

THE COLONIAL MISSIONARIES IN SANTAL PARGANAS: IN SEARCH OF CHANGING WORLD OF THE SANTALS IN AFTERMATH OF HUL

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Abstract

The formation of Santal Parganas District amidst the Santal Hul (1855-56) was the most impactful event for the Santals in particular, and Adivasis in general, of colonial eastern India. The new district was a symbolic recognition of their community based distinguished identity. The district was also considered as a safeguard for the Santals from the Dikus (Non-Adivasis). Eventually, there were many Christian missionaries who appeared and settled in Santal Parganas with the direct encouragement from the colonial authority and introduced well-planned services for the aboriginals to fulfil their open-secret agenda. These Missionaries had worked among the Santals in such a way that gave them the confidence for long interactions and reconciliation. Undoubtedly, the Missionaries had played a crucial role in the changing socio-economic and cultural pattern of the Santals. The present paper intends to argue that some positive changes occurred among the Santals due to missionary activities and also many Missionaries devoted themselves to the cause of their socio-cultural development. But at the end of the day, they were part of colonialism and they had some negative impact on the Santal world. Further, these missionaries succeeded to affect the Santals in many ways through conversion, but at the same time Santals had remained intact and conversion did not lead them to forget their traditional socio-cultural traits.

Keywords: Colonial Missionaries, Santal's World, Santal-Parganas

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I

The great 'Santal Hul' (Santal Rebellion of 1855-56) has been illuminating the history of the Santals as well as their identity formation in the colonial and post-colonial Eastern India. The rebellion was the ultimate response against the external and internal colonialism in the Tribal tract of Bengal Presidency under Bhagalpur administrative jurisdiction. The colonial rule was extended over multiple communities which had its own specific social, political, cultural and economic traits. Moreover, the colonial penetration by imposing new policies affected such communities and led them to changes. Among these, the Adivasis or so-called Tribal communities suffered much and increasingly went to fierce battles to change unbearable situations. As Sanjukta Dasgupta rightly pointed out 'Tribal communities, moreover, have been considered to be isolated and static, whose traditional society and economy collapsed under the pressure of new economic and political forces unleashed under colonial rule.' (Dasgupta 2011:1-2) Similarly, the Santals of Santal-Parganas were compelled to rise in arms and fought against the native culprits and colonial forces. Eventually, the farsighted colonial authority formulated new policies to reduce the discontent of the Santals, and measures were taken up for reconciliation, which had two parts-administrative and diplomatic. The Colonial Government instantly took an administrative measure by creating 'Santal Parganas' (Act-XXXVII of 1855) as a separate district placed under a deputy Commissioner and four Assistant Commissioners within the jurisdiction of Bhagalpur, and made some provisions such as – i) No intermediary between the Santals and the Assistant Commissioner, ii) Complaints made verbally without a written petition or the presence of amla be accepted, iii) The Santals were responsible for arresting the criminals of their own villages, iv) Restriction for the entry of the Outsiders or Dikus in the district. (O'malley 2017: 54) This arrangement proved fruitful for reviving peace with law and order situation, though temporarily. On the other hand, the colonial authority followed tactical approaches by encouraging the Christian Missionaries to settle down in the district and it was hoped that through their activities the Santals would be accustomed to the Western culture as well as the British rule. The Charter Act of 1813 of the British East India Company allowed the Christian missionaries to enter India in a limited way, and later, Charter Act accelerated the process towards Evangelization and Westernisation in colonial India. Historically speaking, many Missionaries played a crucial role

behind the emergence of Tribal/Adivasi Studies in India through their constant writings with great commitment at the same time performing their evangelical duties. Basically, the Santal Parganas district came in contact with the missionaries after the great Santal Hul of 1855-56 and became a fertile field of indigenous knowledge cultivation. However, there were a number of missionary groups that had a good deal with the colonial administrations and settled at the Santal villages. Their records were used by the colonial officials to check the policies implemented towards the indigenous people. Similarly, the Santal's socio-economic and cultural status came under immense influence of the missionaries through their interactions and the assimilating process. This resulted in the conversion of Santals to Christianity that led to the division of an indigenous society in the lines of religious faith. This was a great impetus to the world of the Santals in various ways at Santal Parganas.

