

EXHIBITION  
SEMINAR  
PERFORMANCE  
WORKSHOP

2026

# Santali katha

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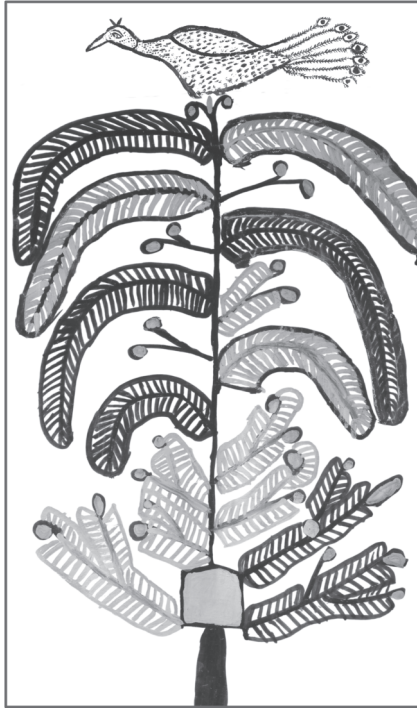
*Ila Palchodburi Foundation  
In Collaboration with  
Kolkata Centre For Creativity*



**KOLKATA CENTRE  
FOR CREATIVITY**

A unit of Anamika Kala Sangam Trust

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Santali katha

Published by Ruby Palchoudhuri  
Ila Palchoudhuri Foundation  
Kolkata

Cover design: Partha Gupta

Printed by: Monobina Printing Press  
Sriniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal, 731236

**EXPOSITION “SANTALI KATHA”: Santali Art, Culture and Knowledge Systems**  
**Collaboration: Kolkata Center for Creativity, Emami Art Foundation;**  
**Ila Palchaudhuri Foundation; Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal**

Santals are among the larger tribes in India and are concentrated along the Choto Nagpur plateau upwards to North Bengal and Assam. This community is present in Bangladesh also. The Santals as a community living along side of mainstream communities has always evoked interest and have been marked out by their uniqueness in conducting their lives and expressing their culture.

The earliest reference to the Santals is found in the works of Christian missionaries from Norway like P O Bodding, Reverend Skrefsrud dating back to almost 150 years and more. Their collection is colossal ranging from literature, language, grammar, medicine and magico-religious rituals. The last colonial District Magistrate, Dumka, W G Archer's oft-quoted and oft-cited book *Hills of Flutes...* is a fine collection of poetry, social customs, religious beliefs and social structure.

The Santals are a relatively homogenous community with a strong oral tradition. Their language, songs, stories and rituals have shaped the community for centuries. This seminar raises the question – are the Santals unchanging and if not, what are the changes like and what is the direction of change. Clearly, the answer points towards change, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in material tangible ways as well as intangible ways. One of the most tangible changes has been the slow transformation of language that has a script (Raghunath Murmu 1926) and more recently recognition of the script and language in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of official languages, Government of India. This has brought about the creation of written, printed, published volumes, books, journals and magazines enjoying increasing circulation and generating interest. The script has encouraged scholarship and the basis of affinity among sections of the community who align and identify themselves with scholars and writers of the wider world.

The Santals are a resilient community who have held on to their language, myths, rituals, songs and dances as well as other attributes of culture. The feeling of continuity evident among the members of the community tends to reinforce the sense of the romantic – and it is this among other verticals that colour and blur our perceptions. This is also a kind of 'othering' that does not bode well for the plural fabric of our nation.

It is through this exhibition that efforts to sensitize and understand a community with more inclusive ends; to appreciate their traits and characteristics contributing to creativity, skills, talents and values. Also, it is clearly evident that the Santal community is as subject to change as any other community and as aspirational as other communities. It may be a fact that the Santals are not as homogenous as earlier or as we perceive but as able to adopt, adapt and adjust (to) change. It is through this that a multi-faceted dynamic representation of the Santals through continuous and consistent study and research, raising questions and recording this transaction of a community with other communities and the flow of time.

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A variety of theme-based presentations by anthropologists, agriculturists, doctors, social workers, development economics, designers and activists is geared towards a full 360 degrees exposure on a much-loved community.

The seminar takes the opportunity to record and applaud Ms. Ruby Palchaudhuri and her relentless pursuit to push forward the admirable traits of little communities of our plural and secular nation.

## Panels

### The Santal/Santhal/Saontal Tribe

#### Geography

It is not surprising to have so many variations of a community name and it becomes even more complex when we consider their spread in the vast landscape straddling the India's Choto Nagpur Plateau up to the tea gardens of Assam and further on in Bangladesh. The 65,000 sq. km area which the Santals occupy is the mineral rich region of eastern India – Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Chattisgarh. The average elevation is around 700 meters. The three main parts, the Ranchi plateau, the Hazaribag plateau, and the Kodarma plateau are separated by the mighty river Damodar.

#### Identity

The Santals rarely call themselves Santals, they refer to themselves **Hor** and consider the rest of the people **Diku**. It is important to bear in mind that this othering is not pejorative in intention – it is a subtle distinction indicating their distinction from others. Hor in their language means Man and Diku simply indicates the other human beings. The Santals' wariness of Diku is concerned with cultural and social differences and does not impinge on shared economic activities with their neighbouring communities. The Santals are included in the constitutionally accepted scheduled list of communities of tribes (ST) among who the Santals would come closest to their neighbours, Munda, Ho, Oraon, and Kora. Their language belongs to the Mundari group of languages. It is largely acknowledged that the language of the Santals is rich in vocabulary, nuanced grammar, use of wit, metaphors and imagery. Santal knowledge of medicinal plants and have effectively treated a number of illnesses.

#### Relationships

Most of the tribes of our country prefer to live within their community; some tribes occupy niche ecologies while others, inhabiting multi-community villages, are found on the fringes of those villages forming an 'enclave'. The fair number of Santal hamlets in the vicinity of the campus of the Visva-Bharati campus attracts attention and interest. Need it be stressed that Santals could be experienced in multifaceted ways if we cared to broaden our interaction and understanding of their aspirations, attitudes, capabilities and talents. It would also be true to state that the Santals are not fossilized in an unknown past or are afraid to move into an equally uncertain future.

### Oral tradition and writing

The Santals have an oral tradition – language, songs, rituals, stories, poetry, folklore, medicine are passed on from one generation to another in which language use and frequency plays one of the most seminal roles. Most of the tribes in our country are the bearers of an oral tradition and that these traditions have survived over millennia never ceases to amaze. There has been cross pollination with languages of their neighbours, observable more where tribes are members of plural societies than in niche ecologies. The interesting aspect of Santal language has been the persistent efforts to create a script that would be representative of the accents and inflexions required to pronounce the words for which the other alphabets to record Santal speech (Roman, Hindi, Bangla and Odia) were found inadequate. Also, the need to preserve the rich culture of the languages calls not only for a script but also the feasibility of study and research the language for greater recognition in the discourse of languages of the mainstream. Towards this end Pandit Raghunath Murmu (1925) created the first alphabets and as a by-product, grammar of Santali language calling it Olchiki/Alchiki (*ol* is verb of write and *chiki* is noun for alphabet). After a long history of struggle(s) (subaltern in nature) Santali language was included in the VIIIth schedule of the Constitution of India on December 23, 2003. This certainly brought about its chain reaction, created contentious distinctions between Santals championing the new script and Santals who are used to express in mainstream alphabets. Some states were quick in implementing the changes while others were somewhat tardy. However, the script is here to stay as a testimony of one man's effort who found continuing and persistent support from his community. The discourse with positive intention between the efficacy of the new script also points to broader scope for deeper and meaningful discourse.

### Imagined or owning fate

This exposition is not an ordinary exhibition of a community leading a life imagined by the Diku as per ideas of idyllic verticals. This is an opportunity to equip our knowledge systems to see them through nuanced lenses at their tradition, customs and culture as well as those interactional points of modernity and tradition and at those junctures where a palpable leap is taken to decide their own 'fate(s)'.

Courtesy Kumkum Bhattacharya

## The Hos

The **Ho** people are an Austroasiatic Munda ethnic group of India. They are mostly concentrated in the Kolhan region of Jharkhand and northern Odisha where they constitute around 10.7% and 7.3% of the total Scheduled Tribe population respectively, as of 2011.[3] With a population of approximately 700,000 in the state in 2001, the Ho are the fourth most numerous Scheduled tribe in Jharkhand after the Santals, Kurukhs, and Mundas. The Ho also inhabit adjacent areas in the neighbouring states of Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar, bringing the total to 806,921, as of 2001. They also live in Bangladesh and Nepal.

### Etymology

The term "Ho" originates from the Ho language, where "hō" translates to "human". The name encompasses both their ethnic identity and language, closely linked to Mundari within the Austroasiatic language family. In Odisha, certain segments of the Ho tribe, such as Kol, Kolha, and Kolah are officially recognized as distinct groups. These names are derived from the colonial exonym Kol, a term widely used for tribal communities across northern India, and from blends of exonyms and endonyms such as *Hoo*, *Horo*, and *Horoko*, all signifying "human" or "human being" in their language. They were also historically referred to as Larka Kol, reflecting their rebellious nature, composed of *Larka* (meaning "fighter" in the Munda language) and the exonym Kol.

### History

Starting from the period between the 9th and 12th centuries, copper was smelted in many parts of old Singhbhum district. It is believed that many immigrants entered Singhbhum from Manbhum in the 14th century or earlier. When the Hos entered old Singhbhum, they overcame the Bhuiyas by 17th century, who were then inhabitants of the forest country. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Hos fought several wars against the Rajas of the Chota Nagpur States and Mayurbhanj to retain their independence. As far as is known, the Muslims left them alone and the Ho enjoyed their autonomy. In 1765, Chota Nagpur was ceded to the British East India Company as part of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa Provinces. The Hos took part in a fierce rebellion of 1831–33, called the Kol uprising, along with the Mundas.

