

# THE WORLD VIEW OF TRIBALS AND BAULS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SANTAL AND LALON FAKIR

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**Abstract:** The Tribals are the Adivasi communities in India having distinctive way of living and cultural identity. On the other hand, the Bauls are mainly residing in West Bengal and Bangladesh, having their own lifestyle. Their way of life, religious beliefs and culture emerged out of their everyday life. Furthermore, their ecology and supernatural world are derived from the concrete understanding of natural environment as well as social environment, which are the essence of their existence. As a result, their society is devoid of discrimination and untouchability. For example, Santal philosophy and the philosophy of Lalon Fakir are the aggregate of hospitality, solidarity, openness to other religions, connectedness and joy in simple living celebration of life through festivities, and so on, in their own way.

**Key Words:** Tribals, Santals, Bauls, Lalon Fakir, Simple Life.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The primitive/old inhabitants of India are known as the Adivasis. So, they are considered to be the first/original residents of the land in India. They are also known as Tribals, having native to the soil. According to the Constitution of India, Adivasis/Tribals are classified as Scheduled Tribes. They have a distinct culture and worldview of their own. They constitute a significant portion of India's total population. India is the abode of many Adivasis/Tribals, who reside in the rural locations as well as in the areas adjoining forests and mountains of the country. Their livelihood, religion, customs, and tradition have enriched the cultural landscape of India. The Santals are one of the Adivasi/Tribal communities of India belonging to the Proto-Astraloid, having a distinctive way of living and cultural identity too.

On the other hand, the Bauls live primarily in West Bengal and Bangladesh, and have their own lifestyle. Their way of life, society, and religious belief have originated from their daily life. Furthermore, their ecological and spiritual life stems from the practical perception of both the natural environment and the social climate, which are the core of their life. As a consequence, their society is non-discriminatory and is stripped of untouchability. For example, especially the Santal philosophy and the ideology of Lalon Fakir is the sum of hospitality, unity, tolerance to other faiths, communication and joy in simply celebrating life through festivities, etc. Here in this article an attempt is made for a comparative study to understand the philosophy of Adivasis/Tribals as well as philosophy of Bauls/Fakirs in general and Santals and Lalon Fakir in particular.

## 2. WAY OF LIFE OF ADIVASIS/TRIBALS:

The Adivasis/Tribals of India for example, the Gonds, Santals, Mundas, Hos, Uraons, Mahalis, Koras etc, have almost resembling manner of sociocultural observance that co-exist with the agricultural and natural cycle. Their feasts and festivals are the consequences of their age-old material understanding in connection with the land, water and forest. The existence and living of the Adivasi/Tribal communities rely on relating to land, forest and ecological environment. In that way, they unify their philosophy of life cycle coincides with the agricultural wheel throughout the year based on the natural phenomena.

Further, they are so dependent on forest that their whole economy runs around the forest environment. They feel more secure in the surroundings of the forest because it provides them food, shelter, drink, raw materials for building huts, basket weaving and herbal medicines, and so forth. For example, they construct their houses with several wooden logs, bamboo and branches of trees available in or near the forest. The roof of their house is sometimes thatched with a kind of locally available grass, and palm leaves. Thus, all these natural things are collected by them from or nearby forest for constructing their dwellings. Their food chart is also very much enriched with the forest products such as roots, tubers, flowers, leaves, mushrooms, honey, etc, which they collect from their immediate natural environment.