II

The call for the 'Hul' was given by two brothers namely Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu on 30th June, 1855 in a public meeting including 10,000 Santals held at the Bhagnadih ground of Damin-i-koh (outskirts of the Rajmahal Hills) and the Hool officially took its course of action with the murder of a native culprit Maheshlal Datta (a local police inspector) by the Rebels on 7th July 1855. Further, the Santals decided to march towards Calcutta, which was a great symbol of their political consciousness. In the words of W.W. Hunter, "From this day- the 7th of July- the rebellion dates. At the time of their setting out, it does not seem to have contemplated any armed opposition to the government. When all was over, their leaders, who in other respects, at any rate, disdained equivocation of falsehood, solemnly declared their purpose was to march down to Calcutta, in order to lay the petition which the local authorities had rejected at the feet of the Governor-General, and the truth of this statement is rendered probable by the fact that their wives and children accompanied them. Indeed, the movement could not be distinguished at first from one of their great national processions, headed by the customary drums and fifes. Want drove them to plunder and precipitate outrage upon the inspector of police changed the whole character of the expedition." (Hunter 1868: 165-167) The rebellion was extended to a large part of Bhagalpur, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts and affected other neighbouring districts like Manbhum, Burdwan etc. within a short span of time under messianic leadership of Sidhu, Kanhu, and other leaders like Chand, Bhairo, Chhotrai Manjhi, Birsing

Manjhi, Harma Manjhi. There were multiple reasons behind the mass movement, such as constant socio-economic sufferings caused by the Zamindars (landlord), Mahajans (moneylender), Traders and local administrators of the colonial government. Whereas, the growing pressure of the Dikus (outsiders), harassments of the Santal women, becoming of landless labourers, colonial injustice etc. made the event inevitable. Historically speaking, the Hul was called in Damin-i-koh area that came into existence from 1824 to 1833 in the records of the Colonial Government, where the Santals were its main settlers. The Government demarcated the area surrounding by the Rajmahal hills, including portions of Dumka, Pakur, Godda and Rajmahal Subdivisions in 1833. (Jha and Raut 2015: 76-77) In the early days of the Santal's settlement in the Damin-i-koh, it was encouraged by the Government for land revenue progress. Mr. Pontet, Superintendent of the area considered that protecting new settlers (Santals) and encouraging more settlers for clearing dense forestry was one of the duties. Hence, the Santals were makers of the cultivable land of Damin-i-koh, but with the arrival of the Dikus, the native exploiters backed up by the colonial government brought endless miseries into the lives and the livelihood of the Santals. Kalinkar Datta, the first Indian historian, who preferred to write on the Santal Rebellion, expressed the view that original character of the movement was not anti-British. According to him the movement was mainly directed against the native culprits, like local Zamindars, Mahajans and Traders. (Datta 1940:10-12) In post-colonial India, many historians have explored its anti-colonial characteristics as well. These social scientists used various terms to denote the real characteristics of the struggle. Social Scientist Dhirendranath Baskey has elaborated the Hul as a popular mass movement and concluded that obviously it was an armed struggle to get freedom from the Colonial rule as well as from native exploiters and the target was to establish Santal-Raj (AbuaDishom, AbuaRaj means our country, our rule). (Baskey 1960:106-115) Subaltern historian like Ranajit Guha showed the Hul as a peasant insurgency in colonial India with full of class consciousness. According to him: 'Indeed, as grudgingly acknowledged in these words, the limits of solidarity and antagonism were specified by the distinctions made between those elements of the non-tribal population to whom rebels were positively hostile, e.g. landlords and moneylenders and those subaltern classes and castes who lived and worked with them in the same rural communities and were treated as royal allies. Such discrimination about which official notice was taken to the effect that "in many villages, the

