties. A family may acquire a *bonga* as family deity in three ways. At the time of persistent disease and distress, the Santals resort to divine intervention to ascertain that if there is any particular *bonga* behind miseries. Thus, the *bonga*, revealed, is offered immediately sacrifice or is promised a sacrifice after recovery. However, if the miseries persist and the same *bonga* is revealed again and again in subsequent divinations, the *ojha* (magician or magician) may advise the family to promise regular

sacrifice to the *bonga* in *bhitri* in the hope that this special treatment will calm down the *bonga*. The *bonga* is given an abode or *than* in *bhitri* along with other family deities and offered regular sacrifices at the scheduled occasions. The process of acquiring a *bonga* for regular worship in a definite place at scheduled occasions is the process of deification (Karua, 2014, pp.194-195).

3.1.13. *Abge-bonga* (Secret God)

While the *Jaher bongas* protect the Santals as a tribe, there is another class of bongas known as *Abge-bonga*, which acts as tutelary spirits to each different subclan or *khut* (Triosi, 2014, p.86). Gausdal states that 405 sub-clans are appeared among the eleven clans at Santal Pargana. The *Abge-bongas* are considered to be the most sacred and the most jealously guarded family deities of the Santals (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p.21). They are said to give earthly blessings and to save in time of danger and also look after the crops and their worshippers. Their names are not disclosed to anybody in any circumstances (Karua, 2014, p.195). The Santals do not disclose the names of the *Abge Bongas* presided over their family to any one. *Abge Bongas* are worshipped near white ant-hills with offerings of rams, fowls, and pigs (Mukherjea, 2017, p.283). According to Beshra the *Abge-bongas* of the Hansdah sept is *Dharasane* and *Katkomkudra*, Marndi sept is *Dhanagara*, Kisku sept is *Dhanahari*, Hembram sept is *Garhsinka* and *Lilachandi*, Murmu sept is *Kudrachandi*, *Bahata*, *Duar Sene* and *Kudraj*, Soren sept is *Acrali*, Tudu sept is *Dhanagara*, Beshra sept is *Champadanagar*, Baskey sept is *Deswali*, etc. (Beshra, 2010, p.105). They are only whispered by the head of the household and he tells the name of the *Abge-bonga* to his eldest son only before he dies. Skrefsrud states that from the primeval times the *guru* knew the names of the *Abge-bonga*. At the time of their misfortune, they were rescued by these spirits as their protectors.

The trend of worship of *Abge-bonga* is somewhat a little different from that of *Agilhapram* and *Orahbonga*. They are worshipped in the month of *Aghan* on the full moon night and also at *Sohrae*. Sacrifice is made in a field outside the house in the early hours of the morning. On the appointed day all the adult members of the family arrive at a selected site in the field in the darkness of early morning. They take with them sheep, vermilion, Sal leaves, cow dung, sun dried rice, *methi*, a winnowing fan, ordinary rice and some utensils to cook the sacrificial meal. The sacrifice is only performed by the senior male member of the Santal family in strict secrecy. A sheep is usually sacrificed to the *Abgebonga*. The procedure of sacrifice is the same as adopted for *Orah-bonga* or *Jaher bonga*, except the *than* (seat) for the foot of an ant hill called *bunum*. The sacrificial meal is cooked with rice on the spot and consumed them and thereby the male members remain present at the occasion. If they fail to eat everything, the left over is buried in the ground. It is interesting to note that rice-beer libations are not offered to the *Abge-bonga*. This is the only ritual in which rice-beer libation are not offered. It is known from the literature that the *Abge-bonga* worship was performed at least once in a year. It should be worshipped every year regularly. Generally, it is done in the fulfilment of a promise to the *Abge-bonga* in the event of any disease or distress. Performances of this kind of sacrifice are called *gohbhariya* meaning “Carrying the burden” or “fulfilling a promise”. A laxity in the worship of *Abge-bonga* is indicative of a change in the religious values and norms with reference to other family spirits and deities. The *Abge-bonga* worship differs from that of *Orah-bonga* in the following respects. Firstly, the sacrifice is performed outside the house in strict secrecy. No rice-beer libations are made to the *bonga*. Secondly, the female members of the family do not partake the sacrifice meal. Thirdly, the *than* (seat) of the *Abge-bonga* is made at the foot of an ant hill. However, *Orah-bonga* worship above mentioned trends are not followed (Karua, 2014, pp.195-197).

3.1.14. Hapramko bongas (Ancestral spirits)

In addition to the household *bongas*, all Santal families worship the spirits of their ancestors said *Hapramko bongas*. The ancestral spirits of Santals are sometimes called as Hapram Bonga (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p.21). The ancestor worship is a tough aspect in Santal social as well as household unity. The term ancestor worship is sometimes used in a very wide sense to refer to any sort of rituals performed in honour of dead persons. Radcliffe Brown has used it, limiting the cult group to the 'members' of a lineage with reference to the deceased members of the lineage (Troisi, 2000, p.93). They are offered a cock and a hen respectively with a liberal share of rice beer. During the harvest festival like *Sohrae* and flower festivals, fowls are sacrificed in their honour for a healthy and disease-free life. The honour is paid to their memory of the dead relatives for the departed spirits. After the propitiation of the *Burah-Burhi*, others unmarried sisters receive supplementary worships. But, in case of the Orans the spirits of the dead ancestors are venerated as a separated class of spirits.

The objective behind the worship of ancestors is that the dead men's social individualities are not annihilated, but relatively altered like other primitive tribes of Odisha as well as India. Mallinowski states that "It is the result of the belief in immortality of deep emotional revelation, standardized by religion rather than a primitive philosophical tradition". Like other tribes, the Santals held the belief in the survival of after death. According to their original conceptions the souls after departure the dead bodies become *bonga*. When one dies, they use the common phrases as *nitong doe hapramena* or *bongaenae* meaning now he has become ancestral spirit. Yet, one becomes a *hapramkobonga* merely after his funeral rites have been performed. Those, who have unnatural death or who die from certain infectious disease like Leprosy, small pox, etc. Those women, who are died in pregnancy or in child birth, are not given full funerary rites. They do not achieve full spiritual status and their ghosts are believed to be hovering around the world as *bhuts* or *churins*. Only after the *Bhandan* ceremony, he finally joins with his ancestors, with whom he continues taking active interest in the household affairs. Their blessings are invoked at every social ceremony and their solemnity. Even their collective expressions help to re-affirm and strengthen the solidarity of the family. In the words of Radcliffe-Brown, they give stability to the lineage past, present and future (Karua, 2014, pp.200-201).

