
UNIT 3 TRIBALS' SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK ON NATURE

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

Tribals, conscious of the Supreme Being, try to live a good, upright, ethical and moral life which is quite a genuine spiritual life. Their natural goodness like simplicity, sincerity, honesty and hard work is certainly the reflection of their inner spiritual life. In this Unit you are expected to know:

- Tribals' way of relating to the Supreme Being
- Tribals' attitude towards life and its meaning
- Tribals' way of relating to nature and the mode of celebrations

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Spirituality can be understood at various levels. Broadly speaking it means a person's spiritual life as opposed to physical or sense life. It is the exercise or application of our spiritual faculties, intellect and will in order to enter into communion with the Divine. Strictly speaking it means (a) to express oneself in one's ethical and moral behaviour and right conduct, (b) practice of virtues and avoidance of vices, (c) acting and behaving in a way that is more human and more divine, (d) living and practising, exercising and experiencing one's religious belief and conviction, and (e) a person's supernatural life lived more consciously, more fully and more intensely in relationship with the transcendent reality, God (Lakra 2006: 2-3).

Tribal Spirituality

In the tribal worldview space (totality of creation) is central. Everything has to be understood in the perspective of creation. Harmony with space or creation is the starting point of their spirituality and their search for liberation. An awareness of being one with the whole of creation is, therefore, the spiritual foundation of the tribal people. In this unity of creation and spirituality, there is no clear cut distinction between sacred and secular, religion and non-religion. One sees the Supreme being in space/creation and not outside of it (Puthenpurakal 2007: 242).

3.2 SUPREME BEING

Each tribal group is unique and, therefore, different from one another and yet there are some remarkable similarities in their worldviews. Since it is not possible to discuss the spiritual outlook of all of them, we select for our purpose the Munda, Uraon (Kurukh speaking), Kharia, Santal and Ho tribals in the Chhotanagpur cultural area running through the state of Jharkhand and the adjoining districts of Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal. The same tribal groups have also been spreading out in various parts of the country at different points of their history. Each tribal group has a very clear idea of the Supreme Being as its creator and of the universe and its creatures. He is known by different names by different tribals as given below:

Tribes	Personal Name	Relational Name	Symbolic Name (In likeness)
Munda	Haram (Old One)	Grand Father	Sing Bonga (Sun-Spirit) Maran Buru (Great Mountain)
Ho	Gusia (Master)	do	do
Santal	Thakur Jiu (Spirit)	do	Chando Baba (Sun-Father) Maran Buru (Great Mountain)
Kharia	Ponomesor (Unchanging One)	do	Bero Lerang (Sun-Moon)
Kurukh	Dharmes (Beneficent One)	do	Biri Belas (Sun- King)

None of the tribals mentioned above has made any *image* of their Creator in the past and present though they share in common His imagery as a benign *old man* with white long hair and flowing beard on dazzling white clouds. They have not made any *temple* for Him because they experience His presence everywhere.

Except among the Kharias there is a mention of a female counterpart of the Creator in their creation accounts. However, none of the Adivasi religious traditions in the region has any practice of worshipping any female deity at the level of the Supreme Being. Rather, the *beloved* of the Supreme Being comes across as a symbol of His own *wisdom*. She comes to His assistance whenever He needs to be wiser in creating the universe and its beings in a more perfect manner.

Creation

Before the Supreme Being made the present world, in all the accounts there is a mention of the *sea* with its *creatures* covering everywhere. In His works of creation the Supreme Being takes the help of His own creatures, especially the sea creatures, such as, *crab, prawn, fish, turtle, tortoise*, etc. separately in bringing a tiny bit of clay to Him from the bottom of the sea in order to make the present earth. However, all of them failed in their mission because the sea water washed away the clay which they had tried to carry to the Supreme Being for making this world. However, the *earthworm* finally succeeds in fetching this bit of earth to the Supreme Being in the Munda and Kurukh accounts. He takes this bit of earth and makes the present earth.