### Language

Ho people speak the Ho language, an Austroasiatic language closely related to Mundari and more distantly related to languages of Southeast Asia such as Khmer and Mon. The Austroasiatic languages of India, including Ho, are inflected fusional languages unlike their

distant relatives in Southeast Asia which are analytic languages. This difference in typology is due to extensive language contact with the unrelated Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages.

### **Festivals**

The religion of the Hos resembles, to a great extent that of Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, and other tribal people in the region. All religious rituals are performed by a village priest known as a *deuri*. However, he is not required to propitiate malevolent spirits or deities. The spirit doctor *deowa* takes care of this. The most important festival, Mage Parab, takes place in the late winter month of Magha and marks the completion of the agricultural cycle. It is a week-long celebration held to honour Singbonga, the creator god. Other lesser *bonga* (spirits) are also honoured throughout the week. Dance is important to Adivasi culture in general and for the Ho, it is more than simply a means of entertainment. Their songs are generally accompanied by dances which change with the seasons. Songs and distinctively choreographed dance are integral parts of Ho culture and art, as well as important parts of their traditional festivals, especially Mage Parab. Most villages have a dedicated dancing ground, called *akhra*, usually consisting of a cleared space of hard ground under a spreading tree. Traditional Ho music incorporates native instruments including a *Dama* (drum), *Dumañ* (barrel drum), and the *Rutu* (flute). The Ho people brew rice wine, called *Diañ*.

### **Economy**

The majority of the Ho are involved in agriculture, either as land owners or labourers, while others are engaged in mining. Compared to the rest of India, the Ho have a low literacy rate and a low rate of school enrolment. Almost half the population is engaged in cultivation and another one third also work as land-less agricultural labourers. The Hos, along with Santals, Oraons and Mundas, are comparatively more advanced, and have taken to settled cultivation as their mode of life. The discovery of iron ore in Ho territory opened the way for the first iron ore mine in India at Pansira Buru in 1901. Over the years iron ore mining spread out in the area. Many Hos are engaged in mining work. However, small, well planned mining towns dotting the territory have brought the Ho people in close touch with the good and bad aspects of urbanisation. Some of the prominent mining towns in the area are Chiria, Gua, Noamundi and Kiriburu.

Courtesy Kumkum Bhattacharya

## **The Mundas**

The Mundas are members of a major community of the earliest inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, variously called aborigines, first settlers, indigenous people, and adivasis. The government of India classifies them as Scheduled Tribes (ST). The total population of the Munda people in India according to the 2011 Census of India is approximately 2 million. More recent estimates suggest a figure of around 4 million for the Munda population across India, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

### **Origin**

We can only conjecture about the history and origins of the Munda people. The land they occupied until recently was hilly and forested, therefore remote and difficult to reach from much of the rest of India. This left the Munda people in relative isolation for centuries. With the gradual advent of dominant non tribes into their territory, many of the nontribal cultural traits came to be imbibed and shared. The Munda people are still predominantly agriculturists and along with their language have tended to preserve much of their own culture,

### **Habitat**

The Munda people are found in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Bangladesh and Nepal. They are concentrated mostly in the Chota Nagpur plateau, the collective name for the Ranchi, Hazaribagh, and Kodarma plateaus in eastern India, now in the state of Jharkhand. Among these the largest is the Ranchi Plateau, close to 1000 metres in elevation. Geographically the Chota Nagpur plateau lies entirely between the basins of the Ganges (Ganga) and Son rivers to the north and the Mahanadi River to the south.

### **Language**

The Mundari language is part of the so-called 'Munda languages' - Mundari, Santhali, and Ho, all of them belonging to the Austro-Asiatic language group, which is distinct from languages of the dominant Indo-European and Dravidian language groups spoken in India. Interestingly, Kurukh, the language of the Oraon people, a neighbour of the Munda, belongs to the Dravidian group and not Austro-Asiatic. The Mundari language has no written script, therefore no written history. But there is plenty of oral history, creation and other myths, folk tales etc. Recent efforts to codify these resulted in the creation of texts named Adi Dharam (Original Religion) for dissemination.

## **Culture**

The Munda people are blessed with a sophisticated and ancient tradition of dancing and singing characteristic of all the indigenous communities in India. To quote a Munda musician: We are poor in wealth but rich in music ("humlog daulat se garib hai par geet baja se amir hai").

Intricate drumming patterns can still be heard in the dance grounds (akhara) of nearly every Munda village which also act as centres of socialisation between young men and women. Musical instruments and percussions regularly used are the bamboo flute, Nagara (cauldron drum), Dulki (double headed wooden drum), Maandar (clay drum), and the increasingly rare Banam (bowing instrument). Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's sweeping 16th century bhakti movement in Bengal and his travel from Bengal to Odisha through Jharkhand left an indelible Vaishnava musical influence on the music of the plains (lataar) Mundas living in the five parganas of Tamar, Bundu, Silli, Rahe and Sonahatu. The plateau (chetaan) Mundas were not touched by this 'Bengalisation'.

## **History**

Before the arrival of the British in Chota Nagpur, the area was ruled by chiefs of the various tribal communities. As the British gradually expanded their authority and exploitation over the mineral-rich Chota Nagpur during the late 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, revolts against them erupted from time to time in Chota Nagpur over the loss of tribal land and forced labour under nontribals and money lenders. The most important of these uprisings were the Ho revolt (1820–27) and the Munda rebellion (also known as the Kol rebellion) (1831–32). The uprisings in the 1830s were part of a continuous resistance. The Ho tribals, who revolted in the 1820s, and in 1831, were joined by the Mundas of Chotanagpur in a joint insurrection against the new farming revenue policy. The uprising was suppressed, but it forced the British to make some administrative reforms. However, exploitation continued until a later, more intense movement was led by Birsa Munda in 1899 known as the Ulgulan (Tumult). It too was suppressed and Birsa was captured and died in captivity. In death Birsa became the icon of tribal independence and is revered still now.

## **Politics**

From the period of British expansion until the turn of the 21st century, the history of the Munda overlapped with the history of Bihar. On Nov. 15, 2000, after decades of growing discontent, and spearheaded by the indigenous people's struggle for autonomy, Chota Nagpur was separated from Bihar to become Jharkhand, the 28th state of India.

Courtesy Dr. Soumya Chakravarti

## Oraon

The **Kurukh** or **Oraon** or **Dhangar** (Kurukh: *Kurukh* and *Orāō*"), also spelt **Uraon** or **Oraon**, are a Dravidian ethnic group inhabiting the Indian states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. They predominantly speak Kurukh as their native language, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. In Maharashtra, Oraon people are also known as Dhangad or Dhangar.

Traditionally, Oraons depended on the forest and farms for their ritual and economic livelihood, but in recent times, a few of them have become mainly settled agriculturalists. Many Oraon migrated to tea gardens of Assam, West Bengal and Bangladesh as well as to countries like Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius during British rule, where they were known as *Hill Coolies*. They are listed as a Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of India's reservation system.

"Oraon" is an exonym assigned by neighboring Munda peoples, meaning "to roam."

Originally, the Oraons relied on the forest and its goods for an economic livelihood. Unlike many other communities of Jharkhand which practice *jhum*, the Kurukh community uses plough agriculture. At the turn of the 20th century however, due to the policies of the British colonial government, most of the tribe worked as agricultural labourers for the *Zamindars* on their own lands. However, recently many have become settled agriculturists, while others became migrant workers.

## Society

The Kurukh are patrilocal and patrilineal. Kurukhs are divided into many exogamous clans. Clan names among the Kurukh are taken from plants, animals and objects.

## **Administration**

In a Kurukh village, the village level political organization is called *Parha* which consists of post such as *Pahan* (village priest), *Panibharwa* (water-bearer of Pahan), *Pujar* (assistant of Pahan), *Bhandari* and *Chowkidar* (watchman). Each has a particular role in religious ceremonies, festivals and solving disputes in the village. The traditional informal educational institution youth dormitory is called *Dhumkuria*. The public and common meeting place is Akhra where people meet for the purpose of discussion and solving disputes.

Twelve to thirty villages form a Parha council. Each village has a village council, member of village council act as the members of Parha council in the headship of Parha chief. One of the villages in Parha is called Raja (King) village, another *dewan* (prime minister) village, another *panrey* (clerk of the village), a fourth *kotwar* (orderly) village and remaining village are called *praja* (subject) village. Raja village has highest social status because headman of this village presides at the meeting of a Parha Panchayat. The Kurukh are patrilocal and patrilineal. Clan name descends from father to son. The major lineage is known as *Bhuinhari Khunt*. Bhuinhari means owner of the land. Khunt has two sub groups: the *Pahan Khunt* and *Mahato Khunt*. Pahan and Mahato are two main office of Bhuinhari lineage.

## **Culture**

### **Language**

Kurukh are traditional speakers of Kurukh, which belongs to the northern branch of the Dravidian family. Around half still speak this language as their mother tongue. However, many have adopted the local *lingua francas*, Sadri and Odia, as their first languages. This shift to regional languages, especially Sadri, has been most pronounced in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, where the Kurukh are mainly tea garden workers and Sadri is the main link language.

### **Festivals, Music and Dance**

The Kurukh celebrate all traditional festivals of the Chota Nagpur plateau: Sarhul, Karma, Dhanbuni, Harihari, Nayakhani, Khariyani etc.

Since time immemorial The Oraon people have a rich range of folk songs, dances and tales, as well as traditional musical instruments. Both men and women participate in dances, which are performed at social events and festivals. The Mandar, Nagara and Kartal are the main musical instruments. In Kurukh, song is known as "Dandi". Some Kurukh folk dances are war dances (between two Parhas), Karma dance (Karam dandi), Khaddi or Sarhul dance, Phagu, Jadur, jagra, Matha, Benja Nalna (wedding dance) and Chali (courtyard dance).