3.1.15. The Saket bongas

The *Saket bongas* or the Tutelary *bongas* of the *ojhas*:- *Ojha* is the magician-cum-medicine practitioner among the Santals. He is the most appreciated person in the village (Troisi, 2000, p.97). His work is to find out the evil agency working behind death, illness or other maladies. He is a Sorcerer and wizard. He is a professional person in this area of practice and works on payment, when his services are called for. He performs sacrifices to *bongas* on behalf of his clan and village people (Karua, 2014, p.201). These special *bongas* with whom the *ojha* is supposed to be in communication and whose power he enlist in time of require are numerous as well as dissimilar. Bodding, records the names of 104 *Saket bongas*. Various *Saket bongas* are invoked as per the preference along with belief of the *ojha* called upon. Some *ojhas* have a predilection for one, others for another. Besides, certain *bongas* are only invoked for particular diseases. Thus, for instance, *Luri Lora* is invoked in the case of smallpox; *Duria Bardo* and *Nason Chandi* in cases of madness; *Bhalua Bijai Julumpaika*, *Kapi Karan* and *Ulumpaika* in the case of women whose labour is protracted. *Gosae Era* against sores, while *Jaher Era* and *nag Nagin* are invoked for cattle disease. The *Saket bongas* who are specially remembered and invoked are *Kamru guru* (from whom, according to Santal traditions the Santal *ojha* have originally learnt their profession),

Sermasinj Thakur, sometimes also called *Sinj Bonga* (the Sun), *Kali Mai* (the Hindu goddess Kali), *Dibi Mai* (the Hindu goddess Durga), and *Ganga Mai* i.e. the Ganges' goddess (Troisi, 2000, pp.98-99). Most of the *Saket bongas* invoked by their *Ojhas*, have been taken from the Brahmanical practices (Troisi, 2000, p.99).

3.1.16. The *Deko-Bonga* (Hindu deities)

Like other Pantheon tribes. Santals also worship some Hindu deities. The names of the deities like Shiva, Vishnu, Kali, Durga, Ganga Mai, Parvati, Rama, Krishna are invoked by them (Karua, 2014, p.201).

3.1.17. *Sima-Bonga* (Boundary Spirit) and *Bahre-Bonga*

The Santals believe that the *Simabonga* and *bahre bonga* are more malevolent than others. *Sima bonga* are particularly feared. They believed to cause snakes bite and other animals to attack in the fields and very furious. Sometimes trees, at the end of a village street, are said to be dedicated to them. Culshaw (1949: 80) points out that in Bankura certain trees are marked by means of a piece of string during the festivals, dedicating them to these *bongas*. Whenever there is a drought spirit promising further propitiation when rain falls. The *bahrebongas* are believed to live in the area surrounding the village, further away from the boundaries. Their favourite abodes are pools, streams, ponds, trees, cremation site, etc. These *bongas* are said to delude thirsty men with mirages of water reservoirs, the *bahrebongas* cause the water to vanish, thus tormenting the thirsty men. On vowing to offer sacrifices to the *bahrebongas*, the reservoir is caused to appear in its reality, enabling the men to quench their thirst.

Both the *sima bonga* and *bahre bongas* are believed to be very envious and they are in any way hurt, for example, if sacrifices are not offered to them, they become hungry for a sacrifice and cause disease. It is very difficult to propitiate them and not everyone is competent to do so. For this reason, in almost every Santal village, there is a *Kudam Naeke* whose primary function is to propitiate these spirits through collectives' sacrifices. This is done twice a year, on the occasion of transplanting and harvesting. Fowls are offered in their honour and all present, with the exception of women, partake of the food. The mode of sacrifice is called *Bulu Mayam* since the *KudamNaeke* offers some of his blood along with the sun dried rice given to these *bongas*. In case of sickness, the *Ojha*, through divination, finds out that the *bahre bongas* or *sima bongas* are the cause of the evil, he offers them sacrifices on behalf of the sick man's family. In such cases, the *Ojha* also performs the *Bulu Mayam* ceremony (Troisi, 2000, pp.101-102).

3.1.18. *Pat-Spirits* (Hill spirits)

Apart from the village spirits, Santals also worship numerous super human agencies called *Pats* (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 277). They are supposed to reside in different regions of the district namely *Berhapat* – chief hill spirit, *Budhapahar*-a male deity, *Pauripat*-a female deity, *Mangar-Pat*-, *Chandra Pat*, *Duarsuni Pat*, *Dogar Sila*, *Sula Pat*, *Burubonga* , *Rankini*, etc.(Mukherjea, 2017, pp. 277-278). Amongst other *Pats*, Lying distributed throughout Mayurbhanj, mention was made of “ *Dagarsila*”, Who is invoked / worshipped during warfare (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 278). *Dagarsila* is propitiated by a red cock and an uncast rated goat as recorded by Mukherjea.

3.1.19. Buru Bonga

Buru Bonga, the horrible deity who delights in human blood (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 277), the human sacrifice is now a rare phenomenon in the Santal society of Northern Odisha. A recorded case of human sacrifice to deities can be seen in Mayurbhanj Law Reports (Bhima Naik vs Mayurbhanj State, 1934-35, which refers to a case wherein certain Santals and Kols were tried on a charge of murdering a lad , “ unique in the annals of crime in Mayurbhanj” as C.J. Dr. P.K. Sen, characterised it (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 279).

3.1.20. Basuki or Basumata

Beside the hill and village spirits, Santals also worship *Basuki* or *Baumata* for their good production of crops during the month of *Ashar* with the offering of fowls and goats (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 280). Such worship is done not in a regular feature but is done occasionally apprehending the failure of the crops (Mukherjea, 2017,p. 280).

3.1.21. Malevolent and Spiteful Spirits

The Bongas are protective and are believed to be intimately concerned with the Santal welfare and integrity of the tribe, village and family, as a whole (Karua, 2014, p.202).

Water Spirits: These female *bongas* are said to exist in hollowed-out water holes and rivers. They are believed to spirit away people, especially young men, to these places with the idea of wedding them. This, they do by disguising themselves as beautiful Santal girls. Though a number of Santal folktales describe such romantic encounters in vivid detail, such happening is said to occur very rarely in actual Santal life (Triosi, 2014, p.103).

Rongo-Rajibonga: These spirits are said to reside in the forest, where a special tree called *terel* (*Diaspyroostomentosa*) is reserved to them. It is believed that they are totally infatuated with sex, at which, it is extremely significant to amuse them with obscene songs as well as stories. If they are not satisfied, they cause terrible mischief during the hunt. To placate them the ban on sexual talks and singing is lifted. The sexual jokes and talk, which are generally forbidden in normal life, are encouraged and amorous songs are freely performed.

Rango-Bonga (forest deity)- Rango-Bonga is considered by the people of Santal community as forest deities.

