

## **‘Adi-dharam’: Tribal Philosophy about Jharkhand’s Culture and its Struggle for Sustainable Existence**

**<sup>1</sup>Prof. Amit Amar Soren and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Shaweta Singh**

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Geography, St. Columba's College, Hazaribag, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand, India.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Columba's College, Hazaribag, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand, India.

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### **Abstract**

Man is a tribal animal and its tribalism started millions of years ago soon after its evolution and once they started to live a anthropographic life. Historical evidence proves that man has been nomadic in nature and has survived with its existence in sustainability with nature. Geography explains it as the man-environment relationship or their co-existence with each other. This concept has been discussed in Geography as Dualism in Physical Geography and Human Geography and also in Determinism. The tribal (Indigenous) people of Jharkhand known as Adivasi have a close connection with the land, water, and forest. Adivasi culture is closely related to the three elements of nature- jal, jungle and jameen. Their way of viewing life is practice-oriented and cannot sustain without them. This paper tries to engage with the tribal philosophy, tribal festivals of Jharkhand to show how the festivals carry the ethos of Adi-dharma and tribal agitations to maintain Adi-dharam. The philosophy of Adi-dharam is about maintaining harmonious relationships with the other elements of the ecology. The rationale behind maintaining such a relationship is acknowledging the contribution of others in keeping the sovereignty of the tribal culture, rituals, practices including worship of nature, festivals, tribal food habits, attire, etc. The structure of the man environment relationships shapes the environmental identity of the Adivasi existence for sustainability. With increase in population the natural habitat of the Tribals shrunk and they were forced to adapt to the changing world. But the concept of tribalism is not only concentrated in its culture, society, traditions, etc. but it is related to its existence. This conflict between their changing environment and their tribal existence has sometimes turned into revolts, sometimes violent too. The tribal state of Jharkhand in its blooming days has faced a couple of tribal agitations in which ‘Pathalgadi in Khunti and Gumla’ and ‘Marang Buru’ disputes are the prominent ones.

### **\*Corresponding Author**

**Dr. Shaweta Singh**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Columba's College, Hazaribag, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand, India.

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### **Introduction**

No man or society can live without a Philosophy. The choice is not between whether to have a Philosophy or not to have a Philosophy; but the choice is between a ‘good’ Philosophy and a ‘bad’ Philosophy. While India is proud of its Philosophy as one of the most ancient, Western world too has an established Philosophy-both of which have received extensive research and development through several centuries.

However, within India there is yet another India which is still to be discovered, which exists with its distinctive and independent Philosophy, away from the ordinary intellectual eye, though searching the philosophical eye cannot overlook

or miss it. This India is Tribal India, still abounding in mystery and mysticism of an entirely different kind, often requiring its own definitions and meaning-something that cannot be looked at with the habituated intellectual spectacles of the established philosophies. This is why men often are found asking: ‘Do the Tribes of India have a Philosophy? Do the Tribes of India have a God?’

Though Tribal India is grounded in rich philosophical tenets, the same has been grossly overlooked and this is the research gap. The Tribes of India have so far been studied only anthropologically; and a thing like ‘philosophy’ is not their cup of tea-is what has so far been thought of them. The ‘anthropological’ and ‘uprising history’ study, without

studying their philosophy and literature, is an attitude that deliberately places the Tribes at a substandard existence-an intellectual injustice that needs to be righted. Besides, at present times when the world reels with problems like Global Warming and Climate Change, only Tribal Philosophy has a response. At least due to this requirement, an institutional effort to research and study Tribal Philosophy appears exigent and urgent. The objective of this paper, thus, is to establish Tribal Philosophy and Religion (Adi-dharm Darshan) as a distinct entity with infallible tenets of its own. The scope and limitation of this paper are as follows:

### What?

From here on, an intellectual effort would get underway to answer a prominent question: Can there a body of knowledge that can be termed as “Tribal Philosophy”?

Basis: One’s worldview is a direct expression of ‘his or her Philosophy’. A human group’s (people’s) worldview is a direct expression that group’s Philosophy. No human group can exist without a Philosophy. Every human group-at whichever stage it may exist in ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’-therefore must own, and owns, a Philosophy.

