

Contemporary religious ethos in an urban milieu of West Bengal: Reflections from a study of the planetary deity Soni

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Abstract

Indian Hindus worship nine planets. They believe that these nine planets are present in the solar system and influence the course of human life. The present study, conducted in an old town named Chinsurah in the Hooghly district of West Bengal, attempts to understand under what circumstances the worship of Saturn (*Soni*) minor deity came into prominence and became part of the contemporary urban religious ethos. The study reveals that surrounding socio-economic and historical factors have been responsible for the recent mushrooming of the Soni temples vis-à-vis worship of the deity. The first temples of Soni emerged at the times of increased immigration of people from Bangladesh and migration from rural areas. Moreover, the study introduces the concept of cosmo-cultural space to understand the religious ethos of the people under study.

KEYWORDS: planetary deity, worship, ethos, doggerel poem, cosmo-cultural, class

Introduction

The worship of planets in Indian tradition has been common for centuries. The Indians worship the nine planets, called *Nabagraha*. They believe that these nine planets influence the course of human life. Of these, probably Saturn or *Soni* is the most horrifying. The pauranic or liturgical texts reflect its nature as a cruel deity. He has been mentioned variously as cruel-eyed (*Krura Lochana*), dark (*Asita*), lame (*Pangu*), deformed (*Bakra*), slow-moving (*Sanischara*) and bad (*Manda*) (Saletore 1984). He is mentioned in the different the ancient mythology of Hindus (*puranas*), including *Padma Puran*, *Brahmabai-bartya Puran*, and others (Sarkar 1410; Bhattacharya 1978). According to the mythology, Soni is the son of Surya, the sun god of the Hindus, and his wife Chaya, but another legend claims that the god Soni came from the great ascetic Kasyapa (Basu 1988).

In addition to Hindu tradition, Soni is also venerable in Buddhist and Jain traditions. To the Buddhists, Soni is the seventh of the nine planets. The Jains have an essentially similar conception. Outside India, the Romans used to worship Saturn, who was Cronus in the Greek pantheon. It is fascinating to note that Cronus was the son of sky and earth, and he married his sister Rhea. Mythological correlation may seem premature

at this juncture, but one cannot fail to notice a faint similarity between the story of Yama and that of Cronus. Harivamsa states that Yama and Soni are identical. Yama is also the son of Surya (Saletore 1984). His sister Yami proposed that he marry her. Both Soni and Cronus were born of celestial union. The point here is not to establish the indisputable relationship between these two deities but to suggest that the existence of a kind of worship of Soni and surrounding legends in the vast area that closely corresponds to the Indo-European linguistic zone.

The worship of Soni as one of the Nabagrahas began in India in the Post-Gupta period. The earliest archaeological evidence of Soni as a part of Nabagraha dates back to the sixth century AD (Dasgupta 2000). Dasgupta attributes an unstable socio-political situation to be the cause of origin and growth of the worship of Soni in the abovementioned period (2000). Worship of the planets was prevalent in medieval Bengal, though separate worship of an individual planet was very rare. It was associated with the *Soura*, a cult prevalent in medieval Bengal. Stone slabs with figures of Nabagraha curved on them have been discovered from different parts of southern Bengal. These Nabagraha included Surya, Chandra, Bhauma, Budha, Sukra, Brihaspati, Soni, Rahu, and Ketu.

According to Sanskrit texts, Soni is dark complexioned and wears blue garments. He is lame. He sits on a vulture, though an iron chariot hauled by eight horses is mentioned as well. He has either two or four hands holding bow and arrow, axe and trident. In north Indian tradition, Soni is described as two-handed, but in south India, he has four hands. In the Buddhist scriptures, he is depicted with two hands and mounted on a tortoise; in one hand, he wields a rod (*danda*). In Jain tradition, he is shown mounting a tortoise.

However, in the present, we see that Soni is worshiped as a separate and independent deity. Moreover, some other salient changes have taken place in the image of this planetary god. What is remarkable about the present situation is the sudden spurt of worship of Soni in urban areas in the last three or four decades. Soni has never been a major deity in the Hindu pantheon, with regard to the pervasiveness of worship and status of deity. References to such worship are scanty in early and medieval texts. Even at present, the number of works is infinitesimal (Baskey 2001). However, its importance as conspicuous urban ethos should not go unnoticed.