The festivals of Adivasis/Tribals are mainly seasonal and coincide with events in the agricultural cycle. Some of these festivals are: *Karama, Sarhul, Sohrai, Maghe, Phagua, Dhanbuni, Hariyari*, and so on. All these festivals of them are often interconnected with the annual agricultural cycle. For all primitive societies, festivals have had religious significance. The tradition of the Adivasis/Tribals to honour the ancestors shows clearly the role of the festivals in

linking with the world beyond. They believe that the deities live in jungle, hills, rivers, fields of agriculture, winds, waves, and some trees as well. Among their other deities, both their ancestors and pens are highly respected by them. In many festivals through which they offer thanks to their deities after harvesting crops. Their sacred grove and other sacred places (except the ancestral chamber) are mainly established in the lap of Nature, sometimes under some trees, or beside a water sources, or on the hill tops. Thus, their sacred beings are in general found related with hills, mountains, jungles, water sources, and also with their agricultural fields, etc. Interestingly, they are allowed to take crops/grains, only after offering it to the deities and their ancestors. For specific social, economic and religious purposes, they are also not permitted to cut many trees. Hence their beliefs, rituals, etc, are very much associated with their day-to-day life, and it is difficult to isolate/separate those from them.

Therefore, from the above discussion, it made explicit that the Adivasi/Tribal understanding of spiritual approach to life is completely and concretely dependent upon their local natural environment.

### **3. WAY OF LIVING AND THOUGHT OF BAUL/FAKIR:**

Generally there are two kinds of Hindu Bauls, such as, *sadhak* (meditation) Baul and *gayok* (singer) Baul. Their wearing apparel is normally saffron in colour, interestingly saffron colour stands for sacrifice. On the other hand, Muslim Baul is called Fakir. Their clothing in general is white in colour, especially the Lalon Fakir community. As the sole aim of the Fakir community is to conserve white *birjo* (semen), consequently their dress and all the other requirements for *sadhma* (meditation) are white. The following songs signify their concrete realisation of life and body:

- 1) *Atyatatto je jenechhe babar khobor se peyechhe*  
*Sotto kore amar kachhe bolo.*  
*Bolo babar rupborno nam rup tar vinno vinno*  
*Ononto koi bises chinho*  
*Baba amar kalo noi, dholo.* (Who has felt self-realisation have got the words of the father; speak the truth to me; speak the different shape and colour of the father; that has specific sign; father of mine is not black, it is white.)
2. *Je bostu jibone karon*  
*Tai Baul kore sadhan.* (The thing that is necessary for every time in life; that is the object of meditation of Baul.)
3. *Sukro dhatu vobet pita*  
*Rojo dhatu vobet mata*  
*Sunyo dhatu vobet prano* (Semen comes from father; menstrual flux comes from mother; life comes from nihil.)
4. *Ei deho mithhe noi mon*  
*Ei dehei achhe achhe roton.* (This body is not false; the jewel is here in this body.)
5. *Pani theke borof hoi*  
*Borofer modhhe pani roi-*  
*Borof kintu pani noi*  
*Pani kintu borof noi.* (Ice comes from water; water is there in ice; but ice is not water; water is not ice. This is the theory of father and child and even the theory of *Guru* and *Sishya*.)

It is seemed that the life and song of Baul, especially Lalon Fakir is not completely analysed till now. It is not possible to explore their normal village life by enquiring merely through oriental outlook. Modern Social science or Social Anthropology is the only way to realise their lifestyle. They are very soft as well as at the same time they are protestful in nature. Baul song is not emotional expression but implication of real and openness mind of the sex control of a men and a women Baul/Fakir *sadhouk* through meditation. Feelings of love, respect to the speech of their Guru and age old traditional path are their foundation of belief. Through the song, they protest against the true nature of caste system and against the communal disputes. And spread the daily message of communal harmony and casteless society. They are over and above the existing social system as well as their livelihood is devoid of shame, hate and afraid, as their thinking is inartificial and genuine. Therefore, their main target is to abolish the dogmatism, discrimination, untouchability, superstition, and so forth. They believe that it is unnecessary to go any Temple, Masjid, Church, Gurudwara, and follow any rituals to attain God as God dwells in humans only. Further, they think that human is God.

Their livelihood, food, manner of hospitality, musical instrument, dress, rhythm of song and presentation are simple and unique. They express their inner realisation by singing and sitting on the mat made of date palm tree leaves under the tree or in the open field along with the audience.