Going by this simple truth, just as any dominant Philosophy - if anything could be so termed- “Tribal Philosophy” with specific geographical context of India (Philosophy of the Tribal People), exists. The most prominent basis (reason) of this is that the Tribal People here have a ‘Worldview’ distinctive of any other worldviews of the world in which and by which they believe, live and die. This effort is just an intellectual journey to rescue that Tribal Philosophy out of reclusiveness and bring it to the general World, in written form in the *language* that the other philosophies understand.

### The Philosophical Research Gaps this Research Paper would Deal with are

- a) Who am I?
- b) Where have I come from?
- c) To where I go after death?

### Where?

The body of Knowledge to be known as “Tribal Philosophy” would have to be constructed from Legends, folklores, folktales, practices, norms, systems, beliefs, relations, attitudes, dispositions *et al*, still prominently and vividly alive in the Tribal Society of India. Tribal world is blessed with rich legends, folktales, practices, systems and relations. These things have emerged over the years in the due course of living in symbiotic relationship with the Nature, with the flora and fauna, with fellow men and women, within the group and with other groups. For a people that had to live amidst perpetual insecurity amidst wild animals and forest, a culture or philosophy right from the beginning, would have been a sheer luxury. But over the years of living together made them to form certain standards-moral and ethical standards, norms, practices, meaning of life and living, practices, beliefs-around which emerged certain legends, folktales, folklores-and when these are closely analysed, what one finds is a philosophy. This work has never been systematically done, and it awaits intellectual scrutiny.

### How?

There are many branches to a Philosophy. Principal among them that could be dealt with for Tribal Philosophy, could be: Cosmology, Philosophy of Religion, Epistemology, Eschatology, and Metaphysics.

### 1. Cosmology in Tribal Philosophy

The term ‘Cosmology’ means: The metaphysical study of the Origin and Nature of the Universe. Tribal India abounds in Legends (Stories of Creation. In Singbonga (that of the Mundas) and Dharme (that of the Oraon/Kurukhs) tradition, for example, God created the universe, man and woman and other creatures. Similar legends and tales abound in Gond, Bhil and North-east groups as well. Concepts of God, Man, Nature, Man-Woman relations, Man-Nature relations etc. are immanent in these legends, folktales, folklores etc. Bringing all of these together at one place and finding a common link/ common string that binds all together, will produce a ‘Cosmology of Tribal Philosophy’.

Curiosity has been in the very nature of man. When he looked at the mammoth power of the Nature around him, he wondered. He tried to read the phenomena and often applied his reason to reach to the root. He tried to pass his understanding and knowledge to his next generation through symbols, and for this he created story. This took the form of myth, narrated from one generation to the other over centuries and millennia. Tribal India abounds in cosmological myths which are both rich and thought-provoking. And behind every cosmological myth is hidden what we may call ‘philosophy’ upon intellectual analysis.

### 2. Tribal Theology: Philosophy of Tribal Religion

Is there something like Tribal Religion/Adi Dharm/Adivasi Dharm? Is there a God (gods) of the Tribals/Tribal Groups of India?

Various tribal groups call their religions in various names-like Sarna religion in Jharkhand, Sansari religion in parts of heartland India, Gondi religion, Bhil religion, Abhor religion (Assam and Arunachal Pradesh), Donyi-Polo (Tibeto-Burman), Hemphu-Mukrang religion of the Karbi etc. For most groups Nature is the base for their God and God-worship. What is the nature of the God(s) of these tribal groups? Whether this God is Swayambhu (Self-Created), Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient? Whether this God is Akar or Nirakar?

When we talk about Tribal Religion, whether does the question of Dualism and Non-Dualism stand? Do concepts like dualism or non-dualism have any relevance to Tribal Religion or Adi Dharm? As is Singbonga tradition God is Nature and Nature is God (Pantheism), can Adi Dharm be subjected to philosophical concepts like pantheism (of say Spinoza)?

The question of Soul (Atma)-ji, jiu, umbul, roa, jiyom etc. in Singbonga tradition for example, is another important subject in the Theology of Tribal Religion-Adi Dharm. Is it eternal? Or is it created? Does not pervade death of the body? What is the Body-Soul relation in Adi Dharm?

And what is the God-Soul relation? Where does human Soul stand in relation to God (Singbonga/Dharme and ....).

Systematic study of theology of different tribal groups has never been done. In fact no one has ever thought in this line. Those who cannot come out from the limits of established theologies too would find it interesting to widen their world if systematic study of theology of different tribal groups of India is worked out and a body of knowledge is systematically constructed. This work will in fact add to the existing theological worlds.

