

# BELIEF OF TRIBAL'S IN SUPERNATURAL POWER AND ITS RELATION WITH RELIGIOUS LIFE [WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN TRIBAL SOCIETY]

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## ABSTRACT

Around seven percent of Indian population follows separate culture from rest of the populations of India. Those populations have been recognized as tribals. They believe in their self identity and altruistic attitude but it is restricted within their own sphere. Here researcher has tried to discuss about the relation of their religion with their daily life and their belief in supernatural power. This is simply an elementary study with a purpose to persist a broad research in future.

**Key words:** Religion, Supernatural Power, Tribal, Rituals, Mana, Bonga, Animism, Animatism, Immortality of soul, Faith in Rebirth, Magic & its faith and Totem and Taboo

## INTRODUCTION

To stop the deviance of *the* social norms there is a requirement of supreme influences either through the government or any other resources. But in the tribal society they believe in supernatural power which has been influencing them since long. Since ages they have a fanatic belief on supernatural power within the tribal religion not only across India but also across the world. There are three indispensable elements i. Existence of superhuman and relationship with superhuman refers to the value system ii. Practices various rites and rituals lead to maintain relationship, to build up action system and to control the society.

It is a common practice of Indian tribals that throughout the year they perform various religious functions, which bring social control, social solidarity and conformity in their society. In any society there are some rules and regulations, which are advocated systematically, that must be followed by the populace of that society otherwise there is a possibility social disorganization. To adapt to the society each and every person must adopt those norms, based on which every society runs smoothly. Social norms of the society give people an opportunity to establish a social control. As per the version of Horton & Hunt social control is the process where society furnished security to its member and consistency to their prospects.

There are altogether 573 tribal communities recognized by Government of India, they are scheduled to get benefit. There are two tribal communities available in India are counted as majority out of all first is Gonds – 7.4 million and next is Santhals – 4.2 million. Maximum numbers i.e. 75 percent of tribal are available in central India.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to understand the tribal society's belief in supernatural power and its relation with religious life.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

So far as Santhal religion is concerned, they commonly follow the saran religion. Their God is comprised of Marangburu, Jaheraera, and Manjhi. They have very familiar practices such as sacrificing animals to conciliate God and Goddess. They have fanatic belief that the Bonga or Marangburu is their ultimate deity who controls the invisible spirits or ghosts because that invisible spirits or ghosts are responsible to influence evil and also having dishonest intention to destroy the natural life system.

They have a many superstitions such as many evil spirits are prime root cause of spreading various diseases. They have an uncompromising faith that spirits control the entire social system and family, inheritance and clan. They believe that various spirits stays in rock, river, and forest and even in animals especially in tiger, few spirits are good for society but few are evil spirits who are always dangerous for the society<sup>1</sup>.

Santhal religion always tries to calm down the evil spirit by performing various types of rituals and festivals.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of karma does not exist on tribal religion because tribal have no caste system they do not divide the people based on cast and wealth. There is no question about inequalities amongst the tribal inhabitant. Their life is mainly channeled by rituals not by moral. They always believe in humanity, and honesty. They also believe in rebirth and their humanity, generosity and honesty will transfer to their next life. "The Tribal and Upanishad agreed on the primary value of knowledge with reference to the supernatural. But the tribal require knowledge to avail and avoid the impersonal supernatural, not to regain it."<sup>3</sup> Verma (1959- 1960)' has given an idea that after scrutinizing different phases of the life of tribals that the socio-cultural organizations of the Sanria paharias, Mal-paharias and Knmarbhag. He also discussed about place of women in the society pregnancy and birth, puberty, widow remarriage, religion, village council and institutions.<sup>4</sup> Nirmal Kumar Bose (1977) told that there are many differences of social system found between tribals and others. They have their own marriage system. They always follow their own regulations in their marriage system. They keep themselves refrain their marriage within their local group. They always believe to that their own elder brother or political chief will guide them in the external and internal matters<sup>5</sup>.

Study on "Structure and marriage patterns among tribals in Karnataka" was attempted by Mutharayappa (1996). Findings revealed that Jenu Kuruba and Kadu Karuba tribes were endogamous in character, having different social structures & marriage patterns. While Khadu Kurubas has divisions and clans among them, the Jenu Kurubas does not have any clans but they speak of God and groups. Among Kadu Kurubas, the parti-sibs help in regulating marital relations. The Jenu Kuruba children were free to marry any one they like among them but one should not marry blood relations. Very often, they separate and remarry in succession. Among these tribes, there was very little control for elders over the brides & grooms. They acquire a male both arranged by parents and also by elopement. Consanguineous & non –consanguineous marriages was prevalent among these tribes<sup>6</sup>.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research paper, a huge number of books and periodical are accessible that contains of scope of informations and in like manner there are countless books on the historical evaluation theoretical concept and

additionally on the issue and structure/function of tribal life and their religious practices are accumulated for study.