The present study attempts to understand under what circumstances the worship of this minor deity came into prominence and became part of the contemporary urban religious ethos. To fulfil this objective, it will include the discussion on the image, temple, ritualistic behaviour, devotees and votaries. The doggerel poem on Soni (*Sonir Panchali*) throws light on the symbolic understanding of the deity by the people. The history of the present worship of Soni in the studied area brings the interplay of different factors behind this to the fore. These factors include economic, demographic, and social ones. However, at the same time, it must be kept in mind that the factors are deeply rooted in the cosmological belief of the people.

History of worship of Soni in the studied area

The present study has been undertaken in a town named Chinsurah (also spelt as Chuchura), which is the seat of administration (district headquarters) of Hooghly district in West Ben-

gal. The town is on the bank of River Ganges. It has a colonial past, first occupied by the Dutch and then by the British. The state capital Kolkata is about 35 km away. The town is well-connected with the metropolis by road and local train service. Hooghly-Chinsurah municipality has a population of 177,833 as per last census in 2011. It sprawls over an area of 17.29 km². The rate of literacy is above eighty per cent. It could be said that the town is adequately urban, well-known and a somewhat representative town of its kind in the state.

The river skirts the town in its eastern side. The market areas are Khorua Bazar, Akhan Bazar, Bara Bazar, and Chawk Bazar and there is a considerable Muslim population in these areas. The Grand Trunk Road (G.T. Road) forms the western boundary of the town. The localities along this road as well as in the western areas grew in the form of colonies, mainly after independence. These areas were previously not altogether depopulated but were not densely populated. The gradual influx of uprooted people from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), accompanied by migration from rural areas of this district and other districts have contributed to the rapid growth of population in the eastern and western side of G.T. Road. As a result, the population has increased manifold in last three to four decades. Several areas referred to as “colonies” also cropped up in this portion. It must be mentioned here that not all these areas fall within the jurisdiction of Hooghly-Chinsurah municipality, but the people in these localities equally share the urban life and are classified for enumeration under “census town” (CT). For all practical reasons, their inclusion in the present study is necessary for the obvious fact of their contribution to the shaping of urban religious behaviour.

In the area, there are as many as thirty temples of Soni where regular worship is held. The temples appear in greater number in the newly developed areas of the town in western and north-western parts. The report of earliest worship also comes from these areas.

The earliest date is 1969 at Rabindranagore and the next at Khadinamore a year later. In Hospital Road, the temple was established in 1978. The beginning of worship at Barabazar is recent; the temple was completed in 2012. It is important to emphasise that the worship of Soni first came into being in the newly grown areas of the town, where people from Bangladesh, and other parts of the district settled after socio-economic turmoil. The temples were built by the side of the road mainly at junctions where very often there were a rickshaw stand.

In most of the cases, it was the rickshaw pullers and drivers who organised the first worship of *Boro Thakur* (meaning great god), another name of Soni. At Ghorimore the temple of Soni was established by the old bus stand. The drivers, cleaners, helpers, etc., of this stand started the worship of Soni here.

Devotees and votaries

The majority of the votaries who regularly attend the temple of Soni are women of different ages. On the evening of the day of worship (*puja*), they are found sitting around the priest on the floor of the small temple. Their fasting varies on the basis the nature of the vow they keep. They may observe their vows for a year or more, in which case they fast each Saturday. Sometimes they fast on one day in the month, always on Saturday. They

keep this vow to fulfil a wish (*manat*), which is essentially a mental activity about which no public announcement is made. Manat is a promise made before the divinity or deity to offer something special to that divinity if he fulfils the wish.

Undergoing such ordeal every Saturday is known as *Bar Kara* (observing the day). The informants stated various reasons behind their worship, such as employment, mental peace and getting rid of misery, curing of disease, prosperity in business, defeat of enemy, and marriage of daughter.

On fulfilment of such desire, they offer a grand oblation to the deity. Some offer a golden or silver eye to the god, others a golden ring. The devotees also donate significant amounts of funds for the building of a large temple of the deity. Votaries sometimes bear the cost of idol or worship individually or jointly.

The votaries have deep faith in the deity. They believe if the god casts his malevolent eye upon anybody he is sure to be destroyed. In contrast, his benevolence can make a man prosper. They even relate some incidences of their life in support of their belief in divine magnanimity. We can present two case studies in this connection.

