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**Journal of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Research and Training
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EDITORIAL

Greetings for the New Year 2020

Published in June and December, ADIVASI is a bi-annual research journal. The journal aims to publish original unpublished research papers on tribal centric issues to highlight those aspects hitherto unexplored. It also publishes articles on Scheduled Castes. The corpus of the journal though is largely anthropological in nature; its scope is broadened to make it multidisciplinary to cope with the changing times. It endeavours to provide a forum to eminent scholars as well as young researchers to exchange innovative ideas and speculations. Tribal literature- contents and forms, representation of tribal life and culture in different genres of literature, tribal art and crafts, dances, music, paintings, tribal culture, languages/dialects, polity, administration, geography, history, economy, sociology, anthropology, tourism, ethno botany, traditional knowledge system, leadership: dalit literature and development aspects etc. are the core issues; other relevant subjects are also incorporated in this journal.

Published since 1955 ADIVASI has earned the distinction of being the oldest anthropological research journal of Odisha. This is the 59th volume number one. For this volume we received a number of research articles for which it was decided to bring out its two bi-annual numbers separately - the 1st one containing articles relating to different aspects of tribal ethnography and the 2nd one having articles on various dimensions of tribal development. This issue is the number one of June, 2019. In this issue 08 articles based on empirical research contributed by nine research scholars are presented.

At the beginning, the article titled **“Not a Mere Art, But a Life Style: Koraput & Its *Desia Naat*- An Aesthetic Introspection”** written by Dr. Sourav Gupta has been presented. In this article the author has discussed the findings of an empirical study on one indigenous form of performing arts - the *Desia Naat* that has been for ages a favourite artistic practice among tribals of undivided Koraput. The relevance of *Desia Naat* acquires considerable significance if the change has to be brought from within rather than imposition from outside. This paper highlights the artistic and performative aspects of the idiom and its bonding with the *desia* way of life, its philosophy which is so central to any understanding of under development in the region. The study aims to point towards the aesthetics of the form in relation to the socio-economic and socio-cultural encounters which the tribal society in Koraput has undergone post globalization.

Next comes the paper on Tribal Music titled **“Tribal Music of India: Some Ethnomusicological Findings with special reference to Bhil Tribe”**. This paper authored by Dr. Prachi Vaidya-Dublay focuses on Adim Sangeet in an ethnomusicological study framework. Apart from discussing the features of Adim Sangeet, the study has made specific observations on the Rathwa Bhil tribe of Gujarat in India. The author analyses a range of

songs important in the socio-cultural context of the tribe and the message that those songs deliver.

The 3rd paper titled **“Tribal Shamanism and Megalithic Rituals: A Study of The Shamanic Rituals of Bettakkuruma Community”** is prepared by Ms. Indu Menon of KIRTADS, Kozhikkod of Kerala. This paper describes the definition and the discourse of shamanism and the ways through which Bettakkuruma tribe of Kerala practice Megalithic rituals. Also, it analyses the divine bond between the ancestral spirits that inhabit Nad’keere, the world afterlife and the living world. This is a study of the rituals of Bettakkuruma community that inhabit the Nilgiri Biosphere reserve and believe in shamanic practices.

The next paper titled **“Tattoo - A Community Marker among a few Tribes of Odisha: A Study with special reference to The Santals of Mayurbhanj”** is written by Prof. Harapriya Samantaraya. The paper tries to explore the cultural importance of tattoos in the tribal tradition and the entry of Chita-Muruja in the tribal culture. In addition, it also attempts to offer a descriptive analysis as how tattoo plays a significant role in determining social status among a few tribal women folks and their interethnic relations.

“Changing Manners, Rituals and Identity in Tribal Culture with special reference to Kui Culture” authored by Anuja Mohan Pradhan comes as the 5th article. It focuses on how manners and rituals specific to a community do reflect the world view as well as the cultural identity of the community. The manners are certified by age, birth position, wealth and power. On the other hand, rituals have the sanction of belief of a community which in turn is part of their culture and these are juxtaposed with major events of an individual’s life. Rituals assimilate into ceremonies and through which a communal or community identity is created and consolidated through shared experiences. Kui cultural traits of manners, language, rituals and in the long run the traditions have gone a sea change in present times. What makes them relevant is more relevant than what duplicates the age old practices and procedures. The challenge is whether that their world view sustains a logical test of enhanced knowledge and changed environment of the indigenous people.

The 6th paper titled **“Impact of Mass Media on Health and Hygiene Practices amongst Mishing Tribe: Looking from A Gender Lens”** is written by Ms. Minakhi Mishra & Dr. Braja S. Mishra. It is about a tribal community of Assam named Mishing which has its own ethno-medicinal body of knowledge wherein stigmatised practices against women are not uncommon. Quite interestingly, almost akin to the concept of ‘Health’ defined by World Health Organisation, the Mishing consider health as an absence of any disease of physical, mental, spiritual and social nature. The paper makes an attempt to understand how mass media (including internet) has impacted changes in health system and health behaviour including gender discriminations amongst the Mishing community.

The 7th paper contributed by Dr. B. N. Mohanty is titled **“Special Development Councils: Commitments and Challenges in Cultural Development of Tribes in Odisha”**. The main theme of this paper is that in order to ensure more holistic, effective, inclusive and participatory tribal development, the State Government of Odisha felt the necessity to involve tribals extensively at all stages of the development process, taking the cultural

development aspects on priority basis. Keeping the above objectives in view, the State Government has set up Special Development Councils (SDC) in 9 tribal dominated districts of Odisha. The paper provides an insight on the commitments and challenges of the Special Development Councils towards conservation of tribal culture along with their development.

“Empirical Observations on Mother and Child Health and Nutrition among PVTGs of Odisha” is the 8th paper contributed by Ms. Sukruti Sarangi. The paper provides an empirical observation on the traditional health care behaviour of the PVTGs of Odisha in respect of mother and child health. The general observations on the PVTGs indicate that the effectiveness of health-giving programs depend upon the health seeking behaviour of the PVTG communities which is influenced by their beliefs, culture and tradition.

My sincere thanks are due to the paper contributors for their painstaking efforts in preparing and presenting their articles. I am extremely grateful to Shri Sarat Ch. Mohanty, Associate Editor of Adivasi and Consultant, SCSTRTI for giving a substantial time for a thorough reading and editing of all the articles and for his efforts not only for bringing out this issue but also for all the issues of ADIVASI published over last 13 years. I also thank Dr. Mihir Kumar Jena, Senior Tribal Domain Expert, SLAU, Special Development Council for rendering editorial support to enrich some contents of this journal.

It is hoped that the articles published in this issue of ADIVASI will be of much help to the researchers, development practitioners, academicians and general readers interested in conducting research and acquiring knowledge in tribal society, culture as well as their development. I invite the research scholars to enrich all our future volumes with their valuable suggestions and contribution of empirical research papers.

Dated, the 17th January, 2020
Bhubaneswar

A.B. Ota
EDITOR

NOT A MERE ART, BUT A LIFE STYLE: KORAPUT & ITS *DESIA NAAT*- AN AESTHETIC INTROSPECTION

Sourav Gupta ¹

ABSTRACT

The undivided Koraput district comprising the newly bifurcated districts of Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri is the most under developed region of the country. Bordering onto Chattisgarh's Bastaar and Andhra Pradesh's Vizianagram the area has hilly terrains, forest cover and a major tribal population which brings along with other things including ultra leftist insurgencies, a repository of indigenous cultural flora and fauna etc. For the tribals, unlike the 'civilized', culture is not practiced specially; rather, it is a way of life. Theatre is omnipresent and one indigenous form of performing arts - the *Desia Naat* has been for ages a favourite artistic practice among tribals of Koraput. It comes so naturally that it is almost as common as taking breath and having food. The art is woven intrinsically to the life style of the *desias*- the name by which the local tribal people are called. There have been continuous efforts by the government to address the issues of underdevelopment in the region and the modern mass media has been used as an instrument of change without much success. The relevance of *Desia Naat* acquires considerable significance if the change has to be brought from within rather than imposition from outside. The present paper highlights the artistic and performative aspects of the idiom and its bonding with the *desia* way of life, its philosophy which is so central to any understanding of under development in the region. The study aims to point towards the aesthetics of the form in relation to the socio-economic and socio-cultural encounters which the tribal society in Koraput has undergone post globalization.

Keywords: Koraput, Desia Naat

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Koraput-lost under the looming shadows of Odisha

Odisha, the premiere eastern state of India has been widely toured and researched for its diverse socio-religious-cultural flora and fauna. The dominant paradigm of research in Odisha as centered round the Jagannath culture and religious architecture and practices prevalent in northern and coastal areas. The western Odisha too is well known for Sambalpuri and Kosli cultural milieu churning out popular products like the Sambalpuri dances, sarees and *gamchas*. The situation has left the southern part of the state in considerable wilderness. Due to problems of communication, under development and insurgencies, coupled with administrative narrowness biased heavily in favour of Bhubaneswar-Puri-Cuttack-Sambalpur-Bramhapur axis, the area inhabited by tribal and in possession of the richest community culture has stayed largely in shadows of its northern and western counterparts. Therefore, the Desia Naat inspite of being an extremely popular theatrical folk form prevalent in the undivided Koraput district has not been able to become a representative form of Odisha. Odisha is happy and proud to be identified with Odishi, Sambalpuri, Dalkhai etc. in dance genre and forms like *Gotipua*, *Prahlad nataka*, *Ravana Chhaya* in folk theatre. It seems as if the undivided Koraput region has not been able to develop itself strong enough to be a true Odishan region or imbibe the man made characteristics of brand Odisha. The *desia naat* is a popular folk form of the region practiced by the *Bhumia*, *Kondh*, *Bhotra*, *Amantya*, *Paiko*, *Paroja*, *Soura*, *Gadaba*, *Bonda* and *Durua* tribes. An aesthetic enquiry into the neglected *desia naat* transcends the boundary of arts and dwells deep into the silence of others on the region and its elements- it is mentioned only for academic necessities and administrative compulsions and the region's own indifference towards the lack of attention. Is the silence and indifference, a major cause of the under development and negligence of the region and its culture, actually an element integral to the form, *desia naat*, itself ?

An account of the politico-administrative dissection on Koraput over the years

Koraput, known for rich and diverse types of mineral deposits, is located along the Eastern Ghats. The area was ruled by several dynasties such as *Satavahanas*, *Ikshvakus*, *Nalas*, *Ganga* kings and kings of *Surya vans*. In ancient times when the *Nalas* ruled this tract with Pushkari near modern Umakote was their capital city. In the medieval period, Nandapur developed as the capital under the *Silavamsi* kings and after them under the kings of the solar dynasty. Viravikrama Deb of the *Surya* dynasty shifted his capital to Jeypore about the middle of the 17th century and developed into a prosperous town. Koraput came under the French possession in 1753 A.D. At that time the French General was Bussy, who obtained it from Nizam. Anand Raju, the Raja of Vijayanagar invited the English to expel the French from the Sarkar. On 1st Dec 1758 A.D., at Rajahmundry, a decisive battle took place where the French were defeated. The Raja of Jeypore Ramachandra Deo (1781-1825 A.D.) was granted a permanent *sanad*, document of possession, by the British. With the march of time, Jeypore Estate was administered directly by the British under the Act XXVI of 1839. It was a part of the erstwhile Madras Presidency and the British, like they did throughout India, identified the area as a profitable trade route and built roads to connect Jagdalpur with Visakhapatnam through Salur in the sixth decade of the nineteenth century. The railway lines came nearly seven decades later. Meanwhile the British also laid down the roadmap of development by identifying the aboriginals as tribes and started making the mistake of pulling them into the so called mainstream, a mistake which became a philosophy of tribal development in post independence India.

Koraput became a district of Odisha state on 1st April 1936. The Dandakaranya Project which started in 1958 is a turning point in the shaping up of the region. The project was launched to rehabilitate the refugees of East Pakistan who were given shelter in Bastar and Koraput. Although it did bring about material development to the area but is also accused of polluting the natural way of life of the tribals. As Krushna Chandra Panigrahy observes:

“Taking an overall view, one cannot help feeling that the balance is heavily loaded on the negative side. But here a question arises, whether this negative balance is just another confirmation of the classical view of the harmful effects of contact between people of different levels of culture and technology or whether it is the result of inadequate planning and incomplete approach to the problem of (by the forcible induction of) development.” (1)

In October 1992, erstwhile Koraput district was divided, resulting in the creation of Malkangiri, Rayagada and Nabarangpur district along with the present Koraput district. The districts of Kalahandi and Bolangir were also cut down and new districts of Nuapada and Sonepur were created. The Planning Commission termed these backward areas as KBK and a lot of funds were pumped in through various development schemes like RLTAP etc. The modern anthropologists and sociologists have been of the view that the development imposed upon these areas has caused considerable adulteration and degradation in the tribal way of life leading them to become prey of modern social evils.

The tribal way of life in Koraput

As the name suggests, *under a tree*, is what Koraput signifies and is an apt statement to represent a life style born on the laps of nature. A place which is blessed with lush green covers and hilly terrains have been inhabited by primitive tribes like the *Parajas, Duruas, Gonds, Bondas, Kondhs* etc. The trees and the fields form an integral part of the upbringing of the people of this region. The agriculture, hunting, seasonal changes, alcohol drinking and a highly sophisticated community way of life, bereft largely of the worldly evils of modern society, instills a free spirit which forms the basis of the arts. It has been opined that the tribals of these region are considered as ‘*simple, truthful and freedom oriented*’. (2:49) The art cannot be studied in isolation. It is an artistic way of life where art is intertwined with nature and human psychology. This art is not to be honed but to be enjoyed. And that is what the spirit of *desia* is, the naat is just an idiom suited for academic study. The aesthetics of the *desia* culture is born of a composite life style of the tribals containing elements of religion, rituals, agriculture, peasantry, food habits, attires, epics.....and the list goes on. In short, it is an account of an artistic life in the true sense of the term.

As discussed earlier, the social organization of tribals have undergone disturbances with the imposition of so called development; the features of their way of life still comprise staying in hills and forests, migrating at times leading to redefining of their identities. They continue to live in simple, socio-culturally homogeneous societies with their own language, dialects and oral traditions. There are traditional village councils regulating the different events such as ceremonies, worships, festivities, education and occupation.(2:47) The youth dormitories provide separated ambiances for boys and girls to grow up through different trainings of peasantry, artisans and eventually culminating to choosing of life partners.

“The dormitories play an important part in the life of the people....the arts of music and dance are also taught outside the dormitory in the akhara, an institution which is common to

the tribes and villages. Here festivities are held and music and dance are organized. Dance patterns evolve directly from this life style." (3:189)

The origin of the *desia naat* is no different from the other folk forms. It won't be an exaggeration to state that the form evolved from the life style of the tribals of Koraput. Life style, here is a composite assortment of rituals, religion, occupation, oral traditions and festivals. Agriculture occupies a vital position here as in all places and the rituals start from washing the plough, to sowing of seeds to the harvest of new crops. The turn of different seasons create different climatic conditions and different physical conditions also for agriculture and other works. So, seasons bring different rituals and worships with them which again provides for cultural celebration. Some times the performance itself is a part of the ritual. A number of deities are worshipped in the form of sometimes nature, tree, cow, ghosts or as simple as a piece of rock, stone or a wood. In Gopinath Mohanty's *Daadibudha*, we find a wooden plank and a termite hill being worshipped in a Koraput village as *Daadibudha* and *Hunkabudha* respectively. The festivals centre round different food items and are celebrated as *Parab* in different times of the year starting from *Dhan-nua* where the new rice is offered to God, a similar festival known as *Nuakhai*, *Pus parab* in winter, *Mandai* and *Dialli* in February, *Am-nuakhai* in March, *Chaiti Parab* in Chaitra (March-April), *Ghanta parab* in April and *Amus* in July. There are several other celebrations at the level of personal, family and community. The life cycle comprising birth and death, diseases and human being's innate desires to have rain, crops, babies, flowers and fruits drive them to different rituals.

"The tribal do not take art just for art's sake.....it is socially significant. The target is never limited to beauty and aesthetics only" (4:88)

The cultural performances form an integral part of almost all the rituals. Song, dance and playing of musical instruments are indispensable. The saga of life which goes on through out the year, exposing people to a range of feelings and emotions and their acceptance to it in a simplistic manner leads to compositions of song, dance, dialogues, characters and situations which put together, gives birth to a very unique form of folk theatre, the *desia naat*.

Structure and components of *Desia Naat*

Folk forms of theatre have existed from the first day when the ancient man started communicating. It has been there before the inception of any sort of dramatic literature or aesthetic theory. However, the Vedic period brought theatre to limelight through a systematic account and practice of performances. The decline of Sanskrit theatre saw the emergence of folk theatre in various regional languages or dialects in the 14th century. Unlike the other parts of India where the text of the theatre became important, Odisha has always had forms where emphasis is more on the performative aspects.

"The entire history of Oriya literature does not record a single dramatic writing in the modern sense from its beginning till the last quarter of the nineteenth century, except that evidence of one drama captioned *Padmabati Haran* having been written and staged as early as 1834 is available." (5:117)

However, there are contradicting opinions about the scripts being actually composed, specially when it comes to folk forms like the *desia naat*.

"Interestingly, some of the local epic story found among the tribes have been found in drama form, which indicates the multi-generic form of folk epics. The Kondh-Paraja tribes and the

Dom caste perform the epic drama called “desianat” which means regional nata. Desia is a link language in Kalahandi and Koraput district used by more than 51 tribes and other non-tribals. This epic story performed in drama form reminds us of the *kavya-natya* form and the *chhanda-natya* form, as the dialogues in *desianat* are in verse form composed by local folk dramatists. Sometime, the professional singers compose such epic drama.” (6: 95-96)

It is quite obvious that the free theatre made by rural people had imbibed the conventions of theatre affecting elements like space and characters, to some extent, the subject of the play also. As opined by Satapathy, it is a wonderful form of tribal theatre as ‘*it coordinated both classical and folk styles*’ (7:185). Let us go through the making and preparation of a *desia naat*.