Baghutbonga (Tiger devil): The Spirit of a tiger is also worshipped as mischievous spirit (Karua, 2014, pp.202-203). This bonga is propitiated every year during the *Dasae* festival (Durga Puja) in order to pacify and avert any haram. By one of the youngsters in the village who has undergone training in *ojhaism* (Triosi, 2000, p.105). Some of this type take the form of young men and women for the purpose of meeting with the opposite sex. The results of such unions habitually lead to illness. The attenuation of the Bonga-Lovers can be prevented by elaborate magic and charms by witch doctors.

Naiharbonga: This spirit belongs to the father-in-law's house hold. It sometimes accompanies a woman, when she joins her husband's house. It is also called *Acraele Bonga*. The *Naiharbonga*, though does not belong to her husband's household, is therefore an unknown spirit.

Kisanbonga: They believe that these spirits steal from others and bring wealth to their master's house. They can eat up everybody in the house. They have the following saying. *Kisanbongay bhutauakantako*,

gujukhanako, meaning whose wealth *bonga* increases, his family members die one by one. It is very difficult to get rid of a *kisan-bonga*.

Thapna-bongas (Buried Spirits): *Sunum-Bonga* ceremony shows that certain *bongas* have been buried under-ground in the house, which cause illness and misery. Santals say that witches do not do such things. One of the methods used by a witch to kill her victim, particularly, if the later does not belong to the family it lives. To defuse the effect of *Thapnabonga*, the Santals take a stone over which spells are pronounced and then it is buried in the house or cowshed of the victim. It can also be planted in a whole village. This is believed to be the case, when a village is struck by a lot of maladies and death, when the cattle die or the crops fail for no reason (Karua, 2014., p.203).

Churins: *Churins* are the women spirits, who are died at the time of pregnancy. They structure a particular class of female goblins with horrifying manifestation reported to have heads like rotating wheels. They are said to ambush along with suck the blood of Santals / people, whenever they find them alone. As an effect, the Santals fear them very much and take a number of safety measures not to let such goblin move and hurt the villagers. Elwin states that 'the unusual is always risky and so when a lady dies in child-birth, taboos are observed to protect, those who are still alive'. Therefore, even in those places, where the Santals used to cremate their dead, it was always the custom to bury the body of a woman dying in pregnancy of childbirth, deep in the ground. To ensure that the dead woman would not outflow from her funeral place, the Santals insert an iron pin in the sole of her foot and also put thorns above her body (Triosi, 2000, p.110).

Bhut (Ghost) : The child who dies in his / her mother's womb, is believed to become *bhuts* and also who dies before the formal cleansed through *Janam Chhatiar* ceremony as well as *Telenahan* ceremony, and those who dies as a consequence of unnatural death. These are supposed to live outer side of the village like rivers, wells, trees, ponds, stones, fields, etc. Unlike the malevolent spirits, *bhuts*, however they do not harm people. As they say *Bhut ko do ekenboh-tor ko* meaning *bhut* only frighten people.

Eka gudias and Rakas: Like *bhuts* and *churins*, *Ekagudia* and *rakas* are not objects of worship. *Eka gudia* are fabulous beings, said to have a head of a horse and one leg. They are believed to devour human being somewhere in Assam. *Rakas* are frequently mentioned in Santal folk tales.

Bongas Husband of Witches: Like other *bongas*, Santals believe in the efficacy of witch-craft. While the Mundas, the Oraons and other tribes behave that a witch can be either a man or a woman, The Santal believes only a woman has a monopoly of witchcraft. Like other malevolent *bongas*, witches can cause a lot of harm. Hence, they are regarded as very dangerous. From the above discussion, it is known that beliefs regarding these Supernatural spirits and the modes of ceremonial approach. Many of their *bongas* cannot be classified as evil spirits. On the contrary, a good number of them like the *Jaher Bonga* and *Orah Bonga* are considered by them as benevolent *bonga*. There is a mutual interaction between the two in the sense that while belief is made expressive and dynamic in ritual it is rationalized and made effective by beliefs. As meaningful deeds of behaviour rituals are representational and as such are not capricious but suitable to culture (Karua, 2014, pp. 204-205).

3.1.22. Hindu Deities

The pantheon of Santal Gods, like that of many other tribes, also includes some Hindu deities. Some Santal households have taken Hindu gods and goddesses as their Household spirit. Out of 5 tutelary spirits three are Kali, Dibi (Durga) and Ganga mai. Most of the other Saket Bonga have name of Hindu origin. The Santals do worship the Hindu Goddess Kali in their houses.

The Santals are deeply associated with their tradition and religious faith. Traditional lives are surrounded by these supernatural spirits or *Bongas* shaping the course of nature and human events. They followed their own religion which unlike a revealed or a cosmic one, does not have an idol worship in, they have orally Sacred scripture to refer and a religious founder to follow. But the nature and the function of the Santal society always followed to the Sun and the Moon for performance all worship. Now-a-days educated and conscious Santals are influenced by other religion and culture that seems kept away themselves from own culture, tradition and religious beliefs.

3.2. Rituals and Festivals of the Santals of Northern Odisha

As Santals live in the natural surroundings, they develop a very close relationship with forests and groves. Their festivals and religion rest heavily on seasonal manifestation of nature. They have a number of festivals spread over different seasons and months of the year. The Santal village priest is known as *Naike*, who is not elected by the villagers, but chosen by the gods (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.259). The *Naike* observes a certain ritual segregation from his fellow villagers before all ceremonies and the worship of the Bonga (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.260). In every Santal village, there is a co-priest known as *Kadam Naike* for whom also special duties are assigned. Some festivals of Santal community of Odisha are connected with agricultural operation; some festivals are associated with religions, while some festivals are for hunting purpose (Karua, 2014, p.206).

Agriculture is very important for the Santals, because of the fact that it plays most vital role in their economy. They remain busy almost round the year on different agricultural pursuits, as it is their means of livelihood. It is the whole way of life and unites the entire family. It permeates the whole Santal life. As a result, there lies a close and intimate relationship between agricultural economy and magico-religious beliefs and practices. The nature of their worship is primarily congregational and the approach is collective. As such their festivals may be considered as the expression on their traditional customs and culture. Each festival has got two aspects—firstly, the magico-religious, which includes the sacrifices and offering to the deity for its appeasement and secondly, the recreational part, which provides entertainment and enjoyment including feasting, drinking, dancing and singing. In the former aspect, the most important rite is the sacrifices of the animals and fowls to the god and goddess. The *Naike* and *Kudam Naike* of the village presides over the ceremony and performs the sacrifices after going through a number of rituals (Raha, 1982, p.43). Most of these festive occasions are marked with social union of the tribes. As such, community participation is the basic feature of these festivals. Individual participation in these festive strengthens their group solidarity (Karua, 2014, p.207). The following festivals are observed by Santals of Mayurbhanj.