houses of Mahajuns were burnt and those of riots spared” by the Santals, showed where ethnicity stopped and an incipient form of class consciousness began.’ (Guha 1999:22-23) Though, there are enormous explanations given by different historians using different sources, like the Governmental records, reports of the contemporary newspapers, memories of the rebels, folklore, writings of the Christian missionaries and colonial administrators. Above all, the Santal Hul or Rebellion had become a mass movement spreaded in a large part of the Bengal Presidency and the Santals fought so bravely with their traditional weapons against the British’ well-trained arms forces. Many colonial officers acknowledged their unity, braveness and commitment towards their own land and community. Eventually, amidst the movement, the Colonial government investigated the facts of the event and reconciliation was made through establishing ‘Santal Parganas’ District in November 1855. The District had been symbolised with the identity formation of the Santal community in the Adivasi heartland of Colonial Eastern India. However, the movement came to an end due to ruthless suppression by the British forces, the officers were deployed from various parts of Bengal presidency such as Calcutta, Barrackpore, Berhampore, Suri, Raniganj, Deoghar, Bhagalpur, Purnea, Monghyr, Barh and Patna, in addition, the Zamindars of localities, and even the Nawab of Murshidabad helped the government in many ways. (Datta 1940:69) Though, the movement had left permanent marks on the history of the Santals as well as the Adivasis of India for its long consequences. Hence, the Colonial Government was compelled to rearrange the administration and a new district was formed and made for direct contact with the Santals by providing some administrative responsibilities to the traditional village authority. But it was not an end rather it was a starting point of another course of history for the Santal Community and for the region too. The new district witnessed the penetration and activities of the Christian missionaries with their own ideology and various services. Eventually, this brought many changes to the socio-economic and political status of the Santals.

III

It has been found that Christianity has a long historical background and gradually it became a part of the religious heritage of modern India. (Kalapura 2014:XXIII-XXIV) It is interesting to note that Christianity had mainly spread in various Tribal or Adivasi regions in India. Moreover, during the colonial rule, the Christian

Missionaries entered India and started to work basically among the Adivasis. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Evangelical ideology gradually became more influential in policy making mechanisms along with Utilitarianism. These two ideas took a strong stand against orientalism and argued about the necessity of government intervention to liberate Indians from their religions that were full of superstitions, idolatry and tyranny of the priests. But the colonial government was not interested to interfere in the religious arena of the natives for the fear of immediate reaction. Hence, there was a ban on the missionaries in the British territories till 1833. In fact, the Charter Act of 1833 was a great impetus to the missionary activities in India as it officially lifted the ban from the missionaries. Still, these controversies had no meaning to the Adivasis of eastern India, specifically in Chotanagpur and Santal-Parganas region. Generally, after the second half of nineteenth century, the missionaries looked at the Adivasis or Tribal tracks and villages as a great field of opportunity, in order to accelerate their Evangelisation among these people, whom they considered 'people of ignorant' or 'uncivilised', 'savages' and so on. Eventually, the colonial officials and Christian missionaries both had identified a separate section of people who had their own way of life and livelihood, and were outside of the caste Hindu society of India. (Pati 2014:5) In order to bring these groups of people under the fold of the western civilization, the best way as they thought was to spread Christianity. Thus, the colonial masters and missionaries had conceived similar perceptions towards the Adivasis, which was based on their vague idea of civilisation. However, the Adivasi communities had unique features of living as well as ideologies, and the colonial rule had to apply different strategies over different regions and periods of time. (Dasgupta 2011:5) In this context, the colonial Education Policy initially shaped by 'Macaulay Minute' issued in 1835, in which Thomas Babington Macaulay argued that it would create "a class of persons between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect." As a result, educational institutions were established in three Presidencies (Calcutta, Madras and Bombay) by the Government. In the later course of time, the education policy was revised through the 'Wood's Education Dispatch' of 1854, which was a shift from the downward filtration idea, and recommended extension of vernacular elementary education, that was endorsed by Lord Dalhousie, the then governor general of India, but Western education did not spread all over India at a similar pace. Though the

Adivasis were totally out of the scene and thus from other services. Generally, the peripheries of the empire and mainly the tribal regions remained outside of modern education for a long time in colonial India. According to the colonial rulers, this gap could be filled by the missionary activities and hence, encouraged them to continue their services at Adivasi villages. There were a number of Christian missionaries who came to India and worked basically among the Adivasis and settled in their village surroundings.