### 3. Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. It deals with definition of knowledge; whether knowledge is possible or

not; and what are the required parameters for a valid knowledge. It deals with what is a valid knowledge and what is an invalid knowledge. The Tribal society in India is rich in its traditional knowledge-on medicine, agriculture, herbs, weather prediction by observing behaviours of creatures like ants, insects, animals etc. But usually, this knowledge is not accepted as 'knowledge' by the mainstream society. The mainstream society often argues that the 'knowledge' of the tribal society, say 'herbal knowledge' is not knowledge but folk practice, as it has never been subjected to scientific verification. Many people argue in this line to negate the validity of tribal knowledge. But, upon close scrutiny one finds that "a particular herb is a medicine for a particular disease"-this finding must have occurred in the tribal society after numerous observations; in the process many patients must have lost their life. A particular herb must have behaved in a particular way when administered on a particular sickness, and the herbal physician must have taken data of it and analysed-the process adopted by the modern scientific community.

Similar is the case with tribal body of knowledge in other fields-all of which must definitely have come about after observations of many centuries. Diagnosis of illness is another area, basis of which has to be discussed epistemologically.

Tribal epistemology will deal with how (basis) knowledge is valid/validated in the tribal society. Or invalid/invalidated. Can there be a Tribal Epistemology?

#### 4. Eschatology

What happens to the Soul after death?

**Eschatology:** is the branch of Theology that is concerned with such final things as Death and Last Judgment; Heaven and Hell; the ultimate destiny of humankind-what happens to the Soul after death?

Tribal groups have rich practice/rituals, beliefs about what happens to the soul after the death of a person. Practices in Singbonga and Dharme tradition like Umbul/Longoy/Chhai bhitar, etc. are examples. Similar practices are there in other traditions too. Does the concept of re-birth exist in various tribal religious traditions?

#### 5. Metaphysics/Ontology

Metaphysics is the philosophical study of Being, Non-Being, Eternal and Temporal, Limited and the Unlimited, deliberation on Reality and Existence. Can there be a Metaphysics/ Ontology for Adi Darshan (Tribal Philosophy)? What is the Ultimate Reality in Adi Darshan/Adi Dharm?

The Tribal society in India also has rich concepts of soul. Each tribal group observes elaborate rituals after the death of a person. These rituals upon analysis throw ample light on the holistic understanding of the concept of soul. Understanding the concept of soul will further help the society to understand tribal meaning of life and living.

Various other philosophical problems like 'Problem of Evil', Realism and Idealism etc, can also be taken up.

Fundamental tenets of Adi-Dharm Darshan, which would not be compromised with:

- i) That there is no heaven and hell. There is no sin and non-sin, and the tenet pertains only to good and bad, right and wrong.
- ii) That Adi God (Singbonga....etc) is Formless (Nirakar).
- iii) That Tribal Religion is not anthropocentric; but Biocentric.
- iv) That there is no Incarnation of God.

This research paper will be a serious effort to systematically rekindle the Tribal Philosophy, keeping the basic parameters that established philosophical traditions set for a philosophy to be a philosophy.

#### Materials & Methods

This research paper involves intensive library work which includes tribal history books, books on philosophy, newspaper articles, journals and published interviews. The qualitative and quantitative research methodology had been applied to carry on this research.

#### Results & Discussions

With the growth of population the natural habitat of the indigenous people has been taken over. Their habitat is not just their home but it's their culture, religious practices, society and moreover their identity culminated from Adidharam. The struggle for this sustainable existence has led to revolts, sometimes violent too.

#### The Parasnath Issue

In the words of British botanist and explorer, Sir Joseph Dalton in 1848 mentioned in Santhal Pargana Gazetteer 1908, It is a remarkable handsome mountain, sufficiently lofty to be imposing, rising of an elevated country, the slope of which, upward to the base of the mountain, though imperceptible is really considerable and it is surrounded by lesser hills of just sufficient elevation to set it off. (O'Mally 72).

The Parasnath hill is considered to be sacred for two communities that differ ironically in way of worship, custom, rituals and diet. The Adivasis comprised 26% of the total population of Jharkhand, worshipping the hill as 'Marang Buru' (Supreme Deity) on the other hand. Jains worship Shikar Jee as their most important pilgrim place.