3.2.1. Magh Sim

Magh Sim festival is observed in the middle of January to first February) prior to the reaping of the thatching grass i.e. *Sauli* (Bodding, 2001, p.149 and Triosi, 2000, p.140). On the occasion of this festival, the

labourers are salaried with their wages as well as new contract is also made (Mohanty, Vol.48, No. 2, December-2008, p.65). From every house, Jog Majhi collects rice, turmeric, salt and fowls (Bodding, 2001, p.149). After having bathed in the water, the village priest comes up to the magic square out the *Jaher* place and offers the fowls and rice-beer. Priest offers them to *Moneko*, *Jaher era*, *Marangburu*, *Pargana bonga*, *Gosae era* and *Majhi haram* and to the *bongas* that have come up and with the Boundary *bongas*. He makes an invocation as on other occasions. When village priest has completed the sacrifices, they make a hash with rice of them and eat them, the rice-beer they drink. Some of the hash goes by customary right to certain people. The followings get the village headman and his deputy and the *Godet*, the *Jog Majhi*, the *Jog Paranik*, the village priest and the priest of the outskirts, the reapers of the thatching grass, the carters, the thatcher's, the water drawers, the bringers of firewood and leaves, the cook, and the rice-beer brewer, they all get one portion each, only the village priest and the priest of the outskirts get two portions each (Bodding, 2001, p.149). A new significant event is that all the village officials are resigned from their posts. Fresh officials are selected or old village officials are re-appointed with the taking of rice-beer (Mishra, 2011, p.133).

3.2.2. Sakrat (Makar)

Sakrat is observed on the last day of *push* (mid-January) after *Shorae* festival. It is associated with hunting. On this occasion, dead ancestors' worships are performed for the general welfare of the house-hold. It is observed for five days (Karua, 2014, p.213). First day is called "*Baundi*". This day, every household woman cleans on the walls and floor, wash the clothes and they clean the head with slime. For the festival, they prepare flattened rice, parched rice, molasses and sun-dried rice (Beshra, 2009, pp.47-48). Eating fish and crab on this day is believed to be giving a long lease of life. (Mohanty, 2008. p.65). Second day is called *Sakrat* festival. This day, they get up early morning for all the house-hold members to bath. Their bathing places are ponds, rivers and they made to "*Budhi Kumba*" after bath they burn to *Budhikumba* and children are enjoyed with fire. Women prepare cake and male members kill hen on the door and they sprinkle blood at the entrance door (Beshra, 2009, p.48). Tasteful cake of meat, flour meat cake, Sun-dried rice, flattened rice, molasses and rice-beer are offered first to the god and goddess and ancestors. The *Naike* offers the rice-beer libation to *Majhi halam* at the *Majhithan* (Karua, 2014, p.213). Towards afternoon *Bejhatunz* (archery competition) to shoot a target placed on a banana tree is held. The successful person is cheered and carried to the Headman's house in a procession. In Headman house they are entertained with rice-beer and fried rice. He, who maintains a uniform record for three consecutive years, is awarded special prize by the Headman. Melodious and spirited folk songs with dances make the evening unique (Mohanty, 2008, p.65). The third day is called "*Gali Asen*" or "*Galienej*" of start. It is held for three days. Young men and women from the village, with straw made puppet monkey, made to dance from village to village and door to door and they collect grain, rice, etc. Subscriptions are also raised to arrange a community feast, while the country side vibrates with music and laughing (Beshra, 2009, p.48, And Also see Mohanty, 2008,p. 65).

3.2.3. Baha Parab (Sal Blossom Festivals)

The second great agriculture festival of the Santals is the *Baha Parab* - Flower Festival (Troisi, 2000, p. 134, And Also see Karua, 2014, p.207). The Santals, in our study area celebrated "*Baha festival*" after the new moon in the month of *Phalgun (Muluh Mane Maha)* after five days new moon. It is observed three days. When the *Sal (Shorea Robusta)*, *Mahua (Bassia Latifolia)*, *Murud (Butea Frondosa)*, and the *Ichah (Wood fordia*

Floribunda, Salib) trees begin to blossom (Beshra, 2010, p.77). It is also known as spring festivals. The objective is to celebrate the spring festival with a prayer to their *bongas* (deities) to prevent the occurrence of sickness or witchcraft and to preserve the crop and cattle. So long as *Baha* is not over, none will suck the honey of these flowers or eat them nor will their women wear them in their bun (Karua, 2014, p. 207).

The *Baha* festival starts with a day of purification called *Um* (Bath) when the *Naike, Kudam Naike, Jog Majhi* and the young men of the village go to the *Jaher than* and build two huts one reserved for *Gosane Era* and the other shared by *Jaher Era*, the presiding deity of the grove, *Moneko* (The fives) and ‘Marang Buru’, the chief presiding deity. The priest purifies the shrine with cow dung. All participated persons go for the bath and purify. The *Naike* (priest) cleans a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pick axe, a broomstick and a hunting horn. He daubs them with oil and mithi (Troisi, 2000, p.134, Also see Mohanty, 2008, p.65). The spirit possession ceremony takes place in the evening in the house of the *Naike* where everyone sings *Baha* songs. Three young men of the village enter into entrance and are possessed by *Jaher era, Marangburu* and *Moneko-turuiko* respectively (Karua, 2014, p.207). The winnowing fans are placed in front of three young men (Troisi, 2000, p.135). They believed to be demon-possessed by *Jaher era*, take the necklace, the bangle, the basket and broomstick. *Moneko* take arrow and bow, while *Marangburu* carries the battle-axe (Karua, 2014, p.207).

Early morning on the second day the priest’s wife grinds floor (Mohanty, 2008. p.66). The *Jog Majhi* goes around the village gathering fowls, rice, salt and turmeric. All participated persons go for their purification bath, after which they go to the *Jaherthan* (Troisi, 2000, p.135). When they go to *Jaherthan* they drum the kettle-drum and blow the horn (Bodding, 2001, p.151). The priests take their new winnowing fan with sun dried rice, lawn grass, vermilion, oil and full water pot for the performance of *pujas*. *Jaher era* wears the necklace, the bangle, take the bamboo basket on the head and take the broomstick, *Moneko* take the bow and arrow, while *Marangburu* carries the battle-axe (Bodding, 2001, p.151). They wear traditional insignia and run into the jungle followed by other young men. There, *Moneko* shoots at the sprouting *sal* flowers with an arrow, Maran Buru climbs the tree and cuts the branches with flowers while *Jaher Era* plucks them in his basket. They return to *Jaherthan* gathering Mohua flowers on the way. *Naike* receives them and they are enshrined in their respective huts (Mohanty, 2008, p.66). *Khond* (Altar) is prepared by *Naike* in place of *Jaherthan*. Fowls are sacrificed with special incantation in honour of ‘Baha’ amidst songs and rejoicing, the *Naike* offers the branches of *sal* and *mahua* flowers (Beshra, 2010, p.80, and see Mohanty, 2008, p.66). In the evening, all the young boys and girls go the *Jaherthan* where they spend some through singing, dancing and merry making (Karua, 2014, p.207). They sing a song about the coming of their god and goddess and how surrounding is changing when god or goddess come.

