



# APPLICATION OF FLUTE IN TRIBAL REGION OF ODISHA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MAYURBHANJ DISTRICT.

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## ABSTRACT:

Printed collections of Santal songs in the original Santali are listed in the Bibliography the chief collections being Hor Soren and Don Soren, published jointly by Gopal Gamaliel Soren and myself in 1943. Hor Soren comprises 1676 songs which are sung at festivals or dances, Don Soren 1824 songs which are sung at weddings. A further 129 cultivation songs are included in the second volume. The majority of these songs are ancestral but it is part of the vitality of Santal poetry that new songs are sometimes made up on the spur of the moment. There is no special class of poet, singer or bard, and the songs are accordingly communal in origin and inspiration. Songs connected with the induction ceremony of Caco Chatiar and with the ritual of Karam are given in Stephen H. Murmu's Karam or Caco Chatiar (published 1945). The special songs, known as Bir Soren, which are sung in the privacy of the forest, are as yet unpublished. A manuscript collection amounting to almost one thousand is with me and I hope in due course to deposit it in the India Office Library, London.

**KEY WORDS:** Kolha, Santal, Soren, Ritual, Santali Songs, Communal.

Songs of this kind are characterized by a bold use of sexual terms and for this reason are banned in Santal villages. They fall into two categories-those which are tender, sensitive and charming, the prerogative of women, girls and lovers and those which are coarse and bawdy, the 'music-hall' entertainments which are put on at bitlahas and at annual hunts. Bir Soren, intended primarily for lovers, could well be termed 'Forest Love Songs', Bir Soren which are primarily jocular could be termed 'Forest Hunt Songs'. Since the same title covers both sorts, it is no surprise that, as one Santal expressed it, 'to the old, Bir Soren are jokes but to the young, they are beauty'.

All Santal songs, whether 'forest' or 'village', have certain characteristics. Rhyme is not employed and the form of the songs, the length of its lines and indeed its whole structure is determined to a great extent by the tune or melody. Few songs have more than ten or twelve lines; any that are longer have usually a ritual purpose. In some cases, the fourth line repeats the second but more normally every line is different and the song achieves its effect by a subtle combination of assonance, rhythm and imagery. In one important respect, the use of unexplained symbols, Santal poetry is very close to that of the Uraons, samples of which I translated in my books, the Blue Grove and The Dove and the Leopard. Just as in English slang, 'girls' are called 'birds' so in Santali 'girls' are often 'peacocks', children 'little parrots', mothers 'milk-trees' boys 'flutes' and so on. It is to the vivid character of particular symbols that many Santal songs owe their poetic brilliance.

For translation, I have adopted the following principles. When working on Uraon poetry, I had modelled myself on Arthur Waley and believing, like him, that 'images were the soul of poetry', I had refrained both from using rhyme and from 'either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original'. The same method had been independently arrived at by Verrier Elwin, first in his Songs of the Forest, a collection that he published with Shamrao Hivale in 1935 and later in The Baiga. We were aware however that not every previous translator adhered to these principles and when in 1942 we began to edit the Indian journal of anthropology, Man in India, I was led to preface a short anthology of Indian folk-poetry with the following editorial:

'if translations are to be of value, it is obvious that they should conform to certain standards. The most evident is that the translation should itself be a poem. If it is not a poem, if it does not create the effect of poetry, it is merely a degradation of its original, an act of murder. The second requisite is that the translation should correspond with the original. If it does not correspond, it loses all claim to scientific value. It ceases to be the translation of a poem. It becomes a poem by a translator. Such a poem may have value as poetry but it has none at all as science. The problem of translating Indian folk poetry is in essentials how to produce a version which contains all the elements both of poetry and science.

'It will be evident that to this problem no solution will be perfect. A poem is a combination of certain images, certain rhythms and certain effects of music, and only if a translation could provide an exact parallel for each of these elements could it be perfect. In actual fact, a translation from a tribal language into English can parallel only one of these elements. Differences of verbal structure are so great that if parallel images are retained, the rhythms will be different. If the rhythms are maintained, the images will suffer, while no form of English can reproduce the musical effects of Hindi, Uraon, Gondi or Mundari. "Certain things," said Ezra Pound, "are translatable from one language to another, a rale or an image will translate; music will practically never translate." A translation becomes possible, therefore, only when there is no attempt at all at complete correspondence.

‘We believe that the best solution so far reached is that of Arthur Waley. In translating from the Chinese, Arthur Waley was faced with problems that are identical with those of Indian languages. His solution has been a series of versions in which the literal meaning of the translation corresponds with the literal meaning of the original. In particular, the images are never added to and never subtracted from. The poem as a system of images remains in translation what it is in the original. Instead, however, of attempting a duplication of rhyme, rhythm or music, his versions use the rhythms and sound effects which come most naturally to the English. The original form is abandoned and instead the effort is to create a new form which is valid for a contemporary sensibility. We believe that in terms of this solution translations of Indian folk poetry can preserve all the elements essential for anthropology while still retaining all the ingredients of poetry.’

This editorial was published in March 1943, four months after I reached the Santal Parganas. I cannot hope that all the present versions successfully achieve these standards. But they do, at least, attempt to reach them. I have not distorted the literal meaning of any of the originals and I have not added or left out any image or symbol.

There remains the question of how best to present these versions. It would have been possible to group them according to the occasions on which they were used and to add notes explaining their imagery. But this, I think, would have weakened their impact. Santal poetry is Santal life; Santal life is Santal poetry. I decided, therefore, to employ two methods and to alternate between them. If a song illustrated with special vividness a particular aspect of Santal living, I have used it as evidence of thought, feeling or behavior and removed it from its social context. In the accounts of marital and premarital love, for example, I have freely inserted wedding, Sohrae and Forest love songs. If, on the other hand, certain songs or stories are essential parts of a ceremony such as the Karam, or of a festival such as the Baha, I have presented them in their original setting. The result may not be wholly satisfactory but the following chart will, I hope, make clear my underlying method.

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