

# Acculturation and Identity: Appraising Santhals' Transition through Folktales

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**Abstract** The Santhal tribe, one of the most significant tribes in India, with all pride, have been trying to keep their tradition, culture and language alive but over the time, their transactions with the neighbouring communities has changed their way of life. Their close association with the Hindus and the Christians has developed a new set of attitudes towards their cultural, social, political, and religious practices. The present paper investigates these partial changes that came about in the process of acculturation. Folktales have been used as means to explore the changes which would help the readers in gauging their evolved liquid identity. The paper analyses them in the light of acculturation of the Santhals as a subaltern group. It is largely based on the works of Rev. P.O. Bodding and A. Campbell who managed to collect and translate the Santhal folk tales with the purpose of giving voice to the voiceless.

**Key words** assimilation; culture; Folklore studies; South Asian Studies; tribal literature

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## Introduction

In connection to the acculturation among the Santhals, this paper talks about the

relationship of the Santhal tribe, the largest tribal community in North-Eastern India, with other neighbouring groups like the Hindus and the Christians. The Santhal tribe belong to the Austro-Asiatic Linguistic group. This tribe is, by far, one of the significant tribes in India in terms of both its numerical dominance and its attestation of self-identity through the Santhal rebellion<sup>1</sup>. The Kolarian<sup>2</sup> tribes of India, of which the Santhals are the most imperative ones, are the last vestiges of the race and their conventional abode is thought to be the Santhal Parganas<sup>3</sup> in parts of the Chota Nagpur plateau in Jharkhand. They inhabited the hilly areas in close association with flora and fauna, though due to the growth of human population, civilization and deforestation, they have migrated from their traditional dwelling places in the hilly and forest areas to different parts of the country (Mathur *Santhal* 30). Today they are widely distributed in different parts of Chota Nagpur plateau covering neighbouring parts of Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Assam (Bodding, *Santal* 709-711). With all pride and honour, they have tried to keep their tradition, culture and language alive to some degree; although their close association with other communities like the Hindus and the Christians, has developed a new set of attitudes towards their cultural, social, political, and religious practices. This may have occurred in the course of their endeavours to forge a new identity which was an after-effect of acculturation process (Carrin-Bouez). This bilateral process, as observed by Berry, is a twofold process of change in terms of culture and psychology. These changes take place as a result of the close association between two or more groups of different cultures and their individual members respectively. At the group level, it engages transformations in social arrangements, institutions

1 This insurrection has reference to the establishment of the Permanent Land Settlement of 1793. The settlement pattern initiated by the British took away lands from the Santhals which they had cultivated for centuries. The zamindars took land on auction from the British government and gave it to the peasants who took it for cultivation. Thereby an attempt was made by the Santhals to get rid of the money-lenders and zamindars.

2 E.T.Dalton in his "Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal," has classified his chosen tribes of Bengal, Bihar and Orissainto two groups: aborigines and "Hinduized aborigines." He subdivided the first into the Dravidian and the Kolarian on the basis of language, which according to him was "the most obvious affinity." He categorized Santhals as the Kolarians.

3 SanthalPargana is one of the divisions of Jharkhand, Dumka being its headquarter. Today this managerial division contains six regions: Godda, Deoghar, Dumka, Jamtara, Sahibganj and Pakur. In the past, SanthalParganas contained a region of a same name, in undivided Bihar state, India. Prior to that, in 1855, amid British India, SanthalParganas was made as a district, and was a part of the Bengal Presidency.

