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## Some important plants used in the festivals of santhal tribe of Dumka district of Jharkhand

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**Abstract:-** The santhal tribe is the major tribe of the state of Jharkhand. The present study focuses on the plants which are used in the festivals of santhal tribe. The rituals and festivals of santhal tribe are unique to them. The santhals of Dumka district observe various festivals in different seasons. They use plants as an essential component in festivals. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the use of plants with respect to their use in various festivals by the santhal tribe in Dumka district of Jharkhand. The use of plants in various festivals throughout the year represents their religious culture and folklore.

**Key words:** Santhal tribe, Festivals, Religious culture, Dumka district

### INTRODUCTION

As one of the largest "Scheduled Tribe" (ST) of India the santhal number about 6.5 million.<sup>1</sup> Santhals are the prevailing tribal community in India who inhabited in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam.<sup>2</sup> Santhal minority is also present in the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal.<sup>3</sup> Jharkhand is home to many tribal communities among them are Santhal, Oraon, Munda and Ho. The santhal tribe is the leading tribe of the state of Jharkhand. They are mainly concentrated in the areas of Dumka, Godda, Pakur, Sahebgunj districts of Santhal Pargana of Jharkhand.<sup>4</sup> Santhal Pargana is an integral part of the lower Gangetic plain which is rich in medicinal plants. This tribe exhibit a long history of migration from one place to another. The

santhal community use plants for their medicinal and religious rites.<sup>5</sup> Plants play a very significant role. These people roam around the forest for their day to day requirements, cultural activities, beliefs and for performing religious rituals.<sup>6</sup> They are mainly dependent on their traditional system for their information which is passed on from generation to generation orally.<sup>7</sup> The santhals of Dumka district observes many festivals in different seasons.

### Festivals

The main festival of santhals was Sohrai. It is celebrated in push (Dec-Jan). It is celebrated after the rice crop of the year has been harvested and it is of five days. The next important festival is Baha Parab.<sup>8</sup> It is held in the month of Phagun (Feb-March). It indicates commencement of New Year. Like Sohrai it is celebrated with dancing, singing and drinking.<sup>7</sup> It is celebrated when

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Sal (*Shorea robusta* Gaertn.) and Mahua (*Madhuca longifolia* (J.Koing) J.F.Macbr.) flowers are in full glory.<sup>9,10</sup> The entire land looks like forest fire due to the flowering of Palash (*Butea monosperma* Lam.).<sup>11</sup> Sal and Mahua flowers are used during Baha Parv.<sup>12</sup> Sakrat is held in the month of Poush (Dec-Jan). The previous day of Sakrat they go for catching fish and on the day of Sakrat, men go for hunting, while the women make pressed rice (chuda) and rice cake. The same afternoon Jog Manjhi cuts a Banana stalk and places it on the end of village and calls men with bow and arrow to shoot the banana tree.<sup>13</sup> This game is called “Bheja Tun”. Erok Sim is celebrated in Asar (Jun-Jul). This is also a festival which is celebrated with the whole village.<sup>14</sup> It is a sowing festival. Hariar sim is a feast of the sprouting of the rice is held in Sraban (Jul-Aug). Irigundli-nawai is the offering of the first fruits of millets.<sup>15</sup> It is held in the month of Bhadra (Aug-Sep). Mak sim it is celebrated when the jungle grass is cut during the month of Magh (Jan - Feb). This festival marks the end of santhal year.

## MATERIAL & METHODS

### Study Area

Dumka is located at 24.27°N, 87.25°E. Dumka district has an area of 3716 Km<sup>2</sup>. The district has a population of 13,21,096 (2011 census). Dumka has a pre-dominantly undulating terrain with hard rock's under the ground. The

entire district has topography with high ridges and valleys bounded by mountains and rivers. It was made the headquarters of the Santhal Pargana region, which was carved out of Bhagalpur and Siuri districts after the Santhal Hool 1855. The Santhal revolt started in 1855. Dumka is the sub - capital of the state of Jharkhand. The east Santhal Pargana zone gets rain in summer with an average around 13.5 cm. This area comes under the highlands of Rajmahal range like Sahebgunj and Pakur. The Rajmahal ranges plays very significant role in becoming a roadblock between warm westerly winds and the moisture loaded winds of Bay of Bengal.