In the 1990's the social and economic exploitation of the Adivasis of Parasnath led to the violent revolts which was termed as the 'Lalkhandi Revolution'. The Peertand region of Giridih basically the Parasnath Region became the epicentre of Naxalite movement (Lakhandi Movement) in Jharkhand against the economic oppression and their struggle towards their religious practices at 'Marang Buru'. After decades of struggle the violent revolution almost ended but in the last couple of years the dispute between the religious practices of the Adivasis and the Jain at Parasnath again took the headlines.

The Adivasis being the indigenous and the native of the place have their own way of worshipping 'Marang Buru' by offering sacrifice and Mahua (local alcohol) which is forbidden for the Jain's. These ritual and religious practices disputes became so intense that the Central and the State government had to interfere to safeguard religious emotions of both the community.

The Adivasis from Manbhum and Santhal Paragana region gather on the foothill of 'Marang Buru' or the full moon day (Purnima) to worship the 'Supreme Deity' in their own way through 'Singbonga' (spirit) and 'Pahan' (head priest) as a ritual of their Adi Dharma which was later opposed by the Jain community there.

The second major issue related to the Adivasis of Jharkhand was mostly territorial based upon the Tribal constitution stated by 'Birsa Munda'. The revolt called 'Pathalgadi' in 2018 which had the proclamation that "we are the real inhabitants of this country-jal, jungle, jameen is ours and no one can take that from us." This concept is also based on the Adi Dharma. The Pathalgadi are the stone plaques of 15'x4``

and painted green have messages carved on them. These include excerpts from the excerpts from the Panchayats (Extension to Schedule Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) as well as warning to the outsiders or non tribals (Diku) prohibiting them from entering the village.

This research paper aims to engage with the question of Adivasi existence from the relational perspective—that means the intention is to look at the way an Adivasi individual builds one's relationship with the surroundings. The relational perspective shapes the environmental identity and environmental heritage of Adivasi existence and acts as the cornerstone of the distinctiveness of Adivasi Asmita (identity/pride/selfdom). In the context of resistance movements against development-induced displacements, it is imperative to engage with the issue of connectivity or relationships to understand the interpretations of land from the Adivasi perspective.

Here the focus is on the Creation Myth (Sosobonga) of Munda people and the three annual festivals-Karam or Karma, Sohrai, and Sarhul. These festivals can be interpreted as the cultural expression of the Creation Myth. Here three Adivasi women who lead three different resistance movements in Jharkhand narrated their experiential connections with the festivals. Their narrations point out how Adivasi existence is intrinsically related to the Adivasi culture, which again is the expression of Creation Myth.

The Creation Myth reflects the ethos of Adi-dharam (proposed by Dr. Ram Dayal Munda). Adi-dharam (as explained by Dr. Munda) is the indigenous way of viewing life. From the perspective of Adi-dharam, human and human communities exist in relation to non-human and non-living beings on an equal plane. Environmental Identity, Environmental heritage, and the imperative of Adi-dharam: - 'Adi-dharam' is a term coined by late Dr. Ram Dayal Munda. He explained in details the term Adi-dharam and the exigencies of using the term in Independent India in his book Adivasi Astitwa Aur Jharkhandi Asmita ka Sawal, published in 2002. The intention behind coining the term was to establish distinctness of Adivasi religion, hence existence (Munda 48-77). He has presented Adi-dharam as one of the components of Jharkhandi culture (Munda 2 (Utsler) 002). On the other hand, he has posited the term as a common religious platform for all the indigenous communities living within the territory of the Indian nation-state.

Adi-dharam, thus is used as the identity denominator to get recognition from the Indian Constitution. Jharkhandi culture, according to Dr. Munda, is intertwined with Adivasi-Moolvasi existence (Munda 29-30) and through Adi-dharam; Adivasi society can resurge with a renewed vitality. The rationality behind the hope for a resurgence of a confident, conscious and proud Adivasi community was not arbitrary. By the time this book got published, Jharkhand has received its statehood, on 15th November 2000 after a long drawn movement. Jal, jangal, jameen (water, forest, land) are the cornerstone of environmental heritage as well as the environmental identity of Adivasi-Moolvasi communities. As the relationship is dialogic in nature, de-recognition of any of the two ends of the link—that is distinct Adivasi existence or land, water, forest would be intimidating to the sovereign existence of Adivasi communities. Ram Dayal Munda pointed out the very fact in his book Adivasi Astitwa Aur Jharkhandi Asmita ka Sawal. According to him, even after independence, the word Adivasi is not recognised. Instead of that Adivasi communities are identified as 'Scheduled Tribe' which is, according to Munda, is a misnomer:

The word adivasi does not have constitutional recognition. The constitutional word (for adivasi) is 'scheduled tribe'... The presence of 'scheduled' in the word 'scheduled tribe' is a clear indication of the fact that the state (of the tribe) is temporal and the remaining tribes, is a part of the Indian caste system. (Munda 42).