Case study 1

G.P. (male, 45 years) runs a sweet shop adjacent to a *Soni Mondir* (temple of Soni). He also looks after the temple, keeping the valuable gifts offered to the deity in safe custody. Regular offerings of money are also kept with him for the annual ceremony. He pays the cost of the idol every year. He dedicates all the fortune he has to the benevolence of Boro Thakur. He was employed in a different shop as sweet maker after coming to this place from another town. He was very devoted and regularly attended the worship of Soni each Saturday. Unexpectedly, the offer for purchasing the shop that he currently owns now came from its previous owner. He expressed his helplessness in buying it as he had little money with him at that time. However, the owner was intent on selling this shop to him even below the original asking price. In the end, G.P. purchased the shop at a much lower price. He believed all this happened because of the benevolence of the deity.

Case study 2

M. M. (male, 59 years) has been pulling a rickshaw for last twenty years. Earlier, he worked in a factory, which closed. He thinks whatever improvement in his life took place after he came here. Some twelve years back, he became actively engaged in the affairs of Soni temple, which is situated by the rickshaw stand. False accusations were made against him that he had embezzled from the fund of Soni worship. He prayed to the deity to be acquitted of all charges of defamation and that no misfortune would befall him and he considered the period of his life after this incident to be the most prosperous time in his life. During that period, he married off two of his daughters and built a house with tiled roof. His reasoning was that had he misappropriated the funds divine wrath would not have spared him. Two years later, he was requested to take active charge of the worship. Since then he has been actively involved in organising the worship and has served also as the secretary of the organising committee.

The rituals and their organisation

According to written instructions, the Soni worship should be held in the month of *Srabān* (a part of July and August) but in practice it is held every Saturday evening. There is no fixed month for the annual worship (*batsarik puja*). No mention of its annual worship is found in the spiritual almanack of the Hindus (*ponjika*). In the area, the annual worship is held in any of the months of *Kartick* (a part of October and November), *Agrahayan* (a part of November and December), *Phalgun* (a part of February and March) or *Chaitra* (a part of March and April). The date is fixed according to the convenience of the organiser. In some places, the date is fixed in the month Phalgun, like that of in Hooghly, elsewhere it is held on the last Saturday in the month of Chaitra. The worship is to be held in *Krishna Paksha* (dark lunar fortnight).

The regular worship of Soni every Saturday evening is conducted by a priest. The rituals include the main worship, reading of the poem (*panchali*), offering of the fire (*arati*), and hardened cake (*batasa*) of flour and molasses throwing (*loot*).

Main worship follows the usual sequences and methods practised in daily Hindu worship. It includes *Achaman*, *Swastibachan*, *Sankalpa*, worship of *Siddhidata* (Ganesh), *Samanarghya*, *Suddhi*, *Pranam*, reading of *Nabagraha Stottram* and *Soni Stottram*, and *Anjali*.

After these rituals are over, a poem written by one Sombhunath Biswas is read aloud. There are some other songs as well. Offering of fire is held after reading of the song in the form of the waving of light, lighted camphor, conch, or a piece of cloth by the priest in front of the image.

A handful of a kind of light, solid cake of flour and molasses are thrown towards the devotees present there. The cakes so received are considered to be the grace of the deity (*prasad*).

There are two distinct features of the rituals associated with the worship of Soni. The worship cannot be done inside the house. If it is performed in a domestic sphere, it must be done in the courtyard or any other open space. The food offered to Soni cannot be taken into the house. It must be consumed outside. Another custom is that the god is to be worshiped in the evening.

The annual worship of the deity is more elaborated than the weekly Saturday one. The priest performs the worship of sacrificial fire (*hom*). Moreover, the image is replaced with a new one which is to be worshiped for the following year. The annual worship is held with much pomp and grandeur. On the next day of worship, feeding of boys and girls (*balak bhajan*) is held at many places. It is a grand affair in which thousand of devotees partake of the offered food. It is considered to be an integral part of the annual worship.

There is no permanent separate committee for organising the worship. At some places, an organising committee is formed one month or so before the annual worship. It comprised a president, secretary, treasurer and other members. Sometimes, the local organising committee constitutes the committee for the worship. The members are selected by consensus of the people present in the meeting. The secretary is usually a vocal person having initiative and proficiency in such kind of activities. The committee members are mostly rickshaw pullers, small businessmen, or traders who carry on their business near

to the temple of Soni. However, a comparatively wealthy businessman is often selected as the president of the organising committee.