Ethnobotanical survey was conducted in different regions of Dumka (Kodokicha, Kukurtoppa, Sujan) during February 2019 - April 2019. During survey interview of "Manjhi hadam" (Mukhya), Naike (Pujari), Vaidyas (Herbal Practitioner), Heads of tribe, Elderman, Elderwomen, Knowledgeable persons by the help of questionnaire about ethnobotanical plants and their relation to rituals of santhal tribe and noted down their santhali name, common name and took photographs. During survey work plants were collected and were identified with the help of Flora of Bihar and Orissa by H.H. Haines in University Department of Botany, Ranchi University, Ranchi. The plants were also preserved in the form of Herbarium.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

Table 1: Ethnobotanical plants used in the festivals of santhal tribes

Sl. No	Botanical Name	Common Name	Santhali Name	Family	Habit	Parts Used	Name of Festival	Seasons
1.	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	Sal Tree	Sarjom Baha	Dipterocarpaceae	Tree	Flowers	Baha Festival	Phagun (Feb-Mar)
2.	<i>Terminalia tomentosa</i> Roxb ( ex DC ) Wight & Arn .	Asan Tree	Aatna	Combretaceae	Tree	Leaves	Sohrai	Poush (Dec-Jan)
3.	<i>Musa</i> L.	Banana Tree	Kaira	Musaceae	Tree	Trunk	Sakrat	Poush (Dec-Jan)
4.	<i>Oryza sativa</i> L.	Rice	Horo	Poaceae	Grass	Seeds	Hariar Sim	Sraban (Jul-Aug)
5.	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (J.Koing) J.F.Macbr.	Mahua Tree	Matkom	Sapotaceae	Tree	Flowers	Baha Festival	Phagun (Feb-Mar)
6.	<i>Echinochloa frumentaceae</i> Link.	Sawa Millet	Gundli	Poaceae	Grass	Seed	Irigundli -nawai	Sraban (Jul-Aug)
7.	<i>Cyanodon dactylon</i> L.	Doob Grass	Dhoobi Ghas	Poaceae	Grass	Entire plant	Mak Sim	Magh (Jan-Feb)
8.	<i>Panicum miliacum</i> L.	Common Millet	Iri	Poaceae	Grass	Seeds	Irigundli -nawai	Sraban (Jul-Aug)
9.	<i>Triticum aestivum</i> L.	Wheat	Guhum	Poaceae	Grass	Seeds	Sohrai	Poush (Dec-Jan)

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The present study attempted to analyze the use of plants with respect to their use in various festivals by the local inhabitants of santhal tribe of Dumka district of Jharkhand. The result of the survey (study) reported that 9 plant species were used in the festivals. In the study 5 plants (*Oryza sativa* L., *Triticum aestivum* L., *Echinochloa frumentacea* Link., *Panicum miliaceum* L., *Cynodon dactylon* L.) belong to the same family Poaceae (grass family). They are mainly used in the festivals. The rest 4 plants belong to different families *Shorea robusta* Gaertn. belongs to the family Dipterocarpaceae, *Terminalia tomentosa* Roxb.(ex DC) Wight & Arn. belongs to the family Combretaceae, *Musa* belongs to the family Musaceae and *Madhuca longifolia* (J.Koing) J.F.Macbr. belongs to the family Sapotaceae, these all are trees.



**A. Jaherthan**



**B. Shorea robusta**



**C. Preparation for the festival**



**D. Singing and Dancing during festival**

**Fig 1: Picture (A, B, C and D) showing the celebration of Baha Festival during the month of Phagun (Feb-March) at Kukurtoppa village**

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