In the Ho account, the Supreme Being makes a pair of male and female earthworms which slip into the water of the sea and begin to raise and heap up mud within the water by swallowing it and disgorging it. The two earthworms multiplied and worked together and land rose above the water. In some places it became mountains and in other places hard land. In the Santal account, the Supreme Being tied the legs of a huge tortoise in four directions to float on the surface of the sea. An earthworm then keeping its tail at the back of the tortoise swims down to the bottom of the sea and swallows the clay and evacuates it on the back of the tortoise till the present earth got formed. The tortoise changes its position sometimes and that is why the earth shakes today! Having made the earth the Supreme Being filled it with all other animate and inanimate beings.

In yet another Kurukh account, the *kingfisher* bird dives into the sea and brings a tiny seed of the earth in between its finger nail from the earthworms at the bottom of the sea and gives it to the Supreme Being. He plants this seed in the sea by churning its water till it gets muddy. It was this seed that got multiplied into the present earth with its *saat-pati-raaji* ((kingdom with 7 corners). The Supreme Being filled it with all living and non-living creatures.

In the Kharia account, a *crab* raised a pillar of clay from the bottom of the sea above the surface of water and began to enjoy sunshine everyday lying down on top of the pillar. One day a man like figure came from somewhere and was pleased to play with the clay of the pillar. He is also known as *Ponomesor* (God). Seeing this the crab extended its pillar into a huge island. Thus, the present earth with all other creatures came into existence.

In all accounts the Supreme Being first makes human figures out of clay and bakes them in the sun before putting life into them. However, except in Ho account in all other accounts there comes a *horse* (anti-life force already at the time of creation) from somewhere and kicks and destroys the human figures till the Supreme Being makes a dog(s)/tiger to chase away the destructive horse. Following it, in the Munda account, a large Indian *stork* laid two *eggs* on the land. A *boy* and a *girl* were born from these eggs. Similarly, in the Santal account, a *boy* and a *girl* were born from the *eggs* of *hans* and *hansil* (male-female swans). From the above human beings other men and women were born. In the Kurukh account the Supreme Being puts life into the many sun-baked clay *male* and *female* figures. Whereas in the Kharia account, He made two *male* and *female* human figures, dried them in the sun and put them inside the hollow of a banyan tree and when the milk of the tree dripped into their mouths, they became alive. From them other human beings were born in the world. Interestingly, the Ho account mentions that the first woman was made from the rib of the first man whom the Supreme Being had made out of clay.

Destruction

In the creation accounts above, the Munda and Ho traditions say that human beings filled the whole earth and offended their Creator with their *evil ways* and lost His favour upon them. According to Santals the human beings *did not respect* one another by behaving like he-buffaloes and she-buffaloes. In the Kharia account they became *proud* and *arrogant* before their Creator by their destructive ways. Similarly, in the Kurukh account they with their own *excreta* polluted the earth which was a beautiful creation of their Creator. The last comment is a strong symbolic way of saying that the human beings had committed a very serious and disgusting offence against their Creator.

Offended by the evil deeds of the human beings as mentioned above, the Creator sent *rain of fire* on them for 7 days and 7 nights. All the human beings perished except the *bhaiya-bahin* (brother-sister). In the Munda and Ho accounts, *Nage* spirit hid them in the cool water of a hollow made by a crab. In the Santal account, they were saved in the cave of the *Harata* mountain. In the Kurukh account, the beloved of the Supreme Being had hidden the pair of male and female children in the hole of a *crab* covered with the *gangla* (Job's tear) thicket of the low-land. In the Kharia account, the king *Sembhu* and queen *Dakai* pulled the *brother* and *sister* inside the marsh and hid them.