The people of Santal community are standing in front of *Jaherthan*, they are thinking that someone is coming. That may be *Marang Buru* or *Jaherayo*, because they can be seeing that condition of surrounding is changing, they are seeing that land or soil is fully dusty and dust particles are flowing over the soil and sky is very brightness and sunny. The Santals are hoping that *Chikan Chando* (Sun) is arising and environment is fully dust and sunny.

They are feeling that someone had arisen because they feel that women’s walking sound, land is quaking and sky is very sunny burning like fire ball. They are thinking that someone has arisen (it may be *Marang Buru* or *Jaher Ayo*), because they knew that surrounding is changing time to time. Surroundings become whiteness,

brightening with beautiful fragrance all over the sky when god or goddesses come. Ultimately, they confirm that god or goddess (*Marang Buru* or *Jaher Ayo*) have already come arisen, that is why the surrounding is brightening, lighting by their divine power and beautiful fragrance is spread all over the sky. Thereafter, all participants come back with the *Naike*. His feet are washed by village women at door to door and presents a *sal* flower on return journey. After return to house water is sprinkled on roof and rice-beer is taken. They, all men and women are played water game. Then whole night enjoys the dancing and singing (Karua, 2014, pp.207-208).

The third day is regarded as by two main activities: observing the *sagunsupali* (auspicious clay pitcher) as well as hunting. At the village priest's house, the pitcher had been filled in the previous evening and is supposed to forecast the rainfall for the upcoming crop growing season. Both the women and men chant songs in the court yard of the priest's house. The songs state on the diverse ritual ladder taken that morning and on hunting deeds, which will take place before long after (Droesch, Vol.73, No. 1/2, 2014, p.162). After that men along with boys of the Santal villages get on the initial hunt of the year equipped with axes, bows, arrows, spears, etc. accompanied with their hunting dogs and they must kill a fowl (Droesch, 2014, pp.162-163 And see Mukherjee, 1962, p.263). In the evening they come to priest house and his wife accepts them by washing along with oiling their feet (Droesch, 2014, p.163). The function concludes with a general drink of rice-beer at the priest's expense (Mukherjea, 1962, p.263).

3.2.4. Disham-Sendra (Annual Hunt)

In the Santal soul, annual hunt is extremely-important festival. It is an annual hunting festival (Karua, 2014, p.208). This body meets once a year at the yearly hunt during the spring season. The tracks are made from the middle of a hill over which the hunter passes and all the male members of different tribes attend it. This meeting was found to be presided by the *Dehuri* "a priest, a master of the Hunt, a president of the ballet, a leader of the house and a Chief Justice". The hunting meeting generally are held at the time of the annual hunt. It is a people's council, in which different types of matters / issues relating to the social, religious and legal matters of the tribal people are generally decided (Archer, 1984, p.18, And see Mishra, 2011, p.141).

The very old society of annual hunt is now nearly died out. Besides *Bir Sendra*, the Santals of Mayurbhanj are found to be connected with another *Sendra* namely *Daah Sendra* (water hunt) on the eve of the beginning of monsoon time. They usually come to the sites of hills and worship gods as well as goddesses to obtain sufficient rain water (Mishra, 2011, p.141). The Santal in the study villages and study district Mayurbhanj observed *Dhangel*. They come down to hill side. All the hunters perform the role play of gods and goddesses called "DHANGEL" dance. They beat the *Tamak*, *Cholachulii*. *Tumdah*, *Banam*, rings the bell, flute here the sound play is called *Karaha*. Such these events are organised in various places of Mayurbhanj district that 1. Rodo *Sendra* at Rairangpur block, 2. Banka *Buru Sendra* at Bahalda block, 3. Ukam*Buru Sendra* at Kusumi block, 4. Dabra *Buru Sendra* and Chagnua *Sendra* at Tring block, 5.Parawa *Buru* and Sandumandu *Sendra* at Jamda block, 6. Banki *Buru Sendra* at Bisoi block, 7. Baba Kanapat *Buru Sendra* at Bijatola block.

3.2.5. Jom-Sim

Jom Sim festival is a religious festival through which Santals pay homage to the Sun God or *Sinj-Bonga*. It has not fixed for this celebration; however, it is usually celebrated in the full moon day of *Phalgun* (Feb-

March) or *Baisakh* (April-May). *Jom sim* festival is observed to a same clan in groups, it is held once after five years. It is observed for two days. They sacrificed fowls to their ancestor and *Marang buru* (Karua, 2014, p.208). The traditional rituals are performed and the villagers along with the kith and kin are entertained with feast in which any irregularities and violations committed is reminded and rectified. Thus, this affair bear excesses expenditures. So now-a-days this festival is gradually vanishing but it has a great social importance (Mohanty, 2008, pp.66-67).

3.2.6. Pata Festival

It is of Hindu origin known as *Pat bonga*, which is celebrated in the honour of Mahadeva and Parbati. Like Durga and Kali Puja, it is also correction to *Charak Puja* (hook-swinging festivals) of the high caste people. The festival is observed in the month of *Baisakh*. With the arrival of the festival, the script of the possession of trance comes like Tagore's maniac. During this time the Santals abstain from eating any oil and salt. When *Jatrabonga* is celebrated Santal usually have a *Charak Puja* or swinging festivals. It is said, that the devotees cast themselves on thrones and upraised knives, they pierce their arms or tongues by iron arrow, draw string through the flesh of their body or pierce their back with spikes that are heated in burning fire, while others swing on the *Charak* tree by hook fastened through the muscles of their back. The devotees are suspended in mid-air and they swing round apparently by the hooks. When the *bhaktas* swing solemnly the crowds cry 'Mahadev' 'Mahadev'. Sometimes they walk on fire and even sleep on the thorns.

3.2.7. Eroh-Sim / Erok-sim

Erok-sim festival of Santals indicates the commencement of sowing the seeds in the land / fields (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p.22). The sowing of paddy seeds in the month of May-June (Karua, 2014, p.209) is performed by the Santals as their first agricultural festival known as *Erok Sim*. Each household subscribes fowls to be sacrificed at the *Jaher than* (Holy Grove) by the *Naike* (village priest). The deities who are offered the sacrifices are *Marang Buru*, *Jaher Era*, *Moneko*, *Pargana*, *Gosane Era* and *Majhi Haram* (Mana, 2000, p. 90, And see Mukherjee, 1962. p. 234). They pray to deities and their blessing for a bumper crop, good rains and to ward off diseases, and evil influences and growth of cattle (Singh, 1982, p.66). On the second and third days of the festival, each house-holder sacrifices fowl to *Abge Bonga* (the god of the Santal males), *Orah Bonga* (the household deity), the Patriarchs of the tribe and *Marang Buru* (the Chief presiding deity). Song and dances by the people conclude the *Erok Sim*. The festival is also observed in the name of '*Asharia Puja*' in some parts of the Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts of Odisha.