## **Marriage Tradition**

Marriage among Kurukhs is usually arranged by the parents. The parents negotiate a bride price, after which the wedding can take place. On the wedding day, the groom arrives with his friends to the bride's house, and they hold a dance. A *pandal* is constructed in front of the bride's father's house, and the bride and groom stand on a stone, under which is grain above a plough yoke. A cloth is then thrown over the couple, who are doubly screened by the groom's friends. Then the *sindoordaan* is done: the groom applies *sindoor* to the bride's forehead, which is sometimes returned. Afterwards, water is poured over the couple and they return to a separate area of the house to change. When they are emerged, they are considered married. During this entire time, the rest of the party continue to dance.

## **Religion**

The Oraon follow their traditional religion (Sarnaism), which is based on nature worship. Some of the groups started following Sarnaism in a Hindu style, as the sects of the Bishnu Bhagats, Bacchinda Bhagats, Karmu Bhagats and Tana Bhagats. The Oraons have established several Sarna sects. Oraons worship Sun as biri (a name given for Dharmesh). Kurukhar also believe in Animism.

Most of population is Sarna, which is a religion that is indigenous to Adivasis in the Chota Nagpur Plateau. Sarna perform religious rituals under the shade of a sacred grove. They worship the sun as Biri and the moon as Chando, and call the earth Dharti Aayo (Earth as mother). Chando Biri are the words which are used in Sarna pujas. Dharmesh is their supreme almighty god.<sup>[24]</sup>

Kamru Bhagats (Oraon or Munda devotees) originated when Oraons acquired special powers after making a pilgrimage to Kamakhya in Assam to pay respect to Durga.

The Tana Bhagat was formed by Oraon saints Jatra Bhagat and Turia Bhagat. Tana Bhagats opposed the taxes imposed on them by the British and staged a Satyagraha movement even before Mahatma Gandhi. All Tana Bhagats were followers of Gandhi during the Independence movement. Tana Bhagats still wear a khadi kurta, dhoti and Gandhi topi (cap) with tricoloured flag in their topi. All Tana Bhagats perform puja to the Mahadeo and the tricolour with a chakra symbol on it, which is fixed at their courtyard.

Among Christian Oraons, there are Roman Catholics and Protestants, the latter of which having several denominations.

Courtesy Kumkum Bhattacharya

# Schedule

**Date: April 30, 2026**

**All will Assemble in the ground floor lobby. 4:30 PM**

The Convenor Sm. Rita Bhimani to welcome and accompany the Guests to the *1st floor Auditorium*.

## **Inaugural function:**

Welcome by Sri Kalyam Chakrobty Honorary Chairperson of Foundation, Ms. Richa Agarwal, President, KCC and Ms. Ruby Palchoudhuri.

Inaugural speech on behalf of Minister of Tribal Affairs of West Bengal; by Prof. Maroona Murmu, Jadavpur University.

1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> floor – Smt. Rita Bhimani to conduct the visitors on a tour of the demonstrations & exhibitions, meet the artists and viewing of reproduction of paintings and Videos with voice recording from the Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich (VMZ)

The Museum of Santal Culture in Bishnubati, Birbhum curated and explained by Dr. Boro Baski on 1<sup>st</sup> Floor. Collection of Santal artifacts to be explained by the curator.

Display of antiques Santali jewellery (private collection)

Bidisa Anthropology Museum, The Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology

**Lecture demonstration** on “Interface of Santal and Classical Dance Forms, at Santiniketan,” by Mallika Sarabhai, Director, Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad **05:30 pm**.

**Fashion show** by Lipsa Hembram showcasing Santhali saris “Galang Gabaan” **6:30 pm**.

### 3-Day SEMINAR SCHEDULE “Santals 360° and More”

Convenors: Ruby Palchoudhuri, Alicja Kruseustern, Kumkum Bhattacharya and Chandana Dey

#### **DAY 1**

**Date: May 1, 2026, 10.00 am 5.00 pm. Lunch break: 1.30-2.30 pm**

Rapporteurs: Ms. Ipil Baske, Independent writer. She will form a team of three to cover all the sessions.

**Session I: Chairperson, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Sidho Kanu Murmu University, Dumka.**

**Inauguration and Keynote address: Professor Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee Nobel Laureate 10.10-11.00 am**

**Special Lecture: Mr. Jawhar Sircar, Former IAS and Rajya Sabha Member: 11.10 -11.50 am**

**Session II: Chairperson: Professor (Retd.) Onkar Prasad, Department of Anthropology and Rural Studies, Visva-Bharati**

1. Professor Peter Andersen, Faculty, Department of Religious Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark 11.55– 12.20 pm
2. Dr. Daniel Widmer and Dr. Patrick Ouvrard, General Practitioners of Medicine, Switzerland and France respectively 12.25 – 01.10 pm

#### **LUNCH BREAK (1.30 – 2.30 pm)**

**Session III Chairperson: Professor Peter Andersen:**

1. Mr. Kumar Rana, Director, Institute for Human Development, Eastern Regional Centre, Ranchi: 2.40 – 3.20 pm
2. Professor Binoy Saren, Faculty, Institute of Agricultural Sciences 3.30 - 4.10 pm
3. Rapporteur's presentation 4.20 – 5.00 pm

- **Display of Masks, Musical Instruments and other Santali artefacts continues on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Floors.**
- **Films on Santal Culture, Curation and Explanation, Anthropological Survey of India, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor: 5.10 pm**
- **Santali songs rendered by Shri Ranjan Prasad Das, former Chief Architect, Govt. of WB: 5.40 pm**
- **Fashion Show in Auditorium: Ms. Lipsa Hembram, Mayurbhanj: 6.30 pm**

**DAY 2 Date: May 2, 2026**

**Session I: Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Widmer**

**Special Lecture: Professor Ashoke Chatterjee, Former Director, NID, Ahmedabad**

**10.00 – 10.30 am**

1. Professor Onkar Prasad: Former Faculty, Department of Anthropology and Rural Studies, Visva-Bharati University  
10.40 – 11.10 am
2. Dr. Indrani Bhattacharya, CEO, CINI, Food Culture of the Santals  
11.15 – 11.50 am
3. Dr. Rahi Soren, Faculty, Department of Oceanography, Jadavpur University, Creation of a Santal Archive  
11.50 – 12.20 noon
4. Ms. Ipil Baski  
12.30 – 1.10 pm

**LUNCH BREAK 1.30 – 2.30 pm**

**Session II: Chairperson, Dr. Patrick Ouvrard**

1. Screening of the AnSI documentary on the marriage of Sm. Manjushri Bhattacharya and Dr. Barka Soren and presentation by Manjushri Soren  
2.30 – 3.30 pm
  2. Ms. Kushni Saren: 3.30 -3.50 pm
  3. Ms. Padma Baski 3.55-4.10 pm
  4. Ms. Ruby Tudu 4.15 – 4.30 pm
  5. Rapporteur's presentation 4.35 – 5.00 pm
- **Lecture by Shri Sauraveswar Sen: Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities in Tribal Eco-Systems and Value Chain in India: 5.30 pm**
  - **Ongoing Exhibition and Demonstration of Santal Art, Craft and Films with facility for training Workshop. Those interested may register: 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floors.**

## DAY 3 May 3, 2026

### Session I Chairperson: Dr. Patrick Ouvrard

1. Dr. Boro Baski, Santal Museum – Role and Impact  
10.00 – 10.45 am
2. Professor (Retd.) Kumkum Bhattacharya:  
10.50 – 11.20 am
3. Ms. Ahana Majumdar, Santali textile tradition, a saga of displacement, loss and regaining the threads of identity  
11.25 -1.10 pm
4. Santali textile and drape, a ramp walk
5. Rapporteur's presentation  
1.15 – 1.30 pm

### LUNCH BREAK: 1.30 -2.30 pm

### Session II Chairperson: Ms. Chandana Dey

1. Dr. Partha Gupta, Santal performance as a form 2.30- 2.50 pm.
2. Vote of thanks: Ms. Chandana De 2.50 – 3.00 pm
3. Rapporteur's presentation 3.15 – 3.30 pm

**Ongoing Exhibition and Demonstration of Santal Art, Craft and Films with facility for training Workshop. Those interested may register: 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floors.**

- **Special feature: Staging of “Mitten Bahawak Daran”, Santali play based on Tagore's *The Post Office*, Blossom Theatre, Production. Directed and designed by Dr. Partha Gupta.**

**6.30 pm**

- **KCC will be closed on May 4, for the Exhibition Santali Katha.**

**May 5, 2026 Ongoing Exhibition and Demonstration of Santal Art, Craft and Films with facility for training Workshop. Those interested may register: 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floors.**

**Lunch Break: 2.30 pm.**

**Chairperson: Professor (Retd.) Kunal Chakraborty, JNU: 2.30 onwards**

- **Shri Dipankar Ghosh – The transformation of the Toto Tribe in the Context of Space and Time.**
- **Professor Suhridd Bhowmik in conversation with Shri Dipankar Ghosh, “Bangla Bhasae Santali Bhasar Provaab”, Auditorium.**
- **Presentation presided by Dr. Dukhia Murmu, Visva-Bharati.**

**May 6, 2026: 4 pm**

**Ongoing Exhibition and Demonstration of Santal Art, Craft and Films with facility for training Workshop. Those interested may register: 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floors.**

**May 7, 2026: 11.00 am**

**Session Title: Synergy between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Artificial Intelligence: An Indian perspective 11.00 – 1.00pm**

- **Welcome Address: Prof. Rajiv Ganguly –**
- **Opening Remarks: Prof. Sambhu Prasad Chakraborty**
- **Introduction to the theme: Prof. Ayanita Banerjee**

**Keynote address: Prof. Satyajit Chakrabarti, Vice-Chancellor, University of Engineering and Marketing, Kolkata 11.30 – 11.45 am**

**Special Lecture: Prof. Sayantan Dasgupta, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University 11.50 – 12.05 pm**