With destruction of the human beings, food supply by them to the Creator by way of offering sacrifice ceased. He was thus very hungry and not happy without human beings. His beloved told Him that His happiness could return only with the finding of human beings alive. Consequently, He found the *bhaiya-bahin* (brother-sister, i.e. male-female) after many disappointments and distress. After seeking and finding them, He brought them to His abode with great joy. He kept them with Him, fed them and looked after them lovingly with His fatherly care. He called them His *grand children* and they in return called Him *grand father*. There is a fun loving relationship between grand parents and their grand children. Thus, the Creator renewed His relationship with the surviving human beings as their *grand father* who is very fond of His *grand children*, ever loving, forgiving and accepting. In this personal relationship with Him there is no oppressive fear. It is quite liberating.

New Creation

When the *bhaiya-bahin* grew up He gave them the *land* to cultivate, *oxen* to plough and *seeds* to sow and reap. When their *crops* were growing, some insects and pests attacked them and thus they were getting destroyed. The *bhaiya-bahin* then went up to the Supreme Being to tell Him their problem. After listening to them, He taught them the ritual of *danda-katta* (ritual of destroying the effects of evil) to drive away the evil beings and their evil forces from them. The *bhaiya-bahin* used to sleep separately by putting a log of the *simbali* (silk cotton) tree in between them. In the Munda and Ho accounts there was a *husking pole* between them to separate them while sleeping at night whereas in the Kharia account it was just a *log*. One night they drank rice beer and went to sleep. The Creator Himself had taught them how to prepare this drink. The Supreme Being and His beloved removed the log between them and they slept together as husband and wife. On reporting their experience to the Supreme Being, He said that it was all right. Thus, He instituted *marriage* and introduced human beings to the secret of procreation so that they might multiply in this world. He divided them into various *gotars* (clans) in order to enter into marriage relationships outside one's own clan. Members belonging to the same clan consider themselves as brothers and sisters of one family. The tribal clans consist of *animals, birds, fish, plants, minerals*, etc. They are called *totems*. This is the *new creation* of the Supreme Being and all men and women today are the *stewards* of this creation by not destroying and polluting it. His creative activity in this world thus continues to this day through the cooperation of human beings with Him.

The tribals believe that increase of their *crop, cattle* and *children* is a clear sign of the Creator's abundant blessing upon them. These are His gifts to them and their whole life revolves around them. That is why they thank Him for these gifts and pray to Him to shower upon them these gifts by offering sacrifices to Him

and worshipping Him. They depend on Him for their life and existence. Since He is the Supreme Being, they pray to Him to protect them from every form of evil.

Creation of Heavenly Bodies

In the Munda and Kurukh accounts it is told that before the moon was made, the Sun was alone in the sky and it did not set. One day the Creator went out to see the man making fields and asked him some questions: “When did you make this field?” “Now” was the answer. “When did you make that field?” “Now.” “When did you make the yonder fields?” “Just now.” “When did you eat from these fresh leaves?” “Now.” “When did you eat from those dry leaves?” “Now.” “When do you rest and when do you work?” “I rest *now* and work *now*.” The Creator said: “You will not live on with such work and eating without regular times.” So, He made the Sun to set and rise - thus *day* and *night* were made to work and to rest. He also made the moon to shine during the night.

Together with other beautiful accounts, in the Santal account the heavenly bodies are described as human beings in their metaphorical sense. *Thakur Baba* (Supreme Being) is *Sing Chando* (the sun) and *Nida Chando* (the moon) is his wife. At first there were as many stars by day as there are by night. They were the children of the Sun and the Moon. They had divided them between the two of them. At their evil deeds *Sing Chando* blazed with fierce heat till his children and beasts died. The Moon took pity on their suffering and prayed to *Sing Chando* not to destroy them. So, *Sing Chando* saved a couple of young man and woman from whom many children were born. *Nida Chando* wanted that the human beings who belonged to her should only be there and not those belonging to *Sing Chando*. So she made a plan to trick him. She covered up all her children with a large basket and smeared her mouth and lips and going to *Sing Chando* told him that she had eaten up every one of her children and proposed that he should also do the same. Listening to her he devoured all of them. At night *Nida Chando* let out her children from under the basket. Seeing them, *Sing Chando* flew to *Nida Chando* in a passion and the children scattered in all directions. That is why the stars are now spread all over the sky. *Sing Chando* could not restrain his wrath and cut *Nida Chando* into two. That is the reason why the Moon waxes and wanes.