Proceeding analysis is totally depending upon the available literature of tribal religion and social control and imperative data's from different research papers available in different journal i.e. the secondary source. The author equally accumulated the information from different web source.

## DISCUSSIONS

There are different religion process have been adopted by the tribal community such as fetishism, worship of nature, animism and worshipping their ancestor, their religiosity culture are the alloy of all those processes. Whatever it may be, but their main motive is to bring happiness and ensuring security from any types of evils. They always believe in sacraments relating their ancestor and totem and various ceremonies relating with their taboos. If they do not get proper outcome then they start a process of praying supernatural power.

In India, almost all tribal are having a blind faith in ghosts, deities and a spiritual power. They also have a faith that deities and supernatural power stays in different forests, mountains and also in rivers, ponds or any streams. They also have a faith in 'Sun God' because they also believe that sun is the supreme power of God and sun is also the originator of this universe. They believe that sun is our God & male by gender and Earth is the mothers, and we are the children of them.

They believe that they have come from the same origin and they have the same ancestral lineal, accordingly they used to consider them as brothers and sisters so the marriage amongst them is forbidden. In the present scenario, many tribal have started mixing with their Hindu neighbor and due to impact of modern life styles the transformation of their conventional life patterns have begun. They started worshipping Kali Mata and Durga Mata and other God and Goddesses also.

But, still many people from Munda and Ho and Santals tribal believe in 'Sun God' Singabonga' and Kolha as Maranburu'.

The most significant matter of different advasis in India is to believe witchery ..... 'is an influence that is bewitching quality or effect, and in detail Witchery adds witchcraft and nature magic to mine craft, the large metal pot, brooms and its stick, circle of ritual, magical brews, a bit of necromancy and voodoo for good measure; all topped off with a fetching pointy hat'<sup>7</sup>. And **sorcery** ..... 'Sorcery is a very ancient form of magic. Its practice date back to prehistoric and pre-Columbian religions, as well as those of the Middle East and ancient Egypt; by the Middle Ages it referred to the practice of malevolent [malicious] magic, or black magic, generally, the make use of hypothetical supernatural power by the agency of evil spirits called forth by spells of any persons with a desire for malice often motivated out of envy or revenge'<sup>8</sup> ..... to save them from evil spirit or ghosts.

Many tribals visit Ganga, Damodar and Narmada to celebrate holy rituals for the betterment of agriculture production and social life. They try to visit two times, first they visit before harvesting session to take blessings from God and after harvesting they offer little harvested paddy to the God. All patterns of celebration are always linked with dance, music and beating special type of drum called as 'madal' and a patten of flute called 'Bansi'. Each and every festival is accompanied with 'Handia' a type of country liquor. They celebrate different festivals which are linked to agricultural operations, social life and religious beliefs & customs. Celebrations are organized either in group or individually. Almost all celebrations are accompanied by dance, music, playing of various musical instruments; above all, taking of local liquor is called 'Handia'.

There are few terminologies, applications of which are very significant to control the tribal society and lifestyles of tribals. Such terminologies are Mana, Bonga, Animism, Animatisms, immortality of soul, and faith in rebirth, faith in magic, Totem and taboo-----in addition to that Ersim, Harialism, Jamtala Bonga, 'Ashadhi' or 'Bihuda' Parva, Karama Parva, Makar Parva

## MANA

Mana is a type of force differs from any physical power that generally tries to control the bad evils, it also controls the disturbance faces the people. DN Majumdar and Trilokhi Nath Madan told that the "Entire life of the primitives is born out of their belief in certain understandable, impersonal, non-material and the individualized supernatural power which takes abode in all the objects, animate and inanimate, that exist in the world."<sup>9</sup> They also told that Mana is a type of belief of tribals, who are in assumption that it is impersonal and material things carries some supernatural force that controls the society and generate peace amongst members<sup>10</sup>.

Many social Scientists have given different views on Mana, such as Maxmuller, the great philosopher told that Mana is impersonal and natural power exists in non-living objects like river, trees and may be mountains.

## BONGA

Bonga is considered to be the supreme deity of tribals. The maximum numbers of worship, though, comes under the court of spirits, which is called as *Bonga*. As per the belief of tribals, Bonga is a mysterious power exists on the rain, thunder, cyclone, flood and earthquake.

Bonga is a supernatural power and also is the malefactors that are primarily responsible for different calamities, ailments and is also destroying the natural life of people. They also believe that Bonga controls all types of life activities in the span of life. It is also considered types of Mana. This term is commonly used by Monda, Ho and few others tribals, exist different parts of India.