Bauls/Fakirs are the *vogmokshovadi*, disconnected from the main stream society but not completely out from the society. As they mainly belong to the lower labour class of the dominant society, their singing and thinking is accurately very concrete and materialistic. They temporarily live in *dera* (camp) in the one side of the village. They move by singing from one village to another with their female meditation partner and collect some money, rice, dal and vegetables whatever available, and then return and make rice and curry and eat together. If somebody goes their home

they try to give unique hospitality as far as possible. They believe that as a creator of life, God will manage food for them anyhow. Generally, Guru does not eat alone but share equally to the disciples. They treat all the people, such as, familiar-unfamiliar, rich-poor, higher caste, lower caste equally. They do not have greed, and do not deceive anybody. They have only love, respect, and nursing to the people. Their ideal/norm of life is to live always a happy life. In that way they are devoid of discrimination and untouchability.

As a realist they accordingly deny the sacred text, veedic karma kanda, Brahminism, Muslim moulovada, idolatry, *mantra*, *tirthayatra* (pilgrimage), and vow. They are against the *sanatan dharma* and main stream. So, they have become the enemy of the main stream society. They think that the ultimate truth is the material world, human beings, desire, liberation from superstition, sex and so on. They have understood that sexual relation is natural. So, they spent their whole life with a man or woman meditation partner. Sometimes they change their partner naturally and live a happy life through their own way by begging. They can mix with any people and love human beings as they believe that *Khoda* or God resides in human body. ‘This man has that man- son is in father’ is their ultimate belief. Their ultimate goal is not to attain the heaven or God but to attain the *moner manus* (‘dying at living’ firstly by doing the sex then controlling the sex) by going beyond the sex without rejecting the reality of the sex.

#### **4. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LALON FAKIR’S LIFE AND THOUGHT:**

Lalon’s past life was interesting that he was from Hindu Kayostho community, but later got Muslim identity. As child marriage existed then, he got married at his very early age. It is known that during a pilgrimage with his native villagers to the Jagannath temple, he suffered from smallpox and was abounded by his mates on the bank of Kaliganga River, from which Malam Shah and his wife Matijan rescued and brought him home to recover. In the smallpox, Lalon lost sight of an eye. The villagers spread the dead news of Lalon to his parents, wife and relatives. He later returned his home after a couple of years. He then bravely revealed his illness to members of his family, and the hospitality he got from the Muslim community. But the Hindu society as well as his family has not consented to admit him into society. He asked his wife to come with him, but she denied it as well. So, he finally went back to Malam Shah and Matijan again.

Lalon was a philosopher, saint of Baul, writer of songs, social reformer, and thinker. He opposed religious strife and did not believe in caste distinctions, hierarchical society, and spoke up against racism. He condemns all caste-based divisions of persons whether material or spiritual. He criticised the superficiality of religious distinctions. His view is that there is not any religion, we all are humans only. He had taken the initiatives to empower people in spiritual, social and ethical values. His target was to liberate himself and the common people from the rigid religious dogmas, superstitions and rituals. Through coherence discourses in his song, Lalon expected a society where all religions and beliefs would stay in harmony. On account of this conception, he was also accused of heresy during his lifetime and after his death.

He too, being a realist, rejects the holy text, veedic karma kanda, Brahminism, Muslim moulovada, idol of God, *mantra*, *tirthayatra*, and vows accordingly. Same as Baul/Fakir community, he was up against the *sanatan dharma* and main stream society as well. So, he becomes the enemy of the main stream society. For him, the truth is the material world, humans, desire, liberation from superstition, sex and so on. He holds that human body as well as the material world is composed of five kinds of material elements (*panchabhuta*), namely, ether, air, fire, water and earth. He believes that *Khoda* or God dwells in human body.

Through the song, he protested against the cruelty of caste system and against the communal disputes, and spreads the daily message of communal harmony and casteless society. Therefore, his main target was to abolish the dogmatism, discrimination, untouchability, superstition, and so on. His belief is that that it is unnecessary to go any temple, church, masjid, and girja and follow any rituals to attain God, as God dwells in human body. Human is God for him. It is not only to liberate human from material wealth but also from power, position and domination that destroy equality.