Approach to God

Among the tribals, there are many forms of approaching God mainly by way of offering sacrifice to Him and praying to Him in an informal but personal way. However, there is one particular ritual among the Kurukh tribals which is worth discussing here because it is full of rich symbols. It expresses protection of *Dharmes* (Supreme Being) against evil. As life is experienced in a paradoxical existence of good and evil, life and death, the twofold end of the ritual is first, to obtain blessing, *viz.* happiness and prosperity of life in terms of sound health and increase in *progeny*, *cattle* and abundant yield from *crops* and secondly to ward off evil.

The ritual is known by various names, *viz.* *danda-katta* (stick-splitting), *palkansna* (tooth-breaking), *bhelwan-phar?i* (*bhelwan* twig splitting), *bhaakh-khandna* (destroying curse). No priest is required for the ritual. Any Kurukh male acquainted with the ritual may perform it. He recites the account of traditional

creation myth, recalling (a) how *Dharmes* made the earth from a little bit of clay, (b) a universal burning of fire during which the *bhaiya-bahin* hid themselves in a crab hole, (c) how *Dharmes* found them and taught them the art of agriculture, created day and night for them, initiated them into the secret of procreation and confided to them the mysterious ritual of *danda-katta* with which to avert the attacks of beasts and pests on their crops and to destroy the effect of the *evil eye* and *evil mouth* of enemies.

The whole proceeding begins with drawing of the mystic diagram of the universe with its 7 corners in the form of 3 concentric circles and 7 arcs on the outer circle. The circles and arcs are formed in the order of *white*, *red* and *black* colours representing the *rainbow*. These colours are of rice flour, red clay powder from the hearth and black charcoal dust. A handful of pearl *rice* is placed at the centre and an *egg* is stood upright on it and the split end of a cashew (*Semicarpus anacardium*) twig rests on the egg.

The significance of these articles is explained as follows: The rainbow being the greatest bow in creation, is the most potent weapon of *Dharmes* against any evil power. The egg is a pure source of life. It is a *faceless* sacrifice to faceless God. It is broken in order to symbolise and also effect together with the split cashew twig the bursting of the *evil eye* and the splitting of the *evil mouth* of witches and sorcerers and thus destroy the evil doings of the spirits let loose by them. It is hoped through the ritual that no harm would be caused to the *crops*, *cattle* and *children* of those on whose behalf the ritual is performed. The oil of the cashew nut is poisonous and a drop of it in the eyes is sure to cause permanent blindness. Hence, there is the use of the cashew twig over the sacrificial egg in order to impart its dreaded effect on the evil doers. The pearl rice is the symbol of life. This ritual is always performed with or without the full recital of the creation myth at all important events, such as, on the name giving ceremony of a child, during a wedding, after a funeral ceremony, while going for the ritual hunt, before paddy transplantation, at the beginning of threshing, while occupying a new house, etc. Belief in *Dharmes* as the source of all good and in the *evil eye* or *evil look* and *evil mouth* or *evil words* as the causes of all evil is held by the Uraons to form the most primitive tenet of their religious tradition.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What were the root causes of destroying the first creation?

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Why do the tribals approach God? How do they approach Him?

3.3 LIFE AND ITS MEANING

Birth On the *Chhati* (name giving) day of a child, one of the elders takes his seat with a pot of water and some paddy grains. He removes the husk of a grain with his finger nails and drops the grain gently on the still surface of water in the pot to float. It represents *God*. Likewise, he drops the second grain representing the *panches* (elders). Similarly, he drops the third grain in the name of the *child* and lastly he drops the fourth grain naming at the same time one *ancestor*. If the last two grains meet while floating, the child is named after the ancestor in whose name the fourth grain was dropped. Rice grain is a symbol of life. Only after the name-giving, the child belongs to the *community*, *clan* and *tribe*. It is an initiation of the child into the clan and tribal community to grow and mature in them as a full tribal.