3.2.8. Hariyal-Sim

In the month of July, the celebration '*Hariyal Sim*' is observed. This is thanks giving ceremony to the god for a good crop of paddy. In this festival only, the village deities are worshipped. The rituals are almost identical to the *Eroh Sim*, the sowing festival (Mukherjee, 1962, pp.235-236). But now a days this festival is observed by very few Santalis and practically become a festival in oblivion.

3.2.9. Gomha-Parab

It is held on the full moon of *San* (August). On this occasion Santals feed their cows with *Mohua* flowers, rice and *Mutha* grass. Cows horns are copiously rubbed with oil (Karua, 2014, p.210). Men and women dance

round at the *Akhra* (place for dance), a special *Rinja* dance. Ancestors are also propitiated with offerings of rice-beer (Mukherjee, 1962, p.237).

3.2.10. Chata (Indiparab)

Chata or *Indiparab* is observed in the month of *Bhadar* (August-September). Bahalda is famous for *Chata* or *Indiparab*, the *Naike* offers goat. Fair, cocks fighting are other attraction of the festival. Two poles are erected in an open field and another pole is placed horizontally. In the middle of the later there is a big iron pivot in which another pole is put vertically. A small umbrella is decorated and tied to the top of this revolving pole. All the people present there gather mud and dust from the ground and throw at the umbrella. People are engaged in dancing, singing and merry making. The object of the festival is to avert illness and miseries (Troisi, 2000, p.143, And see Karua., 2014, p.210).

3.2.11. Ir Gundli-Nawane / Iri- Guldi- sim (The Millet Festival)

Ir Gundli-Nawane / Iri- Guldi- sim festival is held in the month *Bhadar* (August-September). This is celebrated for the offering of the initial millet harvest to the different gods and goddesses (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p.22). The village priest (*Naike*) after purificatory ablution goes to the field of a raiyat (tenant) and harvests the ripened crop. Then *Naike* goes to *Jaherthan* and cleans it with cow dung and offers the crop to *Jaher Era*, *Moneko*, *Marang Buru*, *Gosane Era* and *Pargana* for prevention of ailments like stomach trouble or headache after first eating of the crop. The *Naike* returns to village and offers the new crop to the shrine in the headman's house, and the rest of the crop kept at his home. Then the individual Santal families cook and eat the new crop. This festival in special name "*Muchri*", which is observed with great pleasure, sincerity, love and dedication (Mana, 2000, p.91 and see Mohanty, 2008, p.62).

3.2.12. Jantal

In the month of *Bhadar Bonga* the Santals observe the *Jantal* festival, which is observed for the first consumption of the winter rice crop to offer the hill God (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p. 22). None can take the new rice but can, only after the festival. A special priest *Kudam Naike* performs the offerings to the *Parganathan* (the shrine of the village deity, Pargana and god of hill). The articles are supplied by the priest himself (Karua, 2014, p.213) and merely the males of the Santal tribe / community are sanctioned to eat the meat of the animals sacrificed.

3.2.13. Karam-Parab

Karam festival is observed the full moon in September-October months of each year. In the nightfall of the 2 bachelors of the Santal village take bath in the village pool (*aatu ahara*) and accompanied by the villagers amid singing with dancing in the forest. The two bachelors cut two *karam* branches (*Adina Cordifolia*) and they also plant them in the village lane (*kulhi*). Thereafter, the head of the family sprinkles water on the *karam* branches and puts a new piece of cloth over the two branches and a small *diya* is lighted in front of these (Culshwa, 2013, p. 114. And see Singh, 1982, p.95). On this occasion, a libation of rice-beer is poured out to the *Manes* of the village-chief and to *Marang Buru*. They recite the story of *Karmu-Dharmu* in order to prosperity, children and to ward off any evil spirits in course of the veneration of the Karam tree. The men and women of village dance around the Karam branches till morning. The dance is called '*Rinja*' performance of heroic dance.

After the dance the branch is immersed in water pond or spring (Karua, 2014, p. 211, and see Mohanty, 2008, p.63).

3.2.14. *Soharae*

Soharae is one of the grand festivals among the Santals of Mayurbhanj. The people of Santal community worship cattle for increase of cattle wealth (Ota and Patnaik, 2014, p. 22). The *Soharae* festival is celebrated on the month of *Pous* i.e. December-January (Karua, 2014, p.211). On this day they express gratitude to *bongas* for raining timely and for giving fair weather for harvesting a bumper crop. As they use the service of oxen and buffaloes in their agricultural operations (Hansdah, Vol.48, No. 2, December-2008, p.80). This festival is observed for five days (Karua., 2014. p.211). On this morning of the first day called '*Umhilohor Got Bonga*'. The *Jog Majhi* collects subscriptions of fowls and rice from all the villagers and others sacrificial articles and heaps them in the house of the priest. *Naike* carries it in his left hand whereas in his right hand he carries a *lota* (metal pot) full of water and proceeds to the *got*, a temporary resting place of cattle at outskirts of village. Other villagers follow him with fowls, cooking utensils and pot of rice beer. There in the *got* the village priest cleans a spot with cow dung and water. He prepares a *Khond* (an altar) with rice flour, sundried rice and *mithi*. Thereafter in the name of *Jaher Era*, *Moneko*, *Marang Buru*, *Majhi Haram* and *Goram* the priest applies five marks of vermilion in front of the altar. He then sprinkles some water on the fowls and eggs and marks them with vermilion. In the meantime, *bakhen* in uttered with the villagers to bless the festival and to keep them free from harm. After that, *Naike* cuts of the fowls' head with *Kapi* (one type of axe), let the blood drop on egg and rice heap and the heads are placed on *Khond*. Thereafter, the *Naike* offers rice beer in leaf cup over the *khond* and the leftover are drunk as *prasad* by all villager's present. Then all sacrificed fowls are cleaned for cooking. After chopping those, their heads are separately cooked by rolling them on flour and baking them on the fire in a skin of leaves. Each one who has observed fasting for the occasion shares it. The *Jog Majhi* or *Godet* with other villagers then prepares *jilsole* (rice cooked with meat) and distribute among all present by afternoon (Hansdah, 2008, p.81). After finishing the delicious food of *jilsole*, *Gotlebed* (trial of luck) is started. The walking procession of cows and bullock on altar is interesting event. The priest produces an egg on the altar. *Dakaladu* (some rice) on sal leaf of cup puts in the middle and *Phuluh dah* (sal leaf cup of water) in left. Now priest invited to the cowherds to assemble their cows and bullocks to walk on egg and smell. Those Santals who break or smell is humoured as the luckiest and people accepted it as angle and love with all the wrath of their hearts. The owner of cow and bullock was also chosen lucky person. The cow or bullocks' feet are washed with holly water and donate reverence, oil and vermilion on horns and paddy made put on their foreheads and horns.