Here the author implies that Adivasi societies being recognized as scheduled tribes are deprived of their Adivasi identity and Adivasi heritage. Both the Adivasi identity and Adivasi heritage fall under the domain of different value system. The values are governed by way of viewing at the world. As an Adivasi scholar, activist, and thinker, he took the onus of describing the basis Adivasi existence. His endeavour in extending the meaning of Adi-dharam can be read in tandem with the need for recognition of Adivasi society by the Indian government. In his introduction to Adi-dharam, Dr. Munda says,

By Adi-dharam we mean the basis, the roots, the beginnings (adi) of the religious beliefs of the Adivasis, the first settlers of India. Behind this effort of analysis and determination of the roots, our purpose is to set participate in the process of setting upat the national level-a religious system on the basis of which the self-confidence of the Adivasis could be restored and re-awakened, and in the absence of which the religious identity of the Adivasis is probably almost negligible. (Munda 1).

The politics behind his proposition of Adi-dharam can be seen from the perspective of 'native survivance'. Gerald Vizenor describes native survivance as an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. (Vizenor 85).

In the census of India, there is no definite recognition of 'dharma' of Adivasis. It is recognized as 'other'. According to Munda, this is a conspiracy against Adivasis:

By categorising Adi-dharam as 'other', the government passively encourages Adivasis to declare themselves as Hindu or other. (Munda 45).

The encouragement, according to him, is a deliberate attempt to erase the existence of Adivasis. To resist such attempts that push the Adivasis into obscurity, Dr. Munda, in his book, has tried to bring forward the uniqueness of Adi-dharam. Adi-dharam, as explained by Ram Dayal Munda, is a strategy to continue the stories of Adivasi existence. This strategy of survivance is intrinsically related to the question of displacements of Adivasis from their ancestral lands. Hence, it is to be understood the rationality behind choosing Adi-dharam as one of the components to show the importance of land in Adivasi existence.

Adi-dharam - A way of connecting with the world. The primary aspect of Adi-dharma probably is the fact that unlike the institutionalised religions, it has manifested itself on the mutual relationship of the human being and nature. It does not believe in the superiority of human beings over the creation. (Munda 46).

The aspect of 'mutual relationship' and its manifestation in human lives are the basis of Adi-dharma. Dharma in 'Adi-dharma' in its signification holds closer relation to the Sanskrit word than its English counterpart -Religion. In Classical Sanskrit, the root of the word 'Dharma' is 'dhri' (ध्री). 'Dhri' according to a Sanskrit Dictionary means "to hold, bear (also bring forth), carry, maintain, preserve, keep, possess, have, use, employ, practice, undergo.

(<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). The range of meanings attached to Dhri compels us to look at the word 'dharma' beyond the

stringent meaning of law or duty. According to Vrinda Dalmiya, Dharma with big D can be interpreted as harmonious existence of the moral, ethical, social values. The motto of such harmonious coexistence is to reach the ultimate Good'. As there is no definite formula or law to attain that point of harmonious coexistence, an individual must use her reflexive mind to, the right way among various alternatives and obligations. The general guideline to that choice must be 'made clear through love'. Vrinda Dalmiya interprets the phrase 'made clear through love' in the care-ethical term. In her interpretation, (R. D. Munda, Adi-dharam: religious Beliefs of the Adivasis of India).

Dharma bearing the telos of Ultimate Good 'means establishing non-violent webs of relationality' (Dalmiya 101). The mutual relationship between the human being and the nature seen from this interpretation can be read as a continuing knowledge-building system. The individual who follows this system must deal with multiple layers of relationships. But it should be noted the motto is to maintain the intention of the Great Spirit behind the Creation.

It is impossible to understand the Great Spirit in 'totality'. But it is 'bound by its creation'. The Great Spirit is the 'embodiment of patience, compassion, love and cooperation. (Munda 4).