Giving the name of one of the ancestors to the child shows the faith of the tribals in the life after death. The ancestor chosen for the child becomes his/her guardian. The name thus discovered indicates that the goal of this earthly life is to attain the *ancestral community* at long last. It is in this community that the tribe lives for ever. The ceremony also indicates that the child belongs to God and the *panches* are the witnesses to this mystery of life.

Marriage

The creation accounts of the tribals testify to the fact that marriage has been divinely instituted by the Supreme Being Himself. Marriage negotiations are conducted through intermediaries. The traditional tribals observe omens or signs from nature very carefully during the negotiations. Some of the omens are as follows:

Good Omens	Bad Omens
<div><div>a) a lamp burning: it is a mark of prosperity;</div><div>b) a woman carrying water: presence of water symbolises life giving power and vitality;</div><div>c) a corpse being removed: death is out of the way, opportunity for a new life,</div><div>d) seeing monkeys on the way: monkey is the nephew of God,</div></div>	<div><div>a) a thorn pricking: loss of blood and, therefore, loss of life;</div><div>b) an empty pitcher: sign of lack of life giving power and vitality;</div><div>c) a woman carrying ashes or clothes in an earthen vessel for washing purposes: sign of weakness;</div><div>d) a dead animal being removed: destruction of property;</div></div>

therefore is sacred symbolising God's favour;	e) a snake on the path: a danger symbol;
e) itching in the palm of the hand: sign that one will get money;	f) a vulture overhead: it feeds on carrion and, therefore, associated with death;
f) a jackal crossing from left to right: going away from the life centre: symbolises that death is on its way out;	g) a jackal crossing the road from right to left and hearing its howling: moving to left is moving to life centre, a sign of imminent death;
(g) seeing or hearing a pigeon or a kingcrow singing: sign of humble, patient, loving and hard-working housewife.	h) suddenly a tree or branch coming down on the path is a sign of impending death.

With bad omens observed on the way, marriage negotiation generally would not proceed further while with good omens observed, they would go ahead with their marriage arrangement.

Marriage gives the fullest participation of an individual in the life of the community with duties and responsibilities to shoulder for the good of the *family*, *clan* and *tribe* as a full grown up and mature adult. It marks and strengthens the ties of union between husband and wife and also of the two families and their ancestors. The use of *sindri* (vermilion) during the marriage ritual is a blood substitute and blood is a life symbol. According to their age old custom the Santal and Munda couples in this context, exchange real blood taken from the small finger of each partner and mixed together. At the central marriage ceremony in the Kurukh tradition, the *thatching grass*, *yoke*, and *grinding stone* displayed are economic symbols, stressing the fact that marriage means establishing a new home in which the husband has to work in the field, the wife has to do household works and both of them need a secure dwelling place for themselves and their children.

In keeping with their inheritance law, land belongs to the clan. Hence, women who on their marriage go over to another clan do not inherit it at their parental home. By the same rule a non-tribal cannot inherit land from a tribal. Thus, a tribal has to get married *within* his/her own tribe. He/she has to get married *outside* his/her own clan because the members of the same clan look at one another as brothers and sisters having *common ancestors* in the beginning. There is a practice of giving *bride wealth* among the tribals consisting of livestock or cash. The payment of the bride wealth publicly *seals* the marriage contract, confers marital rights upon the spouses and legitimizes their children.

Good and Evil

Thus, the idea of *good* in the final analysis is inseparably tied up with what is good for the tribals in the *physical* order of *this world*. However, the goal of life as eternal happiness rests in their belief that after this life they will join the community of their *ancestors* in the next world free from all forms of suffering. This is the *ultimate aim* of their life in this world. It is in the *ancestral community* that all their legitimate aspirations will be fulfilled. This community enjoys its

eternal happiness under the divine care and protection of God. The *value* of the living tribal community in *communion* with its ancestors has its *root* in Him as the source of all *life, goodness* and *happiness*. Value is the idea held by people about ethical behaviour or appropriate behaviour, what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable.