Subject and Characters

The subject of the *desia naat* is primarily dominated by mythological narratives based on the *puranas* like the Vishnu Purana, the Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. Some of the old plays are *Ravana Baddha*, *Kansa Baddha* and *Sita Chori*. Some of the plays written by Rama Chandra Deva IV, King of Jeypore, include *Kumbhasura Baddha*, *Indrajeet Baddha*. Bikram Dev Verma started an association Jaganmitra and wrote plays like *Banasura Baddha*, *Jalandhara Baddha*, *Radha Madhaba*, *Kundamala* etc. Most of the plays are based on mythological episodes, the most popular among them being Ganda badim i.e. 'Killing of Ganda', Subhadra haran i.e. 'Subhadra's Abduction, Taranisena badha i.e. 'Killing of Taranisena', etc. Some of the other names can be mentioned as Niladri haran i.e. 'Niladri's Abduction, Shashirekha haran i.e. 'Shashirekha's Abduction, Bhramarabara, Lid Kumara, Brindabati, and Kumbhasura badha i.e. 'Killing of Kumbhasura'. There is a social drama category where problems faced by the common man with regards to death, diseases, relationship, exploitation are dramatized. Not only serious issues but trivial issues like infidelity, break of friendship, quarrel between two people etc. are also depicted. Some of such plays are *Peta Parasu*, *Dhoba Kumuti*, *Jhalaki Rama*, *Damu Khangar*, *Liti Kumar*, *Kali sesha*, *Dama Angar* etc. Historical events and biopics of people relevant to the region become themes of *desia naat*. Events like *paika vidroha* and characters like Saheed Laxman Naik become subjects of the plays. Some of such plays are *Laxman Nayak*, *Birsa Munda*, *Bharata Chhada*.

While the sacred narratives have religious functions, the secular narratives have socio-cultural functions. It is related to their legendary heroes of recent past vivid in their memory. Through the chronological arrangements of various events of their culture heroes they try to relate their caste history and genealogies with some place and time. Thus the characters of these narratives are semi-true and semi-imaginary. It is found that even in the secular epic the replica of the mythic character of the great epics of the country are clearly discernable.(6:96)

In recent times urban playwrights have tried to write scripts in Desia dialects ranging on different social themes like *Sadhava Raja*, *Nagabali*, *Banakuma* etc. Thus, we can see that inspite of the oral traditions among tribals the original scripts and dialogues cannot be traced. The spirit, structure and idiom of the form remaining intact, the text has in fact given away to modern intervention. We do not know what was actually said in the plays in the past but the form, basic characters and the songs have continued in the newly written scripts also. The structure of the *desia naat* demands the inclusion of some basic permanent characters that will always be there irrespective of the subject matter. The *naatguru*, *sandhi*, *sutradhar* and *duari* are entrusted with key responsibilities central to the quality of the performance. The *naatguru* is the creator of the script and it is he who is virtually the regulator of the entire

performance. After taking Lord Ganesh's blessings he is outside the main performance area. He sits in one corner and conducts the entire play just like the conductor of a philharmonic opera or the referee of a soccer match. He indicates the entries and exits of characters, signals the start and end of a song and also sings and prompts. He is the leader of *palia*, the chorus party. The Sandhi is in charge of the music and song. Through his singing he narrates the theme, situation, entry of different characters, sequence of scenes and controls the accompaniments. The *sutradhara* is a direct import from classical drama coordinating between the performers and the audience throughout the play. The *duari* is a clownish, free spirit who is allowed free mobility into the audience and also into the performance at any point. He usually sits in the audience and from time to time, when the occasion demands starts a lateral dialogue with the audience alongside the main play in a humorous overtone. It is obvious to find a hint of Brecht's alienation in the application of the *duari*. All the three, are therefore basically creating an environment of interactivity between the performers and the audience and in the process the *desia naat* becomes a two way communication. Interestingly, in many current performances all the three roles are performed by the *naat guru* himself and his position thereby becomes extremely important and only a person with immense caliber, multi talent and multi tasking abilities will be able to discharge the responsibility.

Script , dialogues and rehearsals

The preparations for *desia naat* start typically after the harvesting of the new crop of rice. Rehearsals take place every day through 3-5 months after the men return from the fields. The rehearsals are conducted by the *naat guru* or the principal resource person who trains the other artists in a designated rehearsal space termed as *akhada ghara*.

Tribes generally perform it during their Chaitraparva celebrations in the month of Chaitra i.e. March-April. The script is written in local dialect by the Nata Guru, who combines in himself the qualities of playwright, director, and musician. Although he is a professional, the actors are amateurs. The actions and dancing are near-mime as the performers use masks locally prepared by traditional craftsmen. Female roles are played by men. The narratives and song-dialogues are sung either by the Nata Guru or a lead singer. The chorus is the main ingredient of supporting music, repeats them accompanied by a pair of cymbals and *mridanga* i.e. double-ended drum. (8)

Some of them may belong to a single family. Normally the artists learn the art of singing or dancing or playing instruments from their parents or seniors. The tradition continues through family lineage. The rehearsals are also attended by interested friends of the performers. The traditional costumes, jewelleryes and musical instruments are treated, mended and repaired during the rehearsals. The unique thing about the preparatory rehearsal is that unlike modern theatre the director does not assert himself on the performers, in fact there is no director as such. The performers practice according to their roles which are allotted according to their abilities and expertise. There is hardly any written script and dialogues come spontaneously out of the actors according to the situation. Presently, in most performances it is seen that the dialogues are delivered out by the guru who sits on one corner with the musical accompaniments. He sings the songs, regulates the musical hands and also prompts the actors with dialogues. The dialogues are in local dialects, known as *desia* language.

“At the beginning of the *desia nata*, the language used was pure Odiya mixed with Sanskrit. At present *desia nata* has been popularized among the people of the area as the script are written in local *Desia* language.(7:186)”

It may be mentioned here that traces of Odia language prevalent in the area are mixed in *Desia* language. The Odia language of south Odisha is different from that of coastal and western Odisha. Due to its proximity to the bordering states of Chattishgarh and Andhra Pradesh on two sides the language practiced here is a heterogeneous mix of Odia, Hindi, Chattishgadia and Telegu. The tribal language of Bastaar has also trickled into the dialects of Koraput tribal. The dialogues often consist of anecdotes, local slangs, nasty humorous remarks and comments etc. A major portion of the script comprises *desia* songs and dance making *desia naat* a musical theatre form.

Costumes and musical accompaniments

Koraput has an art and craft that are the products of a long historical process in which the spiritual, philosophical and the human dimensions have merged to yield the finest effects of a cultured and civilized life. This art and craft only have made the state a land of rich and diverse artistic achievements. The cultural heritage of Koraput is reflected in its vibrant art forms. Having distinct traditions of painting, architecture, sculpture, handicrafts, music and dance, Koraput boasts of a long and rich cultural heritage. The tribals of Koraput region have retained the rich and varied heritage of colourful dance and music. Through songs and dances the tribes seek to satisfy their inner urge for revealing their soul. The performances give expressions and appreciation of beauty. Colourful costumes are worn during the dance. They put on feathers, flowers and leaves on their head and have a unique way of wrapping a saree around them. Earlier there were no blouses but now they are catching up. Other components of the costume include the *ghagra*, *dhoti*, *khosa*, *paza*, *mali*, *gunjumali*, *andu*, *ghungru*, white *pagdi*, towel, *adli mala*, head clip, *bali suja*, *major munda*, ribbon, *chauri*, *dari*, *gumcha*, *khadu*, whistle signifying a range of cloth, wrap arounds, ribbons, garlands etc. The jewelleryes include nose rings, ear rings, armllets, anklets and huge size round cuff-necklaces. Usually the jewelleryes of tribal are made of gold but in recent times silver, copper and imitations are also in fashion.

The main instrument played in a *desia naat* show is the harmonium which is played by the *naatguru* himself. Among the main accompaniments the *dhamsa*, an indigenous *taal vadya* is the main keeper of the rhythm and beats which is often backed up by the *dungdunga*, *turi* and the *mardal*. The phonetic is provided by another indigenous trumpet called the *mahuri* and *flute*. Apart from these instruments like *nisan*, *dhampa*, *tamak*, *tidibidi*, *jhumuka* is also used. The beauty of the instruments may be attributed to the people's love for the music:

“They manufacture their musical instruments of their own. Some parts of musical instruments are purchased from the local markets and beautiful designs are given in it.”(9:148)

In recent times, modern instruments like synthesizers are also being used which creates a discord in the homogeneity of the original instruments. The smoothness, sweetness and artificial mechanical sound of synthesizer is quite contrary with the crude and lively sounds of the tribal instruments which are played with human effort. The sound born out of physical labour and sweat in these instruments are missing in synthesizer and also in a harmonium.

Settings and performance

Desia naat is traditionally performed in open air spaces improvised into theatre stage by using a raised platform. The performance zone or the stage is stepped. The audience sits on all sides of the stage. In recent times we are seeing a quadrangular stage made of bamboo structure and covered with designer coloured cloth. Even the roof is covered with cloth making it a sort of mini pandal. The performances are at night and therefore the space is lit up. Initially fire torches (*Dihudi*), was used which gradually gave way to petromax lights and subsequently to modern halogens. The stage is bare stage without any set or settings. On one corner of the stage sits the *naatguru* or *sandhi* with the *palia* or the chorus party with musical hands. The *duari* sits with the audience and is free to move anywhere. The performers or actors make entry or exit from one side or any other side. There is no restriction as such regarding the points of entry or exit. The performance starts with the worship of the stage or performance space followed by the Ganesh Bandana.

“Without any written script he (*duari*) acts as a bridge between the performer and the audience. After worshipping the stage, there is Ganesh Bandana; a masked Ganesh usually comes to the stage. The *sutradhar* or the narrator sings praising the lord and seeking his blessings for the smooth conduct of the play.” (10)

The *desia naat* is performed in a loud overtone delivery of dialogues and songs. It almost turns out to be a sort of yelling or shouting at top of the voice. There are orthographical reasons though for this kind of a sound produce as observed by Mahapatra:

“It is, of course, true that the tribal languages have such phonetically peculiar sounds as checked consonants, glottal stop, low tone, stress, long or germinate vowels, positionally different articulation of palatal and velar nasals, different qualities of vowels etc.” (9: 7)

Although good actors and singers manage to be in tune and perform inspite of the high pitch but it is hell of a task. The reason is obviously to reach out to the audience who remain scattered over a large area and in earlier days there was no microphones and loud speakers. As we have already seen that interactivity is an important characteristic of *desia naat* and the audience plays an active role in the entire performance process. The basic difference with modern theatre is that the audiences do not come here to watch the play quietly. Rather, they remain vocal and spontaneously reactive throughout the performance. In fact, one is reminded of Greeko-Roman arenas or Shakespearean auditoria where factory workers and day labourers would come to watch a play with food and alcohol. When there is a tragic scene they would cry loudly. In comic scenes they would endlessly go on passing comments. So much so that two sets of dialogue are created-one, in the performance space and another in the audience gallery. In *desia naat* there is no gallery and the audience would make themselves comfortable on mats or floors. They would come with family, rejoice and cry, respond to all kinds of emotion, sing aloud, eat, drink, roam about passing comments and even doze off only to get up again when his favourite scene is enacted. A garland of currency notes will be put around the neck of the performer who regales, praises, abuses and coins will be hurled during dances. The game of pulling legs will go on between the audience and the *duari* specially. Stalls of eatables and delicacies sell *bhaja* and *sija badam* i.e., fried and boiled pea nuts, the *mitha paan* i.e., garnished betel leaves and now a days modern fast food is making fast in-roads. So, the atmosphere is festive and electrifying to say the least.

The aesthetics of *desia naat*

Text

In the mythological *desia naat* play *The Killing of Birabahu*, written by Somanath Dwija and translated into English by Guru Charan Behera (11), there are 19 songs and 13 characters. The play is around 45 minutes duration centered around the slaying of Ravana's son Birabahu by Lord Rama. The play has less of dialogues and more of songs. The musicality of the text is evident from the dominance of the songs in it. Although the dialogues are in Desia dialect, the opening mantra or hymn of *gurubandana* is in Sanskrit. After the Sutradhar takes blessings from Lord Ganesh and Goddess Sharda, the Sandhi takes over and guides the audience through the play. He introduces another key character the Duari or the door keeper. The text has very few dialogues to simply introduce the scene or a character. The song starts subsequent to the arrival of the character. Like,

Singer: Why have you then left the royal entrance and come to the court?

Door keeper: Listen to what I say. The conqueror of three worlds, Indra of demons, ten headed Ravan will now make his royal visit to the court. I have come here to ask all assembled in the court not to create any commotion and quietly sit and wait. (the doorkeeper leaves)

Sandhi: Making this announcement the door keeper left. Let us describe the majestic arrival of Ravan, gorgeous in his regalia with his magnificent retinue of courtiers and ministers. (Ravan and his ministers enter)

(Song)

*Here comes the Emperor of Lanka, His Majesty
Matchless in splendor with great lords and ministers.
On his head dazzles the jewel studded crown,
That surpasses in glamour the glory of the Sun
In twenty hands he wields many a lethal weapon
Bow, arrows, swords, shakti, maces and clubs
His roaring voice drowns the sound of drums
Let Raghav save the poet jewel from harms.*

Similarly the *sandhi* further describes the lament of Ravan on hearing the news of Taranisen's death, his ministers consoling him, the arrival of Birabahu and his journey towards the battlefield. Each time he says the word 'hereafter' and after his announcement the song starts. Rhyming is one of the features of the songs. There are colloquial addresses between the singer and door keeper where they use terms as 're', 'ye, ye, ye' etc. There are abuses in certain places of conflict when Ravan calls Birabahu, 'rascal' for praising Ram. Birabahu in course of his fight with Laxman dares him as 're re re', more of a sound than a word. The dialogues though are very simple, earthen, grounded still have literary metaphors and similes in places. Birabahu is described in a song as,

*.....majestically dressed up, a chariot he rides
Like a part of the moving chariot he rolls his eyes.....*

Or, when Ravan laments,

*.....ill luck has become my enemy, my happiness is gone
It has collapsed like a tree infested with venom.....*

The prolific use of adjectives is another notable element of the script which is resplendent with 'the fragrant cheeks of your pretty face' for Ganesh to start with, 'majestically dressed up', 'bravest son and greatest hero', 'dreadfully strong' etc. for Birabahu and many more for almost all characters. The ending of songs often mention of a poet jewel in the manner, '*the poet jewel says, Hey Ram save us please...*' and many such where the emotion of the audience as a reaction to the scene is echoed. It is likely that the term refers to sage Valmiki, the author of Ramayana. The play is basically descriptive and made predictable by prolific announcements of who is going to arrive on the scene and what is going to happen. Unlike modern theatre, the audience are not kept guessing. So it is not the arrival or situation which is the attraction but the idiom or way of arrival, delivery of dialogue, enactment through singing and dance choreography which interests the audience. The form is more important than the text.

Form

Petta parasu is a popular social *desia naat* play which is performed by different *desia naat* groups in undivided Koraput district. With passage of time the scripts have changed or may be adulterated, according to critics, due to infiltration of various modern elements in dialogues, situation and characters. In fact, scripts are still being written based on the theme of *peta parasu* which basically portrays the friction between landlords of undivided Koraput, between Damba and Ganda communities related to land dispute. The play is believed to be written on a real incident of 20th century at the Kumuli region of Koraput region. The present discussion of form is based on the performance by Adivasi Gabeshana Mancha, Kundra at a national event in Koraput in January 2017.

The performance starts with the opening song by the *naatguru* or the *sandhi* and his team of accompaniments singing aloud the Ganesha Vandana. The stage is bare and open with no settings at all representative of an open performance space. There after the parents, the girl and other friends and neighbours arrive one after another and have conversation. The dialogues are very less and after one or two lines a song is sung either by a character who synchronises the lips while the song is being sung by the *sandhi* and his team. The songs are educative and preach morality in face of daily life confusions that people face. The highlight of the production is the arrival of the Duari character who is a man dressed like a man and who behaves in an unusual manner designed to create laughter and humour in the audience. The play culminates into the marriage ritual and concludes with the *dhemsa*, the traditional tribal dance of the Koraput region ending on a happy note.

The mark of the performance is its rawness and utter disregard for the stage grammar. The actors enter and exit from different parts of the stage, stand and move about practically in any direction they want in whatever posture they like. The absence of theatre lighting relieves the actors from measurements of movements and stage zone consciousness which is so integral to modern theatre. Sometimes we see the actors even positioned back to the audience which is normally a strict no-no in proscenium. The dialogues are in Desia language, very general in nature and not of any real literary or theatrical significance. They are mainly used to introduce the scenes and characters. The one occasion where the dialogues become significant is where the Duari arrives to create a comedy situation. The comedy is not a situational comedy rather, an enforced or imposed comedy created with vulgar body movements and slangs and abuses. The character quickly moves to singing and dancing which also creates considerable fun. It is a sort of unwanted comic relief and arrives

quite prematurely when the main plot has not intensified. The character and the application are very much reminiscent of *Nacha*, the popular folk form of Bastaar district of Chattishgarh. It is quite probable that the *desia naat* is influenced by *Nacha* due to its proximity to the region, the inter cultural exchanges and mingling over the years and the Dandakaranya Project being the common thread in stitching the regions together. Speaking about influence it will be very natural to find on observation, similarities in acting and composition between the *desia nata* and the *Prahlad natak* of Ganjam district of Odisha. According to Satpathy, '*the nattya gurus of Ganjam district imparted training to the artists in the field of desia nata.*'(7:186) According to Elwin Verrier:

Religion has influenced the tribal art in an enchanting way. The evidence to this may be observed in the cave paintings by Sawra community of Ganjam and Koraput." (4:90)

The costumes and jewellerys are nothing special and eye catching rather the normal ones used by the Durua tribes of Kundra block of Koraput.

It is extremely difficult to comment on the aesthetics of a folk drama form like the *desia naat* with the eyes and sensibilities of urban theatre practice. The very concept of designing a theatre is nullified here and theatre is performed with a sense of spontaneity and free spirit. A hint of this free spirit may be found in the rhetoric of Vatsyayan who has compared the movements of tribal dances with that of a bird:

"In a dramatic dance, one man lies on the ground and represents a corpse; the girls approach the body in highly imitating hopping movements, as if approaching a prey. Their arms and hands represent the beak of a large bird, possibly a vulture; they hop and punch at the make believe corpse. These dances have an animistic quality, through them they almost enact the drama of forest animals and birds." (3:190)

The animistic quality described above has also been a feature of other folk forms like the *desia naat*. The lack of design and compositions form the basis of aesthetics in *desia naat*. The role of a director is downplayed and the actor is given more liberty to perform based on his artistic sensibilities. A practice which is often neglected in urban theatre where the director is supreme and the actor is a mere instrument. The lack of design, the inappropriate compositions and postures, the gaps between the scenes, the promptings, the repetition of the dialogues, the overlapping of dialogues are elements which are considered lack luster and mistakes in modern theatre parlance. But that itself creates an ambience of simplicity which is extremely important to the experience of a *desia naat*. The theatre represents the simple way of life of tribal in Koraput.