as well as in cultural practices. At the individual level, it entails changes in an individual's behavioural repertoire. This change is a long-term process and it even takes generations and centuries for the changes to come about, which occur for several reasons comprising colonization, migration and much more (Berry 698). It continues for long after the initial contact among culturally plural societies. The cultures often end up learning and adopting each other's language, predominantly that of the dominant culture; they even adopt each other's religious practices, share food preferences, dress patterns and social interactions which are attributes of each group. At times, these mutual adaptations and adjustments take place rather easily, but sometimes acculturative stress and cultural conflict arise during the intercultural interactions. At times acculturation may become "reactive"; there is partial or full acceptance or rejection that is people might accept or reject the cultural influence from the dominant group and can return to their 'traditional' mode of life (Berry 702). Additionally, the variability with which the acculturation process takes place is also to be considered as there are differences among the individuals, families as well as large and small socio-cultural sub-groups. Similarly, there are deviations in the ways and methods while going about the process of acculturation<sup>1</sup>; the degree to which the people achieve acceptable and satisfactory adaptations is also considered. The phenomenon of acculturation has been taking place since ages, but it is said to have been noticeable after the growing concern for the effects of domination of indigenous people by the Europeans. Later, it centred on the immigrants as to how they changed after their settlement into the respective receiving societies. Lately, much focus has been given to the ethno-cultural groups who undergo change, as a result of living mutually in culturally plural societies. It has been observed that the indigenous national population demonstrate resistance because of neo-colonization, while immigrants, refugees and sojourners stream out of these political and economic changes, and thus an outsized number of ethno-cultural populations become established in most of the countries. Taking cue from the above discussion, the present paper seeks to unveil the gradual changes the Santhal tribe witnessed through the passage of time.

### **Historiography of Transition**

With reference to the concept and process of acculturation in the indigenous tribes, several factors can be listed which result in changes in tribal culture, such as measures undertaken by the government, the spread of education, communication facilities, the process of urbanisation, community development projects,

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1 This process is termed as acculturation strategies.

occupational mobility and contacts with neighbouring societies. In the Indian context, colonialism was the major factor behind changes in tribal culture. The colonial rule by the British for nearly two hundred years had a variegated impact upon different *Adivasi*<sup>1</sup> communities in India. It shaped a wide range of responses among the tribal people in the course of their transition to modernity. With this, there were many changes, as their political institutions and socio-economic organizations came to be deeply affected. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, the British administration formulated a twin strategy so that they could integrate the tribal regions within the provinces of British India. The two strategies comprised the imposition of system of paternalistic rule by district officers and secondly that of a new legal structure which was imposed upon the unified tribal community construction. The status of different tribal groups began to be redefined by this changed mode of political control. Not only this, it even purged much of the authority of the established tribal leadership. This ultimately resulted in dissolution of the old village establishments and the deformation of the functions of the key village operatives (Das Gupta and Basu 1). Changes in the rural social structure and the utilization of new lawful definitions normally affected upon the *Adivasi* economy too. Prior it had been based upon a nearby reconciliation of farming and timberland items, however under the frontier manage, there was an observable expansion of settled development and a take-off from swidden cultivation. The second real improvement identified with the reservation of backwoods. Towards the finish of the nineteenth century, bigger parts of the woodlands were put distant for villagers, accordingly of which there was a more noteworthy reliance on agricultural production. There was likewise more influx of outsiders into these districts and relocation of *Adivasis* from their countries to far away ranches and mines looking for business. These had huge financial and social ramifications (2).

The pre-colonial situation of India is not very well known as there are no records to elucidate it but supposedly in the sixteenth century, some of the tribes such as Bhils and Kols were supposed to have been politically recognized by the Mughal Empire. In addition to these, before the formation of states, the respective chiefs of the tribes such as Gonds, Cheros and Nagbansis, encouraged the settlement of some non-tribal communities like Kurmis, who, as K. Singh conjectures, owned advanced farming technology and this in itself was sufficient to create the agricultural surplus that the new states required (Singh 1921-1931). These newly created states by the Mughal Empire became the breeding ground