In this process the *Gotbonga* is completed at the evening and all the house lady members presented their devotion to cows or bullocks by offering light of mud lamp, sundried rice, lawn grass and worship at the cowshed and they visit to every households in the village. All house holders burn the candle and mud lamp in front of door (Troisi, 2000, pp.130-131). At night the *Jog Majhi* calls for procession of *Gai Dana*, starts from the Head priest cowshed to another village cowshed. The cowherd boys and young men only initiated the song at cowshed. The second day is called *Daka Hiloh*, sacrifices are offered to their *Orahbongas* (tutelary god). The gig team and cowherds come from the procession of *Gaidana* and making hole for bind the bullocks and cows. Village Headman and their *Parnik*, *Godet* and *Naike* binding the bullock. The *Danta* dance is played by all young and old men at *Akhala*. After noon all the villagers clean the yoke and daub the sundried rice, polished the

oil and vermilion and wear the paddy neckless. Lady members draw the *jhoti* on the floor of entrance door from cattle shed door with sundried rice liquid then they dot the vermilion on the ground picture and spread the ryegrass. The cows and bullocks are made welcome on that way. Close relatives are invited on this occasion and they pass the entire day by eating, singing and dancing. Married sisters are definitely invited on this occasion. But the concern between brothers and the sisters very often change after marriage. The brother may be affectionately calling his sister but his wife may not be accepting them with that enthusiasm. There are also instances where many guests have been invited. But the sacrificial meat may not be sufficient for them. The third day is called *Alah ko hiloh*. Village young men put up poles in front of every house. In the afternoon buffalo, bulls or oxen are tied to it. House owner puts *chirchaudal* or an ornamental mimic on top. Youths began to bait the animal by drumming *tumdah*, *tamak* begin poking and dance around them all while trying to climb the pole and take the gift. "Cows have bound upper hamlet and down hamlet binds the Buffalo. The cow is tied with divine power netting (cotton) and buffalo is bound by straw made rope. Cow is dancing flow dust and buffalos are dancing kick the clay. Such war dance continues for several hours and concludes with the winning of last gift of the village. Then comes the fourth day, this is called *jajle*. The *Jogmajhi* with the help of youngsters, who had put the poles now take out them. The house owner offers them rice beer. In the evening boys and girls are assembled in village *akhara*. They move from one end of the village to another for collecting rice and vegetables. They even collect vegetables from garden, which under no circumstances is to be disallowed. Santal people feel happy in contributing maximum in this grand feast. They collect rice and vegetables and cook the dinner. Dancing, singing and merrymaking exclusively enjoy the night (Hansdah, 2008, p.82). The fifth day is observed as *Haku Katkomhiloh* or eating of fish and crab. They believe that they should consume fish and crab on the fifth day for longer life (Karua, 2014, p. 212).

3.2.15. Mah-Mone

Further, it has been observed that the people of sample villages of Santal community also celebrate a festival named "*Jaher Dangri / Dosan*". This festival is usually celebrated once in every five or seven years with a purpose to bring happiness in the society and good harvest.' In this festival cocks, hens, goats, cows and oxen are found to be sacrificed to their traditional deities residing in the "*Jaherthan*" attached to the Santali villages. Most important to be noted that cows and oxen are being offered as sacrifices to the Santali deities only in this festival.

IV. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the Santals of Northern Odisha are practising different types of traditional religious systems of their ancestors. In fact, the religion of Santal community comprised of prayers, sacrifices and religious dances. It can be said that Santal's prayer is a powerful spirit to protect them from famine, sickness, to protect their cattle from diseases, protect them from attack of wild animals like wolves and tiger, to protect their children from the dangers like attack of wild animal's, snake bite, and so on. Now, the Santals are living in a greater society with mystic beings. The Santal women are strictly prohibited to approach any gods and goddesses. The religious functions are found to be performed by the men. There is no temple for the shelter of their gods and goddesses. The *Jahers* of villages are the sacred places for the common worship of Santals of

Northern Odisha. *Chando Bonga* (Sun god) is conceived by Santals as the Supreme god, who is the maker, preserver and sustained of all. The east -the place of rising Sun has great implication in the rituals and practices of Santals of Mayurbhanj. The primeval ancestors of Santals were worshipping only *Thakur-Jiu*, when they got *bonga*, gradually they have forgotten *Thakur*. *Jaher Era* is considered by Santals as the old lady / goddess of the sacred grove (*Jaher than*). The cult of the old lady as tribal spirit is also prevalent among the other tribals of Mayurbhanj. Besides the household *bongas*, all the Santal families worship the spirits of their ancestors said as *Hapramko bongas*. Among the one hundred and seventy-eight different *bongas* prevalent in the Santal community, the *Marang Buru* is the chief presiding deity and it is considered as the most powerful one. The ancestor worship is a tough aspect of the social as well as household unity of Santals of Mayurbhanj of Odisha. *Sakrat (Makara)* is widely observed by Santal community on the last day of *push* (mid-January) after *Shorae* festival. On this festival, dead ancestors are particularly worshipped for the wellbeing of the family. It is observed for five days and the second day is called *Sakrat* festival. *Soharae* is the grand festival among the Santals of Mayurbhanj as well as Northern Odisha. In this festival the Santals express gratitude to *bongas* for raining timely and for giving fair weather for harvesting a bumper crop. The *Baha* and *Saharae* festivals of the Santals are celebrated for two-three days. Other festivals of the Santal community include *Eroh-sim*, *Harial-sim*, *Iri* and *Gundli-Nawane*, *Jantal*, *Karamand Magh-bonga*, which are associated with agricultural festivals. They also celebrate Annual hunt, *Mah-Mone*, *Jom-sim*, *Pata*, *Gomaha-Purnima*, *Chata* and *Sakrat*. All these religious worships attached to the festivals are the community worship of the Santals of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balasore districts of Odisha. In the Santal community, the sacrificial meal is cooked with rice on the spot and the male members remain present at the occasion. If they fail to eat everything, the left over is buried in the ground. All the religious festivals of Santals are celebrated communally with dancing and singing. Animal sacrifices are common in the religious life of the Santals of Northern Odisha. In fact, the Santals preserve and protect their age-old customs and traditions to the future generations and thereby they maintain their cultural identity. Now a days, the religious thoughts of the few educated people of the Santal community are found to be changed slightly due to the impact of modern education and urbanization. On the whole, the prevalent religious systems of the Santal society of Northern parts of Odisha are very interesting as well as curiosity to know the tribal culture of Eastern India in general and Odisha in particular.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge with grateful thanks to Prof. H. K. Satapathy, Vice Chancellor, Dr. P. K. Routray, Registrar and Prof. Rajkisor Meher, the Director of Research, KISS, Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha for their suggestion and encouragement at the time of writing of this article.