Panchali

Panchali is a common poem written in Bengali. There are two main narratives in the poem of the deity: story of the Brahmin named Sumangal (Sumangal Brahmaner Upakhyan), and story of the merchant named Sankhapati (Sankhyapati Sadagarer Kahini)

Sumangal Brahmaner Upakhyan

Sumangal was born of a poor Brahmin Srihari who was a very pious person. Sumangal became well versed in the scriptures within a very short period. He opted for further learning and travelled extensively. While abroad, he received the news of the death of his parents. He grieved deeply, and resumed travelling restlessly from place to place. At the same time, he learnt much.

At last he reached Bidarbha. Sribatsya was the king of that country. He welcomed Sumangal. Hearing of his identity, the king gave his two sons to learn under his guidance. Soni came to him in disguise of a student and was admitted. Shortly, he learnt everything. Then Sumangal asked for his identity. Soni introduced himself. Sumangal kowtowed before him and prayed how he would be relieved from his sufferings. The god replied that his sufferings were still left and told him to go to the bank of river to meditate on the name of Lord Vishnu. Brahmin did accordingly. However, due to a mistake in his meditation, he fell under the wrathful eye of Soni. Soni created two illusory heads of two sons of the king and had his sons hidden somewhere. Seeing his sons nowhere, the king began searching for them. He found the heads of his sons on the thigh of Sumangal. He thought that Sumangal had beheaded his sons. He put Sumangal in jail. In jail, Sumangal cried in the name of Lord Vishnu. At last, his suffering came to end.

Soni released the sons who went to their father, king Sribatsya. Then Sribatsya realised the great mistake he had made by putting Sumangal in jail. He rushed to Sumangal and asked the reasons. Sumangal narrated the entire incident. Both of them went to Soni, They asked for his pity. The king wanted to know how he could propitiate him. Soni detailed the method of worshipping him on Saturday. Then the king started the worship of Soni. Thus, the worship of Soni spread and was established among the commoners.

Sankhyapati Sadagarer Kahini

Sankhyapati was a prosperous merchant who lived in Bijayanagar. Once he went out in trade on a sea voyage and saw people worshipping a god in one port. Sankhyapati asked the name of the deity and learnt from them the method of its worship. Accordingly, he started to worship of Soni. His fortune grew manifold. Being filled with pride, he neglected worship and soon divine wrath befell him. The king arrested him on charges of thievery and was sent behind bars. There Sankhyapati realised his folly. He began to call on Soni, who felt pity for him. Then, he appeared in dream of the king and ordered him to release the merchant. The king released him with honour. Sankhyapati returned to his

country and began the worship of the deity with more openness.

Class and worship

The people who worship the deity Soni primarily belong to the middle or lower middle classes; most of them are from the backward section of the population. No caste affiliation with reference to the worship of the deity can be made. In fact, it is a class phenomenon. The worship of the deity is rife among those people whom we can call the disprevidged class of society. The current resurgence of the worship has taken place in this section of the population. Weber (1963) discussed the nature of religious behaviour of this class, which also seems very pertinent to the present situation. He wrote that the religious need of the middle and lower bourgeoisie puts greater emphasis upon domestic and family life and is directed towards greater peace.

Weber (1963) added further that the religion of the disprevidged classes of the urban territory cannot be said to be a religion of salvation. It is in no way a religion of ethical type. He strongly asserted that ethical religion had scarcely ever arisen primarily in this group. The devotees of Soni in the present study nonetheless aspire for salvation. Their expectations are some material returns and some mundane gains. Decades earlier, Weber noticed this state of mind among disprevidged people. He clearly mentioned that the particular need of such people was to obtain release from their suffering.

Analysis

The present study started with certain basic observations on the religious behaviour of the urban people in a West Bengal town where, within a short period of three decades, there has been a rapid sprouting of small temples of a secondary deity of the Hindu pantheon. This deity is named variously as *Soni thakur* (Soni god), *Grohoraj* (king of the planets) etc., but the most remarkable of its names is Boro thakur meaning “the great god” and this euphemism is not without reason. An investigation into the particular socio-economic condition that resulted in the genesis of the worship of Soni in its present form reveals the overwhelming influence of the deity over the people. It is not that worship of Soni was entirely unknown to the people, but it is undeniable that it has no prominence in the ritual life of the Hindus in the Vedic period. There is no credible reference to the indispensability of its worship in the 19th and 20th centuries in Bengal. He was worshiped in households, which took place in the courtyard of a distressed family, which performed it as a vow to get rid of the misfortune. We cannot say that such worship was pervasive in nature (Roy 2001). Therefore, the recent mushrooming of Soni temples by the side or at the crossing of roads may appear antithetical to the condition prevailed with regard to the worship of Soni. A study of the feature of the deity may be a good starting point to understand the recent spread of its worship.