1 *Adivasi* is a hypernym for a composite group of aboriginal tribal groups of South Asia. They constitute a good percentage of the population of India and Nepal

for Sanskritization<sup>1</sup>. With respect to this, M.N. Srinivas stresses that the first noticeable change was detected among the Coorgs from South India, who began adopting Hindu values which were related to the concept of purity. They did this in order to meliorate their position in the caste system. They started worshipping the higher Hindu Gods and adopted the vegetarian diet with the help of Brahmins<sup>2</sup> who settled in the tribal areas. Thus, in the central part of India, the tribal people were no longer isolated but instead they had economic relations with the Hindus. On the other hand, the tribal villagers were unable to develop their tribalist ideal and responded positively towards their Sanskritization. Because of this, they adopted Sanskritisation, with the help of which they began to be recognised by the Hindus. It was observed that the Santhals also tried to adopt some of the Hindu values. Some of the Santhals adopted the Hindu practices by putting on the sacred thread<sup>3</sup> around the body, which gave them the authority to perform religious rituals like the upper caste Hindus. Adding to this, some of the Santhals even made reformations in their diet by becoming vegetarians which were a practice followed among the Brahmins.

These claims of becoming Hindus were not acknowledged and thus the Sanskritization process was discouraged in the Santhal society. The other important reasons behind this were that firstly, the Santhal insurrection (1855-1857) had posed an image of Hindus as 'land exploiters' and secondly, the Christian education was thought to provide them a greater prospect of social ascension. Hence, it was understood by the Santhals that there was a difference between claiming a subjective status and a status which is recognized by a dominant caste. Moreover some of the agents of Sanskritization were thought to be impure as they were not the Brahmins themselves but some preachers (gurus) or (*Ojhas*) who had started teaching some splinters of local Hinduism to the Santhal *Ojha*, that is the witch-finders who were not a dominant caste. They just reinterpreted some Hindu knowledge and amalgamated with their own notion of religious practices which even incorporated sacrifices and practice of exorcism (Das Gupta and Basu 19-23).

Later on, the colonial rule developed a policy for the protection of tribes

1 M.N. Srinivas introduced the concept of sanskritization in his book "Religion and society among the coorgs of South India" to name the process by which a low caste tries to reform its practices in order to claim a higher status in the hierarchy of castes.

2 Communities like Brahmins and artisans came and settled in the tribal areas. The Santhals requested the Hindu Brahmins to perform their religious practices. The Brahmins, in return, received grants of land for performing the ritual services.

3 Wearing a sacred thread around the body symbolizes the transference of spiritual knowledge. This is a Hindu religious practice.

calling them “ethnic communities” who needed a special jurisdiction which was ironically meant for controlling and encroaching upon their minds and space. Thus, the British administrators planned a series of reforms like agrarian laws and protection of tribal leadership. The British sought these measures for smooth governance and a superiority complex reformation. They likewise, took recourse to put an end to tribal customs such as human sacrifice and female infanticide which was being practiced mainly among the Bhils (1840-1865). This also led to the construction of roads which was even used for the exploitation of raw materials and transportation of products from plantations. This added to their degradation and led to an end of the tribal independence. Apart from the exploitation of their “Mother Nature,” during the late eighteenth century, the Santhals were subjected to colonial processes like forced labour. This was evident from the historical event of clearing the forest tracts of Rajmahal Hills in Bihar (now Jharkhand). There was a massive migration of the Santhal people towards this area and the consequence of this was the weakening of the Santhals as a tribal community resulting in fragmentation of the tribal clan and the territorial organization upon which the tribal leadership was based. Gradually, there began to be development in the tribal areas, with the development of industries, owing to the exploitation of mineral resources. Meanwhile, the missionaries became very active and they tried to impose their puritanical ethics, guided by the evangelization process. Apart from these ideological concerns, the missionaries even tried to guide the tribals in favour of the restoration of their lands against the Hindu landowners. This series of exploitation resulted in a number of reactionary movements against the Hindus, the Christians and the British, like The Revolt of the Gonds (1819), Chero disturbances in Chotanagpur (1820) and Khond resistance to the abolition of Meriah sacrifice (1830) (20). This was the first phase of tribal movements. The second phase keeps up correspondence with the development of colonial organization. The movements like Kherwar movement (1871-1857) and Santhal rebellion (1855-1857) developed a political and religious dimension in the second phase.<sup>1</sup> The last phase of the tribal movements was noticeable by the participation of tribes in the national struggle for

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1 The Kherwars started taking recourse to Hindu practices and consulted the Hindu preachers in times of crisis. As a matter of fact, the Kherwar movement did not gain significance in the Santhal Parganas where educational activities by the missionaries were very active (19-20).

freedom. The Gandhian influence<sup>1</sup> became very obvious among the Bhils, the Gonds and the Hos. Ultimately, in this process, the tribal society adopted the new colonial economy.