Followings are some of his songs that signify his concrete life-centric thought:

- 1) *Sudhho prem sadhle Jodi kam-rotike rakhle kotha?*

*Aage uday kamer roti*

*Ros-agomon tari sathi*

*Sei rose hoye stithi Khelchhe manus dekhge tora* (If pure love is hoped then where have you put your sexual desire? Sexual desire emerge first; *ros* comes with it; getting static with that *ros*; the human is playing, you people see.)

- 2) *Porge namaj ved bujhe sujhe-*

*Borjokh nirikh na hole thik*

*Namaj aro michhe.*

*Panchrokto namaj pore*

*Sora dhore ke pai tare? (Do namaj after understanding; without right to Borjokh (guru); the namaj is false/wrong; by doing namaj five times; by obeying sora (Muslim rituals) will anybody attain God?)*

- 3) *Kar ba ami ke ba amar,  
Asol bostu thik nahi tar,  
Boidik meghe ghor andhokar,  
Udoy hoi na dinmoni* (For whom I am and who am I; real thing is not right to him; there is deep dark in Vedic cloud; knowledge of sun is not rising.)
- 4) *Ami ekdino na dekhilam tare.*  
*Amar barir kachhe arshi-nogor,  
Ek porshi bosot kore.*  
*Ami ekdino na dekhilam tare.* (I have not seen that even for one day; the mirror-city is near my home; by living together; I have not seen that even for one day.)
- 5) *Upasona nai go tar*  
*Deher sadhon sorbo-sar*  
*Tirtho-broto jar jonno*  
*A dehe tar sob milee.* (That don't have worshiping; meditation of body is the essence; pilgrim-vow necessary for whom; everything is available here in this body.)
- 6) *Achhe adi mokka ei manobdehe*  
*Dekh na re vai mon veye.*  
*Des-desantor doure ebar*  
*Moris keno hapaye.*  
*Dos-duyari 'manus'-mokka,*  
*Gurupode dube dekh ga*  
*Dhakka samlaye.* (Mokka is here in human body; see it through mind; moving country to country; why are you dying; ten-door human is Mokka; see from your Guru; after difficult meditation.)
- 7) *Je panche panchab hut hoi*  
*Mole ta Jodi tatei misai*  
*Tobe iswar-onso isware jai*  
*Swargo-norok kar mele?* (We have created from five material elements (*panchab hut*) and ultimately we shall reduce in *panchab hut*, what then the left part that will go to heaven or hell?)

## **5. CONCEPT OF HUMAN AND NATURAL WORLD:**

It seems that Lalon's conception of the nature of the world is materialistic descriptions of the physical world. The development of his materialistic account of the world is the consequence of his daily experience and direct realisation of the universe. As a realist, he has asserted that the physical world which exists is real. Thus, his understanding and experience strengthen him to accept the reality of the material world. He loves Nature so deep that he loves to live in it with harmony.

Therefore, he asserts that it is *sadhana* (meditation) that can reveal the true nature of the physical world. His philosophy of the physical or the material world and supernatural world is conceived as the synthesis of his everyday life, and supernatural believes, as for him there is an inner unity among them. He seeks for the real in his own way.

He conceives human beings as unique, peculiar and gives special dignity to human. The picture of human that emerges in the philosophy of Lalon Fakir is an organised unity of the physical and the spiritual. But spirituality does not imply mysticism in his philosophies. He has never undermines the importance of the physical nature of human. For him, human is not merely a body of reactions, but his physical behaviour generally follows a plan that gives him a unique status in the world. The uniqueness of its physical nature is also due to the presence of spirituality in it. The true/real nature of human consists in his capacity of going beyond his physical nature through meditation and self-control. He accepts that every individual is a mixture of the body and the spirit. In spite of the fact that the bodily aspect of human also has its own importance and value whereas, human's essential nature consists in his spirituality. He conceived that the body is the sacred place in which the spirit resides. Therefore, it is clear that any human being has an aspect of godhood. And if the divine ingredient is used in the right manner by doing meditation and self-control, human can attain their '*Moner Manus*' in their present life.