IV

The Missions had their own objectives and planning of work among the Adivasis of eastern India in general and Chotanagpur-the Santal Parganas regions in particular. In the course of time, Santal Parganas became one of their best suitable places both for Evangelical ideas and indigenous knowledge cultivation. Historically speaking, with few exceptions the colonial administrators turned anthropologists, the Christian missionaries were the pioneers in the field of 'Tribal' or 'Adivasi' studies in India through their writings with experiences, enquiries and observations. Though their writings were often strongly biased by prejudices but formed an invaluable source of information about the Adivasis. The Adivasi history writing is highly indebted to the missionaries for their first-hand reports, systematically preserved in various missionary archives in the form of letters, diaries, pamphlets and monographs. (Chaudhuri 2012:83) Similarly, the missionaries had contributed a lot in documenting the language and the literature of the Santals, which were in oral form through the ages. However, there is a sharp contrast of opinion regarding the benefits or usefulness of missionary activities in Santal Parganas and other Adivasi regions. If some scholars intend to exaggerate their achievements by remembering the benevolent services, then another opinion condemns their efforts and blames them for disturbing and dividing the Santals. In fact, the colonial authority and Christian missionaries had same supposition about the Santals or Adivasis on the basis of their own concept of 'Civilization.' Besides this, anthropology initially developed as a part of the colonial system (Singh, 1985:6). In fact, colonial masters and missionaries both have contributed remarkably to the anthropological studies for exploring the Adivasi issues in India. K.S. Singh has rightly noted that: 'the anthropologists were also charged by the nationalists with having destroyed national identity, created a social category called a "tribe" for which there was no word in many native languages,

introduced alien concepts, and supported the obscurantist chiefs and indirect rule.’ (Singh 1985:7)

V

The Missionaries entered into Santal Parganas lately, quite after the Hul of 1855-56, with the objective of Christianisation among the Santals, as they were the ‘standard-bearers of imperialism’ throughout the world, colonial India was not out of their reach. The idea of linking the missionary activities with the colonial rule in India was started by K.M. Panikkar, who influenced many later historians. (Chaudhuri 2012:84) This type of view tried to show that the Christian missionaries worked as agents for creating social division among the Adivasis and mostly they were uncritical advocates of the western civilization. A Scholar like Susana Devalle has argued that the educational enterprise of the missionaries among the Santals contributed to the dishonouring of the cultural enrichment of Adivasis. (Devalle 1992:73-74) There were two groups of the Christian missionary society working in Santal Parganas, namely, Protestant and Anglican. In 1851, there were 339 missionaries active in India, among these 229 belonged to the Protestant group. Though, these groups refused to accept their connection with the colonial rule at least in the public sphere. Their interest to work among the Adivasis was a wider part of evangelical programmes or agendas. With this purpose the missionaries adopted various welfare schemes for the Adivasis, for example, providing education, healthcare facilities and sometimes food. Keeping in mind the Evangelical ideas, the Christian Missionaries choose to work among the Santals in Santal Parganas in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1862 A.D. the first missionary activity started in the northern part of the Santal Parganas led by Rev. E.L. Puxley and Rev. W.T. Starrs of the Church Missionary Society. (Chattopadhyay 2014:99) Though the most impactful contribution was made for the first time in Santal Parganas by two missionaries namely Scandinavian L. O. Skrefsrud and his Danish companion H.P. Boerresen as both were responsible for forming a new missionary society called the Indian Home Mission (IHM) in 1867 A.D. at Benagaria village in Dumka Subdivision. In 1910, it was changed to Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, where Rev. Poul Olav Bodding played a remarkable role for the Santals. Eventually, the United Free Church of Scotland started to work among the people of Southwestern part of the district in 1870. While the American Methodist Episcopal Mission in Pakur,