The impact of colonialism was such that it ended in emergence of a number of tribal movements from 1820-1857. Since then at least for the Santhals, these movements had been important as they tried to promote the reformation of the tribal values in the face of the Hindu hegemony. The “awakening” among the tribal people paved the way for acculturation and the Santhals adapted themselves to different dominant castes in different ways in the states of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. These differences can be elucidated by different influences acting upon them. For example, the Santhals of the undivided Bihar were much influenced by the Christianisation, the then determining factor. In contrast to this, the Santhals of Bengal were more influenced by the dominant Hindu society and their relation was least disturbed by conflicts as opposed to those in Bihar who were influenced by Christianity (19-20).

It has been noted that though the Santhals aligned towards the acculturation process but somehow tried to reaffirm tinges of their Santhal identity by evolving emblematic response to the acculturation process. These responses are sensed at particular levels of their beliefs, be it religious or social. It is said that the borrowed or acquired items may be micro semantic units which are fused in the tribal center of convictions. For instance, according to the informants of Carrin-Bouez in his anthropological study of the Santhal society, there are numerous Santhal villages where the village priest pours water or rice-brew over the highest point of a slope or a hill in the process of praying to get rain. The prayers are addressed to the *buru bong* who is the mountain deity. In some other villages, one can locate a Hindu rendition of a similar custom where milk is offered instead of water while a Hinduized mantra might be tended to *Otere bong*, a Hindu “ground deity.” In the second form of the custom, the connection with the predecessor mountain can be no longer be traced. According to the informants, the accomplishment of the custom lays on virtue of the *naeke* (village priest), and some *naeke* wear sacred thread but this does not mean that they consciously imitate the Brahmin (Carrin-Bouez 24). This can be further explained by relating these to the Sanskritisation procedure, whereby the minor borrowings stealthily inch in the brains of the villagers which is

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1 This movement politicised the tribals and generated a set of tribal political leaders who engrossed themselves in the national struggle not paying heed to the assertion of tribal identity. But in this respect, the Gandhian influence even added to the rise of political awareness and to the spread of democratic ideals among the tribals as a whole. The *Sap hor* movement (1905) was the first instance of Sanskritization among the Santhals.

instilled in their intuitive self. However, they consciously believe in inheriting their forefather's traits which eventually came through Sanskritisation as a process of acculturation.

### **Recounting Acculturation through Tales**

These socio-cultural details form an important and indispensable part of the folklore of the Santhals. Their oral culture reflects that acculturative traits have kept on dominating their folklores, be it dance, painting, songs or folktales. Out of this magnum opus of folklore, the folktales are the only parameter to measure the acculturation as it judges the metamorphosis and traces the journey of transformation. The present paper would discuss the surviving relics, the Santhal folktales collected by P. O. Bodding<sup>1</sup> and A. Campbell<sup>2</sup>. Aryan or Hinduized influence is spotted in the stories. Traces of religious hybridity are to be found in the tales. In the story "The Silly Women" and "The Story of some Women." Hindu religious customs are hinted at, which are followed by the characters in the story. In an attempt to offer sacrifice to the ancestors, the women folks make some preparations for the purification process that is done by washing of hair and clothes followed by plastering the foot of a sal tree by cow-dung which is assumed to be a purifying agent and thence they apply vermilion, that is *sindur* which is meant to be an indispensable part of any Hindu worship performed. In the tale "The Story of a King and a Jugi" also we witness the Hindu way of performing rites. The Jugi suggests the king to bathe and wash hair to perform the rites so that his