Evil for a tribal is again a concrete experience. It is understood as a *physical* suffering, such as, sickness, death, loss of livestock and property. At the mention of it a tribal begins to talk of the *sick* child, *loss* of the animal, *failure* of crops, etc., and expresses his/her utter *helplessness* and *inability* to handle the situation and to deal with the forces behind such happenings. This suffering is evil because it inflicts *pain, injury* and *harm* upon members in the community. Therefore, actions which *endanger* the good of individuals, family, clan and tribe are evil.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What does marriage do to an individual in his/her community?

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2) What is the ultimate aim of tribal life?

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3.4 NATURE AND CELEBRATION: FEASTS

The tribals live in close contact with nature which plays a very important role in their life. They derive their basic necessities like food, shelter, fodder, fuel, timber, medicines etc. from nature. That is why they look at nature as their mother. This gets manifested in their folktales, folk stories, seasonal songs, feasts and festivities repeatedly as follows:

The *phagua* feast is celebrated on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Phagun* (February-March). As nature renews and bedecks itself with new, tender and beautiful leaves and flowers, this feast ushers in the *new year* for the tribals. The *sarhul* feast is celebrated in the lunar month of *Chait* (March-April) when the *sal* trees (*Shorea robusta*) are full of flowers. It is the biggest annual spring festival of the tribals. The celebration centres around the *sarna* (sacred grove)

deity. She is the guardian spirit of the whole village with its inhabitants, their children and cattle. This deity is believed to be very fond of children. She is responsible for good monsoon and bumper crops during the year. She shares in the joys and sorrows of the people in the village. Her abode is the *sarna* near the village. The *pahan* (village priest) offers the sacrifice of a chicken to her on a handful heap of rice in order to get her favour upon the village community. Similarly, he offers chicken sacrifices to other spirits too in order to please them so that they may not create trouble for the same community.

Transcendence of God over the spirits is clearly maintained at the *sarna*. The *pahan* offers Him the sacrifice of a *white* (sign of purity) chicken or goat at a separate spot away from the place where the sacrifices were offered to the spirits. In the Kurukh tradition, the village priest faces the east because the sun which is the symbol of God, rises in the east and prays as follows: "Here below are the *panches* (elders), *Dharmes* (God) is above. O Father, you are above, we are below. You have eyes, we do not see. You know all, we are totally ignorant. Whether knowingly or by mistake we have offended the spirits, restrain them. Overlook our mistakes." (Tirkey 1991: 76). The prayer shows how the community is utterly dependent on God its Creator. It is also believed on this feast day that *marriage* between the *earth* and the *sky* takes place and due to this mystical union that nature brings forth plenty of good things for the living and sustenance of human beings.

The *karam* celebration begins on 11th day of the lunar month of *Bhado* (August-September) and continues till the end of harvest season. Although the feast is meant to ensure protection of standing crops, it is primarily the feast of unmarried girls who have been recently engaged. They pray to the *Karam Raja* (Creator) for the blessing of healthy children in their future life in order to perpetuate the *family, clan and tribe*. He is symbolized by the *karam* branch (*Adina cordifolia*). Through the *karam* story the feast is the reminder to the tribals that right from the time of creation, God is the ultimate source of all good things in life requiring *harmony* between God-Man-Nature.

Nawakhani is the feast of eating the first fruits of the new harvest. It is celebrated when the new paddy crop is ready in the lunar month of *Kuwanr* (September-October). The head of each household sacrifices a chicken to the *ancestors* for giving the gift of life, land and livestock to their descendants. The choicest portion of the festal meal is first offered to the ancestor spirits and a libation of rice beer is poured to them and prayers are offered to them to get their blessing and protection upon them.