**Session title: Bridging Tradition and Technology: 12.10 – 1.00 pm.**

- **Prof. Mrinmoy Pramanik, JNU**
- **Prof. Saswati Halder, JU**
- **Prof. Mainak Ghosh, JU**
- **Dr. Samrat Sengupta, Sidho Kano Birsa University.**

**Ongoing Exhibition and Demonstration of Santal Art, Craft and Films with facility for training Workshop. Those interested may register: 1<sup>st</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floors. This programme will conclude before lunch break with a Valedictory talk by Prof. Riya Roy Chowdhury**

- **Special lecture: Professor Uma Dasgupta, 'The Santal World and Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan 5 pm at the auditorium.**
- **Santal Music presented by Sm Parbati Hembram and Group 6.00 pm**

**May 8, 2026 and May 9, 2026**

**Static display in 1<sup>st</sup> floor remains for viewing.**

**Exhibition of products of workshop will be on display on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.**

**May 9, 2026 Adam Imam gives an illustrated talk on the museum created by Bulu Imam.**

**May 10, 2026**

**Children of village Rangabouro: Tribal poetry recitation and story-telling. 3.00 pm**

**Lecture by Shri Subhomoy Roy, 'reciprocal Relation between the 1855 Hul and the Bengali Gentry'. 4.00 pm**

**Santal festive dance forms *Baha, Sohrae, Dasai* presented by Blossom Theatre curated by Dr Partha Gupta 6.00 pm, auditorium.**

**Valedictory Session: Ms. Richa Aggarwal and Sm. Ruby Palchoudhuri. 7.00 pm**

**Concluding Talk: Dr Kalyan K. Chakravarty, Hony. Adviser, KCC and Ila Palchoudhuri Foundation 'Summary and Way Forward'.**



## **Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee**

Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee (born 21 February 1961) is an Indian American economist who is currently the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 2019, Banerjee shared the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences with Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer, "for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty." Banerjee is currently the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; he has taught at Harvard University and Princeton University. He has also been a Guggenheim Fellow and an Alfred P. Sloan Fellow. His work focuses on development economics. Together with Esther Duflo he has discussed field experiments as an important methodology to discover causal relationships in economics.



**Jawhar Sircar**

**Jawhar Sircar:** (born 22 March 1952) former IAS and Rajyasabha Member. Civil Servant and a public intellectual based out of Kolkata, India. He has headed India's Culture Ministry from November 2008 to February 2012 – the longest for any Secretary. Sircar supports campaigns to preserve India's inclusive cultural heritage against constant attempts to utilise it for sectarian gains. He has represented India in top international organisations, including the UNESCO and he speaks regularly and writes on public issues relating to the conservation of heritage. He was CEO of India's public broadcaster, (2012 - 2016). He was on its four-member statutory national-level self regulatory mechanism, which is chaired by the former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan Lokur. Jawhar Sircar was an active member of a powerful pressure group of retired central secretaries, chief secretaries of states, director generals of police, Indian ambassadors and others, known as the 'Constitutional Conduct Group'. Sircar is involved with civil society in its constant opposition to right-wing political and governmental forces encroaching on liberty of thought, idea, expression and belief. He studied at the universities of Calcutta, Presidency, Cambridge and Sussex and has two master's degrees in History and Sociology.



**Peter B. Andersen**

## **Peter B. Andersen, dr.phil.**

Born 1956.

Associate Professor (emeritus) at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen. MA 1982, Diploma (magister) 1984, PhD 1995, dr.phil. 2023. University of Copenhagen: Faculty of Humanities

My research focus is on religion in modernity. In Denmark and the west this has mostly been through surveys (European Value Survey, Denmark, PI Scientology, Teacher Training Students, Danish Home Mission and others) and in India mostly through field work, interview and achieve research on Scheduled Tribes like the Santals and Bodos, and on the Christian churches in India (PI Tranquebar/Tarangambadi).

Behind the lecture are the books *From Firerain to Rebellion. Reasserting Ethnmic Identity through Narrative* (edited together with Marine Carrin and Santosh K. Soren, 2011) and *The Santal Rebellion 1855-1856. The Call of Thakur* (2023).

A recent publication is

*Changing Religiosities in the Nordic Countries. A Complexity Perspective* (edited together with Peter Gundelach, 2025).

## **Indigenous Memories on the Santal Rebellion**

Peter B. Andersen, dr.phil. (emeritus) Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen

### *Abstract*

This intervention offers a case illustrating the differences between indigenous memories of events and the official colonial reporting on the very same events. The case stems from the Santal Rebellion, the Hul 1855-1856, where the Santals raised against the East India Company.

The presentation draws on the Santal memories collected from Santal participants more than 35 to 50 years after the rebellion comparing their experiences with the colonial reports of the same experiences. The examples are selected to illustrate contrasting the colonial authorities' and the Santals' contrasting interpretations regarding trust and mistrust, atrocities, pardon and surrender.

In relation to the present event the intervention stress the importance of preserving indigenous memory and making it accessible for the relevant indigenous communities that the original community can draw in times to come.

The data behind the presentation is found retrospective narrations collected from Santals 40 to 60 years after the events and in the colonial archives. These materials are now mostly accessible in print or printed references, and I draw among other publications of the publications of Santal memory which I have been part of publishing.



**Dr Daniel Widmer MD.**

- Studied medicine in Lausanne. Diploma in 1977 and specialization in general medicine in 1985 (today general internal medicine).
- General practitioner in Lausanne in group practice from 1985 to 2025 and now in Bulle (Canton of Freiburg).
- Certificate of Competence in Psychosomatic and Psychosocial Medicine SAPPM in 2000. 1998-2019: Member of the Directorate of the CAS in Psychosomatic Medicine, Universities of Lausanne and Geneva.
- 2007-2024: Lecturer, Department of General Medicine, Unisanté, University of Lausanne: Communication skills and “community immersion”. Joint research work with psychiatrists and anthropologists.
- 2014 to 2019: Interprofessional field work in Santal villages with Swiss, French and Indian students in medicine, nursing, anthropology and social work.
- 2001-2025: head of swiss delegation European Union of General Practitioners UEMO.
- 2015-2019 Vice president UEMO. 2023 – today. Nominated representative of UEMO of the Health Technology Assessment Stakeholder Network of the European Commission.



**Dr Patrick OUVRARD MD.**

- Studied medicine in Angers (France). Diploma in 1982 and specialization in general medicine.
- General practitioner in Angers in group practice from 1983 to 2023.
- Certificate of Competence in Gynecology
- Certificate of Competence in Pediatrics
- Certificate of Competence in Tropical Medicine
- Certificate of Competence in Aeronautic and Spatial Medicine
- Joint research work with anthropologists.
- 2014 to 2019: Interprofessional field work in Santal villages (Santiniketan Area) with Swiss, French and Indian students in medicine, nursing, anthropology and social work.
- 2014-2026: French delegation European Union of General Practitioners UEMO.
- 2017-2024 Vice president UEMO (European Union of Omnipratician Medecine)
- 2022 – today. Nominated representative of UEMO at HERA (Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority), European Commission.

## **Abstract of Dr. Daniel Widmer & Dr. Patrick Ouvrard:**

A Western view on Santals.

Lessons from the Santals for Western health care professionals.

From 2014 to 2019 we did field work among the Santals villages around Santiniketan, with an interest in health. It was an interprofessional and interdisciplinary field work with students and their teachers in medicine, nursing, anthropology, and social work coming from Switzerland, France, and India.

We learned various lessons from this contact with the Santal population:

- the importance of shared perspectives through interprofessional work,
- the importance of complexity and reflective thinking,- the avoidance of rigid categorizations,
- the understanding rather than imposition,
- the consideration of local disease classifications and pragmatic local solutions,
- the importance of medical pluralism,
- the necessity to consider care pathways,
- the awareness of the observer's presuppositions.

A few years later how do our students see the Santals? What specifics regarding health did they retain? We should present the results of recent focus groups and individual interviews conducted with them.



Binoy Kumar Saren

Binoy Kumar Saren (Dr. B. K. Saren) is a distinguished agronomist, academic administrator, and social contributor with over three decades of experience in teaching, research, and extension in agricultural sciences. He is currently serving as Professor of Agronomy and Principal, Palli Siksha Bhavana (Institute of Agriculture), Visva-Bharati University, Sriniketan, West Bengal. Born on 4 February 1965 in Bankura district, West Bengal, Dr. Saren completed his Schooling at Jhilimili High School and earned his B.Sc. (Ag.) Hons., M.Sc. (Ag.) in Agronomy, and Ph.D. in Agronomy from Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (BCKV), Mohanpur. He was a recipient of the prestigious ICAR Junior Research Fellowship during his postgraduate studies and specialized in Water Management. Dr. Saren began his professional career as an Agricultural Development Officer (ADO) under the Government of West Bengal and joined Visva-Bharati in 1996.

Over the years, he progressed through various academic positions to become Professor of Agronomy in 2009. He has taught a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral courses and has supervised 37 M.Sc. and 8 Ph.D. scholars (with several currently pursuing research). An accomplished researcher, Dr. Saren has published 91 research articles in national and international journals, along with book chapters, research bulletins, and practical manuals. His research contributions have earned several Best Poster Presentation Awards at international conferences, and one of his Ph.D. scholars received the Best Ph.D. Thesis Award (2024) at the national level. He has successfully handled major research projects funded by ICAR, ICARDA, IFAD, and the Government of West Bengal. Dr. Saren has played significant academic and administrative roles, including Head of the Department of Agronomy, Vice-Principal, Principal of Palli Siksha Bhavana, and notably Officiating Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati University (2024-2025). He has also served as an external expert for ASRB, ICAR, universities, and selection committees across India. Beyond academics, Dr. Saren is deeply engaged in extension, cultural, and social activities, particularly in promoting agriculture and Santali language and literature. He is a regular contributor to All India Radio and Doordarshan in Santali, editor of the Santali literary magazine UMUL for over two decades (since 2003), and an active participant in literary, cultural, and documentary initiatives. In recognition of his multifaceted contributions, Dr. Saren has received several honors, including the Dr. Dhirendranath Baskey Award (2023), Fellow of the Academy for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (2024), and the Arichali Award (2024). He continues to contribute actively to agricultural education, research, administration, and community development at regional and national levels.