Should we experiment?

There has been a nationwide practice to revive folk theatre with the 'back to roots' movement spearheaded by stalwart theatre directors of our country like B V Karanth, K N Panikkar, Habib Tanvir, H Kanhaiyalal, Ratan Thiyam, Balwant Thakur, Probir Guha, Satish Anand, Sanjay Upadhyay, Subodh Patnaik and so many others in different parts of India. In their masterly productions these directors have tried to implement the folk elements and idioms to find out their own expression of what they think to be 'Indian Theatre'. Needless to say that there is no one concept or definition of the theatre of a vastly diverse country like India. However, along with this aesthetic practice, as its off shoot has also arrived mal

practices like tampering with the original form of a folk, changing it to suit the needs, placing one's own name as a director in a folk or tribal performance where there is nothing to direct or branding classics in folk style like Macbeth in Chhau style or Shakuntala in Kalari style etc. All these practice have been criticized and discussed and has given birth to different schools of opinion regarding what is the best practice? Should we let it remain like what it is and preserve it? Should we create a fusion with modern theatre? Another vital question of its sustenance comes up as many forms are getting lost due to the next generation of tribal artists not really taking interest to pursue the art for its commercial inviability. There have been some government measures to utilize this folk form for spreading messages of development. That solves the matter of money to some extent but does not really provide any long term solution. Neither does it affect any aesthetic intervention to the forms. As far as *desia naat* goes, the region to which it belongs is presently positioned at the cross roads of development and insurgency and the traditional values are under threat. The need of the hour is to take steps for the preservation of the original *desia naat* and create documents for academic research which subsequently may provide scope and opportunity for modern practitioners to experiment. If experimentation is done without proper research, it may lead to possibilities of creation of fakelore and brute commercialization.

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TRIBAL MUSIC OF INDIA: SOME ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL FINDINGS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHIL TRIBE

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ABSTRACT

Music is an integral part of the tribal life and culture. Also, it is believed that music has been in existence even before language was discovered by humans. It is that primeval and collective consciousness of the tribal society which gives rise to peculiar musical traditions; the traditions which eventually create a foundation for rest of the musical streams. However, the structure and texture of tribal music which is still a living musical tradition in the vast cultural domain of Indian tribes is still not explored properly.

In order to understand Tribal music, one has to first understand their geographical, social and cultural contexts. The reverse is equally true, that to understand the geographical social and culture life of the tribal communities, one needs to look into their music. This field of study is known as Ethno-musicology. The world over, musicologists are involved in studying the relationship between cultures and their music.

The cultural traits of tribal communities may have undergone sea change over the years but there are certain characteristic features among the tribal communities that are still intact and maintains their originality. Tribal music is one such aspect that has undergone change with its roots almost intact and integral to the entire domain of socio-cultural life.

Musical traditions in India flow, generally through six streams such as Adim, Lok, Kala/Abhijaat, Dharm/Bhakti, Jan/Lokapriya, and Mishra/Sangam. On a closer look, it is seen that these are not watertight compartments, but rather, are like several streams joining together at different places to form a mighty, single river like, the Brahmaputra. The river's characteristics are completely shaped by these smaller tributaries. The focus of this paper is on Adim Sangeet in an ethnomusicological study framework. Apart from discussing the features of Adim Sangeet, the study has made specific observations on the Rathwa Bhil tribe of Gujarat in India. The author analyses a range of songs important in the socio-cultural context of the tribe and the message that those songs deliver.

History witnesses the fact that whenever an indigenous knowledge system meets any contemporary thought which is supported by science and technology, a new idiom of living or art is created in all aspects of human society. Hence, it is of utmost urgency that these folk-music traditions are not only supported but also respected and given their rightful place among the various streams of music. It is indeed a pressing need, to preserve and propagate these fast diminishing traditions and their diversity; not just as museum pieces, but as living traditions.

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Introduction

Music is an integral part of the tribal life and culture. Also, it is believed that music has been in existence even before language was discovered by humans. It is that primeval and collective consciousness of the tribal society which gives rise to peculiar musical traditions; the traditions which eventually create a foundation for rest of the musical streams. Thus, for a music researcher it becomes important to look into the structure and texture of tribal music, which is, fortunately, still a living musical tradition in India. However, before one addresses 'Tribal Music' as one single term, one needs to understand the phenomenon called Tribal as well as phenomenon called Music.

Tribe and Music: Singularity and Plurality

Due to the peculiar historical circumstances during the colonial times which led to enumeration of certain Indian communities as 'Tribes', and the subsequent endorsement in post-Independence period of the initial listing of such communities, there has so far been no clear theoretical apparatus with us for determining the 'tribalness' of a 'tribe'. Given that most of the theoretical assumptions employed in any exercise for determining the tribal identity of a specific community are drawn from Anthropology and Ethnography developed in the West, there is often a gap between the lived experience of some of the communities and the formal categorization of those communities as non-tribe/tribe. This results in the incongruities such as inclusion of non-tribes into tribes and exclusion of tribes from the formal lists. It is, of course, true that a number of Indian social scientists have dedicated a remarkable intellectual energy to evolving theoretical description appropriate to the Indian situation. However, the decline of the practice of dedicated field study stretching over several decades has kept the theoretical formulations in India from acquiring the solidity that the early twentieth-century western theory of ethnography acquired. The ethnographical accounts on Indian tribes need to be revisited in order to capture the unexplored or little explored aspects of tribal life and culture. Dedicated field research is also required to identify the change and the levels of assimilation of cultural traits between the tribe and non-tribe. The cultural traits that qualify 'tribalness' in the context of a community may have undergone sea change over the years but there are certain characteristic features among the tribal communities that are still intact and maintains their originality. Tribal music is one such aspect that has undergone change with its roots almost intact and integral to the entire domain of socio-cultural life. In this context, it is important to devote considerable time with the communities to rediscover the importance of music in their society, culture, language, art and life.

Just like the term Tribe, the term Music is also quite intriguing. The question has often been a matter of intense debate among the scholars, artists and music-lovers across the world. However, the answer could be, very simple and unambiguous.

Seeds of music rest in being away from the prose and from everything that is prosaic. In this sense, the Primeval Music, also called as Tribal Music or *Adim Sangeet* in Indian languages, can be looked upon as the first step of mankind towards making music. It creates interesting tonal designs which, eventually become Music. Thus, *Adim Sangeet* can be defined as the first category of Music which gives rise to other streams of Music.

Indian Musical Traditions:

Many studies have been conducted on the musical traditions of India from different disciplines and dimensions. A broader classification derived from the theory and practice provides that musical traditions in India flow, generally through six streams. They are:

Sl. No.	Name	Nature
01.	<i>Adim</i>	Tribal / Primeval Music
02.	<i>Lok</i>	Folk Music
03.	<i>Kala / Abhijaat</i>	Art / Classical Music
04.	<i>Dharm / Bhakti</i>	Religious / Devotional Music
05.	<i>Jan / Lokapriy</i>	Popular Music
06.	<i>Mishra / Sangam</i>	Fusion / Confluence Music

On a closer look, it is seen that these are not watertight compartments, but rather, are like several streams who join together at different places to form a mighty, single river like, say, the Brahmaputra. The river's characteristics are completely shaped by these smaller tributaries.

Adim Sangeet (Tribal / Primeval Music)

Music is an integral part of any tribal society. The sole aim of which, is not just to provide entertainment. Sometimes, it is used to relieve oneself from the tensions and pains arising out of the mundane living, at other times it simply comes out in response to the changing moods and seasons of the surrounding nature, which, also, are integral parts of these societies. Music also plays a role while appealing to the deities and supernatural forces, to accompany the rituals or just to convey the wishes to these powers. As an extension of this, music is an important part of celebrations or marking of socio-religious events within the community.

It is observed that the tribal tones connect deeply to our own primeval consciousness. These tribal tones are, representative of the indigenous society's character, hence it is more appropriate to call this music Primeval instead of Primitive. Primeval Music has definitely stepped away from the prose. It has almost become 'Singing'. But, only 'almost', since, it is yet to be a full-fledged singing in the proper meaning of that word. It, effortlessly, alternates between the Speech and the Singing.

Salient Features of Adim Sangeet

- *Adim Sangeet* is fundamentally an oral tradition and hence memory becomes an extremely important aspect. The tribal communities memorise their oral traditions so well that it would not be unimaginable that entire epics like the Ramayan or the Mahabharat could be recited out of memory.
- Every act or the performance has some musical principle or the other, at its core. The Music is repetitive in nature as elaboration of these principles is not expected.
- The musical scales, generally consist of 3 or 4 notes. At the most, a pentatonic scale is used, but not beyond that.
- The rhythms are usually of 6, 7 or 8 Mastras (*beats*). Hence *Chhand-Taals* (Rhythmic Patterns) like *Dadara*, *Rupak* and *Kerava* are among the most used rhythms.

- Human body becomes an instrument, a medium for the performance. Especially the Touch. Clapping, moving the feet to the beat or holding hands with other members of the community is invariably a part of the musical renderings. This eliminates the dependence on the external factors like instruments etc.
- *Adim Sangeet*, by nature, is not inclined to be person dependent. It flows from the community and belongs to the community. As such, the original creators of the musical compositions are not of importance and hence they remain unknown. Music more often is born out of the collective consciousness.
- Singing, playing instruments and dancing form music together and are done simultaneously. Also, due to the collective / congregational nature of these societies, all of these are performed by a group, rather than an individual.
- Mostly, the tribal societies are assimilated into the surroundings of their habitat. As such, most of the instruments used in *Adim Sangeet* (E.g. *Dhol*, *Dholak*, *Maandal*, *Nagada*, *Ghungroo*, *Kartaal*, *Bansuri*, *Morchang*, *Pehi*, *Dumdum*, *Lupi* etc...), are derived from these surroundings. These instruments are nature-friendly, they are designed such, that seasonal changes do not affect their performance adversely.
- Since, the entire community takes part in the performance, the performer versus spectator divide is bridged and they all are one.
- There is music, associated with every phase of the entire life cycle, from cradle to the grave. In fact, music becomes a major component while marking these events.
- Another important feature of *Adim Sangeet* is the symbolism. Many a times, *Adim Sangeet* points to other meaningful things rather than talk about the music itself. For this, imagery consisting of different symbols is used.

Importance of the song-text in Adim Sangeet

Adim Sangeet has long and elaborate song-texts. Use of the *Swara* (musical note) and the *Laya* (rhythm) is limited but the texts show immense diversity and richness, both in ideas / imagery as well as the word usage. Tones and sounds that come along with the spoken word, also become music. For example, many songs start with a '*Kikyari*', a sound much like a sharp high pitch call, and the rest of the song follows after that. The words are simple yet express very deep and powerful meanings.

Ethnomusicology

In order to understand Tribal music, one has to first understand their geographical, social and cultural contexts. The reverse is equally true, that to understand the geographical social and culture life of the tribal communities, one needs to look into their music. This field of study is known as Ethno-musicology. The world over, musicologists are involved in studying the relationship between cultures and their music. This is a difficult task as the relationship between culture and music is complex. Further, to understand this relationship, a scholar has to spend a long span of time with the respective community, to become a part of its internal existence and collect a huge number of data. It is only then can a researcher reach a theoretical premise or conclusion. It is nearly impossible to understand or fathom all dimensions of culture-music-ethnology in a single life. However, for a scholar to reach an understanding of even some of these, is considered a huge achievement.

The Rathwa Bhils – subjects of the study

The paper is prepared on the basis of observations on Rathwa Bhils, a sub-section of Bhil tribe of Gujarat. The Bhils are spread over a large territory of Western India and are concentrated in southern Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Northern Maharashtra. It has many sub-sections out of which Bhilala Bhil is one.

According to Singh (1994), Bhilala Bhil is described as a mixed tribe which sprung from the alliances of the immigrant Rajputs and Bhils. The Bhilala speak Bhili, an Indo-Aryan language. In Gujarat their language is influenced by the Gujarati language. The endogamous divisions of the Bhilala Bhils are the Rathwa, Naira and Mankar of which the Rathwa are considered higher than the Naira and Mankar. The Bhilala observe clan or *gotra* exogamy. The primary occupation of Bhilala is agriculture and wage labour complemented with animal husbandry and collection of forest produce.

Songs of Bhil Tribe

The songs and music of the Bhils offer fresh insights. If one listens closely to the Rathwa songs, one finds that they are brimming with vivid descriptions of Rathwa life and society. For instance ...

*“Kariyu setar seyandu re...movasi no Bhildo,
Sedi sedi ne ras Vaylu re, movasi no Bhildo
Seliyo haanra joydan re...movasi no Bhildo
Oyro jowar ugyo baajro re, movasi no Bhildo!”*

Meaning: Oh, Bhil of Mewas! You toiled hard to till the land filled with black rocky soil and sowed *jowar*. But look, what's grown there ... It is *bajra* ...

Every reader or listener who reads or listens to this song will contribute or add to a range of meanings and perceptions of understanding Adivasi culture and literature. As Harry West (2008) suggests, inevitably all ethnography itself becomes some sort of sorcery. However, when I asked my Rathwa-Bhil friend the meaning of this song, one of the key informants Naranbhai smiled and replied, 'this song reveals the esoteric of our birth. That, two different entities unite to create a third being. This song conveys the scientific fact of creation.'

The interface between culture and music is complex; but that between people, the relationship of the creators of music from one culture with people of other cultures is even more complex. To understand this complexity, let us look at the following song based on a conversation between *devar* /brother-in-law and *bhabhi* / sister-in-law. This song is sung on the occasion of *Ujani-Diwaso*.

*Diyar Bhojay be Golwa Jayla
Diyar bhojay be golva jayla
Chaydo mendi no rang
Mendi rang laygo..
Vaati kuti ne bhayro vaatko ne
Bhabhi rango Tamara haath*

Mendi rang laygo
Haathe rangi ne hun kene batavu
Maro payno padiyo pardesh
Mendi rang laygo

Diyar bhoyaj be golva jayla
Chaydo mendi no rang
Mendi rang laygo...

To understand this song, we must first understand the Bhils in the context of Gujarat. It is a known fact that since the time the government has taken control over the forests, Adivasis have lost their access to forest resources.

Dams have been built in Adivasi populated areas. The hills where many Adivasis live, have been taken over for building of factories and mining. So many Bhils have lost their silver ornaments to money-lenders. Trapped in these facets of development, a large section of the Adivasis has been reduced to being a 'nameless' daily-wage labourer in the cities. When this Adivasi migrates to another village for labour work, his wife stays back at home to work in the fields, sometimes with the support of her brother-in-law, to take care of in-laws and children.

This song which is sung during the Divaso festival of Rathwa Bhils, describes the bond/connect that develops between them in these circumstances. One day on his way home from the fields, the brother-in-law fetches some *mehndi (henna)* leaves and gives them to his sister-in-law, saying, 'O bhabhi, please put this mehndi on your hands.' She replies, 'who will see the *mehndi* on my hands? My beloved has gone to another land.'

Coming to the music; when we study the swara (musical notes) of this song, we find that it has 5 major notes.: sa re, ga, pa, dha, saa. However, when they are sung, their attachment is graphical.

धुधसासारेगपगरेगपसासाधुधसा.

सा.. सा.. धसारेग, रेगसारे, धसा, सारेगप, पगरेग, रेपग, गसारे, रेधसा, गरेग, पग, पधपप, गपरेगसारेधसा, पधपपसां..

सांपधगपरेगसारेधसा...

The structure of this pentatonic scale (five notes scale) is known in Hindustani classical music as *bhup* or *bhupali*. The presence of these *swaras* in a Bhil song indicates or stands testimony to the exchange between classical music and Adivasi music. It seems that different kinds of tunes have existed long before the formulation of the scholarship or science of melody. It was much later in the sixth century that Rishi Matang conceived the concept of 'raag' in his treatise, *Bruhaddeshi*. He has explained *raag* as some sort of an ascending descending melody. In this sense, primal melodies can also be explained as *raag*.

All over the world many ethnomusic scholars have made Adivasi music the central subject of their study. Western musicologists have tried to write Adivasi music as per their musical system, for instance staff notation or the chord system of western music.

Take this example; the Chord Progression for the tunes similar to the structure of Raag Bhoop would be as below:

1	2	3
C Major	D minor	A minor
D Major	E minor	B minor
E Major	F# minor	C# minor
F Major	G minor	D minor
G Major	A minor	E minor
A Major	B minor	F# minor
B Major	C# minor	G# minor

The 'mainstream' has developed a misconception that Adivasi music and arts are ancient, and thus outdated, also that it has little or no relation with real life or world music. However, more we listen to the variety of Rathwa songs, this misconception starts to get negated. Here is another song of the Rathwa Bhils, more contemporary, that speaks of the Bhils constructing buildings for the urban people/city dwellers.

Saama ni Peli Chhede...

*Sama ni peli chhede paaya khoday che
 Paaya khoday, dhanu bhungela kaam che?
 Hun jaanu naam norta jay chhe...
 Sama ni peli chhede ito paday chhe
 Ito paday, em shuyela kaam chhe?
 Hun jaanu naam norta jay chhe..
 Saama ni peli chhede bangle bandhay chhe
 Bangle bandhay, enu shuyela kaam chhe?
 Hun jaanu naam norta jay chhe...*

Meaning:

We live in a shelter here on one side of the road.
 On the other side, the foundation of a bungalow is being laid.
 We do labour work here...
 Dig the land.
 Place the bricks.
 A thick layer of cement dust fills the air.
 We do not know the meaning of all this.
 We do not know the meaning of all this.

This song brings in a sense of guilt to us the urban people. It raises questions regarding: What is progress? What does development mean? Can one society/community justify its progress by exploiting the other and the people on the margins?

But it is equally true that the songs and music of the Rathwa Bhils is full of life, removing all sadness in a moment, when Bhil youth are in love, they forget all difficulties and sing songs full of love and mirth.