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1 Reverend Paul Olaf Bodding (1865-1938) was a Norwegian missionary, folklorist, linguist and ethnographer. He served in India for 44 years (1889-1933), dedicating his life to the Santhal tribe. He operated basically from the town Dumka in the Santhal Parganas district. He came to help Borresen and Skrefsrud in their missionary work. He indulged in collecting Santhali Literature consisting of folksongs, folktales, legends, medicines, witchcraft and record their daily life. He documented these with the help of Kolean, an old Santhal *guru*. After Bodding died, his wife Mrs Christine Bodding handed over the documentations to the Oslo University Library in Norway. It was published later on by another folklorist, Steven Konow. Sangram Murmu, a man from the Godda subdivision helped Bodding with the Santali language. He even collected few stories as he had good contact with his people. He got a nominal remuneration from Bodding to write and collect stories. The tribals claim that most of the stories were written as well as collected by Sangram Murmu himself (Datta 173-174).

2 Rev. Dr. Andrew Campbell of Gobindpore, published in 1891, a collection of *Santal Folk Tales*, which he had collected from the district of Manbhum (now in Jharkhand). Other biographical details of Campbell could not be traced due to paucity of sources.

wife could bear children. This use of sacred and purifying objects like cow-dung, vermilion and washing of clothes and hair before worship is part of the preparation of religious worship among the Hindus but these are witnessed in the tales which are supposed to be Santhali in nature and origin. On this pretext it might be argued that in the context of religious hybridity, the thing to be kept in mind is not the conversion of a person to an imposed religious belief system but how diverse belief systems interrelate with the local and traditional cultural religious frameworks. The acculturated practices followed by the Santhals were influenced by their encounter with the Hindu and the Christian communities which, as a result made changes in their religious practices. To prove their local religion as “pure,” the Santhals might have had the tendency to follow the superior classes which gave rise to religious hybridity. They were not the only ones, in fact, Hinduism too was influenced by the missionaries as a result of which the Hindus formed various societies such as BrahmoSamaj and the Arya Samaj, which inculcated many reforms in their religious practices so that the Hindu tradition could be made more acceptable to the missionaries as well as religious scholars in the West. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the way Hinduism began to be interpreted and practiced in the beginning of the twentieth century, reflects a lot of changes and proves the presence of “religious hybridity.”

Adding to these borrowings, at times readers can relate similar parallel tales in the bulk of the Aryan tales. In this connection, the stories about jackals by Bodding needs a special mentioning as stories related to jackals have always been a part of the treasure trove of traditional Indian tales. Here the borrowings can be noted but with a difference which proves the retention of Santhals’ inimitability. Usually in collection of other traditional tales, like “The Clever Jackal” or “The Lion and the Jackal” from the Panchatantra collection, jackal is a dextrous and clever animal but even a cursory scrutiny of the Santhal tales shows that the jackal has been not been characterised and described in a uniform way. The jackal enacts different roles. Sometimes it is malicious and at times treacherous too. Bodding has compared the jackal with the foolish devil in European folklore (Bodding *Santal IX*). It has been noted that the folktales might have originally belonged to the Kolarian tribes, and thence might have been adopted by other Aryans. It is said that the latter ones made use of animals in their tales to introduce certain doctrines and specially for teaching political wisdom. Under this criterion, the lion acted as a king and the jackal, being crafty and wily, acted as the minister to the king who would always come to king’s rescue. This idea is said to have been imported into Santhal folklore with a difference (Bodding, *Santal X*). In Bodding’s collection there are fifteen tales about

jackals and their astute craftiness in order to serve their means which are sometimes good and sometimes unfair. The jackal is thought to be the ultimate judge who resolves the conflicts by means of his ultimate wit and intelligence amalgamated with wickedness. The jackal is called *toyo* in Santhali but in the process of gender identification, we come across the Hindi word *andia* which is used to indicate the male jackal. It has been found by Bodding that whenever any Santhal narrator would speak about the craftiness and shrewdness of jackal, he would always say the expression *sat siyaler budi* or the wit of seven jackals. Here we notice the use of Hindi words throughout. In the story “*Toyo haram budhi rean*” or “The Jackal and Husband and Wife,” we find the jackal coming to the rescue of the husband and wife by saving them from the ghost or the *bhut*, which is again a Hindi term. In the story “*Toyo artarup rean*” or “The jackal and the leopard” there are instances of jackal saving the traders from the ravenous leopard using his wit and presence of mind.