## **Applying Agricultural Know-How among Santals**

**Prof. Binoy Kumar Saren**

The Santal community has a rich tradition of agricultural practices that are deeply connected to their cultural heritage and the environment. Santals traditionally practice rain-fed agriculture, with paddy as the main crop, along with millets, maize, pulses, and oilseeds. Their knowledge includes careful selection of seeds, timing of sowing based on rainfall patterns, and use of mixed cropping to reduce risk. Indigenous methods of soil conservation such as leaving land fallow and using organic manure (cow dung, leaf compost), help maintain soil fertility and reduce dependency on external inputs. Tools used are simple but well adapted to local conditions, reflecting practical knowledge passed down orally across generations. Their farming practices are mainly subsistence-oriented and closely linked to natural cycles, rainfall patterns, and soil conditions. Knowledge of weather patterns and seasonal changes guides sowing and harvesting decisions. Rituals and festivals such as Erok Sim, Karam, Sohrai and Janthar Bonga are closely linked with agriculture. These rituals and festivals associated with agriculture regulate farming cycles and reinforce respect for nature, land, and ancestral spirits. Such belief systems encourage sustainable use of natural resources and prevent over-exploitation. In recent times, applying agricultural know-how in Santal communities involves blending traditional wisdom with modern techniques such as improved irrigation, better storage facilities, and scientific pest management can enhance productivity while preserving ecological balance. Recognizing and integrating Santal indigenous know-how into development programs is essential for sustainable agriculture and cultural preservation. Strengthening institutional support and participatory approaches can enhance the transmission and practical application of this agricultural heritage in the face of rapid socio-economic transformation.



Kumar Rana

### **Kumar Rana**

Kumar Rana is the Director of the Institute for Human Development – Eastern Regional Centre (IHD-ERC), Ranchi. His research focuses on primary education, healthcare delivery, gender equality, and marginalised populations. He has conducted extensive fieldwork across several Indian states and has visited more than one thousand villages nationwide.

Rana is multilingual and speaks Bengali, Santali, Odia, Hindi, and English. He has authored several books, contributed to numerous edited volumes, and writes regularly for academic journals as well as popular newspapers and periodicals.

He holds a Master of Medical Sciences in Global Health Delivery (MMSc-GHD) from Harvard Medical School. From 2001 to 2020, he was associated with the Pratichi Institute of the Pratichi (India) Trust as its Research Director. He also taught courses on Society and Health and Qualitative Research Methods at the Institute of Public Health, Kalyani (IPHK), from 2018 to 2023.

## **Invoking the Adivasi World Outlook to Save Planet Earth**

Kumar Rana

### **Abstract**

An ideological divide among humans over their relationship with nature has become a determining force in the trajectory of human society. On one side are those – the Adivasis – who believe in advancing within nature, as an integral part of it. A defining feature of the Adivasis is that they do not believe in human supremacy; rather, they place their faith in nature's supremacy. Mountains, forests, oceans, air, and the animal world—in short, the entire natural universe—constitute a whole of which humans are only one part. In contrast, another group began to regard itself as all-powerful. Intoxicated by their own sense of power, they forgot that the so-called human superiority they take pride in is not their own achievement; it is a gift of nature. They seek to conquer nature, break the very laws by which nature sustains the earth, and, in their arrogance, deem the plant and animal worlds inferior and impose dominion over them. This same arrogance fractures their own society: it turns other human beings—even their fellow inhabitants—into enemies. We have now arrived at a critical juncture where the struggle of nature and of those who live in harmony with it is no longer their struggle alone, nor merely the lived struggle of Adivasi communities; it is a struggle for the very survival of the entire planet.

## **Ashoke Chatterjee**

Born in 1935, Prof Ashoke Chatterjee received his education at Woodstock School (Mussoorie), St Stephen's College and Miami University (Ohio). He has a background in the engineering industry, international civil service, India Tourism Development Corporation, and 25 years in the service of the National Institute of Design (Ahmedabad) where he was Executive Director, Senior Faculty, Distinguished Fellow and Professor of communication and management. Prof Chatterjee has served a range of development institutions in India and overseas, particularly in the sectors of drinking water, sanitation, disability, livelihoods and education as well as working with artisans in many parts of the country. He was Hon President of the Crafts Council of India for over twenty years and continues to serve CCI. He serves as Adviser to the Centre of Heritage Management at Ahmedabad University where he is Editor of the Journal of Heritage Management. An author and reporter, his books include “Dances of the Golden Hall” on the art of Shanta Rao, “Rising” on empowerment efforts among deprived communities in rural Gujarat and “Learning Together at Jawaja” on a 50-year experience in self-reliance involving an artisan community in Rajasthan. Prof Chatterjee continues to assist design education and a range of development efforts. He lives in Ahmedabad with his son Keshav, daughter-in-law Prativa and grandchildren Kabir and Alisa.



**Onkar Prasad** Born 1948) is an anthropologist and ethnomusicologist. He was formerly Professor at the Dept. of Anthropology and Dean, Vidya Bhavan (Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences), Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, W. Bengal. Among his major works are *Folk Music and Folk Dances of Banaras* reprinted in 2010 by The Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata, *Santal Music : A Study in Pattern and Process of Cultural Persistence* reprinted in 2013 by Inter-India Publications, New Delhi

*Methods of Raga Formation and Music Analysis* (jointly with his teacher, Prof. Mohan Singh Khangura, a music maestro) published in 2015 by Parampara, Kolkata. His book, *Musical Cosmology of the Santal* with the cosmological dimension of the Santal music and *Anthropology of Sound : Santal Tribe* have been published by B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi in 2016. Dr. Prasad is credited for nurturing *Creative Anthropology*. Introduction of *Auto Graphic Method*, *Anthropophilosophic Perspective* and the concept of *Sadhanikaram (Commonization)* to understand the process through which the Indian civilization persists cutting across ethnic, linguistic and regional boundaries of the country include *Anthropology of Oraon Music (2025)*, *Santal Thought : Reflections of Time and Space (2025)*, *Anthropology of Music (2025)* and *Aspects of Spiritism in Santal Society (2026)*. In addition to these there are more than thirty published articles to his credit.

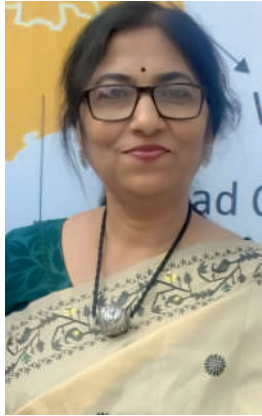
### Musical Culture of the Santal

Onkar Prasad  
former Professor of Anthropology  
Visva-Bharati  
(opanthros@gmail.com)

#### Abstract:

Music and musical instruments these two are an integral part of the Santal way of living. The musical culture of the Santal is constituted of a variety of sung-poetry and different types of musical instruments ranging from autophone, aerophone, chordophone to membranophone.

In this context the present paper aims at explaining the Santal theory of evolution of music and deciphering its meaning in different contexts of its performance.



Dr. Indrani Bhattacharya

Ph.D. in Social Anthropology with more than 25 years of professional experience *in strategic partnerships management and leadership development in the social - development sector, India.*

#### Work Experience

Working in Child in Need Institute (CINI), Kolkata since 2001. Presently working as Chief Executive Officer of the organisation and also as Chief of CINI Resource Centre.

## Title: Food and Religion: Essence of Association in Traditional Santal Society

### Abstract:

In the functionalist view, religion provides meaning, identity, and structure within what Geertz has called “cultural systems” (Geertz 1973). Religion reflects the human desire for order, but it provides order because people believe it has its origins in the divine. It is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. Food, being central to socio-economic and magico-religious activities, often figures prominently in functional interpretations of religion. Lévi-Strauss (1966) described food as a type of language that helps human beings express their basic perceptions of reality, where rules about cooked and raw foods are shaped by myths and taboos, reflecting underlying distinctions between nature and culture. While recent scholarship has emphasised foodways in relation to identity, ecology, and change (Counihan and Van Esterik 2013; Murmu 2025), relatively limited attention has been paid to food as a cognitive and symbolic system within indigenous cosmologies.

The Santal, a pleasure-oriented and numerically significant Scheduled Tribe of India, perceive the world as inhabited and ruled by invisible supernatural beings. To cope with this unknown supernatural world, they have gradually evolved a system of beliefs and rituals. To appease spiritual beings, they offer items to them in the form of sacrifice. In their traditional world, food not only communicates ideas about holiness that provide identity and order, but also functions as a control on identity in a context where incursion by other tribes and their gods was perceived as a threatening possibility. Thus, their concept of ritual purity and pollution operates at two levels—within the community and in relation to others—echoing broader anthropological insights on classification and boundary maintenance (Douglas 1966). They also observe various taboos as a means of protection against malevolent spirits, particularly impersonal powers, and believe that breaches invite immediate punishment.

From the ritualistic food items offered on various agricultural, periodical, and lifecycle occasions, it is evident that the Santal satisfy their spirits through the offering of food. Each major spirit is believed to have specific preferences, including the colour of the sacrificial animal, and acceptance depends on sensory and symbolic satisfaction. The Santal also appease their spirits through smell—particularly the smell of fried fenugreek. Here, food assumes symbolic value, denoting presence and fellowship with the spirits. Through the sharing of sacrificial offerings and libations, a kinship bond is formed between the members of the two worlds—*noapuri* (this world) and *hanapuri* (that world).