Dhiri Dhiri Vanjhari Dhumel Laaygi

Dhiri dhiri vanjari dhumel laaygi

Nate kalla ni joyi layi aalu

Vanjaari dhumel laygi

Tane ghadiyal ni jod layi aalu

Vanjhari dhumel laygi

Tane haansli ni jod layi aalu

Vanjhari dhumel laygi

In this song, the youth tells his beloved who is on the threshold of adolescence, 'Oh, Banjaran, why are you so impatient? Be patient. I will take you to the Mela and buy you bangles, a watch, necklace and other ornaments and clothes of your choice. Do not roam about with such abandon!'

It appears that the tribal can spontaneously weave every emotion and experience into a song and express or sing it beautifully. The so-called modern city-dwellers perhaps seem to have lost this amazing sense of sound and ability to make music from what we see as our mundane daily lives. We even seem to have lost the realisation that it is love alone that enables human beings to overcome all difficulties.

Instruments in Bhil Music

According to Naranbhai, the key informant, 'during the monsoons, when the breeze is misty, the sun is hidden among the clouds, then we play PEHO, the *bansuri* (flute) with a bigger pipe, bigger resonator. Beginning from Diwaso, flute playing continues almost until Dushera. Along with playing of the flute, women sing, 'Oh, my brother, please play the flute, flute playing days are here again!'

Women do the *garba* to the tune of the flute. On the occasion of Navratri and Dushera, women dance the *garba* to the tune of the flute. After Dushera, cold sets in and the Rathwa Bhils play the PIHI and *vasdi*. In Basant/spring, and during Holi, when the air begins to dry, they play the PEHI (small flute with a smaller pipe). During marriages, they play the *sharnai* and *shainai*. These musical instruments are prepared within the community. They are sold at the weekly village *haats* of the community. Two weeks before Holi, young men and women come together to dance to the tune of the *dhol* and the flute. It is interesting to observe this organic process of making the instruments by the community members within the community as depicted in the following song:

Aayvo Punamiyo Melo Re...

Aayvo Punamiyo melo re ooli juvadi
Oli sori aavyo punamiyo melo re lol
Mele jashu ne shu ae khasu re ao shaili juvandi
Mele jashu ne shu e khasu re lol
Taro tako ne maro paise re o Shaili juvandi
Oli sori taro tako ne maro paise re lol
Taka paisa ni barfi leshu re o sheli juvandi
Oli sori taka paisa ni barfi leshu re lol

Meaning: Sung during the Holi festival, the boy says to the girl: 'Oh, my beautiful, we will meet at the Mela (funfair) on this Purnima – the full moon. We will sing and dance and with whatever money we have, we will buy sweets. And slowly steal our way from the others and go far away from the village!'

The distinctiveness of this 'Bhagoriya' tradition of Bhil-Holi is that young men and women flee from their village. When they return, their village-community happily accepts them as a couple. The Holi and Bhagoriya tradition among the Bhil, symbolises the free expression of love among the Bhil community.

Holi, the festival of colors and celebration of love, is the most important festival of the Bhils. What is interesting about Bhili Holi is the fact that Bhils look upon Holi as a 'foreigner lady' and say 'just as a special guest from a foreign land visits just once a year and brings along beautiful gifts, similarly, Holi Bai comes with colourful flowers and pleasant weather once every year. Wherever we may be, we leave all our work and return to our villages to meet Holi Bai!'

Aayvo Punamiyo Melo Oli Juvandi

Aayvo poonamiyo melo re oli juvanadi
Oli sori aayvo poonamiyo melo re lol

Mele jashun ne shun e khashun re o sheli juvanadi
Mele jashun ne shun e khashun re lol

Taka paisa ni barfi leshoon re o sheli juvanadi
Oli sori Taka paisa ni barfi leshoon re lol

प.. मपम.. रे, रेमपमरे, नीरेसा, नीप, पनीसा ...
निसारे, रेमरे, सा, नि, (ध) प, नि, धसा, निरेसा..
निसारेमरे, मप, परेमरे, सा..
पनिसा, सारेसा, मप, ममरे, मरेसा, निसारेसा...

The notes of this song remind us of the Raag Saarang of Hindustani music. Tunes similar to Saarang are found even in the regions of Rajasthan and Marwad. This reflects the cultural relationship that Adivasi regions have shared with other regions. Similarly one finds variants of Adivasi instruments like Dhol and Bansuri in almost all Bhil regions.

The Adivasis hold the *dhol* and *bansuri* as *Aadivadyas* (primal/original musical instrument). Similarly, the Rathwa Adivasis hold the *Dhol* to be their *aadivadya*. However, the *dhol* is considered to be incomplete unless it is played along with the *thali*. The *dholis* who traditionally play the *dhol* in the Rathwa region, are held in great respect by the community. They find space within the folk literature and interweaving themselves in *Dholi* songs, make themselves immemorial.

Some elderly Rathwa or a skilful craftsperson-artist from the community contributing to the rendition of the *Thalis* and *Dhols* is so memorable. It is the craftsperson-artist who understand the making and texture of the *dhol* in all its intricacies—how the sound of the *dhol* can be raised, how it can be lowered, which string of the instrument has to be pulled in which direction and which strokes are to be used to strike the sides of the *dhol*. The craftsperson-artist receives and inherits this discipline and technique from the community's oral tradition. It is only an expert and experienced craftsman-artist who can bring alive the *dhol* tradition, which the generation of Rathwa Bhils have embraced and kept alive till today.

Dhol par dondi no taal vajyo...
Dhol par dondi no tall vajyo...
Khare khare bhaya taal vajyo...
Jheri jheri harkhe ne taal vajyo...
Sora ne soriono taal vajyo...
Dhol par dondi no taal vajyo...

Meaning: O brother! The drummer is playing the beats by beating the drumsticks on the drum. Hearing the drumbeats, all begin to dance. The children, young men and women and the old—everyone comes together to dance, as if they are all of the same age.

Dancing to the beat of the drums, the Rathwas forget their age, their difficulties, their body and experience only an enthralling freedom. Music is a source of human energy and the Rathwa community is passionately connected to this energy which they believe is transmitted to them through the spirit of their ancestors.

However, it is a sad reality that many Bhil Adivasis are getting distanced from this energy. As many Adivasis are forced to migrate to other areas for work or take up multiple works to make ends meet, they are hardly left with any energy and enthusiasm for celebration and joy. Presented here is the song, *Jena Maruji* that encapsulates this poignant situation. The song is embedded in a tune which is close to *Saarang Raag* just as the song, “*Aavyo Punniyo Melo!*”

Jena Maruji Re

Jena maruji re mare aanjan maro pipro re, jena maruji re...
Jena maruji re talvar ni dhaar par chalou re, jena maruji re...
Jena maruji re mare joy dabal naukri re, jena maruji re...
Jena maruji re sarkari naukri onkri re, jena maruji re...

Meaning: In this song, a Rathwa Bhil boy says, I have come to stay as son-in-law at my wife's home. This house feels like the gigantic Pipal tree. But living here, looking after wife and family.. also doing the service as a government employee and protecting this house is for me walking a double-edged sword. It is with great difficulty that I pass each day here.

The song 'Jena Maruji' holds significance in the Rathwa community because the Rathwas are a patrilineal community. For a man to stay with his in-laws after marriage is unusual. Thus, this song presents the sadness of a son-in-law living with his wife's family.

As in other communities, the Rathwas too hold marriage to be a very sacred relationship. On the occasion of marriage, families of both, the groom and the bride, sing songs filled with fun and laughter as well as of sadness when the bride leaves her parents' home.

Baapo ke mare vadina ringna...

Baapo ke mare vadina ringna vechay jaa...
Baapo ke maari ladeki disri vechay jaa vechay jaa...
Baapo ke maari ladeki disri peni jaa
Mali ke maari ladeki disri vechay jaa vechay jaa...
Mali ke maari ladeki disri peni jaa...

Meaning: This is a song sung by the bride's father whose daughter is soon going to leave him. Just as I toiled to grow brinjals in my field and then sold them in the *haat*, similarly, I raised my daughter with great love and care and now I am about to send her to her husband's home.

Beni ne saasri...
Beni ne sasri ghani dur re, vaate diwas ugse
Beni ne maata no ghano lad re, vaate diwas ugse
Beni ne pita na ghano lad re, vaate diwas ugse

Beni ne sasri ghani dur re, vaate diwas ugse
Beni ne Veera no ghano re, vaate diwas ugse
Beni ne bhabhi no ghano lad re, vaate diwas ugse

Meaning: This song is a song of separation for the parents that they sing with great restlessness. O daughter, your husband's home is so far, so far away, that even if we walk for the entire night and day, even then we will not reach your home. You love your parents, brother and sister-in-law so deeply, but now you have to get married and leave for a far-off place.

This is how the song would look like if written in Hindustani Notation System.

सात मात्रा													
								सा	सा	निसा	नि		
								बे	नी	नेऽ	ऽ		
सा	-	-	म	-	-	-	गुम	गु	सा	सा	म	गुम	गु
सा	ऽ	ऽ	से	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	रीऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ध	ऽ	णीऽ	ऽ
सानि	नि	-	नि	-	नि	-	सा	गु	म	गुम	गु	सा	नि
दुऽ	र	ऽ	रे	ऽ	वा	ऽ	टे	ऽ	ऽ	दिऽ	ऽ	व	स
सा	-	-	-	-	सा	गु	सागु	सा	नि				
उ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ग	ऽ	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ				
										बे	नी	नेऽ	ऽ
मा	ऽ	ऽ	ता	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	नोऽ	ऽ	ऽ	घ	ऽ	णोऽ	ऽ
लाऽ	ड	ऽ	रे	ऽ	वा	ऽ	टे	ऽ	ऽ	दिऽ	ऽ	व	स
उ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ग	ऽ	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ				
										बे	नी	नेऽ	ऽ
पि	ऽ	ऽ	ता	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	नोऽ	ऽ	ऽ	घ	ऽ	णोऽ	ऽ
लाऽ	ड	ऽ	रे	ऽ	वा	ऽ	टे	ऽ	ऽ	दिऽ	ऽ	व	स
उ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	ग	ऽ	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ				

Margha bolse...

Margha bolse, hahuli jagadse

Maro beni nono, nindre gherase

Margha bolse, ponilo bharavse

Rojni hahuli, ponilo bharavse

Margha bolse, vasano ghasavse

Rojni hahuli, vasano ghasavse

Margha bolse, vaayo mukavse

Rojni hahuli, chayo mukavse

Margha bolse...

Margha bolse, hahuli jagadse

Maro beni nono, nindre gherase

Margha bolse, ponilo bharavse

Rojni hahuli, ponilo bharavse

Margha bolse, vasano ghasavse

Rojni hahuli, vasano ghasavse

Margha bolse, vaayo mukavse

Rojni hahuli, chayo mukavse

मुक्तछंद									
सा	गु	सा	-	गु	म	गुम	-	सा	
म	र	धां	ऽ	बो	ल	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ	
गु	म	गुम	गु	सा	-	सा	-	नि	
सा	सु	ळीऽ	ज	गा	ड	से	ऽ	ऽ	
मा	रों	बे	नी	नों	ऽ	नो	ऽ	ऽ	
नीं	द	रेऽ	घे	रा	ऽ	से	ऽ	ऽ	
म	र	धां	ऽ	बो	ल	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ	
पों	नी	लोंऽ	भ	रा	व	से	ऽ	ऽ	
रो	ज	नी	ऽ	सा	सु	ळीऽ	ऽ	ऽ	
पों	नी	लोंऽ	भ	रा	व	से	ऽ	ऽ	
म	र	धां	ऽ	बो	ल	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ	
वा	सी	दोंऽ	न	खा	व	से	ऽ	ऽ	
रो	ज	नी	ऽ	सा	सु	ळीऽ	ऽ	ऽ	
वा	सी	दोंऽ	न	खा	व	से	ऽ	ऽ	
म	र	धां	ऽ	बो	ल	सेऽ	ऽ	ऽ	

Meaning: One finds that the Rathwas continue to practice child marriage even now. As the first rays of the sun descend the earth, a married woman sings this song to a girl child who is about to get married. In the song she captures the changes that marriage will bring to her life. 'O my little sister, when dawn breaks, you will still be in deep slumber. But as soon as the cock crows, your mother-in-law will awaken you. She will ask you to fill water to collect cow

dung, collect and wash the utensils, prepare tea and cook food. O my young sister, now your days of love and care are over. Get prepared for your difficult days ahead in your life.

My experience with this song is intense. I distinctly remember that when I first heard this song, I tried to write this notes/notation. And just as I sing other songs, I tried to sing this song stringing together the notes. On hearing me, Naran exclaimed, 'whenever our women sing this song, they begin to weep.' Hearing this, my eyes too brimmed with tears. I realised that every song brings along a story. Thus, if one has to understand a song, one needs to comprehend the story alongside it. It is true that we as ethnographers weave our parallel stories while listening to the community members but one must also first try to assimilate the spirit of the community which rests at the bottom of every creation, just like in the case of Marghan Bolse. Thus after this experience, I asked Naran if I was imposing 'my' meaning on 'his' songs, he smilingly said, 'yes sometimes you do, but then you, I feel as an outsider give a different and special meaning to my song which I cannot think otherwise, as I always remain inside my own song'. This holds true to what Mikhail Bakhtin (1993) observed 'in order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are others.'

Talking about the new songs of Rathwa Bhils, we get some wonderful examples such as:

Table upar limbu..

Limba no rang lilo

Sokhin beni..

Ticket par maaru naam se..

आठ मात्रा											
सा	सासा	नि	सासा	गुमगु	सा	-	म	म	प	म	गु
टे	बल	उ	पर	लींऽऽ	बु	ऽ	लीं	बा	नो	रं	ग
सागु	गुमगु	नि	सासा	गुमगु	सा	-	म	मम	पप	मपम	गु
लीऽ	लोऽऽ	सो	खिन	बेऽऽ	नी	ऽ	टि	किट	पर	माऽऽ	रुं
सा	सा	सा	नि								
ना	ऽम	से	ऽ								
पि	ता	नो	करी	जाऽऽ	से	ऽ	टि	फि	न	जो	ई
रड	सेऽऽ	सो	खिल	बेऽऽ	नी	ऽ	टि	किट	पर	माऽऽ	रुं
ना	ऽम	से	ऽ								
मा	ता	र	सोई	रांऽध	से	ऽ	र	सो	डुं	जो	ई
रड	सेऽऽ	सो	खिन	बेऽऽ	नी	ऽ	टि	किट	पर	माऽऽ	रुं
ना	ऽम	से	ऽ								
बे	नी	पा	णीऽ	भऽर	से	ऽ	पा	णी	ऽ	दे	खी
रड	सेऽऽ	सो	खिन	बेऽऽ	नी	ऽ	टि	किट	पर	माऽऽ	रुं

Meaning: Even though a woman may leave her parents' home, she leaves behind her memories and her very being. In this song, the girl asks her friend, 'You enjoy laughing at me, isn't it? So, listen, 'this is a table (table here symbolises a home). On the table is a green lemon (lemon here stands for herself). Similarly, this house is green with my memories. Each and everything here have the stamp of my name.'

When father goes to work, a glance at his tiffin will always make him cry. When mother will cook, the kitchen will make her cry. When sister goes to fill water, the water pitcher will bring tears to her eyes. When brother goes to college, his books will make him weep. For all these things bear the stamp of my memory. Even after I leave, I will continue to live in their thoughts.

Terms as table, stamp, college, tiffin and other such English words and new themes in the Rathwa songs refutes the belief that Adivasi songs bear no relation with modernisation. At this junction we must ask ourselves: 'Is it Adivasi who are transfixed till today at some corner of the past or is it we who always wish to see them as some exotic objects of history?'

Coming back to the musicological being of these songs, we find 'Beni ne sasri, margha bolse, table upar limboo' are marriage songs of the Rathwas. When we study the notes of these songs, we find that their notes are similar or akin to one more pentatonic scale of Hindustani music called as Dhaani. The five notes of Dhaani are: *saa, ga, ma, pa, ni, saan* – wherein *gandhar* and *nishad* are Komal (Minor) and the remaining notes are Shuddha – (Major).

Chord Progression of Tunes like Dhaani

1	2	3	4
C Major	A# Major	F Major	G Major
D Major	F Major	G Major	C Major
E Major	G Major	A Major	D Major
F Major	D# Major	A# Major	C Major
G Major	C Major	F Major	D# Major
A Major	G Major	D Major	F Major
B Major	A Major	E Major	G Major

A wedding song which also has references to Adivasis going to schools and colleges provides an understanding of how the communities think of their child's education in gender perspective.

<p><i>Limed valiyadi vavi...</i> <i>Limed valiyari vavi, dale attar jay se</i> <i>Koraj naa suppar veera nasal bhanva jay se</i> <i>Tejgadh maa daffol taara dobo varva joy se</i> <i>Koraj nayi suppar beno college pharva jay se</i> <i>Tejgadh ni daffol soriyon soron vinva jay se</i></p>	सात मात्रा
	रे सा सा रे म म म रे रे ऽ सा ^३ सा सा -
	ली म ऽ डे ऽ व लि या री ऽ वा ^३ ऽ वी ऽ
	रे ^३ रे सा रे गु रे सा सा - - सा - - -
	डा ^३ के ऽ अं ऽ त र जा ऽ य सें ऽ ऽ ऽ
	को ऽ ऽ रा ज ना ऽ सु प्प र वी ^३ ऽ रा ऽ
	नि ^३ सा ल भ ण वा ऽ जा ऽ य सें ऽ ऽ ऽ
	ते ज ऽ ग ढ ना ऽ ड फ्फो ल सो ^३ ऽ रा ऽ
	डो बो ऽ चा र वा ऽ जा ऽ य सें ऽ ऽ ऽ
	को ऽ ऽ रा ज नी ऽ सु प्प र बे ^३ ऽ नो ऽ
को ^३ ले ज फ र वा ऽ जा ऽ य सें ऽ ऽ ऽ	
ते ज ऽ ग ढ नी ऽ ड फ्फो ल सो री यों ऽ	
सो णों ऽ वी ण वा ऽ जा ऽ य सें ऽ ऽ ऽ	

Meaning: Songs sung during a marriage are full of humour and jokes flung from the bride's side to the bridegroom and vice versa. *Limde valiyari* is a song that describes two trees bearing opposing qualities. The first tree is the *neem* that is bitter in taste; the other tree is the *saunf* or aniseed that is fragrant. The fragrance of the aniseed spreads all around. Similarly, the 'super' or intelligent boys of the Koraj village go to school while the duffer or dull boys go to graze the cows. The bright girls of Koraj go to college while the duffer girls go and collect cowdung. What is important to note is that Koraj and Tejgadh are two small hamlets of a single panchayat. The word 'super' here has been used in a fun and touching manner.