In the folktale “*Toyo reak khisa*” or “The Astuteness of the Jackal,” there are evidences to be found which show the acculturation process among the Santhals even when it comes to village administration. References to the village council have been mentioned where an old man goes to the head of the village for judgement. It is witnessed that the head sends his messenger for calling the people of the village. This seems to be the by-product of the Santhals’ contact with the non-Santhals. The Santhals, earlier did not have this administrative process but after coming in contact with the non-Santhals, be it the Hindu or the Christians, they started replicating what they saw. The village headman began to be designated as *manjhi* and the village council consisted of five people which was called *more hor*, which seems to be the adaptation of the *panchayat* of the Hindu villages. This close investigation hints that though Santhals had accepted much from their Hindu neighbours, but they were equally desirous to maintain their identity which shows the assimilatory tendency present in the tribe. They assimilated many things but did not fully accept the cultural and traditional traits of their neighbours. The result of this was a curious and creative heterogeneous mixture of Santhali and non-Santhali elements which were regarded by the Santhals as symbols of their unity and clarity in their ways (Orans and Jay 109-110).

Apart from the loan words and phrases, we even find evidences of parallel tales in the well-known collections of other languages, mainly Hindi which seem to have been derived from sources other than Santhali. Campbell’s collection of Santhal folk tales has some stories which relate to the Hinduized or semi-Hinduized aborigines. In the story “The Magic Lamp,” we find traces of the story “Aladdin and

the Magic Lamp.” which has been translated from Arab to English and then in many other foreign and Indian languages. Here it is to be noted that The Santhali story “The Magic Lamp” has a different protagonist but the story line is same as the story “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp.” In this story too, we have a poor boy like Aladdin who was equally tortured like Aladdin by one of his relatives. But ultimately, he encounters a magic lamp which fulfils all his wishes. The contrastive point is that in Santhal version of the story, a fairy comes out of the magic lamp that fulfils all the wishes of the poor boy but in “Aladdin.” a genie would come out of the lamp in order to cater to the orders of his master (Campbell 1-6). Thus, here we notice that the tale has been adapted and modified by the Santhals so that it suits their language, culture and tradition. On the other hand, the modes of thought and social usage of words may be sensed by the presence of untranslatable words or phrases which undeniably point out the source from which they have been derived. Besides this, there is mention of the word “Hanuman” in the Santhal narrative “The Story of a Hanuman Boy” titled “*Harukora rean*” in Santhali. In this context, it is to be noted that the word “Hanuman” is of Hindu origin and is related to the Hindu myth of “Lord Rama” and his disciple “Lord Hanuman” who is supposed to be an incarnation or “*avatar*” of Lord Shiva.

In these cases, it is to be comprehended that the concepts might be the result of acculturation process or cultural hybridity. In this process, it is quite difficult for the person to maintain their inherent identity be it cultural or social. Here the Santhals are the ‘other’ who were doubly oppressed as they were subjected to the rule of the British as well as the people belonging to higher castes in India which contributed to the acculturation among the Santhal people. To accentuate this supposition, the story “The Magic Lamp” needs to be mentioned where the protagonist of the story ends up in marrying the princess which is symbolic of the inherent desire of a less privileged person to merge with the mainstream, taking recourse to whatsoever means possible. Here the poor boy after becoming rich by the help of the fairy of the magic lamp, marries the king’s daughter. The poor boy here might represent the Santhal community, who are engaged in the process of mimicry by allowing themselves to follow and to mimic the ruling class. Hence it can be hinted that as it was difficult for Indians of higher class to resist mimicry of British, so was it difficult for the Santhals even to resist the influence of neighbouring Hindu and Christians. Additionally, the best example for mimicry (the close cousin of cultural hybridity) is found in the tale “The Story of a Hanuman Boy” where the boy who looked like an ape, was out-casted from the society along with his mother, for looking like an ape. But this did not stop him from working hard to be at par