## **6. SIMPLICITY IN THE WAY OF LIFE OF SANTAL:**

According to Santal's environmental conditions their major occupations are agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and gathering, fishing etc. Along with these, they indulge in subsidiary occupations such as, mat-weaving, trays and bowls making, broom weaving, toddy-tapping etc. Although the Santals are involved in agricultural activity, they are very much dependent upon forest for their existence. They run their livelihood by collecting and selling forest

products which are obtainable in their surroundings and buy the essential commodities from adjacent market. For example, Santals' home is made of mud, several wooden logs, bamboo, straw, palm leaves, etc which they collect from their environment. They acquire the forest products from their immediate environment to construct their houses as they adopt themselves with the pristine environment radically that synthesize their affinity with nature. Being the part of pre-eminent, they are deeply conversant with Nature and accumulate their necessities as blessings. Apart from being a part of Nature, they believe that their existence co-exists with the spirit of the ancestors who passed away. They setup an area as a consecrated place to worship the deities and spirits.

Their food chart is very much balanced with their local environment such as, leaves, roots, tubers, flowers, mushrooms, etc which they gather from nearby jungle or neighbouring area. Furthermore, as they are settled cultivators too, they cultivate paddy, wheat, maize, potato, mustard, several types of millet and pulses.

Homemade rice beer and *Matkam Pouro* or the wine made out of *Matkom* (*Madhuca indica*) is also their favourite drinks and these are sacred to them. Toddy from *tali dari* (*Borassus flabellifer*) and date-palm tree is also consumed by them. Each and every time before taking these foods and drinks, they offer (*Barha* or *Chodor*) to their ancestors and deities with the belief that they will save them from ruin, destruction or harm. In that way their food habits are also closely associated with Nature and ancestors, they worship.

Santal festivals too emerge centring their daily routine and the concerns of ecology. For example, they celebrate *Baha* (flower) festival as the beginning of the renovation of life in Nature and the renewal of creation. It is celebrated during spring season when the new leaves and flowers blossom. Until the festival is over, the women do not gather *matkom* (*Madhuca indica*) blossoms which supply them with both food and drink, nor *sarjom baha* (flower of *Shorea robusta*) which is worn by Santal girls on their hair. It implies that this festival sanctions the use of flowers for the community for the purposes of everyday life. During this festival, *Nayke* (the village priest) offers *Sarjom* and *Matkom* flowers to the benevolent *Bongas* at the *Jaher Than* (the village sacred grove), sacrifices fowls as thanks offerings and offers supplications to protect the village for the sake of all the villagers.

Thus Santals living together is natural. Relating to the material world is part of their daily routine. Their festivals and ceremonies are concerned with the ecology. And they are closely connected with their ancestors and deities through festivals and ceremonies. In short their way of life is unique as their livelihood is attached with immediate environment, such as, land and forest.

## **7. CONCLUSION:**

After comparative analysis of their (Adivasis/Tribals, especially Santal and Bauls/Fakirs particularly Lalon Fakir) worldview that assist to determines their way of life is very much simple. They are devoid to discrimination and intangibility that illustrate the uniqueness in their livelihood. Moreover, there is no hesitation to anticipate that Lalon Fakir took great efforts to transform the deprived and underprivileged masses into open-mind and self-respect. Although their perspective of thought and understanding establish several resemblances among them, but dissimilarities are in excess. Therefore, it can be stated that Adivasi/Tribals philosophy, especially Santal philosophy is pre-eminently Nature-centric with concerns of ecology, whereas philosophy of Baul/Fakir particularly Lalon Fakir is not in same degree.

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