The relationship of the Adivasi with the dominant/larger society has been a very complex one. In the past few years it has been noticed that the Rathwa Bhils are composing many new songs and these songs are being recorded in studios to the accompaniment of key-boards. For instance, there is a 'wrong number' song by Jaswant Rathwa that accompanies the *timli* dance. This song is available on You-tube and it has received thousands of 'hits'.

New Rathwi Timli – Wrong Number

Wrong number bhai, wrong number, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Gaalo khavdave roj wrong number, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Mar khavdave roj wrong number, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Janya ajanya maa prem thayi jay, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Bhantar bagade wrong number, jeevtar bagade wrong number
Chhokra Chhokriyo bhaan bhuli jay, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Chikni sori ne nokar layi jay, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Des vides maa vaato vehti thay, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Gharon maa roj roj jhagda that, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Court kacheri na dhakka pade, game tyan laagi jay wrong number
Humji vichari ne phone karje, game tyan laagi jay wrong number

Meaning: In these days of mobile use, we often get connected to more wrong numbers than the right numbers. The wrong number gets connected anywhere on its own. At times one may even get to hear someone shout or get beaten on connecting to a wrong person. Sometimes people fall in love after connecting with the wrong person's number. The wrong number destroys your studies and your peaceful life. Young girls and boys lose themselves. One beautiful girl eloped with her servant. If you have to say 'I love you' or express your love to someone, you get connected to a wrong number. Your news gets viral everywhere – at home and abroad. There are quarrels among families. Uncle and nephews, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law get connected through wrong numbers. The wrong number also makes you run about in courts. That is why I say, be careful while dialing numbers. Otherwise, one day you too will become a wrong number!

'Wrong Number' a Rathwa Timli-dance-song is a one of its kind. It has been made to match a new context. The 'wrong number' presents itself as a distinct metaphor. Like other tribal communities, the Rathwa Bhils too are experiencing rapid changes, that is transforming the community's social-cultural surroundings. The song 'wrong number' encapsulates and reflects this transition.

Conclusion:

While working on the field, singing the folksongs of the tribes, interacting with the scholars, speaking to the community artists and travelling deep into interiors of India, one realizes strongly that induced urbanization is affecting the indigenous culture and changing its face very fast. It is indeed a pressing need, to preserve and propagate these fast diminishing traditions and their diversity. Not just as museum pieces, but as living traditions. History witnesses the fact that whenever an indigenous knowledge system meets any contemporary thought which is supported by science and technology, a new idiom of living / art is created in all aspects of human society. Hence, it is of utmost urgency that these folk-music traditions are not only supported but also respected and given their rightful place among the various streams of music.

End Notes:

- The musical chord structures placed in this essay are written by Dr. Tikendar Kaul, Divine Music Academy, Shimla.
- The essay was originally written in Hindi by the author, translation support has been provided by Dr. Sonal Bakshi, Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Vadodara.

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TRIBAL SHAMANISM AND MEGALITHIC RITUALS: A STUDY OF THE SHAMANIC RITUALS OF BETTAKKURUMA COMMUNITY

Indu Menon ¹

ABSTRACT

There are communities in Kerala that continue to maintain practices and subsistence styles of the Megalithic period. They maintain megalithic beliefs regarding the world beyond death, about afterlife and the interrelationship of these two worlds. The Shaman is the magical link between this other world and the living world. He brings in souls, ancestors and gods from the other world, provides them space in his body and makes them solve human problems. This is a study of the rituals of Bettakkuruma community that inhabit the Nilgiri Biosphere reserve and believe in shamanic practices.

This paper describes the definition and the discourse of shamanism and the ways through which Bettakkuruma tribe practice Megalithic rituals. Also, it analyses the divine bond between the ancestral spirits that inhabit Nad'keere, the world afterlife and the living world. The settlements of Begur, Bavali and Kutta of the Nilgiri belt were chosen for the research. This research is exploratory and descriptive in design. As it is a qualitative research, a hypothesis has not been formulated. Data collection was completed using direct attendance in the ceremonies, participant observation and in-depth interviews with elders and shamans. Case studies of Shamans also helped to complete the study

Several distinct shamanic practices were discovered during the study, including introduction of a new member (Keermehgge, Ajjoduke), sending off of a dead soul to the other world (Binje), invoking and propitiating ancestors for healing and problem solving (Baluv) and the invoking of deities for the community (theyyadugge). It was possible to collect and analyse several myths and ancient and secret chants of the Bettakkuruma.

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Keywords: Tribal shamanism, other world, Keermehgge, Ajjoduke, Baluv, Theyyadugge, Binje

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I. Introduction

In several ancient communities, there exists a belief system of communicating with the spirits that inhabit a supernatural world, and of spirits possessing a human being with the help of magico-ritual practice.

A supernatural world could mean the world of gods/deities, or a world of spirits of dead ancestors, or a intermediate world of satanic and demonic forces and souls unable to reach the after world.

Although ordinary mortals cannot communicate directly with this after world and the spirit or souls, shamanism is the term given to such a communication.

II. Objectives of the Study

1. To understand what is tribal shamanism
2. To collect background material on shamanic practices of Kerala tribes
3. To study in depth the practices of Bettakkuruma tribe

III. Theoretical Background

There are several views regarding the origin of the term 'Shamanism'. Mircea Eliade is of the view that the Sanskrit word for a wandering monk - *Sramana* - may be the origin of the term. J. Nemeth postulates that the term originated from the Turkish-Tungusian languages. The term *saamana* or *saman* in the Siberian Evenksi language means a knowledgeable or an all-knowing person.

Clemens Alexandrios argues that the term originated from *shamanaei*, meaning a descendant or follower of the Buddha. The term could have originated from the Prakrit word *samana*.

There are terms akin to shaman in most languages.

It can be seen that the term has spread in most languages, such as *sa-men* in China, *shaman* in Russian, *Schamane* in German and *Shamani* in Finno Ugrian language. By the time the term reached the English language, the meaning had changed to indicate a person who conducts magical cures.

The Beginning of Shamanism

This has a simple logical basis. For ancient communities, there would be a tribal logic for the several unknown occurrences. Primitive religion and Ancient belief systems gave much importance to such occurrences, such as those connected to death, illness, physical disability, natural phenomena, animal behavior, collection of forest produce, harvest and security about which mankind was ignorant and from these the faith in supernatural powers originated.

Ancient tribes, clans and civilisations worshipped such unseen forces and found solutions by communicating with them. They believed that one among them who possessed magical powers could invoke such forces and find solutions to their problems. Such practices were in the vogue from Neolithic age. Shamanism as a proto religion became formulated in ancient Greece and Rome, India and Africa, which later found continuity in rural, tribal and regional forms of established religions.

It had strong influence in Hinduism, regional/local faiths and Tibetan Buddhism. With the spread of Christianity, such practices were regarded as satanic cults, and there was widespread religious disapproval of shamanic rituals. Societies became witness to cruelties such as witch hunting. The advent of the renaissance brought logic and a new direction of thought among people. Practices such as shamanism were depicted as unscientific. In psychiatry and social anthropology, the true nature of shamanism was revealed. But even today, shamanism and related beliefs are prevalent in many ancient tribal religions.

The tribal belief systems in Kerala are examples of this. Even in the face of strong influences from the Hindu religion, elements of shamanism continue to be practiced in tribal religion. This paper studies such shamanic rituals, especially among Bettakkurumas.

IV. Method

A. The People: Bettakkuruma

The tribal community, which speaks the Bettakkuruma language, is known as *Vettakkuruma* in Kerala, *Bettakkuruma* in Tamil Nadu and *Bettakkurumba* in Karnataka. From the root word of *Bid*, *Bidari*, *Bindam* came the word *Bott* or hill or highland. The community thus derived their name as one which originated in the hill. According to tribal myth, the community originated from the *Nerrdi* hill or the hill of Nilgiris. There are 1,703 families of *Vettakkuruman* with population of 6,482 consisting of 3,193 males and 3,289 females. The family size is 3.81 and sex ratio is seen as 1000:1030." (ST Development, 2008)

Bettakkurumas are an artisan community in the Nilgiri Biosphere. Following ancestral practices, they believe in the existence of ancestors named Ajjan and Ajji, and of Naat keere - the afterlife world. As the Ajjan, Ajjis are more powerful than the Gods, their blessings are essential for the community.

The Bettakkurumas have a clearly delineated social structure and organisation. They are divided into Phrateries called *Oli's*, clans called *Keere's* and lineages called *Moop*, *Moudlu* and *Elame*. The *Megalan* is the head of each *Oli*, and the *Megalan* of the dominant cult Balkeere is the head of the tribes.

B: The Methodology

As the study is designed as a qualitative study based on exploratory and descriptive design, no hypothesis has been formulated or tested. Primary data collection has been done using different ethnographic techniques. In the first stage, information was collected from senior community informants through in depth interviews.

As it was believed that the presence of outsiders in rituals will anger ancestral entities, the researcher could not attend any shamanic ritual initially. However, because of the bonds of friendship built over ten years of work in the Tribal Research Department, the researcher was later allowed to listen to the rituals from the outside.

My presence was under threat and was questioned several times by the ancestral spirit, and I was asked to go away. When the researcher replied to the queries of the shaman in Bettakkkuruma language, who had invoked the *Thoppetti Ajji*, the spirit of female ancestor of Clan *Kuppossch keere*, that spirit was pleased, and pleaded on behalf of the researcher to her husband Choman, the *Kupposh Keere Ajjan* viz *Keththil ajjan Choman*.

When I continued to reply in the tribal language during the logical conversations with ancestors (*Njayam parachil*), *Ajjan Choman* was also pleased, and agreed to give me entry provided that I should become a clan member of *Kupposh Keere* clan. I participated in the *Ajjuduke* ritual that introduces a new member to the ancestral world, and the spirits made me a clan member by permitting me to partake of the *Nich*, the ritual rice *Keer'mehge*.

From 2010 February, I was designated by the community as *Nangalakkan* or 'our girl' and permitted to attend shamanic rituals. From then on, I could conduct participant observation and also case study of shamans.

C. Profile of the Study

The paper has been prepared by interviewing members of several Bettakkuruma members spread across Nilgiri biosphere and administratively spreading across Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

V. Results and Discussion

Shamanism among the Tribal Communities of Kerala

There is a strong tradition of shamanism among the tribal communities of Kerala, and the shamanic rituals are tied to the tribal and Hindu societies. There is a caste-tribe continuum. The Komaram, Velichappadu, Theyyam, Thira, Vellattam are all caste based shamanic rituals and had a very strong relation with the tribal discourses of Shamanism. Shamanic rituals must have evolved and continued in many civilisations, continents and religions in parallel.

The tribal religion is among those religious forms that have not yet achieved specific religious structure, and all that have a complex amalgamation of simple religious forms such as animism, animatism, manaism, bongaism, totemism and ancestral worship. There is also the influence of Hinduism. While essentially simple in nature, it assumes complexity due to the interplay of several influences.

This includes assimilation of continuous cultural interchanges, several aspects of universalisation and beliefs and religious beliefs outside tribal shamanism. Even semitic beliefs which have no connection with tribal societies have been universalised.

For example, Cholanaicker and Kattunaicker, PVTG communities of Nilambur Valley, invoke muslim saints and holy men called *thangal* in their shamanic ritual known as *Arattu Pooram*. Hindu deities also often enter the bodies of shamans.

The primeval fear of death and beliefs form the basis for tribal shamanism. The ignorance of a scientific basis for the organic process leading to death, the belief in myths all contribute to the communal logic that death is a journey to the afterlife. The belief is that one who arrives in that world becomes divine and offers protection to the living.

The world of spirits is an extension to our world, and it is believed that the original founders of the tribe as well as recently dead persons all inhabit that world. It is common to see rituals in which newly born are introduced to the inhabitants of the afterworld.

Similarly, rituals involving invoking spirits from the afterworld into the body, in order to gently lead the spirit of the newly dead person to that world are quite common. The belief is

that the spirit can leave this world only after satisfying all requirements of this world, which explains the shamanic ritual of invoking the spirit to the body so that it can relate its requirements to the community members who can fulfil these, thereby facilitating the exit of the spirit to the afterworld in the company of ancestors.

The *Pel Binje* of Bettakkuruma and *Gaddika* of Rawler are similar ceremonies. Megalithic burial practices such as interring objects belonging to the dead person, food materials, implements and money in the hand are all practiced with the intention of ensuring smooth passage of the soul to the afterworld. Among the *Mullukkurumar*, *Theenukettu* (the cloth tied with food like *pacha*), *Kanappanam* (the entry fee kept in belt to the other world) and *Olli*, (the new and perfectly stitched dress/shrouds by the matrilineal kins of the deceased) are all for the same purpose. Sometimes, the spirits are invoked for other requirements, and for annual feeding ceremonies. All these are shamanic rituals necessitates the services of a shaman with expertise in invoking rituals.

Shamanic Initiation

Shamans necessarily need to acquire this important gift through shamanic initiation. It is no small matter to obtain control over divinities, supernatural forces and spirits, and to bring such forces to a particular spot where the shaman is. Such special powers can be obtained from birth, or spontaneously, but it is a difficult process.

“Only a selected few can become shamans. This is from a shamanic initiation process, through which a person is recreated into someone with superhuman qualities, upon which the community will accept that person as a shaman. This occurs in different ways for different persons. A person goes through an extremely painful process such as severe illness, epilepsy, bouts of unconsciousness and moves close to death. The community may assume that the person has passed away. But within the body, a super sensory incident has occurred. Many shamans have related that they were taken away by ancestral spirits, provided sacred chants, recreated as a new being by being liquified through fire or by passing lightning through their bodies, and bestowed with gifts and blessings as if in a dream. Anyway, most persons become shamans by a set of ancient rituals. This new entity later has control over spirits of ancestors.”

A person may spontaneously acquire magical powers and control, with the ability to talk to gods and ancestors, to bring them to the human world, engage in conversations with them, provoke and please them. They should be strong enough to give away their own bodies to enable such powers to remain in this world, and the shaman should have the strength to overcome severe physical tests and bear these on their physical bodies.

Shamans are called *Binjekkalan*, *Thoy Vad'kalan*, *Ajji*, *Pattalakkanmar* among *Bettakkuruma*, *Plathi* among *Urali*, *Pilathi* among *Kanikkar*, *Hethenmar*, *Hetchimaar* among *Kattunaicker* and *Velichappadu* which speak *Konthala* among *Mullukkurumar*, *Vathi* among *Mannan*, *Thammadikkaran* among *Adiyar*. They have acquired magical powers either from ancestry or by blessings from gods or through revelations in dreams. But some persons obtain the powers of invoking spirits into their bodies by doing penance, which bring minor divinities, spirits of birds, animals, reptiles or fish into their bodies. This is seen in those persons of

Pathinaicker and *Aler*, who do penance during the time of the *Arattu pooram* festival. Here, the reason for shamanic initiation is the penance the persons have undergone.

The following are the most important shamanic rituals among tribes in Kerala

Sl. No.	Community	Male Shaman	Female Shaman	Shamanic rituals	Shamanic objects
1.	Bettakkurumar	Binje kkalan, Thoyvad'kalan	Ajjimar, Pattalakkanmar	Binje, Al Binje, Pel binje, Theyyaduge, Ajjod'gge Keermeh'gge Baluvu	Binje mera
2.	Mullukkurumar	Velichappadu	none	Daivakanal, elaykku kodukkuka, koottathil koottuka	Red silk, thambayi sword, the stick of muthassiyamma
3	Mannan	Vathi	none	Kalavoottu, chavarkku veykkal	Stick
4	Adiyar	Thammadikkar, Kanaladi, Karimi		Gaddika, Peyattu, Peykkettal, Murakettu, KoOliyattu, Kootta, Nekalu, Theyyakkol nalkal	Marithali, stick, Mani muram
5	Kattunaicker	Hethanmar	Hett'chi	Hetchilattam, churaykkathullal	Hadikka burooda
6	Paniyan	Karmi		Penappattu, Marikkali, idiveeranu nalkal, theyvam thullal, Melerikkoottal	Thudi, Cheeni
7.	Thachanadan Mooppen			Different thiras	

8	Malayan			Muram kilukkipattu	Different types of magical winnows sieves
	Konga malayar			Churanga thullal	Churaykka
9	Kurichiya			Thirakal, vellattu, kalasattu	
10	Koraga			Bhootha koraga dance	
11	Malavettuva	Keeran		Heyyam, vadakkan vathil, thadupp rasi	Thaduppa
12	Mavilan			Different theyyams panchuruli, kallurutti etc	
13	Pathinaykkan			Arattu pooram	Beeda
14	Aranadan			Nali vekkal	
15	Malamuthan			theyyakoothu	
16	cholanaickan			Barsa pattu Nelalu patt	Beeda
17	Kurumba			Cheeru	
	mudooka			Abdham	
18	Alar			Arattupooram Muram pattu Daivam vili	
19	Kunduvadiyan			Elakku kodukva	
20	Kani			Chattu	Kokkara
21	Malapulayan			Mathattam	

Myths and Magico-Ritual cum Shamanic Activities of Bettakkuruma

All religious and belief system related ceremonies are shamanic rituals. Most involve the invocation and possession of forces such as ancestral souls, Muddir, Ajjan Ajjis, jungle gods

and benevolent forest goddesses, satanic forces and spirits such as *preta* and *pisachu*, in order to find the reason for and solution to human problems.

The important shamanic rituals are as follows:

1. Keermeg'ka - purification ceremony after child birth and the removal of birth taboo; Ealkka
2. Ajjaduka or Ajjoduge - To introduce a new born member to the world of ancestors through the possession of a soul of female ancestral spirit
3. Baluvu -
4. Binje - shamanic ritual connected to Baluvu ritual - birth and death
5. Maddeduppaka - removal of Odi curse
6. Theyvad'g - the dance of gods or god's in possession

As these remove illness and solve problems, all Bettakkurumars are interested in observing these rituals.

There are different myths and belief system associated with the pregnancy and delivery. During the 6th month the midwife comes for helping the pregnant woman and at that time the deity of pregnant women, *Thyaamarakkan* is invoked.