with his brothers so that he could be accepted into their community along with his mother who was claimed guilty of giving birth to such an abnormal child. His ultimate weapon was to marry a girl with the help of who he could completely be at par with the dominant society. In this case Bhabha's mimicry can be taken into consideration. Though Bhabha's cultural dictum is situated in the context of colonizer and its subject, but here if we expand the relationship beyond the strict constrain of colonialism to the context of dominant Hindu and the subaltern Santhal then it can be said that the tribals being the deprived and the oppressed ones took resort to mimicry to be able to become one with the upper caste people. Here mimicry is seen as a conciliatory pattern. It is a sort of binary opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed which results in modes of obligation and imposition inclusive of the demand of the colonized people to be like the colonizers thus resulting in mimicry. The term accentuates the crevices between the pattern of courteousness and civility as set by the Europeans and its imitation by the colonised people in a faintly distorted form in order to merge with the oppressors so as to prove their worth. He goes on to affirm that mimicry may be regarded as a means to dodge the control of the colonial master. He defines colonial mimicry in following words in his work, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse":

colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha 126).

According to Bhabha, mimicry is nothing but an overstated thing which results in an exaggerated copying of culture, manners, ideas and even language as in the case of the 'Hanuman boy' and the poor boy who had the magic lamp. Hence mimicry comes out to be a sort of repetition with some difference concluding the fact that it is not evidence of the colonized's serfdom.

Other instances of acculturation are to be found in "The Story of Sit and Bosont" in Campbell's collection where the second wife of the king asks him to send away his son to some remote place and not allow him to come back to the palace. It is to be noted that here we find references of the Hindu epic "*Ramayana*." where, "Kaikeyi," one of the three wives of king "Dasaratha," through treachery, banished "Rama" from the kingdom and sent him to fourteen years of exile so that she could place her own son "Bharata" on the throne. The theme remains the same

in the Santhal narrative too but there are certain changes which are made in order to provide peculiarity to the narrative. Here the cultural hybridity plays a major role as living in close communion with the non-Sanths and in an attempt to infuse their beliefs with those of the higher society, the Sanths even adopted their myths, tales and legends but with a difference. We even find the names like “Ram,” and “Lakhan” being used as names of characters and they even relate to these Lords in the tales but with some deviations. This instance demonstrates that the colonizers expect the colonized to be identical to the colonizers, but it somehow fails in many cases as in the case of the Sanths. This happens because there is formative non-equivalence between the inferior and the superior class which clarifies the phenomenon of a particular class’ supremacy over the other.

In addition to cultural and religious hybridity, there are loan words which are largely used about articles of food and dress; the words like *mithai*<sup>1</sup>, *ladu*<sup>2</sup> for sweets, *dal*<sup>3</sup> for beans, *panahi* for shoes are mentioned which bear witness to the tinges of civilization which was a result of acculturation. Other borrowed terms which are non-Santhali in nature cater to some low professions like the trader is called *bepari*, *muci* is used for shoemaker, *kamar* for blacksmith and *gadwan* for the carter. Similarly, the names of certain tools and objects of daily need too have foreign origin such as *botol* for bottle, *basta* for bag, *sui* for needle, *lota* for a jug, *churi* for knife and *laser* for razor. Market is called *bajar*; *kirin* is used for the expression “to buy” which is of a non-Santhali origin. However, the assimilation process is so much so that the particular word has given rise to many derivatives like *akrin* word is used for the expression “to sell” and *kikrinhor* is used for a seller or a salesperson. Even the Bengali words *taka* for rupee and *lekha* for counting are used which add to the degree of acculturation process among the Sanths. In addition to these, with reference to the calculation of time, the Sanths use loan words which either are taken directly or are derivatives of the original word. For example, the word *ghariis* used to express a span of time, *tin din* is used for “three days,” *bar cando* for two months, *bochorpurakate* for the expression “after a year,” *cirocal* for “a long time,” *jivetbhor* for lifelong and *jaejug tire jug* is used for forever.