But how could one prove that the Great Spirit embodies those qualities mentioned above (Guna)? To know the qualities, one must observe the creation closely from the position of a caring epistemic knower. The Creation Myth or Sosobonga embodies two narratives. The Creation narrative and the Asura Story. The Great Spirit or the Singbonga and the First Mother planned to create the world, as there was no one existing but them. So they felt the need of someone with whom they could communicate. "Our questions our inquiry... Returns to us." They wanted to hear songs; they wanted to try dances, feel warmth; they wanted to express their emotion (Munda 21-23). So they created Earth over the water. Various animals of water helped them to fulfill their desire. Human beings, the children of Latkum Haram (the first man) and Latkum Buria (the first woman) grew in number. 'Wherever they could make a living' they settled. They 'followed' the forests, hills, rivers, and streams. With their growth in numbers grew the love among them. "There spread all around a kingdom of happiness" (Munda 11).

The Creation Myth, the very basis of Adi-dharam, is the intrinsic part of the 'Karam' festival. This festival is celebrated by every Adivasi communities of Jharkhandi society in August-September. The song and dance that follows the ritual of Karam can be seen as the real celebration of the Creation Myth. Dayamani Barla belongs to Munda Adivasi community.

It is with the nature the lifecycle of Adivasis moves on. And on earlier days Adivasis used to celebrate the Karma festival with much more enthusiasm. The festival reflected the solidarity of Adivasi society. The social relation was strong. The season of summer comes after spring. After that comes the rain. Adivasis are busy with cultivation. So Karma festival is celebrated in relation to cultivation and forest. So now as all of them have finished their work of cultivation and they are tired, there would be a celebration of the Karam festival.

The exciting part of this narration is her use of time in relation to Karma or Karam. There is a continuous dialogue between past and present. She starts with the past tense and then moves to the present time. This sudden shift of time reflects a sense of eternity in relation to the interpretation of time that connects the past with the present. This sense of eternity

demonstrates her way of connecting to the Creation Myth. Her narration starts with the relationship of Adivasi lifecycle with nature. Why did she choose to begin her narration from the perspective of the relationship between Adivasi existence and nature? Should we read the first sentence from the standpoint of Dayamani-the Adivasi activist? Or should we read the sentence from the perspective of an Adivasi woman who is bearing the Creation Myth through her cultural epistemology? Or the activist Dayamani is a reflection of that Dayamani the epistemic knower of Sosobonga? If we read the lines from the perspective of Sosobonga, we can understand the meaning of lying beneath her word 'Adivasi solidarity'. Singbonga and First Mother desired to get answers to their questions and inquiries. They wanted voices that will carry on their problems and queries. So they created the world, made human beings and taught them to live with happiness. They taught them to live with others, to learn the flows of life in hills, forests, rivers, and streams. Every single place bears the memory of the Creation. The celebration of Karma is a celebration of that relationship that has been sustaining the Adivasi lives along with nature. But again, one must ask why do the Adivasi society celebrate after roping the seedlings? The ritual, of course, includes the prayer for a good harvest. But there is more to it. There lies the principle of keeping a balance between the work and rest.

The second part of Sosobonga carries the story of Asuras who were also created by Singbonga and First Mother. Asuras knew to forge iron and chose to work day and night. Thus they polluted the water, forest, field, air, and everything living on it became unhealthy. Singbonga asked them to keep a balance between work and rest. So that the "Earth can cool down" and "the sky can calm down". Asuras declined to listen, and finally, Singbonga defeated them. The balance of the world is restored. (Munda 71-217).

Karma is not only sharing solidarity and remembering the connection between human beings and every other species but it also about keeping a balance between work and rest. That's how nature and different species can live in a usual, healthy way. That's why after the strenuous jobs of cultivation, people need to rest. So the energy can be restored in every species. The celebration is to remember that "the land for us all, the earth for us all". Sharing the land and the Earth with all is the 'ultimate Good'. The aspect of maintaining the well-being of the environment is the basis of Adi-dharam. One can understand the happiness in sharing by knowing the way to balance between the work and the rest. This way of looking into life may give an idea about the 'simple' living style of Adivasis and their practice of 'minimalism'.

If the festival of Karma rekindles the memory of the Creation Myth, Sohrai festival is about expressing gratitude to both human and non-human beings that helped to get a successful harvest. Sohrai is observed by the Adivasi communities in the month of Kartik and Poush (November-December). It is Basically an observance and of honour of the cattle, which assist in the cultivation operations. (Munda 21).