Birth and Related Myths

A pregnant woman is known as *thondir'thiruval* or *Basalpeduval*. *Baluv* is a mythic ritual conducted during the fifth month of pregnancy of *Bettakkurumar*. It is a divine ritual done to ensure longevity and health of the pregnant woman and her child. The main ritual is bird sacrifice. Childless women conduct a ritual called *Baluv Bud'g* making an offering of *Baluv*. This expensive ritual involves *th'rgatt'g* (*thira*), *kalga* or *kalam/Kolam* drawing. In the drawing figures similar to human figures are drawn. However they are drawn with cruel faces, along with long canine teeth and horns and thick eyebrows. These drawings are prepared using turmeric powder, charcoal, lime powder and rice powder.

It is on the courtyard of the *Ambala* that the *Baluv Bud'g* is held on Mondays and Fridays. A *pandal* built of bamboo is raised, and decorated with mango leaves and tender coconut palm leaves. Bamboo lamps are lit and placed on the four corners of the *pandal*. The fire kept in the *Ambala* is called *Mogasala* or *Moosala theeche*, and the fire lit on the pathway of the *Ajjan* is called *Kyarambal theeche*. This protects people who have gathered to witness the *Baluv* in the cold.

As part of *Baluv*, there will be *Balkeer JenuvarcMegan* and his helper *Moojari* and the heads of other *Oli* s (phrateries).

“While performing the *Baluv*, the head and clan heads of the settlement along with *Mujari* are made to sit near three pillars row, placed on the eastern side of the *Ambala*. ‘*Vokkalutanada Yajamaana*’ (cultivators head) is seated near two pillars row, which are placed before three pillars. The next three pillars just opposite to two pillars row are considered to be the place for community headman called *Ajjanapata*. The last two rows of the pillars are meant for community men, women and children.” (SC Jai Prabhat and M R Gangadhar, 2011, p131)

The pregnant woman, who has been on ritual penance, wears a traditional white robe. Wearing a blouse is prohibited. There will be beautiful frills on the front part of the robe. She wears many necklaces adorned with white beads. The ornaments are not worn in the normal fashion, but diagonally across the chest. Women escorting the pregnant woman are also required to wear white clothes. As *Baluv* is very expensive, the ritual is often held after the baby has been born. In this case, the baby is also dressed in white and placed along with the woman.

Baluvakkan is the term used to denote the pregnant woman sitting at the *Baluv*. She holds the chicken. Blood from its toe nail is taken and applied on the forehead of *Baluvakkan*. After this, the chicken is sacrificed, and its curry given to *Baluvakkan*. The curry made of sacrificial chicken is called *saar'* or *chaar'*. It contains colocasia leaves and grains. The *Saar'* is first offered ceremoniously to the *Ajjans* and *Ajjis*, along with puffed rice. The right thigh of the chicken is roasted and served to the *Megalans* and *Ajjans* who have gathered for the *Baluv*.

As part of *Baluv*, five mud vessels full of rice is placed within the *Ambala*. This rice is distributed to animals and birds at the time when *saar'* is being served. It is believed that ancestors will come in the guise of animals and birds to partake of the feast. If this food is not eaten by animals or birds, it is a bad omen, indicating that the penance has not been undertaken properly or that the rituals have been wrongly done.

Two human figures are created out of plantain stem in the middle of the *Kolam* (floor drawing). These are known as *Balu kir'thadd*. The starting of *Baluv* is known as *Baluv Kurthinige*. These are also adorned with ornaments. When the *Kolam* is ready, women are forbidden entry. It is believed that if they do, *Jogi*, the main *thira* of *Baluv*, will enter their bodies. If *Jogi* enters her body, a woman immediately undergoes '*galat'nad*' or becomes dizzy and falls down.

Thiras are representations - '*janduvaidhambhana*', that is they mime animals. The *thiras* that usually appear and dance (*ketti adi*) during *Baluv bud'g* are *Merli*, *Kethi*, *Pakethi*, *Jogi*, *Boothan* and *Durigi*. *Merli* is a god with spots all over the face, and has two antlers that are tied to the head. *Merli* has the movements of spotted deer. *Kethi* is dressed in black to resemble a bear. *Kethi* imitates the movements and facial expressions of the bear, and has a winnow and a broom in his hands. It is believed that *Kethi* comes to sweep off garbage and waste, and purify the *tharavad*.

The *Pakethithira* has the characteristics of the mother deity *Bhagavathi*. As soon as the *janduvaidhambhana* (animal miming) *thiras* dance, *Pakethi* makes an appearance.

Jogi dresses in clothes made of sack cloth and reed. *Jogi* has facial decorations made of charcoal, rice powder and turmeric. Like a *yogi*, the *Jogithira* asks for alms at each household. *Appam* and *dosa* made of new rice is given to the *Jogi* by the householders. It is believed that the problems and illnesses besetting the residents leave the house along with these offerings.

Durigi is another powerful *daivam* appearing as *Baluv*. *Jala Durigi* is one form which is so fearsome that no one dare go close, as she is the mother of diseases creating diseases causing pustules. She travels here and there, always accompanied by a sack containing diseases such as small pox and chicken pox. If she likes someone, she gifts that person an illness taken out of her sack. Therefore, *Durigithira* is worshipped only from afar.

Boothan is a *daivam* with matted hair. Realising that people are afraid of *Durigi*, *Boothan* swings his matted hair to confine *Durigi* to a corner.

As part of *Baluv*, a small *Ambala* is built in an area close to *Baluv*. *Balu thir'thad'*, the human figures kept in the *Kolam* is brought to this plantain stem *Ambala*. A *kalam* would be drawn beside this *Ambala* also. This is done to prevent *Jogi* from possessing women. At night, many *Binje Kalans*, purified by penance, arrive and sing *Binje* sitting around a fire. Slowly, some of them go into trance (*uranju thulluka*). To sing *stutis* of *Binje*, there are *Pattaalakkanmar*, women who accompany the singers. *Binje* continues all day and night.

Doppu Baluv is the extensive *Baluv* involving all *thiras*, and smaller ceremonies are called *Thontu Baluv*. *Baluv* is conducted for the prosperity of the family, but instead of the pregnant woman, it would be family members who are brought and seated.

Delivery is normally conducted in the husband's house. At around seven-eight months of pregnancy, midwives come to attend on the woman. *Thwamarakkan*, the midwives, make a special *keere* (house) where the pregnant woman will stay till she gives birth. This house, where no males can enter (*Ayitha pura*), is called *Soothika keere*. It is the *Thwamarakkan* who does all help to the woman, and after the birth of the baby, she looks after essential activities such as bathing the baby, washing clothes, giving the right food and other assistance. The midwife enjoys a high social position and respect. *Thwamarakkan* stays with the mother and child till the child goes through *Keermegke*, the *Ajjaduka* ceremony. On the day of *Keermegke*, she is honoured by giving betel leaves, new clothes and *dakshina* money.

As the delivery date approaches, a lean-to room is built adjacent to the *Soothika keere*. This is the delivery room – *Bithinees'g* or *Naldapp'ne*, where entry of others is forbidden. When the '*pottenovu*' or labour pain begins, the *Thwamarakkan* spreads a grass mat, and the woman gives birth in a sitting position. Newborn babies may have particle like eruptions on the skin, called *Kembara*. It is believed that this happens because the mother had eaten something undesirable while pregnant, or had a desire which was not fulfilled. To cure this, a fruit called *Imbneringe*, similar to *naranga mullu*, is mixed with *Ajal thyol* and *ele* (*sadavari bark and leaf*) and breast milk, and some applied on the tongue of the baby and the rest is applied on the skin.

Kember mudugar is the eruptions on the baby, akin to sweat pimples. It is believed that these occur because the woman ate hot food while pregnant.

Immediately after birth, the umbilical cord is tied with white woven string. When the cord falls off on the 5th to 7th day, turmeric is roasted over fire, made into a paste and applied.

The mother does not leave the delivery room till the end of *Pula* period. A pit is dug on the corner of the room, where stones are paved, and a hole is created for water to be discharged. The mother and child use this area to bathe. They do not step out, or use oil.

Each female visitor brings a pot of water, which is used to bathe the mother and child. Water is heated on the fire or under the sun. This practice was adopted to reduce the burden of women who live in areas of water scarcity, and who cannot step out or during times of menses. It is believed that children grow in water, so exposure to water is very important.

After giving a bath, the baby is warmed by taking it close to a fire, and by rubbing. Mothers are also warmed using this technique.

Cheekul nich / machir nich are names given to tamarind flavoured rice which is the staple diet of pregnant women. This is mandatory till 6-7 months after birth. The umbilical cord is buried, respectfully remembering the ancestors *Ajjan Ajjis*. A small part of the placenta is dried and stored. After delivery, the mother is permitted to use hot and spicy food. Newborns are never left alone. If at all they needed to be left alone, a broom is kept on the side, and an iron knife kept near the head. Up to seven months, a knife has to be kept near the baby, as it is believed that this will ward off spirits such as *muddir* (spirit of dead) *bhoota* and *preta*.

Until *Keermegka*, the mother and child do not step out, and the father cannot see the baby till the birth *pula* ends. *Keermegka* is the purification ceremony, which is done on the 9th or 11th day normally. If there is any difficulty, this can be done on the seventh day, with the permission of the *Megalan*. This is purely a shamanic activity. The ceremony is to introduce the newly arrived member of the family to the ancestors. It is believed that the ancestor gods, the *Ajjis* and *Ajjans*, come over to bless the baby. They take the baby in their hands and pray, blessing the baby with good health and longevity and good character. On the day of *Keermegke*, the mother and baby step out of the *Bidinis keere*. The house and courtyard is made clean by plastering with cow dung. Early in the morning, a pot of rice is prepared. Betel leaves are kept ready.

For *Keermegke*, people with shamanic forces visit the house, and they summon and possess the spirits of ancestors. They are called *Ajjadunnavar* or *Ajjattakkar*, those who are possessed by *Ajjis*. This is known as *ajjodege* or *ajjyadal*. On the day of *Keermegke*, the mother and child purify themselves by bathing, warm themselves over a fire, and in the light and warmth of frankincense fire, they enter the house. They believe that frankincense cleanses all impurities. All articles and spaces used by the mother and baby are purified using a fire made of frankincense.

The next step is serving rice. According to the number of *Ajjan Ajji*, five or seven leaves are placed, and rice is served to them. *Kambe*, a curry made of wild colocasia, *mambayar* (red beans) and colocasia leaves is served. Different types of delicacies, fruits and other food stuffs are also served. For the female shaman; *Ajjis*, a mat is laid for them to rest. The *Ajjis* sit on one side, and the mother and child on the other side. After the lamps are lit, they remain silent, waiting with prayers for the arrival of the *Karanavathi* goddess; *Ajjis*. They descend to earth, only after it is confirmed that the house and neighbourhood have been purified. The *Ajjattakkar* begin by saying *Nyayam* (reasoning), which is known as '*Nyayam pok'ka*'. This is a ritual by which the *Karanavar* gods are brought to the house by relating one or the other *Nyayam*.

An example of a *Nyayam* would be "today, on the ninth day, we have purified ourselves. *Ajjis*, please come to this house, and protect this baby for her lifetime"

Many such *nyayams* are related, to please the ancestors. Suddenly, *Ajjis*, the female ancestor spirit, enter the bodies of the *Ajjattakkar*. Their bodies start trembling a little, and then after the spirit has completely entered the body, they enter a trance stage, shivering and

trembling. This stage is called *Beeri kottana* or *Beeri varika*. *Beeri kottana* occurs in one body at a time. The baby is given into the hands of the *Ajjattakkar* in trance. In their trance stage, the *Ajjattakkar* loudly recite mantras blessing the baby and praying for her prosperity. Once an *Ajji* the female ancestor spirit leaves a body, another god enters the body of another *Ajjattakkar*. While leaving, the spirit tenderly kisses the baby and hands her over to the next person who has started showing signs of possession. This goes on for hours. The number of spirit Gods entering the bodies of *Ajjattakkar* is the number of leaves served. Sometimes, gods descend in groups. During such an occasion, older babies of breastfeeding age are placed in the hands of the *Ajjattakkar* in the place of the *Keermegke* baby. If the baby is not very healthy, the baby is given in the hands of the *Ajjattakkar* for a brief while, and the rest of the blessings are done using other babies. All these are performed by women, and men do not have entry.

Ennayoothal is the last ceremony. Oil is poured on the heads of the *Ajjattakkar*. After this oil is applied on the mother and baby, for the first time after giving birth. Thereafter, rosewater is sprinkled over food to be served to all. A handful of rice and cambe curry each is eaten from the meal served to the ancestors, signifying the end of *Keermeg'ka*. Betel leaves and areca nut is distributed to all. The *Thyamarakkan* who looked after the mother and baby is given betel leaves and areca, clothes, and oil. *Mampood mage*, the young girls designated to help the *thyamarakkan* with her duties, are also given money and *dakshina* offering.

Till the *Ajjadal*, babies are swathed only in cloth. After *Keermegke*, they are dressed, and placed on a thick cloth mat called *pakai thigathe*. *Kal'ngeeriye* or eye kohl, is applied to the eyes of babies. *Kal'ngeeriye* is prepared from the soot that forms on the bottom of a mud vessel, and which is mixed in oil. A dark spot is applied on the left side of the forehead of a female baby, and on the right side of a male baby. Ear piercing is done on the day before Vishu. The *Megalan* conducts this ceremony at the *Ambala*. The *Megalan* cleans the *Ambala*, assisted by the boys of the *Ooru*. Grass and weeds are removed, and the courtyard cleaned, this is done in the forenoon. In the afternoon, the rights over the *Ambala* are given over to the *Kattunaicka* community. The members of that community sweep the *Ambala* clean. The baby, bathed and purified, is brought to the *Ambala*. Small *dosas*, called *kiri kiri*, is also brought. The *Megalan* takes the baby, and pierces her ear with a *Kaara* thorn, in the presence of a praying audience. If it's a boy, it is called *Kimbil kad'kedukke*.

The *Megalan* has the right to name the child. Usually, a name of an ancestor is given, sometimes the name of a god is also given. The name may also be given considering the tharavad, clan god or place of residence. After the name is given, if the child has an illness, the belief is that the name is the reason for the sickness, and the name is not suitable. In such an eventuality, the *Megalan* and elders choose another name. If the name giving was conducted with the god *Meraavu* in mind, the name given is *Marran* or *Mari*. The children of *K'ringali* god are named *Kali* or *Kal'in* or *Kalan* or *Kala*. Names given with the blessing of the ancestor *Thoppatta Ajjan* are *Chomi*, *Chemi*, *Shomi*, *Somi*, *Choman*, *Shoman*. In areas around Bathery, names given are *Bommi*, *Bommukan*, and around *Palvelicham* names such as *Chelli*, *Chellin*, *Chellan* are given. In these days, contemporary names are adopted and find place in certificates, but everyone will mandatorily have a traditional name.

Table showing the Names and its origin

God/Ancestor	Names given
<i>Merav</i>	<i>Marakkan, Maran, Mari</i>
<i>Kirnkali</i>	<i>Kaln, Kali, KaLi</i>
<i>Keththi</i>	<i>Keththi, Keththan, Cheththi</i>
<i>Tholppatta Ajjan / Aji</i>	<i>Choman, Soman, Chomi, Chyemi, Somi</i>
<i>Batheri Ajjan / Aji</i>	<i>Bomman, Bommi, Bomkkan</i>
<i>PalvelichamAjjan / Aji</i>	<i>Chelli, Chellan , Chellin</i>
<i>Dalmebi Aji</i>	<i>Methakkan, Methi, Maran, Mathan</i>

The *Choroonu* (first meal) ceremony is also done under the supervision of the *Megalan*. This is known as *Mudde Theet'th*, and is conducted usually at the *Ambala*. For this ceremony also, small dosa like delicacies are offered.

Another version of the ceremony is given below:

“It is conducted with festivity, with the arrival of *Mothali* (*Megalan*) and relations. *Kanjiis* prepared in a *mudkalam* which has been made by themselves. Broken *unpOli* shed rice pounded in a *Nankuli* (pestle) is used to make *Kanji*. One of the relations who has a calm temperament is the one who feeds the baby first. The ceremony is done within 15 days of birth. (Prasanth Krishnan, 2013, 69)”

There is a ceremony of hair shaving among members of the *Bettakkuruma* community. They visit one of the community temples such as *Ombala* or *Kuttam*, and shave the heads of babies as an offering. This is known as *Manthakr' Jav'du*. *Putt'thakar' eduppu*, *putt'thakar' keezhthu*. After the *Megalan* conducts the ceremony, hair shaving is done by women. In each *thittu*, some women are believed to have good luck (*kaipunyam*) who conduct this task. It is believed that if the baby is shaved by women with bad luck, then the baby will fall ill, catch cold, and the hair will not grow well.

Binje

This is the most important shamanic ceremony. The rituals are conducted by the shaman *Binjekkalan*. By chanting mantras, he summons their ancestress; *Ajjan & Ajjis*, forest gods and clan gods and *thitte* (geographical division) gods into his body. The reason for illness, death, how can someone be enticed, what are the enemy maneuvers, solution to evil acts such as placing of *mattam* and *thakidu* by enemies, are some of the questions asked to the soul that has entered the shaman, and for which the soul offers answers through the *Komara* (oracle) who goes into a trance and shivers and dances (*uranju thulli*). He provides the answers and also gives solutions. Sometimes, they are not ready to give answers. Then the

women followers of Binjekkalan, the Pattalakkanmar, sing the *pinpattu* (music that follows the main cadence) and ask 'nyayam' of the soul. The Binje is when *nyayam* is mutually told and a decision arrived at.

Pel Binje and Ol Binje are the two variants of Binje. Death related ritual is called peleBinje. During other occasions, Ol Binje is conducted for the prosperity and good fortune of the family. Ol Binje is divided into Kudumba Binje and Baluv Binje.

When someone in the community dies, Megalan the headman, after consulting elders, decides on a date for Binje. The date is announced loudly at the burial ground itself to the family members and community members. Normally, it is conducted on the ninth day. When there is no money available or for some other reason, the Binje can be delayed. On the day of the Binje, about ten Binjek Kalan from Aith Oli and Mur Oli clans ceremonially arrive at the departed's house after observing penance and obeying all regulations. Pattalakkanmar, the women followers who will sing along, also arrive. They wear *thonkettu thikathe* apart from traditional attire. The Binjekkalan, Karanavars and Moopp elders sit on one side, and the Pattalakkanmar and women sit on the other side. Two fires are lit for this.