Thus, the present paper attempts to understand the relationship between the Santal and their supernatural world, and to illumine how religion functions as a meaning-making structure in culture, where food plays a central symbolic and relational role.

## **Rahi Soren (Ph.D)**

Assistant Professor, School of Oceanographic Studies,  
Jadavpur University  
rahisoren@gmail.com

Dr. Rahi Soren is currently Assistant Professor at Jadavpur University since 2019. She completed her research as a Ph.D. fellow in biological science concerning forest fire ecology in the remote locations of Bankura, West Bengal. Dr Soren has developed an acquired interest in Santal culture including the manuscript heritage. Dr. Rahi Soren is a native speaker of the language and actively participates in its revival. She has been the Principal Investigator of a National funded (RUSA 2.0) project entitled 'Resource Mapping the Early Recordings of Traditional Santali Songs.' Her current project (2021) is funded by the British Library, Endangered Archives Programme titled, 'Locating and digitalizing early Santali periodicals published between 1890 and 1975 in Eastern India'.

## Reimagining Santal Heritage through Oral History and Archives

Dr. Rahi Soren  
Assistant Professor, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

The proposed talk will try to explore the nuances of the existential crisis that the Santal community has been facing vis-à-vis the politics of representation across colonial as well as post- colonial times. This overriding thesis will be analysed through different narratives of oral history, ranging across radical moments of political turbulence such as the Santal Hul (rebellion) of 1855 to social issues of pertinence such as involvement of the community in higher education – all revisited and reintegrated through the embodied memory of oral history studies. The talk will aim to address the extent to which oral Adivasi history and embodied memory can be reimagined and reintegrated, especially in forms of higher education that - via academic social responsibility - purport to redress structures of social exclusion. The qualitative and epistemological dimensions of Santal orality and heritage-work will be brought into focus, with a view to rendering both visible and viable some short- and long-term prospects for academic transformation. There exist many versions of the revolutionary moment of the Santal Hul (rebellion) of 1855-1857 which lies embedded in oral histories of the community and is passed on through generations. The pioneer missionaries came to their “rescue” and preferred to designate their new mission field Santalistan - the land of Santals. Since the insurgence, Hul has been in the memory of the Santal consciousness through the constructed narratives of songs, folklore, poems and dramas, both within the community as well as with the neighbours. The talk will try to explore reception of ‘Debon tingun Adivasi bir hor’ (Lets stand up, Adivasi brave heart), one of the most popular songs written by Sadhu Ramchand Murmu and sung in remembrance of the Hul, in popular memory of the community. Multidisciplinary approaches in understanding history through unravelling archival materials, digital humanities and social sciences would help to delve deep into the disentangling Santal heritage and legacy. If disciplines associated with representing social crisis and conflict, such as history, anthropology, environmental studies, tribal studies, subaltern studies, political science, sociology, folklore, and philosophy, are prompted not only to adjust to - but also to engage with and benefit from - the demands of Adivasi self-representation, what kinds of cross-cultural sensitivities and responsibilities need to be cultivated and sustained? And, with these concerns in mind, what future parameters for Adivasi Studies need to be ascertained, especially those that advocate for a deep constitutional awareness as well as global citizenship?



**Ipil Monica Baski**  
Independent Researcher & Documentation Assistant

I am a Masters graduate in English with expertise in writing, journalism, and translation. My academic and professional work is driven by my strong interest in socio-political issues, particularly those affecting marginalized communities, including Adivasis, Dalits, and women. I combine analytical research skills with clear, impactful writing to critically examine structural inequalities and amplify underrepresented voices. My approach integrates rigorous scholarship with a deep commitment to social justice, aiming to produce work that is both intellectually grounded and socially relevant.

Research Documentation | Field- based research methodologies | Qualitative data collection | Academic and Research Writing | Proofreading and Editing | Transcription and Data Organization | Literature Review and Archival Research | Research report writing | Journal Formatting | Indigenous conservation practices | Archival Research & literature review method | Qualitative data analysis (interviews, oral histories, ethnography) | Research report writing and technical documentation | Basic Computation (Excel, databases, metadata) | Academic publication preparation and Referencing styles (APA/Chicago)

Intern D+C/E+Z Author D+C/E+Z

## Abstract

My name is Ipil Monica Baski, and I hold a Master's degree in English from Jadavpur University. I am currently working as a freelance writer, with a strong interest in research and critical writing. My work primarily engages with socio-political issues, particularly those concerning Adivasi and other marginalized communities. I am especially interested in exploring questions of identity, representation, and power through my writing. In addition, my academic and creative pursuits extend to gender studies and the study of oral narratives, where I examine how stories function as sites of memory, resistance, and cultural preservation. Through my work, I aim to contribute to more inclusive and ethically engaged forms of knowledge production and explore and understand more about the community I come from.



Manjushri Soren

At the tender age of seven, in 1950, Manjusree Saren and her family migrated to India from Dhaka in East Pakistan after communal disturbances in 1950. Soon after the family settled in Santiniketan, West Bengal, young Manjusree was struck by the differences in access to education and culture between her and the tribal children around her.

As an adult, these differences were sharply reinforced between 1967 and 1986 when Manjusree was training village-level workers in Visva-Bharati University as part of a central government-sponsored project to teach crafts and mother-and-child health and hygiene. She witnessed first-hand poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy prevalent in tribal areas. This was a turning point in her life. She felt compelled to help the Santhal tribal community. Manjusree prepared her own road map with encouragement from her family and thus embraced the commitment to educate and empower poor tribal children. In 1997 she started the Binapani Educational and Welfare Trust that aims to promote formal education among children from tribal communities in West Bengal. It currently provides free hostel accommodation for 70 young girls and has set up a multipurpose English-medium school and vocational training centre, computer application, tailoring and music for both residential and non-residential girls. Almost all the girls are first-generation learners and are given holistic exposure to arts, music, dance and cultural activities. From humble beginnings, Manjusree's organization is now supported by dozens of business houses and corporates. "It is not my project, better you should call it a people's project," she says proudly. Her husband Barka Saren has been a pillar of strength, igniting her missionary zeal while Manjusree credits her parents with instilling in her the spirit of cooperation and kindness, which continues to be her inspiration.

Manjusree has wholly immersed herself in the Santhal community — she speaks their language, and has picked up their habits and culture. The girls address her as “Marango”, meaning senior mother in tribal lexicon. Her most challenging job was to convince illiterate parents to let their daughters go to school instead of animal herding or working as domestic help for rich families to generate income. Fortunately, with her sustained efforts and greater awareness, the tribals have begun to understand the importance of education. Her triumphs are heartwarming — especially when students from her school go on to graduate and have lucrative careers in corporate houses or government schools and even as independent entrepreneurs. “Our fulfilment and satisfaction emanates from the fact that with our support, encouragement and love these girls have turned their dreams into reality,” she says. For Manjusree, true empowerment is a combination of knowledge, skill and confidence. Her core belief in the importance of education can be summed up in the words of Nelson Mandela: “Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.”



### **Dr. Kushni Saren**

Assistant Professor  
Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata

She is currently serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Rabindra Sangeet at Rabindra Bharati University.

Having been raised and educated in Santiniketan since childhood, she developed a profound connection with Rabindra Sangeet. This environment provided her with a significant platform for the dedicated practice of the genre, while the Binapani Ashram (founded by Manjushree Saren and Barka Saren) offered her the initial opportunity to step into the world of teaching music. This lifelong journey of practicing and nurturing Rabindra Sangeet continues to this day.

#### **Key Achievements & Contributions:**

**Broadcasting:** She is a 'B-High' graded artist for Rabindra Sangeet at Akashvani (All India Radio) and a regular performer of Nazrul Geeti, Atulprasadi, and Dwijendra Geeti.

**Recognition:** She is a prestigious National Scholarship holder.

**Digital Presence:** Through her personal YouTube channel, she actively promotes and preserves the purity of Rabindra Sangeet, sharing its authentic essence with society.



## **Padma Baski**

Ph.D. scholar, Department of Japanese  
Bhasha Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan  
West Bengal, India