Plymouth Brethren Mission in Jamtara, Karmatar and Mihijam were selected as their places of work. There were a number of missions that had worked among the Santals, which included the three most notable English Missionary Societies, such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS, 1799), the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS, 1792) and the London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795). But as a matter of fact, the Christian missionary like E. Droese was a German Lutheran Missionary belonging to the Church Missionary Society (CMS), first thought of elementary schools and a separate mission station for the Santals. Actually, he was stationed at Bhagalpur in 1850 for the first time and started educating the children of the neighbouring Paharias who lived on the top of the hill ranges. By 1853, he had started pleading for the introduction of some missionary operations among Santals and at the same time established the first school at Karmatar under Godda-subdivision in Bhagalpur district. In fact, Mr. Droese witnessed the great Santal Movement or Hul and aftermath of the event he supported the Santals. But he whole-heartedly rejected the anti-British character of the Hul and aptly blamed the native exploiters or Dikus (Zamindars, Mahajans and traders were Non-Adivasis) for extreme miseries of the Santals. However, the formation of the Santal Parganas district brought some new administrative arrangements as a part of the political reconciliation with the Santals. Moreover, the colonial authority took a strategic policy to bring the Santals under their control by encouraging Christian missions. In this context, the Missionaries started to work among the Santals with a lot of hopes and possibilities for the later course of time. According to Mr Bradley-Birts: 'Like most aboriginal tribes they (the Santals) have shown themselves far more fertile soil for mission enterprise than any section of the Hindu community, though the penalties for embracing Christianity are no less severe among the Santals than the higher race where the caste system is rigidly enforced. No Santal would take food or water from a Christian, and the adoption of the new faith at once involves the extreme penalty that of being an outcast from the tribe and a loss of all privileges as members of the race and community. For a Santal to face so great a penalty requires much courage and belief.' (Bradley-Birts 1905:220)

VI

When the missionaries had encountered the Santals, they had some suppositions regarding their subjects of action. Actually, they had a preconceived idea about the Adivasis world based on the imagination that Adivasis or Santal's mind still was like a 'clean slate'

where anyone and anything could be written. (Chaudhuri 2012:87) Especially, they thought that the Santals had no rigid structure of religious faith in contrary to Hindus, Islam and Christianity; even it was thought that they had no religion at all. Hence, the missionaries in eastern India and particularly in the field of the present study had the sole motive to convert them to Christianity as quickly as possible. In Santal Parganas, two missions had contributed the most, namely the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Indian Home Mission (IHM). These missionaries had selected two main issues to fulfil their objectives such as the education and medical services. In this field, the Church Missionary Society or CMS took the first initiative for opening schools in order to educate the Santals. The colonial government also preferred such ideas and provided aid to the missionaries for a secular education till 1856, but the outbreak of 1857 Mutiny prevented the execution of the scheme, for reasons that the government decided not to interfere in the socio-religious arena of the native directly. The Santals were also affected by the contemporary wave of events. Basically, in the period from 1860 to 1871, there was gradual discontent among the Santals of Santal Parganas. (Tor 2000:122-123) But the missionaries did not move back from their agendas and actions. However, the CMS opened a Santal branch under the Bhagalpur mission in 1859 and the Indian Home Mission (IHM) came into existence in 1867. There were several differentiations among the missions and the missionaries on the basis of their motive, commitment and course of action. Though they had some commonalities, the Evangelical spirit was to regulate their force in India within the colonial framework. Introduction of the western education in Santal Parganas was a great credit to the missionaries. They thought that the Santals would be accustomed to understanding superior English culture and Evangelisation among the Santals could be accelerated without breaking their socio-cultural fabric. The education programme of the CMS had continued under two missionaries namely J.E. Hallet and E.L. Puxley, though both had different methodologies of execution. On other hand, the IHM under the leadership of Skrefsrud and Borresen missionary education became prominent in Santal Parganas not only from an Evangelical point of view but also from the Santal's perception.

VII

There was growing discontent among the Santals, due to increase of rent, pressure from the local officials, restrictions on rights to access forest resources due to the colonial Forest Acts, imposition of alien

faith and spirituality etc. It led the Santals to walk in a new path of protest under a socio-cultural banner. In the words of Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri it was 'a quest for a New Culture' (Chaudhuri, 2020: 81). Basically, the Santal's traditional society got disrupted due to the colonial rule, intrusion of the Dikus and activities of the missionaries. The last one was the final addition to the line of outside forces, which gradually entered into the interior portion of the Santals and left a permanent impression on their socio-cultural world. Nonetheless, the Santal-Adivasi community had strong social solidarity based on egalitarian norms and a well-organised village social system. They enjoyed their village life with all sorrow and pains. Skrefsrud rightly pointed out while recording the voice of Kolean Guru and which was carefully translated by Poul Olav Bodding that:

'The Santals do not build houses for themselves away from others; they build villages, and there they live together in one place. To found a village three to four men will go with a leader and investigate a forest. When they, after having entered the forest, see any of three kinds of quails flying, they say: Some day in the future a village here will be deserted. But if they see these birds sitting quiet on their eggs, or they meet a tiger or see the footmarks of a tiger, they say: Some day in the future we shall become a very populous village and we shall be settled here. Thereupon, continuing to investigate, they select a place of this kind, viz., where there is dry ground, where there will be good highland and homestead fields, where rice fields can be prepared and where water is easily had.The Santals consider it an honour when their village is honoured, and they feel it a dishonour when their village is dishonoured; therefore if someone in their village gets into a quarrel with people of another village, then the whole village stands up for him.' (Bodding 2016: 100-113).

Absolutely, the social solidarity of the Santals was the guiding force behind the united mass mobilization during the movements. The social organization lost its creditability, but its cultural world remained largely unchanged. After the arrival of the Christian missionaries into the villages of the Santals, their social fractions began to take place on the basis of religious beliefs and educational status. This was the reason behind the changing ideology of the movements from old Hul ideology to a new ideology of the quest for a new culture, for example SaphaHor movement or Kherwar Movement from 1870 onwards (Chaudhuri 2020: 104). This movement had several phases under different leaders like Bhagirath Manjhi, Dubia Gossain and so on, who at some extent, were significantly influenced by the Brahmanical ritualistic culture. This neighbouring culture

affected positively the world of the Santals in Santal Parganas since 1871, with variants repeated in 1942, when many Santals declared themselves as Sapha-Hor (the pure men) after eschewing fowls, pigs, and intoxicating liquor but taking Ganja (hemp, *Canabis Sativa*) and tried to bring it on a line with the Hindu practices. It had social and political implications and the impact clearly reflected in the census report of 1931, because 586,499 Santals declared themselves as Hindus. (Mukherjea 2017:380) The anti-Raj political thinking of the Saphar-Hor or Kherwar movement disturbed the missionaries due to their colonial affiliation in terms of larger colonial objectivity. On other hand, the Christian missionaries had been working among the Santals simultaneously with full efforts under the encouragement of the colonial government. The missionaries adopted teaching and preaching policies for the religious conversion.

As a result, gradually the Santals came under the influence of Christianity or have changed their traditional faith. The missionaries took education as a medium of interaction with the Santals. Spreading western education among the Santals was a major contribution of the missionaries. In the words of S.P. Sinha that:

‘Education is in essence the transmission of culture from one generation to another and the role of education in a simple society is to strengthen the fabrics of the society so that continuity is maintained. The tribal societies in Bihar have their own institutions through which they have been imparting oral instruction and training to their youth for shouldering responsibilities when they turn into adulthood.....Here in the hills and valleys of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas, the spread of western education through the direct efforts of the British administrative institutions as well as missionary bodies served as a factor of negative change, creating conflict and tension.’ (Sinha, 1993:139-140)

Though, the colonial government played little role in this direction and fully relied on the missionaries. Whereas, Alexander Duff, an official pressurised the Government for introducing a new education system for the Santals as suggested by the Civil Commissioner of Bhagalpur just after Hul of 1855. In this context, the local Christian missionary came forward to start a joint venture for an education scheme. Hence, the Director of Education decided to allocate funds for a secular education to open schools for the Santals. The authorities thought it would be the best way to bring so-called ‘barbarous’ Santals (for their freedom loving spirit) under full control. The situation changed after the revolt of 1857 and the court of Directors discouraged the joint scheme of education. Keeping

in mind the Queen's proclamation, the Government decided to stay away from religious interference of the Adivasis and natives as well. Thus, from 1860 onwards the missionaries became the sole responsibility for providing education to the Santals. By 1860, it was found that there were twelve boys' schools with 350 students and two girls' schools with 20 students running on a regular basis. Also, there were 11 teachers' training schools opened in Santal Parganas. Gradually, the number of students increased because of multiple opportunities such as to get allowance and scope of socio-economic upgradation. It was found that within a short span of time a number of elementary schools, teachers' training schools, and technical schools were opened at Dumka, Katikund, Benagoria, Talijhari, Sahebgunj, Madhupur, and Pakur etc by 1903-04. (Sinha, 1993: 148-149) This kind of educational progress among the Santals was highly praised by the education department of the colonial government. The missionaries also introduced Santali language as the medium of instruction in school education for making the education more acceptable among the village community. It created a scope for cultural interactions between Western missionaries and the Adivasi Santals. With some limitations, the missionaries were the sole agency for educating the Santals in Santal Parganas. (Chaudhuri 2012 :103)