The deity has many features. He is cruel-eyed, inauspicious, slow-moving, lame, dark-complexioned and deadly. He has many names. He was cursed by his wife and mother. His is benevolent, but his glance is inauspicious and destructive. He is a son of Surya and Chaya (Surya or Sun, i.e., the solar god of the Hindus and his wife Chaya). The

sun is the eternal source of light. From that light, emerged the dark-skinned Soni. In Buddhist tradition, he rides on tortoise and wields a rod. This is reminiscent of the Dharma, the popular folk god of Bengal. In occidental tradition, he is seen to marry his sister. He is darkly depicted as some cruel divinity. In contrast, he has a very different noble image in the Roman pantheon.

This again points to the story of Yama, another son of the Sun was asked by his sister Yami to cohabit with her. He also wields the rod in his hand. Moreover, he is dark-skinned and lame. Yama is also called Dharmaraj, which suggests a mythical universalism. There may be a structural interpretation to this or a diffusionist explanation.

The image of the deity is modelled after southern tradition, and the names of places mentioned in the poem are in the southern territory. In ancient and medieval Bengal, the traders used to go south, and southern traders came to Bengal. They might have brought with them the worship of Soni.

One may suppose that the pervasive Dharma worship of the medieval Bengal among the commoners has been rejuvenated in the present oblation of Soni. Though such correlation is not unfounded, this would be an over-simplification of the state of affairs. The process involved is more complex and probably linked to the cosmology of the people.

The people under study here clearly differentiate between light and dark, not merely at the empirical level but also symbolically. Light is associated with auspicious and greater divinity, whereas dark is identified with more mundane, unnatural, inauspicious and death (Even when Ram and Krishna are described as dark skinned, they have descended to the earth as human incarnations). These cultural meanings of darkness are also manifest in other aspects of the worship of Soni. Soni is worshipped in the dark fortnight of the moon. He prefers blue *Aparajita* flower or *Nilkantha*, i.e., dark colour. The principal offering (*nai-bedyā*) should be of a dark-coloured pea (*mashkalai*) to the deity. One blue cloth is offered. Moreover, the water pitcher (*ghat*) should be made of iron and coloured black. An iron ring and iron throne are also needed, all of which symbolise the dark colour. Again iron is ritually lowly ranked below the more pure metals in rituals, namely gold, silver or copper. A similar categorisation may be observed in other spheres of Hindu life and rituals (Das 1997).

Soni is not worshipped inside the house; if we look into the nature of classification of space among the people, we find that inside of room or house is more sacred than the outside. Soni's worship outside the domestic premises can be paralleled with this identification of outside universe. Such identification is again reflected in the features that resulted out of the malevolence or casting of glance of this deity and narrated in the poem. The popular belief is that a person saddled with misfortune under the influence of Soni becomes restless, cannot stay inside the home, and roams about like a vagabond. He is ruined and he cannot settle domestically. People believe that this feature can be found in the god himself. One devotee narrated the following mythical story in support this belief:

Once Soni was fallen in the displeasure of his father Surya. The father was aggrieved of Soni's maltreatment of his mother. An altercation ensued between father and son. As a result of this, Soni was driven out of home, and after that he went away from his father. Thus, we find the Saturn far away from the Sun in the solar system.

In the poem, the two narratives also testify to the same proposition. Sumangal was away from home when got afflicted with the curse of Soni. This was also the case with Sankhyapti. He was on a sea voyage in connection with his trade. He was made a prisoner under the malevolence of Soni in foreign country. In the pauranik story, King Sribatsya and Chinta speaks much about the belief that discontent of Soni brings domestic disorganisation and unsettlement. Thus it appears in opposition to the domestic or private sphere of the household.

This cosmology of the people became a synonym for the socio-economic situation of people from Bangladesh in the 1960s and 1970s. They had to abandon their homes in Bangladesh and their colony grew in the peripheral areas of the Chinsurah. Their life at the time was full of anxiety, uncertainty, poverty, and marginality. The economic turmoil adversely affected also other people, resulting a strong migration from rural areas to the town. A good number of the men of these families took rickshaw pulling and other menial work as their vocations. They experienced a sudden change of their status and life condition. Driven out of their native villages, they were to accept uncertain destiny in far off places without knowing where to settle. They conceived their misfortune as the evil influence of the planet (*Graher fer*). They believed that only the benevolence of Soni could save them.