### **Ph.D. Research Topic:**

2023 – pursuing: “Anesaki Masaharu's Vision of Spirituality: Navigating Japan's Tradition and Modernity” in Department of Japanese (Nippon Bhavana), Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal  
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আমি পদ্মা বাস্কি, একজন রিসার্চ স্কলার, বিশ্বভারতী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে জাপানের সাহিত্য নিয়ে গবেষণা করছি। বাড়িতে মা বাবা আর দুই বোন আছে। বড় বোন TCS কোম্পানীতে জাপানি ট্রান্সলেটর হিসেবে কাজ করছে। ছোটো বোন রবীন্দ্র সংগীত নিয়ে মাস্টারস ডিগ্রি করছে। আমি বড়ই গর্ব অনুভব করি আমার কাজ, আমার একাডেমিক স্ট্যাটাস এবং আমার বোনদেরকে নিয়ে। আমার জীবনে অনেক কিছু জিনিস অপরিকল্পনীয় ছিল। কিন্তু যত সময় গেছে সব কিছুই আস্তে আস্তে ধাপে ধাপে একটু একটু সামনের উজ্জ্বল ভবিষ্যৎ এর দিকে এগিয়ে গেছে। ব্যর্থতাও কাছে আসেনি। আমি খুব উপলব্ধি করেছি যে বিশেষ কিছু গুরুজনদের জন্যই আমি এই জায়গায় সহজেই আসতে পেরেছি। বিশেষত মা বাবার কঠোর পরিশ্রম, মালবিকা মাসির আমার প্রতি গভীর মনোযোগ, আশ্রমের শিক্ষা, ছোড়দি ডিসিপ্লিন। আর যার কথা না বলেই নয় তিনি হলেন মারাঙ্গ, আমাদের বড়মা, তিনি বলতেন জীবনে যায় করো না কেনো, কিন্তু মানুষের মতন মানুষ হও। আমার মনে পড়ে প্রত্যেক মাসে একটি করে পূর্ণিমা তিথিতে সাহিত্য সভা আয়োজন করা হতো। সেখানে যার যেটা গুণ আছে সে সেটা উপস্থাপন করত। কবিতা আবৃত্তি, নাচ, গান, স্বরচিত কবিতা, নাটক ইত্যাদি। একটা কবিতা বড়ই ভালো লাগত সেটা হলো কবি কুসুমকুমারী দাশের লেখা আর্দশ ছেলে “আমাদের দেশে হবে সেই ছেলে কবে, কথায় না বড় হয়ে কাজে বড় হবে? মুখে হাসি, বুকে বল তেজে ভরা মন, “মানুষ হইতে হবে” — এই তার পণ...”। আমি যখন ক্লাস থ্রি তে আশ্রমে আসি তখন সকাল সন্ধ্যা প্রেয়ারে সংস্কৃত মন্ত্র শুনে শুনে শিখে ফেলি “অসতো মা সদগমায়ী, তমসো মা জ্যোতির্গময়, মৃত্যু অমৃত গমায়ী...” তখন মানে কিছুই বুঝতাম না পরে সেটা বুঝতে পারি। গান ও সেভাবেই শিখেছিলাম শুনে শুনে। কুস্তালদা শনিবারে গান শেখাতে আসতেন। সামনে গীতবিতান খুলে আমাদের গাইতে বলতেন, “নে গান কর, কেই হারমোনিয়াম বাজাবি নাকি আমিই ধরব? আমি তাল দিচ্ছি তোরা কেও সা পা ধর”... এইভাবেই চলত গান শেখা। গানের সাথে অনেক কঠিন বাংলার মানেও বলে দিতেন। আমি একজন সাঁওতাল মেয়ে সাঁওতালী ভাষা ছাড়া সেরকম কিছু ভাষা আমার জানা ছিল না। কিন্তু এই আশ্রমে আসার পরে গানের মাধ্যমেই বাংলা ভাষা অনেকটাই রপ্ত করেছিলাম। পরবর্তীকালে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সমস্ত গানের মধ্যে যে নিগূঢ় প্রেম, ভালোবাসা, দুঃখ, পরিতাপ, আকাঙ্ক্ষা সমস্তটাই উপলব্ধি করতে পেরে এক অদ্ভুত তৃপ্তি অনুভব করেছি যেটা আজীবন রয়ে যাবে। এই অনুভূতি প্রকাশের কোনো পরিভাষা আমার কাছে নেই। প্রথমে নাচটাও শিখেছিলাম বড়দিদিদের দেখে দেখে। কেমন করে ওরা হাতের মুদ্রা বানাচ্ছে, পায়ের স্টেপ ফেলছে, কীভাবে এক্সপ্রেশন করছে সব কিছুই অবজার্ব করতাম। নাচের দিদি আসতেন নাচ শেখাতে কিন্তু নাচটা ভালোভাবে শিখতে পেরেছি শুধুমাত্র বড়ো দিদিদের কাছে। পরবর্তীকালে বড় স্টেজে কবিগুরু রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের নৃত্যনাট্য চন্দালিকা, ভানুসিংহের পদাবলী, চিত্রাঙ্গদার মত নৃত্যনাট্য পরিবেশন করেছি।

ছোটবেলায় কিছু কিছু জিনিস করতে ভীষণ বিরক্তি লাগত। এই ধর, সকাল বেলায় টাইমে ওঠো, প্রেয়ার করো, নিজের দায়িত্বের কাজ সারো, 7টের মধ্যে পড়তে বোসো। হাতের লেখাটা ছোড়দির কাছে শেখা। মনে পড়ে সকালে রেডিও অ্যান্টেনা টাকে ঠিকঠাক করে আমাদের বলতেন "দাও তোমাদের হাতের লেখার খাতা দাও। গতকালের দেওয়া কাজ করেছ কি না দেখব..."; দিয়ে রেডিও শুনতে শুনতে আমাদের হোমওয়ার্ক গুলো চেক করে দিতেন। এখন মনে হয় এই বিরক্তিকর ডিসিপ্লিনই আমাদেরকে জীবনের আরও সামনে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে অনেক সাহায্য করেছে। আমি এই আশ্রমে প্রায় দশ বছর থেকেছি। প্রি ক্লাস থেকে টুয়েলথ অবধি। আমার জীবনের মূল্যবান সময় আমি এখানেই কাটিয়েছি। আজ যখন পিছন ফিরে তাকাই, তখন বুঝতে পারি এই দীর্ঘ পথচলা শুধুমাত্র আমার ব্যক্তিগত সাফল্যের গল্প নয়, এখানে মা বাবা, শ্রদ্ধেয় গুরুজন, আশ্রমের প্রতিটি শিক্ষা—সব মিলিয়েই আমার ভেতরের মানুষটিকে গড়ে তুলতে সাহায্য করেছে। আমি উপলব্ধি করেছি শিক্ষা কেবল পাঠ্যবইয়ের মধ্যে সীমাবদ্ধ নয়, শিক্ষা মানে মানবিকতা, শৃঙ্খলা, সহমর্মিতা এবং নিজের শিকড়কে ভুলে না যাওয়ার এক গভীর দায়িত্ববোধ।

আজ আমি যখন জাপানের সাহিত্য নিয়ে গবেষণা করি, তখন আমার মনে হয় আশ্রমে শেখা সেই মূল্যবোধই আমাকে বিশ্বসংস্কৃতির সঙ্গে সংযোগ স্থাপন করতে সাহায্য করেছে। নিজের সাঁওতাল পরিচয়, বাংলা ভাষার প্রতি ভালোবাসা এবং রবীন্দ্রসংগীতের অনুভব—সবকিছু মিলিয়ে আমি যেন এক বহুসংস্কৃতিক সেতুর উপর দাঁড়িয়ে আছি। এই সেতু আমাকে শেখায়, মানুষ যত দূরেই যাক না কেন, তার ভিত গড়ে ওঠে শৈশবের মাটি থেকেই। একটা কথা বলে শেষ করব যে আমার বাবা মা, মালবিকা মাসির বাড়িতে কাজ করতেন, মাসিই আমাকে এই আশ্রমে পড়াশোনার জন্য পাঠায়। এই কয়েক বছর আগে মাসি আমাকে বলছিলেন "পদ্মা, আমি চারাটাকে পুঁতে দিলাম আর মঞ্জুদি গাছের চারাটাকে সযত্নে বড় করে তুললেন।" আমার মনে হয় আমার জীবনের প্রতিটি অর্জন মা-বাবার স্বপ্ন, গুরুজনদের আশীর্বাদ এবং বীণাপাণি আশ্রমের স্নেহময় শিক্ষার ফসল। ভবিষ্যতে আমি চাই এই শিক্ষা, এই মানবিক মূল্যবোধ এবং এই আলোর পথ আরও অনেকের কাছে পৌঁছে দিতে। কারণ মারাম্মর সেই কথাটাই আজ আমার জীবনের একটি মন্ত্র হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে—জীবনে যা-ই করি না কেন, মানুষের মত মানুষ হওয়াই সবচেয়ে বড় প্রাপ্তি। আর সেই মানুষ হয়ে ওঠার যাত্রাই আমার জীবনের সবচেয়ে বড় সাফল্য মনে হবে।



**Dr. Boro Baski**

**Boro Baski** works for the community-based organization Ghosaldanga Adibasi Seva Sangha in West Bengal, India. He is co-founder of a non-formal Santal school, Rolf Schoembs Vidyashram, near Satnicketan, West Bengal. The school takes an innovative approach to Santal education, combining the needs of poor Santal village children emphasis on learning through play, music, arts and mother tongue. He is also the founder of the Museum of Santal Culture, a community museum based in his village Bishnubati. With a PhD, he has translated several books and has written articles on Santal culture and development in Indian and international journals and edited volumes.

Boro Baski's work can be seen in the following websites-

<https://www.dandc.eu/en/contributors/boro-baski>

[www.dorfentwicklung-indien.de](http://www.dorfentwicklung-indien.de)

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# **"The Museum of Santal Culture" at Bishnubati: Its Role in Education and Adivasi Development**

**By**

Dr. Boro Baski, Head, Museum of Santal Culture, Bishnubati, Birbhum

## **Concept Note**

Santals have no written history of their own. The memories that exist have been passed down through generations from their ancestors in the form of oral traditions. The written history of Santals is mostly the work of groups who dominated us during various stages of civilization. In schools, children read about the lives of the great personalities and rulers of our country, but there is hardly any reflection of their own history. Hence, the Santals who take mainstream education often grow up ignorant about their own culture and heritage. Besides reading about great personalities of the country, they also need to explore their own heroes who have become 'successful' in life in the context of their own background. Growing up with the talents and the genius of one's own people in mind will have a lasting effect in life. Keeping the above idea in mind the author in this paper has tried to explain how the artifacts of Santal culture and heritage can play an important role to address the challenges the Adivasis in general and Santals in particular face today in the multi-cultural society of our country.



**Kumkum Bhattacharya**

**Kumkum Bhattacharya**, Retired Professor, Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati has a little over four decades of teaching in the Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati. She has wide experience of research among tribes of eastern India, especially the Santals and other minority communities. One of her areas of interest is culture-personality studies and the various ways in which minorities and marginalized communities constitute the plurality of Indian civilization. She is also interested in understanding the ways in which minorities and marginalized communities adjust and adapt to plural situations. The other abiding area of academic interest is revisiting Tagore's ideas of Rural Reconstruction and the role of a university in extension activities. She has recently published Rabindranath Tagore: Adventure of Ideas and Innovative Practices in Education, Springer International (2014). She may be contacted at [kmkm.bh@gmail.com](mailto:kmkm.bh@gmail.com) and her profile may be accessed [www.visva-bharati.ac.in](http://www.visva-bharati.ac.in)

# **Acceptance, Respect and Building Bridges: from Uni-directional to Mutual Interaction and Exchange between Communities in a Composite Society**

**Kumkum Bhattacharya**

## **Abstract:**

I have long been of the opinion that the communities of tribes have rarely had a level playing field in negotiating their presence, participation and access to resources in a plural society. Our general response to tribes, colours our sentiments while they do not not engage our intellect other than in the scholastic space; where too the discursive texts appear foreign and tribes do not find much to connect with. The distinct traits of the community are described, with limited discussions on the gains of value, worth and merit accruing to the tribe and if these qualities are noted by their neighbours. The dominant neighbours are good at mentioning those aspects that negatively impact interaction across communities rather than looking at them in positive ways.