The Binje is conducted at night. This has to be held at the Ambaala, in the presence of relations and family members. The Ambala is cleaned and purified using cow dung by the women. Boys collect all materials needed for the Binje. "Orpayut oru theech" is what the Binjekkalan says about the Binje. It means that a mat is laid, and a lamp is lit. For this, mats and timber from the forest is all brought to the Ambaala. White *mundu* is thrown into the laps of the Binjekkalans who are returning after bathing and in wet clothes. They wear this new white mundu. Then when they arrive at the Ambala, they are given a meal. Their feet are touched and betel leaves given to them as *dakshina*. They are purified using frankincense (*kunthirikkam*), collected in a *panthakuzhikke*. After the Megalans, Karanavars, Pattalakkanmar and Mooppans have been purified, they start praying after touching and bowing before the Ambala. The Aith Oli people have primacy at a Binje. The Bettakkuruma tribe head Januvar Megalan will be in the front. The main person of the Binjekkar will ask "Ett keer' palonnithu?" meaning why is this Binje being held? or from which side. This signifies the beginning of the ceremony. The answer to the question could be *pele* or for child bearing, or to destroy enemies or to trace an eloped person or to save some life. Once the answer is received, the mantras and *stutis* will begin as chanting and singing, and the song part is repeated by the Pattalakkanmar, which is known as Binje paduge.

The Binjekkalan will carry in his hand the shamanic instrument that is Binjemore. It is a single cornered winnow, with kiji or bells at the corner. "They are conch shells to *aiyndikirji* or read omens." (Cohlo Gail, 2017, 3) Ringing this magical instrument, and chanting 48 Binjekshara *satyamantras*, souls are brought down to earth one by one.

First, the Ajjans are called. The Adiya Karanavar; the headman, Ajjan Boliikkaran known as Tyolan muddir is summoned first. Then, according to leaneage Moopp and position, Ajjan Maryod or Ajjan Mujjod is called. When the souls of Ajjan & Ajjis arrive for Binje, the oracles start getting into a trance, known as Komaralekk'. Their arrival is called Beeru varika. Each Ajjan gets into the body of each Binje Kalan due to the strength of the mantra chanted. If there is anything wrong, the soul will not enter the body of Komara even after chanting many mantras. Then, the Vakkukar or the elders occupying positions of authority plead with

the angry ancestors, apologizing to them and asking for forgiveness and assuring of compensatory rituals. If the Ajjanare satisfied and pleased with this, they will arrive, *beeri varika*, and their souls will enter the bodies of the Binjek Kalans. The ancestor of Januvar Megalan Doppa Ajjan, the other Ajjans of Aith Oli , the ancestors of Paniyas, Muthumel Ajjan are all called in their language. Souls of ancestors such as Elthare, Multhare, Nimeel Ajjan are then called. It is believed that they will wait outside the Ambala unseen.

Only those Binjekkalanmar who are pure of penance and pure of mind are capable of summoning the souls of ancestors chanting the Binje mantras. If the summoning goes wrong, the spirits such as Mutir pisachu will descend and strike down the Binjekkar. If it is pele Binje, Chodle Ajjan (the headman of graveyard), Ajjan Nad'keere Noorajjan is summoned. At the end, the soul of the departed person is also summoned. The cause of death, the reason for unnatural death is ascertained by Vakkariyunnavar and Karanavars to the BinjekKalan possessed by Beeri. The *nyaya anyayas* are mutually discussed and negotiated, and a final decision arrived at.

The Binjekkalan who is in trance (*beeri ilaki nilkunna*) is asked questions by Vakkariyunnavar (logicians).

“What are the reasons for this incident? What is the solution to the problem? The reason for illness? Is the missing person still alive? Why did the crops get destroyed? What is the reason for the family issues? Such questions are asked and help is sought. The soul may or may not respond. Sometimes, he points out that the problem was not caused by him, but by someone else. Sometimes, he gives wrong answers or keeps silent. The Vakkariyunnavar brings him back. During the *nyayam* or conversation, disputes, jokes, serious matters, abuses, complaints are all aired and solved.

The Binjekkalan will be trembling and shivering because of possession. He may behave in a fearsome manner, beating on the mat and on his thigh and screaming, after being possessed by souls. The soul may get enraged and go away while discussing *nyayam* with Vakkariyunnavar, Megalan and elders, if it does not like the conversation. In that case, the Binje will have to be conducted again. If the *nyayams* are decided, the soul of the departed is accepted in the hands of *nad'keere* Ajjan, who receives him in his company sparing it the fate of roaming the earth as a *pisachu*. Sometimes, the Ajjan will not receive certain souls under any circumstance. Such souls are condemned to roam the earth as muddir troubling the living. Balu Binje is conducted along with Baluvu vettal. This is done mainly for child bearing. Kudumba Binje is held for prosperity of the family and to resolve family issues. When such Binje are held, the disputants and family members have to be present. The Binjekkalan determines what is right and wrong, and suggest solutions through *nyayam parachil* (logical verbal conversation with the spirit). Bettakkurumar believe that menstruating women, people with *pula*, excommunicated Mouljonivaj' persons should not be present during Binje.

The Myth of Binje

The ancestors of Bettakkurumar, who are believed to have taken birth in Nirddi mountain, took customs, mantras chanting, tantras tricks for their use, undergoing great troubles and crossing the Kabani river. But they did not receive the most important Binje and Komara,

who is possessed of the souls and forest and clan gods. Disturbed by this, the ancestors got together under a tree within the forest and started praying to the forest gods after undergoing penance. They underwent severe hardship and continuous penance. Even after fourteen days of fasting and hunger and prayers, there was no result. Although the Komara descended from the skies to the earth on a *poonool* (string), it did not enter the Karanavar. The Komaram stayed at the top of the peepal tree, but did not enter the body of anyone who was under the tree, despite making noise. They tried different sounds to attract its attention. One of the Ajjans left the gathering and roamed the forest in deep thought. Then he saw an extraordinary sight. A small *hornetvandu* was piercing a bamboo stem with its sound. There were three or four such holes, and when the breeze entered the bamboo, it created a melodious musical sound as it passed through the holes. The Ajjan brought the others to see this beautiful scene, and everyone was attracted to the melody. Someone brought a knife and cut the bamboo stem, and started blowing into it. The melody of the forest flowed through it, and the Kalal or flute was born. The Ajjans sat under the tree and started playing the Kalal. Attracted by the music, the Komara descended from the tree and became accessible to the tribe, and to the entire world. That was how they obtained all the customs of Binje and Binjemara (winnow), and all the rules and regulations of the community.

But the community was not complete with the Kalal alone. Because there was no *davil*, there was no sense of rhythm. Making the *davil* was not easy. For Ajjans who remained pure and clean, they could not touch the ox or the buffalo. Ajjans wore the sacred *poonool* (thread), and would lose their purity if they touched the hide for *davil*. While they were thinking of what to do next, a calf appeared. The Ajjans planned a trick. They enticed Kalkeer Megalan by offering him inducements. Kalkeer Megalan, realizing that the *davil* was needed to complete the customs without which the community could not progress, stripped the living calf of its hide. The area from where the hide had been stripped suddenly regrew its skin. The Megalan created the *davil* affixing the piece of hide on to a piece of wood. But the impure Megalan and the *davil* was not allowed entry into the tribe. As penance, he was asked to take a dip in the river for seven days, along with the *davil*. Elder Ajjans told him to stay there till they settled matters when they would return for him. On the eleventh day, the call of the Ajjans came. "Konduva ninte ocha" (bring forth your sound) was the command. Kalkeer Megalan, who was in wet clothes after taking a bath was received with lit *pandam* (frank incense) and doing pooja. He brought the *davil* and made sound with it. The sound came out loud, and the world vibrated. Someone played the Kalal. The *davil* was played again and again, and hearing the loud sound (*malgeesath'*), the customs and traditions descended to earth one by one. When the world itself started shaking under the force of the sound, Theive also descended. Hearing the musical tone of *ad'kalal*, even Theive was entranced, and became friends of the Bettakkurumar Ajjans. Although the impurity was removed, the Ajjans, who considered themselves above even the Thirunelli Eswaran, kept the Kalkeer Megalan away (*theendapad*). The untouchable Kalkeer Megalan became Pulayan. Chikkamman thevi (Peledaivam) blessed him and took him with her. From then onwards, Kalkeer and Aith Oli clans do not take or give women in marriage to each other. Kalkeer clans would get women only from far away Tamilnadu and Karnataka regions. Even today, the Aith Oli clans people regard Kalkeer as second class. The Kalkeer do not give Binje to Aith Olikkar. The position and authority of Aith Olikkar still evoke fear among Kalkeerkkar.

Madd'eduppage

The Bettakkurumar have several techniques to destroy and disarm enemies. The main among these is Odi put n'ge or poisoning through an *odi* (spell). Madd'eduppage is the method through which the influence of this poison is removed. Two techniques are used – the sick person is treated early in the morning using *beriyette* or cane stick, or blowing on a string/thread. The shamanic healer invoked seats of the patient with his back facing him. Chonna kuruthi vellam (water mixed with turmeric and lime) is placed on the side. The *odi* is removed into this water by means of a thread tied to the patient's body, which extends into the vessel of water, when the healer repeatedly blows on the thread. The cane is whirled or around the patient's body to remove pain. This Bethaboje the sacred stick is held between the teeth and deposited in the water. If one can spy dead insects, thakidu, nail, bone, teeth etc. in the water, it can be assumed that the *odi* has been removed. The patient is taken inside, and the others given a *prasadam* by the healer. The water is gently drained out, and if there is any living insect inside, it is also killed. It is believed that by this method, the patient will be free from the influence of *odi*.

Theyv'adith' or god's arrival

Just as some persons have the power to bring down Ajjans, souls of ancestors into their bodies, some have the power to be possessed even by *thieve* (god). A person possessed by *thieve* goes into trance, and provides solutions to problems, a practice known as theyv'adith'. This is conducted by a shaman *theyvadu* Kalan, who knows all kinds of mantra and tantra. Removal of 'odi', removal of 'kaivisham', evacuation of Muddir (ghost) from a body (*gelat'nade*) are all done by Theyvadu Kalan. He chases away the Muddir using a cane during *gelat'nade*, during which time the patient vomits, becomes unconscious and the Muddir exits the body. The *theyvadu* Kalan is called in to remove the possession of other spirits such as Muddir, Savandi, Pakethi, Kuttichatan and Ko Oliyan.

It is common for *thieve kooduge* (possession by god) when the *thira* of *kuttathamman* comes out. During this time, people with mental illness, people afflicted with fits all come over to Kuttam for treatment. The Vellattam swings the cane and beats the *preta* out of these patients. Along with this, there are some herbal treatments also. Galmad' (wild camphor) juice is smelt, and given in a drink. In the case of children, the Aruth leaf is crushed and given in breast milk, which is licked up by the children. For adults, the leaf is given after being ground.

TATTOO - A COMMUNITY MARKER AMONG A FEW TRIBES OF ODISHA: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SANTALS OF MAYURBHANJ

Harapriya Samantaraya ¹

ABSTRACT

Tattoo is an art form on human body surface. This art form is integral to some rural and tribal cultures of Odisha. Tattooing is considered as one of the cultural markers among the tribal communities emblazoned on different visible parts of the body. It is also treated as a part of dress on skin. Like tribes, the a few rural caste women also have permanent tattoo on arms, elbow, ankle, thighs, chest and neck. However, across the communities the perception on tattoo varies. Some communities perceive it as a symbol of beauty; a visible language; a safety measure to ward off bad omen and malevolent spirits during life and after-life ; while a few others consider tattoo as an ethnic and sub-ethnic marker and therefore maintain it as a part of cultural heritage. Mostly, it is gender specific. The diversity of art on skin not only retains ethnic identity but also offers an understanding on worldview of the ethnic groups.

This paper based on periodic observations and informal interactions across unplanned visits to communities like Santals of Mayurbhanj. However, a few other tribes namely, Binjhals of Bargarh and Kandhas of Kandhamal of Odisha have been observed through casual visits. The paper tries to explore the cultural importance of tattoos in the tribal tradition and the entry of Chita-Muruja in the tribal culture. In addition, it also attempts to offer a descriptive analysis as how tattoo plays a significant role in determining social status among a few tribal women folks and their interethnic relations. Irrespective of tribes, apart from cultural identity, tribal tattooing with age old tools and techniques is strongly believed as a benevolent act for the community to ward-off evils during life and after-life and in its supports there are myths and legends that narrate causes and consequences of existing designs. However, younger generations feel traditional tattoo is unworthy as it disfigures them.

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Introduction:

One of the human nature is a desire to remain young, attractive, and unique. Irrespective of degree of development and economic class everyone suffer from some form of identity crisis. Thus, there is an urge for appreciation for one's manifested action from interacting persons. In contemporary society, tattoo worn by educated urban youth are mainly attributed to draw the attention of others and enhance one's own outer beauty. It's a kind of craze for some young adults. Probably western athletes, adventurist cowboys, participants of horse race, kick-boxers, boxers, sportsmen, models, film stars and personality in popular media are the source of imitation for the urban youth. As such it is a market driven body paint art. Nowadays, it even assumed a part of make-up. There is temporary and as well as permanent tattoo engraved on exposed portion human body. Tattoo on body has assumed as a contemporary fashion for many. In India, tattoo parlors are mushrooming in urban centers. Young urbanites spend money to get an appreciated pattern to be inked on their body. In rural and tribal areas people have the knowledge on traditions of tattoo. Age old tattooing methods and motifs are inseparable from their culture. However, this art is a vanishing tribal art. Though, preserving tribal culture is the responsibility of governments as a part of constitutional safeguard, it is not an easy task. As it is well known that goods and services go better in market driven economy, tattoo can be no exception to it. Market survey reveals that youngsters have a typical choice to decorate their exposed body cleavages. Thus, entrepreneurs target this segment of population who are their prospective consumers. To popularize, positive youth psychological statements are being circulated through different electronic and print media .In market places, aggressive demonstration are being made emphasizing the price, package, place, population and performance. Promoting traditional tattoos and assuming a style in modern way of life is thought to maintain its popularity. The report of Das (2012) in Times of India daily, expressed about a Manipuri artist, who has set up a school where he teaches "the ancient practice of tattooing on the body to professionals and amateurs". In a sense, for tribal entrepreneur this could be a model where one would get a tribal motif inked on body with modern tattoo machines. Tattoo talents are witnessing the ancient tools of tattoo designs and exhibited in their parlors.

Tattoo is an almost indelible mark on the human body. Tattoo is also considered as a cultural heritage. Some ethnographers treat tattoo as a type of painted body dress. Tattoo gives identity to a person's ethnic origin, his/ her knowledge, beliefs, and emotions (Buckland, 2013 & Baruah, 2011). For women, mostly tattooing is for body beautification. It also exhibits one's social status. For many indigenous communities, it is an ethnic marker, a symbol of marital status and totemic identity (Panda, 2005). Thus; it is valued as an ancestry symbol. Krutak, (2015) stated that tattooing is integrated into the social fabric and religious life of community. Typically speaking; it is a cultural, clan or family-mandated ritual that anchors social values on the skin. During informal interaction some of the tribal women of Odisha stated that for centuries, tattoos remained a medium to communicate various psycho-social concepts serving the purpose of protection due to its fetish value. In fact, no tribal cultural practice goes without ritual. Thus, tattooing in tribal traditions has occupied a normative position in their religious system. For tribal people, it is a way to allure good luck by keeping evil spirits away. Dakota - a Native American tribe believed no one could cross the 'ghost

road' safely unless they had a tattoo device on their forehead or wrist (Sinclair, 1908). Tattoo technique also refers to mimic the evil spirit with a purpose to ward-off malevolent spirit from attack to tattoo worn persons (Krutak, 2015). Thus, tattooing being an intangible aspect of cultural heritage serves multiple purposes in societies.

Unlike designs of the Alpena marks locally called *Chita-Muruja* as done by rural Hindu women on the floor of houses having ritual importance and intimately associated with religion, the diversity of tattoo is no way less important as a ethnic marker among the rural and tribal communities of Odisha . By and large, this art form is gender specific. Hinduised tribes like the Santals and the Binjhals are observed to have imitated rituals along with such art forms of dominant neighboring Hindus. Contrary to the modern market driven tattoo forms, the tribal tattoo is an inseparable cultural entity. However, not all tribal communities have tattoo as a part of their culture. Traditionally, Santal women and neighboring Hindu women take care of procuring raw materials to decorate their walls and floors of their houses with arts representing flora and fauna that include also human forms or part thereof, especially the feet and hands of Laxmi- the deity of wealth. The book *Odisha ra Chita-Murija* bears the testimony to the diversity of art skills of rural Hindu women in which flora such as banana leaf, green coconut, lotus flower, creepers with flowers etc and faunas like lion, tiger, elephant, horse, rat, owl, duck, pigeon, fish, turtle, cobra, and *Hanuman* a modified human form with monkey feature holding a few weapons occupy pivotal ritual importance. Among the Konyak Nagas traditionally even the entire chest is covered with blue tattoo and the punctuate lines ran from the centre of the stomach over the shoulders and halfway down the upper arms and the necklace is tattooed over the collar bones (Furer-Haimendorf, 1976). The Soara women of South Odisha are widely known for their art forms revealing entire livelihood activities. Saoras call their house in their dialect as *Sing*. Gadabas of Odisha in their dialect name their house as *Chhendi dien*. Santal houses are known as *Olah* in Santali language. Juang call their houses as *Inza*. The Santal women of north Odisha decorate their houses with indigenous graphic designs using colored mud-mixed cow dung plaster. The Binjhal women of west Odisha keep the floor of their houses clean with mud mixed cow dung plasters. Unlike Alpena marks to decorate the house, the tattoo symbolically represents something unique beyond the bearer's ethnic identity.

Antecedents of Tattooing

Prehistoric evidences have indicated the appearance of tattoo among cave dwellers on rock shelters and caves. Prehistoric wall arts found in caves and rock shelters while revealed the mode of living of people, also expressed the symbols of archaic fauna and flora, human group living as the hunting community and also the tattoo like signs and symbols on mummies. The studies on mummies unmasked the evidences of tattoo in archaic human societies which have been interpreted to have magico-religious importance (Clark and Piggott, 1970). Tattooing has a long history. Tattooed figurines from mummies were reported from Egypt, dating approximating to 3017 BC (Tattoo by puncture was probably a purposeful invention that expresses a way of capturing magico-religious power by the beholder by coloring relatively permanent markers on body surface (Humbly, 2009). According to Green the oldest evidence of tattooing was found in 1901 (Poli et al (2012). The iceman mummy was discovered on Italian-Austrian border with tattoos on the body that carbon dated back to 5300 years ago. During feudal period, across the globe tattooing was

not seen in some parts of the world. For a long time in the human history it went hibernate and reappeared as a style among the youngsters in contemporary world. The electronic media such as WWF made it more popular for the contemporary young mass.