The *soharai* feast begins on the eve of the new moon day in the lunar month of *Kartik* (October-November). It is celebrated to honour the cattle helpful in agriculture. The cattle are indispensable for the tribals in agriculture. They are the tribe's most prized gifts and possessions given by God. That is why they are given a royal treatment on this day. Their hoofs are washed with rice beer, horns are anointed, necks are garlanded and heads are adorned. They are fed on soaked pulse grains mixed with salt. According to a myth, God once came down to destroy a monster unseen, which used to eat up human beings. He brought along with Him a *bull* and took shelter in the hut of a kind, old and poor widow before he accomplished his mission. The dung of this bull in its shed turned into gold and the poor and needy widow became rich. Thus, the *soharai* feast is celebrated

in the background of this mythological account. *Maghe* feast is celebrated in the month of *Magh* (January-February) to honour the house servant who works for a family during the year.

Thus, the annual feasts of the tribals are very closely linked with the annual agricultural cycle and centre around the good health and prosperity of their children, cattle and crops as blessings of God. In them they find their joy and happiness.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) How is the tribal spiritual outlook on nature expressed in the feast of *sarhul*?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

In the tribal worldview space (totality of creation) is central. Everything has to be understood in the perspective of creation. Harmony with space or creation is the starting point of their spirituality and their search for liberation. An awareness of being one with the whole of creation is, therefore, the spiritual foundation of the tribal people. In this unity of creation and spirituality, there is no clear cut distinction between sacred and secular, religion and non-religion. One sees the Supreme being in space/creation and not outside of it. Tribals conscious of the Supreme Being try to live a good, upright, ethical and moral life which is quite a genuine spiritual life. Their natural goodness like simplicity, sincerity, honesty and hard work is certainly the reflection of their inner spiritual life.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Spirituality : Broadly speaking it means a person’s spiritual life as opposed to physical or sense life. It is the exercise or application of our spiritual faculties, intellect and will in order to enter into communion with the Divine.

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3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) In the creation accounts the Munda and Ho traditions say that human beings filled the whole earth and offended their Creator with their *evil ways* and lost His favour upon them. According to Santals the human beings *did not respect* one another by behaving like he-buffaloes and she-buffaloes. In the Kharia account they became *proud* and *arrogant* before their Creator by their destructive ways. Similarly, in the Kurukh account they with their own *excreta* polluted the earth which was a beautiful creation of their Creator. The last comment is a strong symbolic way of saying that the human beings had committed a very serious and disgusting offence against their Creator.
- 2) Life is experienced in a paradoxical existence of good and evil, life and death, joy and suffering etc. Tribals feel helpless in some of these situations, and, therefore, they approach God in order to restore their state of wellbeing.

Among tribals, there are many forms of approaching God mainly by way of offering sacrifices to Him and praying to Him in an informal but personal way. Through these approaches, they want to obtain blessing, *viz.* happiness and prosperity of life in terms of sound health and increase in *progeny*, *cattle* and abundant yield from *crops* and secondly to ward off evil.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) Marriage gives the fullest participation of an individual in the life of the community with duties and responsibilities to shoulder for the good of the *family*, *clan* and *tribe* as a full grown up and mature adult. It marks and strengthens the ties of union between husband and wife and also of the two families and their ancestors.
- 2) Giving the name of one of the ancestors to the child shows the faith of the tribals in the life after death. The ancestor chosen for the child becomes his/her guardian. The name thus discovered indicates that the goal of this earthly life is to attain the *ancestral community* at long last. It is in this community that the tribe lives for ever.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

- 1) The *sarhul* (flower festival) celebration centres around the *sarna* (sacred grove) deity. She is the guardian spirit of the whole village with its inhabitants, their children and cattle. She is responsible for good monsoon and bumper crops during the year. Her abode is the sacred grove near the village. The village priest offers the sacrifice of a chicken to her on a handful heap of rice in order to get her favour upon the village community. It is also believed on this feast day that *marriage* between the *earth* and the *sky* takes place and due to this mystical union that nature brings forth plenty of good things for the living and sustenance of human beings.