**Ahana Majumder**  
Centre-coordinator Foundation Program  
Assistant Professor,  
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Ms. Ahana Majumder, Assistant Professor and Centre Coordinator Foundation Program NIFT Kolkata, Graduated in 2002 In Bachelor in Design in Fashion Technology from NIFT Kolkata. Have six years of Industry experience in Fashion and apparel industry including Levi's and Export houses in Bangalore and Kolkata. Joined NIFT Kolkata at 2008 Completed Bridge Course from NIFT Kolkata in 2011. Honoured master degree with distinction from RBU, in Environmental Studies. Her research interests include craft sustainability and human displacement. Major projects focused in Handloom and craft cluster and women skills development.

## **Woven Identity: Santali Textile Tradition, a saga of displacement, lost and regaining threads of identity**

Ahana Majumder

### Abstract

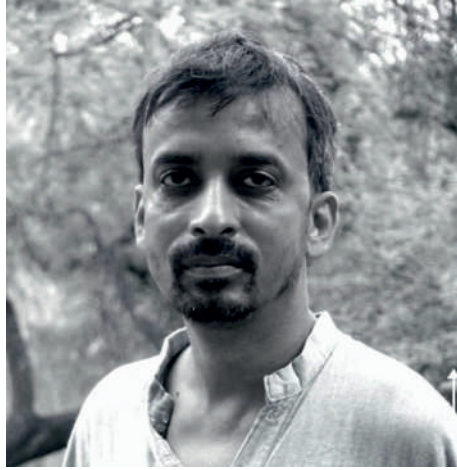
The Santali people of Eastern India possess a rich heritage in which textiles serve as a primary medium of cultural expression and identity. This paper explores the profound historical trajectory of Santali weaving, tracing its evolution from a self-sufficient, ecologically integrated practice to its near extinction under the pressures of modernization and market economies. This narrative of decline is contrasted with a powerful contemporary revival movement, spearheaded by grassroots organizations, which is fundamentally reshaping the craft's production models, material palette, and socio-economic dynamics. By examining the shift from a male-dominated craft to one, centered on the economic empowerment of women artisans, and from reliance on market goods to a sustainable "soil-to-shelf" ecosystem, this research highlights the remarkable resilience of Santali textile traditions. The paper ultimately provides critical insights into the adaptation and preservation of indigenous craft heritage in a globalized world, demonstrating how cultural identity can be both reaffirmed and redefined for a new generation.

## Threads of a Culture

Within the material culture of indigenous societies, textiles function as a critical semiotic system—a tangible language that encodes ancestral knowledge, delineates social structures, and articulates collective identity. The Santali people of Eastern India offer a compelling case study of this intimate relationship between fabric and culture. This paper analyzes the profound evolution of their weaving traditions, charting a course from ancestral techniques rooted in local ecology to the disruptive forces of the 20th century and, finally, to the innovative adaptations and revivals of the present day.

The research is framed by a dual narrative that provides the micro and macro lenses for this paper's analysis. The first account, an ethnographic data point of cultural erosion, is the personal history of designer Shakuntala Marndi, whose memories document the decline of traditional weaving in her village, driven by the introduction of mass-produced consumer goods. The second, representing a powerful counter-force of cultural reconstruction, is the grassroots revival movement led by the Mauna Dhwani Foundation, which exemplifies a new paradigm of community agency and empowerment.

This paper's thesis posits that the Santali textile tradition, while facing near-extinction due to modernization and market forces, is demonstrating remarkable resilience through grassroots initiatives. These efforts re-centre women as the primary artisans, champion a sustainable "soil-to-shelf" production model, and strategically adapt traditional motifs for contemporary markets. In doing so, they are not only preserving an ancient craft but are actively redefining and strengthening Santali cultural identity for a new generation. To fully appreciate the significance of this contemporary movement, it is essential to first understand the historical foundations upon which this rich tradition was built.



## Partha Gupta

Dr. Partha Gupta, is a poet, painter, Columnist, theatre director, designer and environmental activist whose contributions have enriched the fields of theatre, traditional dance, and cultural preservation. Hailing from Dwaronda, a village in Birbhum District, West Bengal, India. Founder and creative director of *Birbhum Blossom Theatre*, Partha has dedicated his life to promoting the heritage of the Santal community and blending it with contemporary artistic practices. He possesses knowledge of **Santhal tradition**. His work captures the vibrant essence of Santal rituals and performances, making these traditions accessible to a broader audience. He ensures the continuity of this art form while presenting it in innovative and captivating ways with his knowledge in traditional performing arts form of West Bengal.

In addition to his theatrical expertise, Partha is a skilled **director and designer of theatre** and also has an expertise in festival and ambience-designer. He conceptualized and created **Theatre Cottage**, the campus of Blossom Theatre, which serves as a model of eco-friendly and culturally resonant design. **Birbhum Blossom Theatre** has an open air auditorium shield with mud and its wings and backdrop is crafted with palm leaving its mark as an important performance space in Indian contemporary scenario, designed by Partha Gupta. This campus, thoughtfully designed, venue is not only a space for performances but also a hub for cultural activities, workshops, and ecological engagements and stay.

Partha has successfully conceptualised and designed numerous **theatre, dance and music festivals** that celebrate the confluence of tradition and modernity. His leadership has brought the first Santhali theatre production, *Hnasa Ora Ria Sereng (The Song of the Earthen Cottage)*, to life, marking a significant milestone in integrating Santal storytelling with the theatrical arts. His play-productions also include adaptations of Rabindranath Tagore's masterpieces (trilogy in Santhali), emphasizing his ability to bridge literary classics and indigenous traditions; blending it, he creates a contemporary theatre form.

Partha's academic journey reflects his dedication to theatre as both an art and a discipline. He earned his doctorate degree on his guru Shri Ratan Thiyam (an Indian luminary in International Theatre scenario) in Visva Bharati University, the legendary figure in modern Indian theatre and Partha's mentor. His research delves into the ground-breaking contributions of Thiyam, offering valuable insights into contemporary Indian theatre practices and their cultural underpinnings. His work has received significant backing from prestigious institutions, including the National School of Drama (NSD) and Sangeet Natak Akademi under Ministry of Culture, Government of India. He has bagged Junior Fellowship in the field of theatre on Santhal Tradition, awarded by the Ministry of Culture, GoI in 2011, highlights the national recognition of his contributions.

As a poet, Partha Gupta has written five poetry collections. His creative practice also extends into painting and other visual arts, reflecting a multi-disciplinary engagement.

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# The Transition from Santhali Traditional Performing Arts to Contemporary Theatre:

Dr. Partha Gupta

## Abstract

The Santal community, whose villages are mainly located inside the forests or on the slopes of the plateau mountains, is a primitive civilization that has survived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in harmony with nature. The main religious place of the festival is the 'Jaher Than', located on the edge of the village. The main rituals of the festival are held in the 'Jaher Than', which is mainly open land under the trees of Sal, Mahua, Neem etc. The most important festival of the Santal tribe is 'Sohrai', which is held after the rice harvest (Paush month). After the rice harvest, the specific rituals of 'Sohrai' are held in the open rice fields, and the important heart of the festival, called 'Khad', is composed on the barren land of the rice fields under the open sky.

The houses have large, empty courtyards, bare feet, peacock feathers in their hands, boys practicing the 'Dasai' dance in the courtyard. The tribe's only puppet dance form, 'Chadar Badani', is very simple in technique, the bride's attire is a yellow cotton saree dyed with betel leaves, the use of earthenware, furniture-free home furnishings, flower-leaf ornaments, etc. have established the unostentatious life of the tribe. A civilization that survives in the lap of nature, the basis of whose beauty is simplicity.



## **Alicja Krusenstern**

Alicja Krusenstern(Poland) – psychologist, visual artist, and creator of projects at the intersection of culture, communication, and art.

She holds a Master's degree in Psychology, with a specialization in social psychology of communication and informatics. She further developed her education in the fields of pedagogy, reportage, and artistic practices in new media.

An important aspect of her artistic and personal path is her many years spent in India, where she deepened her knowledge of Indian culture, religion, and the practice of yoga. This experience has had a lasting influence on her perception of the world and is reflected in her artistic work.

She works in photography and painting, focusing on the relationship between image and inner experience. Her practice explores themes of identity, presence, and the interpenetration of cultural and spiritual dimensions.

She has broad professional experience spanning education, media, and the realization of cultural and social projects. She has worked as a teacher, writer, and co-creator of artistic initiatives and events, including concerts, festivals, and social campaigns. She has collaborated with institutions such as the European Parliament, Polish Radio, and initiatives associated with the United Nations and Art of Living Foundation Poland.

In her practice, she combines psychological knowledge with intercultural experience and artistic sensitivity, creating work grounded in reflection on the human condition, its relationship with the environment, and the meaning of image in the contemporary world.



Exposition chairperson

## Ruby Palchoudhuri

**A pioneering force in Indian craft advocacy, deeply involved with the Crafts Council of India and its West Bengal chapter.**

**A respected voice for the preservation, documentation and international appreciation of Indian traditional crafts.**

**An author and editor of numerous publications on crafts, she has documented and championed the richness of Indian textile and craft traditions for scholars, designers and enthusiasts.**