## ANIMISM

Animism is the one of the important feature exists in the people. Founder of this term is Taylor; its creativity was also described by Taylor, who precisely told that "Animism is the belief on some natural material objects having souls from very ancient time to that civilized man<sup>11</sup>". It is believed that soul is supernatural power is connected with human beings and is control social life of tribals by applying different process. Many tribals also believe that there is life after death so there is a possibility of rebirth of each human. Tribal people believe that many of the objects have lives. Those objects are the creator of heavy rains, flood and storms and because of that many tribal worship them after adopting different process. They believe that different objects have different types of activities and different duty, and for that reason they control the nature and daily life of the tribal society. They also believe that each God has been assigned a particular duty; therefore tribals worship different deity in different situation and time. Many tribals worships different object in different places to control that abnormal happening to life. There are diverse kinds of worships performing different tribals but out of those the most significant is ancestral worship of Sanathals and Oraons. Many of the places they satisfy the God by sacrificing animals, but on the contrary many tribals worship different animals also, they feel that the different Gods or supernatural power are residing in their soul.

## ANIMATISMS

Animatisms are the broadest thought of tribals. There are few impersonal powers in non-living materials apart from the living things. "**Animatisms** is a term coined by British anthropologist The term animatisms was first coined by Robert Marett (1899) in response to E. B. Tylor's (1871) well-known description of animism as a form of religion used by early humans and their modern "primitive" counterparts to explain the universe by personifying all phenomena with animate power.<sup>12</sup> As indicated by animatisms that there are few material power behind each material thing. It is clear that tribals world has had fear for few of the materials or objects, because they have and had idea that those materials have some magical power and used to change nature as well as life processes of human being miraculously. It has been observed that almost all tribals, not only in

India but also in the world wearing bones, stones, wood chips and feather to save themselves from notorious soul and many have a belief that wearing these materials will bring the peace and success in the life. In the present world, many astrologers of different parts of India also make a link with this mystical power and advising the customers wearing those materials.

## **IMMORTALITY OF SOUL**

Many philosophers are on belief that that any human is made of two parts one is body and another is soul and out of those many a number believe that soul is immortal and body is mortal.

As far as tribals are concerned, they also believe that soul is the immortal and body is mortal.

They always believe in two times rites of a dead person. First rite happens when the person died and lit/buried him by following proper rituals. After that they homage the soul and provide food sufficient periods of time, or follows proper time interval prescribed by their priest because they believe that soul of person stays in the dead body for few days. That is why they provide food to that soul.

Since Vedic time every Hindu offers food and prayer to the soul because Hindu people believe that there is an existence of the soul in the universe. These philosophies are also available in China and Japanese. In many places, Hindus of different places also perform ritual of a death person in every month for one year based on the position of moon i.e. tithi. This worship is generally performed by the person who conducted the last rites. In current time, many persons have replaced the activities, such as feeding poor people and make financial supports to the Orphanage. But in Hindu religion, maximum people believe that feeding natives or inhabitants staying in and around of the dead person is predominantly a holy job.<sup>13</sup>

The aforesaid concepts are also followed by different tribals in India but they have modified all those process as per the situation, such as, in Nagaland, especially Naga people inviting the ancestral soul and taking blessings from them, because they require rain for sowing the rice crop. In many places, especially in Bengal, Bihar, UP and Orissa every year they remember their ancestors by following special rituals and also inviting few Brahmins for lunch. In Kerala, they worship in the statue of dead person every year. In India, almost all tribals invite the soul of dead ancestors by performing different rituals in every year.

## **FAITH IN REBIRTH**

This is an additional conviction exists on the tribals of India. They believe that soul of a man stays alive after death. The soul of a person will never die and soul after leaving one body, will enter into another body irrespective of own biological group or family. A human soul may enter into the animal's body.

Gond's tribals of Madhya Pradesh believe in impersonal life which has no concern with emotion. They believe that every person has his own life span, when life span ends that time God calls the impersonal life exists in the body of any persons., that ultimately leads to a death. When God wants to take a life of someone he sends messenger – 'Yama' to take the life of a person. Sometimes, before that God sent dieses to make the person prepared to leave his impersonal life. The life will come out and will go to God's place with Yama, but body of the person will remain in the earth. This occasion happens to all person but the process and situation shall be different. Gond tribals also believe in reincarnation. The incarnation of a person is completely based on his qualities of roles and functions and accordingly his soul will incarnate either in an animal or human. But as per Hindu philosophy soul will be incarnated in Gond and will be born as Gond and accordingly Brahmin shall be born as a Brahmin. Many are also in belief that person will be promoted to the higher cast based on his quality of role and functions of past life. Many people also believe that the soul of person rebirth as the grandson of the family.

The aboriginal tribes Chenchus is available in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Odisha, have a different concept in reference to the incarnation. They do not have any sort of belief that person fate his depends on his deeds, but they have an idea that the life of living entity is controlled by supreme God, who generally manage the life force called as 'Jiv' of a person. Most significantly they also believe that after death, the supreme God takes him back in his custody.