Meanwhile, the missionaries considered the drinking habit of the Santals which had an impactful role in their cultural world, was considered a major obstacle to evangelical work as well as for their social progress. E.G. Mann, the Assistant Commissioner of the district noted an appropriate replica of cultural consciousness of the Santals. When a committed Missionary works hard for preaching Evangelical ideas and talking about opening up schools at the villages, then a reply given by an old Santal 'that there was no objection to his preaching in their villages, and to his establishing schools in their midst: moreover, as the Santal children seemed to improve under tuition, the headmen even looked upon their conversion to Christianity with a favourable eye.-"But," continued the old reprobate, "does your God allow us old people to get drunk twice a week?" "No!" replied the Missionary, aghast at the question. "Then," said the manji turning on his heel, "teach our boys and girls, but leave us alone." (Man, 1861:16)

The Missionaries were worried thinking about the conventional attitude of the Santals, as it led their Evangelical work to a fruitless ending. Initially, they failed to realize the hard reality that the homemade Handi was a part of their socio-religious activities. In the context the Missionary societies declared total abstinence from

drinking habits, was created discontent among the Santals.

The Kherwar movement was mobilised against the colonial Government due to the socio-economic grievances of the Santals. In the course of time, the Santals moved towards Hindu rituals. Initially, the Kherwars protested against the Government's steps in different phases. Firstly, they disliked the concept of an alien rent assessment policy proposed in the Settlement of Wood (1872-79). Secondly, during the famine in 1874, the Santals suffered from food scarcity due to Government actions that were not enough and they also launched the anti-census in 1881-2 agitating throughout the District. (Bengal Judicial Proceedings, 1874) However, the movement had obviously anti-British character and therefore, they also targeted the missionaries in the region. According to their concept, the missionaries were an integral part of the colonial rule. The Kherwars or Sapha-Hors were always fearful of the missionary activities and their conversion policy to the Christian faith. Interesting to note that during the whole course of Santal's sufferings the missionaries did not criticise the government. Hence, the missionaries were only interested to deal with their religious faith and superstition and tried to make them loyal to the existing rule. But, the missionary community kept an eye on the movement thoroughly as the Indian Evangelical Review (the inter-denominational mouthpiece of Protestant Missionary Societies) published the opinion of a correspondent of the Englishmen that special treatment of the Santals in Santal Parganas should be abolished to bring them under control of the Government. (I.E.R. 1881:506) In fact, they did not like the anti-British character of the Kherwars at all. Therefore, they consciously made attempts towards the Evangelical efforts.

Besides, at the end of the day, the Missionaries were standard-bearer of the Western ideology and accelerated the socio-cultural changes among the Santals through religious conversion. These acts had great value to the colonial government for ruling the masses without any disturbances. Though, scholars like Marine Carrin and Harald Tambs-Lyche have argued differently that:

'Yet Skrefsrud and his associates were part of the colonial set-up, and the power dimension of implanting a mission in Santal country is obvious. In this colonial encounter, the missionaries saw themselves as representatives of progress of civilization- a cornerstone of the missionary myth. We deal here with the construction of this myth. Our story centres on a mission, but is not meant to be missionary history. As a narrative genre, such histories necessarily focus on conversion and – in some cases- the lack of success. Like the

Comaroffs (1991, 1992) we use missionary history as a vantage point to study a cultural encounter framed by the colonial situation, with the missionary central to the meeting of cultures, rather than an agent for Christianity. Missionaries represent here the nodes of a series of cultural influences that act on them and through them, consciously or unconsciously, so that the question of agency cannot be reduced to their actions alone. But our story is different from that of the Comaroffs, and our missionaries do not appear simply as the conscience of the colonial enterprise.’ (Carrin and Tambs-Lyche 2008:9)

