

EDITORIAL

It is almost fashionable for Biblical scholars to trace the source of faith of all believers to the faith of Abraham, the ancient semitic tribal patriarch. In this search for the root of the faith of the believers in Judaism, Christianity and Islam we unwittingly acknowledge our common semitic tribal ancestry. In fact a considerable portion of our faith expressions are in the pattern of the prototype faith-experience and expression of Abraham: Abraham believed in Yahweh, and hoped against hope and trusted in God's saving power, and so it was credited to him for his righteousness before God. This short formula of faith and righteousness centred around the tribal patriarch Abraham has become classical in Biblical religions.

The case of the faith lineage of the contemporary man in any country even today may not be that different from the pattern of the root-search of the faith of the twelve tribes of Israel back to Abraham, the wandering Aramean of the Ur of Chaldea. This would give us the clue to the fact that even today there are numerous wandering tribals carrying their own baggage of traditions and customs, beliefs and rituals, sacraments and celebrations, and yet not all believing in the same God, and practise the same rituals of faith. There are numerous tribal settlements in our own country as well as in many countries of the world over. They all have different patterns of beliefs and practices which have got many useful information to pass on to us for a cross-examination of our sophisticated religious practices. Moreover, it has become prestigious to many religious families to trace the root of their ancestry and take pride in being called after the name of some ancient tribal patriarch. In this way we are all interested in being linked to some of our glorious tribal heritage so much so that we may even think that we belong to different tribal movements struggling even to day to fix our settlements in some plot of this "global village."

Journal of Dharma with its declared policy of offering a forum for scholars of all branches of religious studies invited to this issue those research scholars who have special interest in the study of tribal religions. Specific guidelines were given to scholars to be concrete in collecting living data and be specific in the choice of the particular tribal groups. It is a matter of satisfaction for us to see that the scholars responded very positively.

Johnson Vadakkumcherry, a Ph.D. Research scholar in the department of Cultural Anthropology, University of Calcutta, presently doing

field research on the tribal religions in the ecological context of Bastar district in Madhyapradesh, presents his findings about the religious practices of the tribes of Madias and Ghonds. He has highlighted the 'most luxuriant growth of ethnocentrism' revolving about religion among the Madias and the Ghonds. D. M. Changson, Dean of Trulock Theological Seminary, Manipur, is personally in close contact with the "Kuki" traditional religion of North Eastern India. In his research he has discovered that the Kukis have distinctive religious traditions which were mistakenly forsaken for the sake of the Gospel, a point which missionaries have to bear in mind. Abraham Thuruthumalil a lecturer on tribal anthropology at Darsana Institute of Philosophy, Wardha in Maharashtra, has his own experiences of the living poetry of the tribals of central India. According to his conclusion the song poems of our tribals are nothing but simple and ordinary facts of life put in a symbolic form, in a tune and tempo that attracts the mind of a real lover of music and dance. Their music and dance are often religiously tempered to suit to their special occasions of ritual celebration of the facts of life.

Venance Tovagonze, a Post Graduate research scholar from Tanzania Africa, surveys the God-Concept of the "Supreme Being" in African Tribal Religions. According to his findings God is the real, unique and absolute controller of the universe. According to most of the tribals in Africa God as the Supreme Being is only One and he is the sole God of the whole universe. God is present more actively in the nature, indwelling in his creation, and yet is distinct from all his creation. It is one and the same God who gives life to every creature, animates the nature and sustains it with his omnipotent power. In my own survey on the "Cultural interactions and the Socio-religious transformation among the tribals of Bastar", I have focused on those forces of interaction which are mainly responsible for the attitudinal changes of the tribals in the district of Bastar in central India. Religion is not the main concern or the controlling factor in the life of a constantly threatened and exploited people. What these people need is not any heavy dose of religious fundamentalism or emotionalism but sincere expressions of human love and an acceptance of their human dignity. If religious people can interact with them moved by these values of love and concern it must be a liberative service for them.

Thomas Manickam
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