There is a saying that Soni is the god of the rickshaw pullers. Such association is no way tenable because the rickshaw is a recent entry into the material life of the people. However, the popular saying gains ground because wherever there is a rickshaw stand a temple of Soni can almost always be in proximity. Investigations reveal that there are people other than the rickshaw pullers among the organisers, but the latter figure prominently.

Here I would like to introduce the concept of cultural space or cosmo-cultural space to explain this situation. The idea of cosmo-cultural space assumes an association between the cosmos and the ethos of a particular cultural group. Religious belief, rituals, and the pantheon are not considered to be homogenous categories to the cultural groups sharing a common source for these. The different cultural groups would have different sorts of access to the different levels of these religious units (aspects of religion). Cosmo-cultural space is a cognitive space in the cultural mosaic and can be understood by interpretative exercise. It is again an inclusive/exclusive category. As inclusive, it would show overlapping in religious ethos; as exclusive, it would not permit any such intrusion. They may have other sorts of religious associations, but those do not characterise them as dominantly as the worship of Soni does in present case. This is true for similar forms of worships where cosmology, rituals and group identity juxtapose. Thus the saying that Soni is the god of the rickshaw pullers seems appropriate to certain extent. It is because they can historically and culturally identify it with them. They can enjoy an economic influence over the affairs as they manage the funds. In other forms of worship that are held in the region, they are not allowed such access. Similar sayings are heard also in case of Lord Kartik who is popularly described as the god of the prostitutes. Earlier he was described as the god of the thieves.

In connection with the above discussion, it can be said that there are multiple reasons behind the origin and recent spurt of the worship of Soni. They can identify the god

as dispeller of particular misfortune that befalls upon them. The features of the deity are equated with their misfortune. Cosmo-culturally, there was little chance to be identified with others' god or goddess worship because other communities had already dominated them. Similarly, other cultural groups have certain exclusive categories in these ritual ceremonies with regard to their worship. It can be seen that the other cultural groups have formed certain exclusive categories if spoken of cosmo-culturally. Moreover, people who have greater association with the worship of this deity can symbolically, or rather cosmo-culturally, relate to the affairs of the god. With the worship of Soni, the organisers could assert themselves. Marginal people's social solidarity is also consolidated. Other people not belonging to "them" come to recognise their social identity and position through their regular participatory role on Saturday evenings.

Mandelbaum (1966) differentiates between two types of religion. Tanaka (2003) has also pointed to this dichotomy of transcendental religion and pragmatic religion. On pragmatic religion, he writes that it is 'used for local exigencies, for personal benefit, for individual welfare'. He adds that 'the pragmatic looks to the curing of a sick child, the location of a lost valuable, victory in a local tussle' (ibid. 863). It is clear that the worship of Soni falls in this category.

Therefore, it can be said that people in urban settings interpreted the dominant cultural symbols they use to make meaning in different spheres of life. This may be an unconscious process, but its implication cannot be undermined. They had seen the worship of planet (including Soni, of course) in the villages or native places from where they migrated. This was overwhelmingly a household affair. People used to seek personal favour of the deity for redressing their misfortune of a typical nature which they paraphrased as the curse of the planet. However, this sporadic worship of irregular nature when contextualised in a city or town became a public affair, precisely reflecting the symbolic meaning that it held. Thus, it became a part of urban ethos (Geertz 1973). A particular character and quality of their life and its distinctive styles are embodied in this ethos.

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Povzetek

Hindujci v Indiji častijo devet planetov. Verjamejo, da je teh devet planetov prisotnih v in vplivajo na potek človeškega življenja. Študija, izvedena v starem mestu Chinsurah v okrožju Hooghly zahodnega Bengala, poskuša razumeti, pod kakšnimi pogoji je čaščenje manj pomembnega božanstva Saturna (Soni) prišlo v ospredje in je postalo del sodobnega mestnega verskega etosa. Raziskava razkriva socialno-ekonomske in zgodovinske dejavnike v tem okolju v odnosu do čaščenja božanstva, ki so spodbudili nastajanje templjev tega božanstva. Prvi templji božanstva Soni so nastali v času priseljevanja ljudi iz Bangladeša in migracij iz podeželskih območij. Študija uvaja tudi koncept kozmokulturnega prostora, ki pomaga razumeti verski etos proučevanih ljudi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: planetarno božanstvo, čaščenje, etos, smešna pesem, kozmična-kultura, razred

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