Besides, the missionaries also provided medical facilities to the Santals. As mentioned by Ivy Imogene Hansdak that:

‘Medical work by the Santal Mission started with the arrival of a Danish missionary couple named Dr. And Mrs. Johansen a Benagaria in 1902. However, due to illness and other reasons, they had to return to Denmark after only ten months. In 1915, Dr. Christine Larsen and Dr. B.B. Borg arrived from Denmark. While Dr. Larsen took up medical work at Dumka and Maharo, Dr. Borg worked at Benagaria. In 1923, Dr. Larsen married Rev. P.O. Boddington and moved to Mohulpahari, where she ran a small hospital from 1923 to 1934. After the Boddingtons left India in 1934, the hospital at Mohulpahari was closed down. As for the hospital at Benagaria, Dr. Borg carried on the work there from 1915 to 1928. A Bengali Christian doctor named Dr. Banerjee also joined the Benagaria hospital in 1921 and worked there many years. In 1928, a new hospital was dedicated at Benagaria just before Dr. Borg left India.’ (Hansdak 2012:65)

However, these services had a great impact on the Santals and brought them considerably under the fold of the Christianity in the later course of time. By receiving the services the Santals gradually became loyal to the Missionaries and thus conversion took place in Santal Parganas. Immediately, the converted Santals started to spread evangelical ideas among their neighbours. The two missionary stations namely Benagaria and Mohulpahari played the most crucial role and left permanent footprints on missionary activities in Santal Parganas. Moreover, the Missionaries had kept their eyes on the Evangelical objective of conversion through various activities and services among the Santals. Practically, they targeted influential people of the village society, such as Manjiharam’s (village headmen) family, persons with land, property, and children. After conversion, the Missionaries started to impose a number of restrictions in order to protect the Christian identity of their converts and to control their lifestyle. (Chaudhuri 2012:119) Such

as prohibition of liquor drinking, worshipping traditional Bongas, restriction on group dancing and attending the Church in a week became mandatory. Truly speaking, these norms created confusions and barriers among the Santals and thus, a large number of Santals remained aloof from Christianity because the group singing and dancing during the festivals and ceremonies or community-based activities had played great roles in their cultural world through the ages. In spite of their remarkable contribution in the documentation of Santal's language, and literature, the missionaries were responsible for creating the factions among the Santals. Hence, there emerged three religious categories such as Traditional (original), Hindu and Christian Santals. Above all, the missionary activities in colonial India were based on the idea of religious and psychological conversion to Christianity i.e. the western world. The Colonial authority also considered the missions for the noble work of civilizing the savages. Actually, the missionaries had a close connection with the colonial administration, for instance, Rev. Skrefsrud arranged a personal interview with the Lieutenant Governor Mr. Campbell in 1872.

However, the Christian missionary activities among the Santals in Santal Parganas had multi-layer actions and consciousness. They entered and worked among the Santals in a systematic way. Eventually, they were supported by the colonial administration. Actually, they were responsible for various developments like the introduction of western education, cultivation of traditional knowledge, modern medical facilities etc for the first time. Above all, they contributed in documenting the oral traditions and language-literature of the Santals. Even some Missionaries received a permanent place in the Santal community by their devoted commitment and contribution. Perhaps, the personal worlds of some missionaries were influenced by the cultural heritage of the Santals through an encounter of peripheries. (Carrin and Tambs-Lyche 2008:348) However, the main thing was that the Missionaries entered the Santal Parganas with the direct encouragement of the colonial authority after Hul of 1855. Further, during the anti-British movements of the Santals, the government came down with ruthless suppression but the missionaries remained silent because both had common objectives to make the Santals fond of the western civilization and the Christian faith, thus a colonial rule. Therefore, I argue that the missionary activities supported by the colonial authority, imperial and evangelical ideas had a common ground of interest. Further, their attitude towards the Santals was shaped by the colonial perceptions of a cultural superiority of the Western or Christian civilization.

Despite the changing aspects, the Santals remained intact due to their deep-rooted cultural heritage. Moreover, they are fond of their living culture more than merely religious faith.

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