In many of the stories, we find mention of words related to lifestyle of common

1 According to Oxford Dictionary, *mithai* is a collective name for Indian sweets, such as burfi or gulab jamun. Origin: From Hindi; Pronunciation: /mi'tʌi/

2 As per Oxford Dictionary, *laddu* is an Indian sweet made from a mixture of flour, sugar, and shortening, which is shaped into a ball. Origin: From Hindi *laḍḍū*. Pronunciation: /'lʌdu:/

3 According to Oxford Dictionary, *dal* is split pulses, lentils. Origin: Hindi *dāl*. Pronunciation: /da:l/

household. In this case too, we find many words which are Hindi in origin. The word *orak* for house has retained its old name but some modifications have been observed; like the word *bhitar* is used for inner part of the house, the door is termed as *duar*; *culhais* used for fireplace where food is made, coal is termed as *angara*. *Pukhri* and *bande* are used for ponds and tanks. The relationship terms are even not untouched by the non-Santhal or Hindu influence; wife is called as *bahu*, *naihar* refers to the bride's father's place; words like *mama sasur* for maternal father in law and *bhagna* for nephew are certain Hindi terms which seem to have been adopted by the Santhals. There is usage of prefix, suffixes and infixes which the Santhals did in order to amalgamate the non-Santhali language with the Santhali which ultimately resulted in the production of an altogether different variable which was neither purely Santhal nor non-Santhali by nature. The borrowings from the Hindi vernaculars could be found in abundance. There are instances of assimilation of words in sentences. For example, in a sentence like *bicar pahiltalinpe*, which means "first decided between two of us," *talinpe*, which is a part of the word *pahiltalinpe*, is of Santhal origin but the rest are borrowed from other non-Santhali languages. It has been noted that the foreign elements are very well assimilated in the sentences used by the Santhals. Though the grammar remains the same, but the vocabulary easily gives way to the foreign elements. Thus, the new words formed are inflected according to Santhali rules. Foreign verbs are conjugated in the Santhali way. For instance, the expression *calak-kantahe kana* which means "he was going"; *bujhauketa*, means he understood; in these two expressions, the terms *cal* and *bujhau* are Hindi but the rest of the terminology is indigenous in nature. In other instances, Hindi nouns are inflected as verbs in accordance with the Santhali grammar, where practically every word can be used to denote a predicate; for example, *bidakaea*, which means "they sent him off," "gave him permission to go," *bahuadea* which means "gave him a wife." This state of conversion, assimilation and changes in the process of Hinduisation of Santhal language has been going on for a long time. The ancient vocabulary has been replaced with a new one with some grammatical principles being the same thus resulting in peculiar shape of a mixed tongue. The fact is that significance of non-Santhali languages is still felt strongly by the Santhals but the admixture in their language shows off their linguistic mentality which is still strong (Bodding *Santal* XI-XVI).

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above examination, it is suggested that development of acculturative traits in the Santhals has included particular procedures that are idiosyncratic

of the multicultural society notwithstanding broad procedures that likewise occur in mono-social settings. The Santhals who were in close contact with the missionaries or the Hindus, resulted in undergoing the process of acculturation. Amid such contact progressive propensities seem to have happened. Culture-contact has changed Santhal society to some extent. The instructive procedure of social association accordingly has given a connection to the Santhal society and a vital component of social acknowledgment and change. Some critics have dependably contended that this procedure has prompted to estrangement, to the deserting of conventions, hereditary roots and methods of thought. Despite this it can be said that culture-contact prompting to social communication has had greater advantages than detriments when it comes to the Santhal society. This cultural gap seems to have weakened the tribal solidarity to some extent but has however given them a new ethnic identity by the help of which they have been able to voice their stand amid other cultures.

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责任编辑：李敏锐