According to Munni Hansda, Sohrai is a festival in which brothers invite sisters. The centre of the festival is the cattle. Here the sense of kinship includes both the human and the nonhuman species that unless come together and work in harmony food can't be produced.

The festival is the space where the Adivasi communities of Jharkhand show gratitude to those human and non-human beings that help in farming and thus play a critical role in maintaining the food security and food sovereignty of Adivasi communities. Both food security and food sovereignty are the

cornerstones of the self-reliant identity of Adivasi communities. This festival can also be read as an acknowledgement of agencies of the animals. If the harmonious coexistence or the balance of harmonious coexistence is not maintained, the Adivasis will lose the strength. The connection thus thrives on an equal plane, and this is the cause behind egalitarian characteristic of the Adivasi social system. The festival is also a way of remembering the desire of Sing Bonga and First Mother. So long Adivasis have land to cultivate; they would connect with the desire of Singbonga and First Mother through practice. The showing of gratitude does not end with the ritual. The practise of remembering the functional relationships of various species with the peasant adivasis persists in everyday living. That's why the interpretation of Adi-dharam is personal. Every individual understands the meaning of Adi-dharam through her engagement with Adivasi way of living. There is no single or monolithic experience. The arrays of experience and continuous active engagement with the Creation Myth make the relationship both personal and communal (Simpson 31-32). It is a way of connecting with the ethos of harmonious coexistence in a self-reflexive manner. The Adivasi existence is conscious and careful about the other non-human existence. This careful consciousness emerges out from the sense of moral obligation existing in Adivasi environmental heritage. The 'moral obligation' of the relationship demands the active engagement of both the mind and body of an individual. From the perspective of care ethics, this moral obligation situated in the 'interrelation' can only be reached by means of feeling the relationship. The objective relation, when perceived from the subjective standpoint, one finds out her meaning of connection. The rituals and the festivals act as a medium of connecting the personal experience with the collective.

Moral obligations arise from and within relationships when they are: how one should live follows how one feels one's circumstance. Anukrosa (empathy), thus works to convert actual relationships into experienced ones and, thereby into motivating bonds. (Dalmiya 63-64).

The disintegration of the community would mean a violation of the wish of Singbonga and the First mother. And integration will continue to live till the community will continue to live, remember, and practice the directives of Singbonga. That means Adivasis need to place themselves in relation to other human and non-human beings, and that is not possible without psychological and physical freedom to participate in the act of connecting with the surroundings. The environmental identity and environmental heritage of an Adivasi individual thrive within a complex maze of relations that give space to memories, interpretations, individuality, and inclusivity. This is how Adi-dharam holds an integrated relationship with the Creation Myth. That is how Adi-dharam can be interpreted as one of the cornerstones of Adivasi existence. Separated from her landscape and community and without a provision for suitable rehabilitation, an Adivasi individual loses her sense of environmental identity and also loses her connection with environmental heritage. Without these two, Adivasi culture, as well as Adivasi existence, loses the vitality and spontaneity and the threat of obscurity looms large over them.

## Conclusion

Hence, it can be claimed that Adi-dharam is a 'darshan' of coexistence that thrives on the practice of cooperation and survives in relation to place/land. Through the festivals of

Karma, Sohrai, and Sarhul a cyclical order of remembering and engaging with the memories of Creation Myth is maintained. This is the way Adivasi people nurtures the ethos of balance and harmonious coexistence. It is a way of practising as well as celebrating the 'interrelationships' with the environment for sustainable existence. The relationships help to nurture a sense of self-reliance within Adivasi communities. This sense is the basis of Adivasi Asmita. It also bestows an Adivasi community with the freedom of self-determination within the place (Alfred 55). The conglomeration of all these aspects shapes the environmental identity of an Adivasi individual who is part of the environmental heritage of her community. These are the sustainers of Adivasi existence. Adivasis have ensconced the values of Adi-dharam as the regulatory force behind Adivasi way of looking at the world. These values are the normative features of Adivasi Identity. The presence of self-reflexive agency embedded within and also nurtured by the environmental identity of every member of Adivasi society makes Adivasi existence distinct. Without the environmental heritage, Adivasi communities would lose their relationship with their knowledge systems, hence the basis of sustainable existence.

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