We express our profound reverence to Prof. (Dr.) Achyuta Samanta, the Hon'ble Founder of KIIT & KISS, Bhubaneswar who encouraged us for the writing of the article.

REFERENCES

1. Troisi, J., (2000). *Tribal Religion, Religious Beliefs and Practices Among the Santals*, New Delhi.
2. Majumdar, D.N., (1953). *Affaires of A Tribe*, Universal Publication, Lucknow.

3. Mohanty, R., (2008,). “Panorama of Santal Festivals: The Pious Beauty and Precious Sanctity”, in A.B. Ota, (ed.), *Adivasi*, Vol.48, No.2, Bhubaneswar.
4. Samantaraya, H. , (June & December-2011). “Man-Nature-Spirit Complex Among the Santals”, in *Adivasi*, Vol.51, No. 1 & 2, SCSTRTI ,Bhubaneswar.
5. Bodding, P. O. , (2001). *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*, New Delhi.
6. Mukharjee, C. L. ,(1962). *The Santals*, Culcutta.
7. Mukherjea, Charulal, (Edition -2017). *THE SANTALS*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.
8. Kochar, V.K., (1966). ‘Village Deities of the Santal and Associated Rituals’, in *Anthropos Institut*, Germany.
9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable>
10. Debnath, D. , (2003). *Ecology and Rituals in Tribal Areas*, Sarup & Sons, New Delhi..
11. Beshra, D.,(2010). *Samaja O’ Sanskruti Prustapatatare Mayurbhanjara Santala*, (Odia), Bhubaneswar.
12. Mohanty, R.,(December-2008). “Panorama of Santal Festivals: The Pious and Precious Sanctity”, in *Adivasi*, SCSTRTI Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, Vol.48, No. 2.
13. Culshwa, W.J. , (2013). *Tribal Heritage A Study of the Santals*, New Delhi.
14. Kochar, V. K.,(1963). “Family Spirits and Deities Among the Santals”, in *JASB*, Vol.V, No. 3 & 4.
15. Elwin, V. , (1957). *Tribal Myths of Orissa* , Oxford University Press; London.
16. Elwin, V. , (1955). *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*, Oxford University Press, Bombay.
17. Biswas, P.C., *The Santals of Santal Paragana*, New Delhi.
18. Karua, S. C. ,(2014). *Tribal Culture of Odisha- A Focus on the Santal*, Baripada, Mayurbhanj.
19. Mishra, R., (2011). *Tribal Development an Institutional Perspective*, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
20. Beshra, D., (2009). *Damadar Dhare Dhare Santal Sanskruti Suchipatra* (Odia), Bhabuneswar.
21. Drosch, L. S. , (2014). *Fertility or Indigeneity? Two Versions of the Santal Flower Festival*, Nanzan University, Vol.73, No. 1/2.
22. Archer, W. G. ,(1984) *Tribal Law and Justice- A Report on the Santal*, New Delhi.
23. Mana, S., (2000). *The Fair Sex in Tribal Cultures Problems and Development*, New Delhi.
24. Singh, A. K. , (1982). *Tribal Festivals of Bihar A Functional Analysis*, New Delhi.
25. Hansdah, G. , (December-2008).“Shorae Festival”, in *Adivasi*, SCSTRTI, Vol.48, No. 2.
26. Ahmed, M., (1967). *District Census Hand Book, Mayurbhanj*, Cuttack.
27. Senapati, N. & Sahu, N.K. , ed.,(1967). *Orissa District Gazetteers, Mayurbhanj*, Cuttack.
28. Laeequddin, M.,(1940). *Village Directory of Mayurbhanj State*, Vol. 1, Baripada.
29. Raha, M.K. . (1982). “Religious Practices Among the Santals”, U. K. Ray, A. K. Das & S. K. Basu(ed.), *To be with Santals*, Culcutta.
30. Kochar, V. K., (1966). “Village Deities of the Santal and Associated Rituals”, in *Anthropos*, Bd. 61, H. ½.
31. Lenka, B. P. , (1996). *Banajyoti; Santal Janajati* (Odia) , Cuttack.

32. Das, N.J., (July 2015). "The Santal Pantheon of Supernatural Agencies", in *Pratidhwani the Echo*, Vol. IV., Issue-I.
33. Ota, A.B., and Patnaik, K., (2014). *SANTAL*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha,.
34. Hasnain, Nadeen, (1991. Reprint: 2016). *Tribal India*, Palake Prakashan; Delhi.
35. Vidyarthi, L.P.& Rai, B.K. , (1977). *Tribal Culture of India*, New Delhi.
36. *Tribes of Orissa*, (Revised Edition; 2004.). Edited by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute; Bhubaneswar ; Orissa Government Press; Cuttack.
37. Bose, N.K.,(1971). *Tribal Life in India*, National Book Trust; New Delhi.
38. Roy, B.C., (1989). *Tribes of Orissa*, Gyan Publishing House ; New Delhi.
39. Senapati, R.M., (2006). *Odishara Adiviasi* (Odia), Vidyabharati, Cuttack.
40. Padhi, S. K. , (2009). "Primitive Santal Tribes of Orissa: Culture, Life & Language" in S. Patnaik (ed.) *Glimpses of Tribal Issues*, New Delhi.
41. Murmu, S. C. & Dash, J. , (June & December-2012). "Nature-Based OLCHIKU and Santal Ethno-National", in A. B. Ota, (ed.) , *ADIVASI*, Vol.52, No.1 & 2, Odisha Government Press, Cuttack.
42. Das, N.J. , (July 2015).. "The Santal Pantheon of Supernatural Agencies", in *Pratidhwani the Echo*, Vol. IV., Issue-I, July 2015, pp.70-75.
43. Hembrom, T. , (1996). *The Santals- Anthropological Theological Reflection on Santali and Biblical Creation Tradition*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta.
44. Mohapatra, K., (1990). *Tribes of Orissa*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.
45. Mahaptra, S., (1993). *THE TANGLED WEB-TRIBAL LIFE AND CULTURE OF ORISSA*, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Bhubaneswar.
46. Orons, Martin, (1965). *The Santals : A Tribe in search of a Great Tradition*, Wayne State University, Detroit.