Other aboriginals' tribes the Konda Reddis' of Andhra Pradesh believes that any person will take a rebirth in his own family.

## MAGIC AND ITS FAITH

Since ages the belief of magic and its practice is very common amongst the tribals in India. Tribal practices many types of magic are linked with mysterious supernatural things that may be either God or Ghost or impersonal soul and spirits. Their believed leads to fear and also have a perception that those spirits are the originator of different diseases and they also put the people in a great hardship without any valid reasons. In each and every tribals region there are some people who can detect wicked agencies. They are also expert at managing those evil powers. They are popularly called as 'Ojha' [Exorcist], who are the doctors of relieving people suffering from different malignant magical net. Magic is used to change the life patterns of people in a particular way to meet the requirement. As per the tribals' belief, magicians are the faithful, Nobel and highly respected people. There are many more magical rites available in India used to save people from different types of epidemics. Belief in magic changes the natural behavior of tribal because of that they commit many more fatal jobs and also commit many miscreant activities. There are many places in India are considered as land of magic and sorcery out of those "Kamrup Kamakhya" is the popular one.

Ojhas are not only relieved tribal from fever, pain or any major disease but also helps the entire land of village for the fertility of soil followed by good agricultural production.

Almost all tribes in India execute various types of rituals to save themselves from the most horrible influences of witch. They have a faith that few types of women play a typical pattern of magic i.e. witch activities that may affect the regular livelihood of different people. On the contrary, because of this blind faith many women are also get wounded by people who are involved in witch-hunting activities.

## TOTEM AND TABOO

Totem is the tribal's fundamental belief linked with specific animal, which is having a special relationship with a tribal family. It is a blind faith that the animal is the originator of that family and that animal should be worshiped and to be respected by each and every member of the family as because the entire family believes that they are the descendent of that animal. There are many examples of totem like Tiger, Cheetah, Cow, Goat, Gorilla, Giraffe, Rhinoceros, Wolf, Monkey, Dog, Buffalo, Ram, and Bull, Camel, Rabbit, Cat, Lion, Mouse, Horse and many more.

Different tribes have selected different totem as their God. Few have chosen natural object such as river, trees ..... etc. Few have selected different types of animals and few tribes worship natural object such as moon, sun, stars and various planets. As illustration, Monda tribes worship Suryadeb [God Sun] regularly; Garo tribes of Assam worship God Sun and Moon both<sup>13</sup>.

E.A. Hoebel has explained very nicely, he has told that totem is an object, which represents in the form of animals or planets, getting special respects from the people, who generally identify them under the same social group, and keeping emotional bond between totem and within themselves also.<sup>14</sup>

As per Emile Durkhiem version "Totem represents flag of the clan. It is very difficult for the clan to represent themselves as to increase vitality, they understand themselves with the idea of the totem rather than clan,

because clan is a very complex structure and in reality it is too complex to represent apparently with its complexity by such elementary intelligences.”<sup>15</sup>.

Tribals have to preserve few taboos about the animal to whom they select as their totem, such taboos are..... they cannot kill and consume that animal; they cannot even disrespect them in any situation. Moreover they cannot marry the member belongs to same totem family.

They also perform various types of rituals and even they sacrifice their entire life to satisfy the totem and tribals also accomplish their different needs by worshiping their totem.

As it is discussed that totem is the creator of tribal community and that totem also gives them an opportunity to form an unbreakable bond between themselves. Totem also maintains their brotherhood among themselves.

Moreover the statuses of their totem keep their dignity intact in the entire tribal society. Few tribes follow patriarchal society based on their totem such as Birhor, Oran, Mundas and many more. They have not only opted their totem from animals but many tribals have also chosen their totem from plant umbrella, rainbow etc since their ancestral time.

They also have a great faith that totem defends them from any types of terrible problem especially happening to the nature. Totem also warns them for the future problems; even totem draws their future life diagram. Moreover if any totemic animal dies they will observe the funeral process and rest of rituals with complete religiosity process.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that religion of tribal society is directly related to their daily life. Majority of the people, apart from tribals' community, consider that religion is merely one of the processes of their life. Tribal's belief in supernatural power controls the universe is also directly related to their religion and regular life both.

All rituals they follow are commanded by their law of religion but their ultimate goal is to defend themselves against the treacherous supernatural power that can affect their regular life. Ritual is the simple medium to message to the evils that they confess that they are always ready for their service. On the course of rituals they request to God to save themselves from harmful supernatural power, which makes trauma by spoiling routine procedure of their life.

Their primitive culture keeps themselves united and creates a beautiful emotional bond amongst themselves but on the contrary, it is also a great disappointment that in this modern social system, tribal also sustain massive differences between the cultures of rest others people of the country, Differences exist not only in religious practices but also it is available in social, economical, and political process.

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