Tribal Beliefs on Tattoo:

Among tribal societies it is an age-old practice woven around great stories and art skills that pass from older to younger generation with continuous modification. Thus the dynamic tenets of tattoo and the motif behind need to be understood contextually. The perception towards tattoos varies and changes cross-culturally across time. A case study of tattoo among Santal tribe of Odisha would help to understand the cultural matrix of body art.

Tattoo is named differently by different communities. Among the Kondh women of Kandhamal, Odisha this indelible and incredible body art is popularly called *bana kuda* or *kutei chita* (Manseth, 2013 and Rath, 2013). The Parajas of Koraput, Odisha name it as *jhunti khuta* (Swain, 2013). In Kui language it is called *tikaang uppapa* (Ratha, 2013). People in north Odisha such as Bathudi tribe use a local term for tattoo called *ullkhi*. Tattooing process includes interethnic cooperation between the skilled artists who belong to semi nomadic Banjaras and the beneficiary women of tribal and peasant communities. Recipients of these inserting pigments into their skin being crafted by the Banjaras -a nomad community, dates back to pre independent era about their history of interethnic interaction. The Binjhals of Bargarh Odisha call tattoo as *Guden*. Santals of Mayurbhanj call it as *khoda /khada*.

There is a myth current among non-tribal living in tribal area of Odisha. The rural women revealed that the tattoo acted as a safety measure from being sexually exploited by the zamindar and local feudal lords and their henchmen. There is a saying viz '*lachha pila bacha*' - meaning the child having burnt scar on body is unique. The Desia Kondh belles have tattoo on face to make them less attractive to outsiders. A girl without tattoo on face is hardly chosen as a bride. The Binjhal believe that if a girl gets puberty before being tattooed on her body face difficult in marriage. She can be chosen to become some widower's wife. The understanding of cultural heritage includes and highly values its intangible aspects, such as esthetic, historical, scientific and social values, which in turn serve the identity purposes (Dryjanska, 2015). Tattooing is not all about ink and design, rather, especially for tribes, it serves the secondary purposes. Primarily, it is a process of knowledge transmission in the form of visual language on skin, where part of culture is inscribed and preserved in a typical way (Krutak, 2015). As an intangible cultural heritage its preservation is cumbersome, because even an undeletable tattoo terminates with the mortal body. However, the knowledge and skills of tattoo transfer across generations. Thus, tattooing, the 'ritual' is considered as an intangible aspect of cultural heritage. Tattooing, in tribal community, is done for a number of reasons including denotation of adulthood, fertility or tribal rank (Wright, 2009). The transmitting tattoo culture expresses person's identity, adornment, status and position, therapy and apostrophic (Krutak, 2015). Of many, the group identity leads over other purposes. For most of the indigenous groups tattoo signifies their attachment to a particular clan. It symbolizes togetherness and social solidarity. Eyeliner and eyebrows are tattooed to make them permanent. On the other hand, there are tribes like Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh, India who tattoo their women to make them unattractive so that the rival tribes of other districts do not abduct their prettiest women (Baruah, 2011).

Tattoos cannot be worn by anyone, at any time or on any part of the body. It is a ritual of assigning a member a special status. Such as, being adult, being eligible for marriage, being married etc. For instance, the married women of Singpho tribe of North-Eastern India were tattooed on both legs from the ankle to the knee; men can wear tattoo on their limbs, while unmarried were not allowed to wear a tattoo (ibid.). In some cases, tattoos are worn by people with special power or special status like, priests or head of the clan. As Raveendran (2017) reported in *The Hindu*, Konyaks, the 'head-hunters' would wear tattoos on different parts of their body, to display courage and honor of chopping someone's head (Furer-Haimendorf, 1976). Thus, tattooing is also associated with social esteem in community, social status, honor and pride. But there was a totally different story of tattooing linked with disrespect and taboos. Even in early 1900s Western society, tattooed people were thought to be pimps, homosexuals and neuropsychiatric disables (Ferguson-Rayport et al., 1955). In the colonial India the Prisoners were forcefully tattooed as a method of identification. Criminals were often tattooed with the word "thug" on their forehead.

Tattoos are often believed to have healing powers. Tattooing, for some culture is an alternative medical treatment which is either magico-religious or pseudoscientific. According to a few tattoo bearers, the tattooing is the substitute of acupuncture. At present this type of tattoos are used by Kayan tribe of Myanmar. Furer- Haimendrof quotes the sateen of the native Konyak Nagas who believe that the tattooing never gets septic (1976). However biological science research in contrast advocates to take care of the tattoo beneficiaries to remain away from sunlight as it damages tissues of dermis layer leading to skin infections. Tattooing, without proper safety measures can lead to grave consequences such as hepatitis B and C, Tuberculosis or even HIV/AIDS (Poli et.al, 2012).

Tattoo and interethnic relationship:

The field situation of the tattooing process involves more than one community. The tattooing experts are outsiders and the beneficiaries exchange their stories while in operation. The artist speaks out the power of their skill. In some cases the tattoo bearer eulogies the skill of artist. Often they use to refer to royal families with whom they were associated for their art. They talk on influence of tattoo such as countering misfortune, elimination of vices and help gaining courage. The tattoo is also attributed by the artist as a mitigating tool to menace caused by malevolent spirits / omen.

Objectives and methods:

This paper explores the importance of tattoo across the tribal communities and methods of tattooing with special emphasis to Santal of Mayurbhanj. To data have been collected through a few brief informal interviews / interactions with the tattoo bearing community elder women in villages namely Rujangi of Kandhamal, Bijadihi of Bargarh and Manada of Mayurbhanj District, Odisha. Descriptive analytical method was adopted to report the diversities and differential perception, patterns of tattoo, materials used during tattooing to decorate the body parts, and related myths and beliefs. Since the tribal communities do not have the expertise of tattooing. Photographs, observations, group interaction and sample case studies were adopted to supplement the finding.

Tattoos among the Santals of Mayurbhanj;

Santal tribe is one of the numerically dominant tribes of Odisha. They are divided into number of totemic exogamous groups. They have a favorable sex ratio. As per 2011 census they are the third largest tribal group of the country with 7.4 million populations, concentrated mainly in the States of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. They are also found beyond the national boundary such as some parts of Bangladesh and Nepal.

Their main occupation is agriculture, though, hunting is practiced during festivals. The characteristics of Santal society are well depicted through their festivals, marriage alliances, annual hunts, sanitary behavior, economic activities and religious practices (Samantaraya, 2015 and Gogna, 2011). Sarnaism is the traditional religion where they worship several '*bongas*' (spirits). At present they also worship Hindu Gods and Goddesses, while a section has got converted to Christianity. Superstitions, witchcraft, and beliefs on afterlife, strongly contribute for their perception.

In 2016, during the informal interaction about forty Santal people were interviewed in and around Manada village of Rairangpur subdivision in Mayurbhanj district about the role of tattoo in their socio-cultural life. According to the elderly people of this tribe, ritual of tattooing comes from the belief that nothing could be taken from material world once death happens; tattoos or body marks are the only things which could help to survive in afterlife. Because Santali myth says that a person without a tattoo would be eaten up by insects after death (Kislaya, 2013).

Tattoo is known as '*Khuda*' in Santali language meaning attraction. Tattoos are drawn in winter season by '*Khudnis*'- the artist belonging to non-Santal nomad community of Islamic group. However, Karua writes that the blacksmith women are expert tattoo makers of Santal body (2014). The artist takes almost an hour to complete the demand of the client for any common design. Both the artist and beneficiary prey their deity *Maramguru* and seek blessings of ancestors. The tattoo artist offers a few designs to the beneficiary to choose. She never imposes rather speaks out the associated power of the designs. Traditionally the artist is reciprocated with cooked and as well as raw food for her displayed skill. During the process of tattooing normally more women folk assemble and no male is found around.

The process of making a tattoo on skin is very painful. Girls without tattoo are not accepted cordially by her mother in law. Unlike Binjhal girls who get tattooed before puberty, invariably the Santal women get tattooed after marriage. A Binjhal girl who got puberty prior to getting tattooed is expected to go as some widower's wife. In such cases traditionally Binjhals treats her as fit to become second wife. Among the Santals after marriage the bride gets her right arm shoulder and chest get tattooed. The punctured marks of tattoo are done with the help of a long needle and some dye made from the burnt plant product mixed with human milk. Tattoos are drawn by injecting pigments into the skin with the help of a bunch of very fine needles. Traditionally, pigment is made from the carbon remains on the back side of the cooking utensils. Such carbon is generally mixed with the water to make the ink to be inserted into the skin. Sometimes, the lactating '*Khudnis*' use their breast milk to make the paste with dye instead of water. Normally they collect human milk from some close lactating kin from within their clan territory. After applying the paste in punctuated skin the pigment becomes greenish.

Santali tattoos are inscribed with the help of different natural objects. The tattoo is painted on both hands, along the neck, shoulder and outer part of the palms. As per the cultural norms it is expected that the unmarried girls have tattoo on their right hand and married women on their left hand. However, these rules are not strictly maintained. There are some common designs revealing parts of nature such as the leg of the scarified chicken. Irrespective of age and sex the tattooing is perceived as a ritual performing act of the community to expand the virtue of wearing it. That is why, what design to be inked is a matter of choice. Some of these tattoo designs are i) '*Nekkii Khuda*': in Santali language; *Nekkii* means 'wooden comb', ii) '*Had Khuda*': Santals called themselves as *Had / Hor*. It's their community marker. Having this tattoo on the body implies that the owner belongs to the Santal community. '*Nekki*' and '*Had*' is the most common designs with an addition to the traditional clan community marker iii) '*Kadam Baha*': *Baha* means flower in Santali. *Kadam* is a common flower in Santal territory. This tattoo represents *Kadam* flower (*Neolamackia cadamba*), iv) '*Pan Sakam*': This implies the leaf of beetle nut (Magai paan). v) '*Miru Khuda*': *Miru* means Sun. Santals worship sun as one of the most powerful *bongas*. vi) '*Sim Kata*': *Sim* in Santali means chicken and *kata* means its leg. The tattoo looks like the legs of the scarified chicken.

Changing Pattern of Tattooing

With modernization, the concept of tattooing is changing. Instead of permanent tattoo, many opt for temporary tattoo so that they can change as they wish. Among the young elite Santals living in metropolis this trend is also reported. The perception regarding tattoo in the Santal society differs sex wise and age wise. The impact of globalization on body beautification is seldom observed among Santals. Thus, traditional tattooing, both process and motifs, is more common among women. According to Kislaya youngsters are reluctant to get a tattoo and those who got one wish to remove it (2013). The elderly people still think tattooing should be a mandatory part of life since it keeps alive the community motifs and myths and legends that remind blessings of the ancestral souls. One more observation on tattoo was that the younger generation expresses a sense of inferiority if someone has such tattoo. Such a feeling is not only among educated Santal youths, it is the same with Binjhals and Kondhs. For instance, on informal interaction with college students, the college going Santal girls of Rairangpur and Baripada of Mayurbhanj District expressed their displeasure on traditional norms on tattoos and desired to remove the tattoo if any, in exposed body part as it is embarrassing and even some chide the bearer .

Conclusion

Tattooing culture in tribal India has its origin since time immemorial. These are generally non-consensual and indicate membership of a particular group or sub-group. As a cultural practice, it must have evolved as an ethnic marker displaying natural elements to maintain cultural boundary of groups (Tribes) and subgroups (Clans). Through cultural contacts the tattoos among the community members have under gone change. With the passage of time this tribal cultural heritage experienced lots of changes due to the distress migration and culture contacts. Being an intangible cultural heritage, it is considered as a vivacious part among a few tribal groups.

On cross cultural comparison, it is ascertained that this tradition bound practice is not just an art but an important custom of tribes also concerned with myths and stories associated

within that exhibit a part of their worldview. Perception regarding tattooing revealed huge variation among different cultural groups at different times. The punctured skin bearing tattoo designs, mostly of natural objects and human artifacts, are hardly accepted as a painful event by the bearers. It was a mandatory custom for some tribal societies as it carries a determinant for marital status. Some use it for body beautification; some for safety purpose for its magical tenets to ward-off the harmful event in life. Some believe that tattoo contributes health benefits while neighboring elite non-tribes consider it as the cause of skin disease. However, among tribes despite having lots of taboos, superstitions and spirituality, tattoos are inseparable cultural traits. For preservation of this primitive custom one has to understand retention parameters of culture from the perspective of tribal culture contextually. They include worldview, social norms, beliefs and lot more things about their life and livelihood. Indelible tribal tattooing with age old tools and techniques is strongly believed as benevolent to the community and in its supports there are myths and legends that narrate causes and consequences of existing designs. The Santals believe that, for tattoo, the artists use natural beneficial plant products for preparation of dye and the needle they use is shown to the flame before use. After performance, the punctured body area is plastered with tartaric paste mixed with human milk. To retain this art of tribal tradition, and keep it hygienic tribal beneficiaries and the physicians need to have periodic interfacing. Santali tattoo designs too can be promoted in a similar way. To keep the tradition of tribal tattoo alive as a community marker, the developing agencies need to raise awareness among tribal people about their community self esteem manifest through tattoo and the hygienic aspect of tattooing.

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CHANGING MANNERS, RITUALS AND IDENTITY IN TRIBAL CULTURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KUI CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Manners and rituals specific to a community do reflect the world view as well as the cultural identity of the community. While manners are expression of due respect to living and non-living by a conscious individual, rituals are unlike habits which are often mindless, generally consist a single or series of actions carried out for specific purpose. The manners are certified by age, birth position, wealth and power. The children are taught to respect the elders and the eldest of family shall be respected the most. On the other hand, rituals have the sanction of belief of a community which in turn is part of their culture and these are juxtaposed with major events of an individual's life. Rituals assimilate into ceremonies and through which a communal or community identity is created and consolidated through shared experiences. Rituals are reflections of their world view being justified by the popular acceptance by the community which undermines, sometimes, even brutalities like sacrifice of animals or even human beings. Kui cultural traits of manners, language, rituals and in the long run the traditions have gone a sea change in present times. What makes them relevant is more relevant than what duplicates the age old practices and procedures. The challenge is whether that their world view sustains a logical test of enhanced knowledge and changed environment of the indigenous people.

Identity is a cardinal principle. Objectivity of identity of a man or matter is subject to ticking the squares of cultural traits like manners, rituals and beliefs (even taboos). The manners, rituals are elaborate and hence have been subjected to erode to fit into contemporary times. It is human nature to adopt and adapt to change for the obvious reasons. Kui cultural traits of manners, language, rituals and in the long run the traditions have gone a sea change. What makes them relevant is more relevant than what duplicates the age old practices and procedures.

Manners are expression of due respect to living and non-living by a conscious individual. The manners are position specific. The manners are certified by age, birth position, wealth

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and power. The children are taught to respect the elders and eldest of family shall be respected the most. For instance, touching feet of elders was not a common practice in Kui culture. They greeted each other with folded hands and smile in face expressing happiness on meeting. The person greeting first usually happens to be junior. But in case of equals (say bride's father and groom's father) who ever greets first is said to be more modest and respectful. Secondly, reciprocation of manners is also the mark of Kui culture. A *Johari* always to be returned with *Johari*. Kui language and culture has no hierarchical terms for showing respect like, *Namaskar*, *Pranam*, *Astang(dandabata)* *Pranipat*, *Payelaagu* etc. In North, a junior says *pranam* to senior and senior blesses with words like, *Khusraho*. The daughter-in-law touches feet or touches their forehead to earth from a distance and sometimes the seniors just raise a hand or even stay unmoved. But non-reciprocation of a *johari*, or simply nodding head is considered to be a bad manner.

Children are taught to be respectful in their manners. At that stage they are at the lowest rung of people. They are not forced to show respect to family members now and then. But they are taught to use proper words in speech. Their manners to guests, relatives are always under scanner. Earlier, even a father or grandfather used to ask their little son to lit the country cigar (*kaheli*) in the burning hearth or oil lamp (*dibiri*). There on returning the lit cigar the child has to say *johari* after handing it over. The guest too reciprocates equally. To guests, when such cigar or *bidi* was offered, the elders used to say *johari* and hand touched their own forehead. Handing anything by left hand was un-imaginable. In case of addressing a gathering or meeting, to show respect to all, people used to say "*Aajaa, Aaba, naajugudagule lokurie putalarna Johari*". The gesture happens to be like amassing or grabbing from air and joining the hands and touching the forehead with both the thumbs joined together.

The women folk too had their share of manners and respect. It was the manner of every girl to show respect to elders. Perhaps, the best way to show respect was to share and extend a helping hand. If there happens to be an old lady without her near relatives to help her, the young girls used to bring curry, firewood, tooth brushing wicks, leaves for her. They shared fruits like mangoes, greens viz. *sunsunia, kopukusa, sitikusa, gulikusa* etc. collected for themselves. They used to clean her house. Like-wise such old people could live long in villages. On attending puberty, the young girl used to say *johari* to ladies while returning from stream after taking her ritual bath. For the women guests of a house, the gift of new cloth, say the loom spun new loin cloth for women with borders hand-picked was considered a good manner. There is only one occasion where manners are non-equivocal. When a person brings in a second wife while his first wife is alive at home, the second wife has to be respectful to the first wife by performing a ritual of "*Sirukeepka*" i.e., pouring water to hands at first wife with a gift. Though living amicably afterwards is not obvious in each case, but the manners of respect by the second wife is a compulsory for entry into house. Till that ritual women chase the married men, even the unmarried brothers-in-law (*Dewars*) are not spared. Bringing a second wife is considered to be a disrespect to women in community.

Rituals are unlike habits which are often mindless, generally consisting of a single or series of actions carried out for specific purpose. The components of a ritual can be extensive and vivid, involving a single or group of people, doing their part of action through direct involvement like performing or singing a chant, or simply being present on the spot as consent to the action being carried out. Rituals have a sanction of belief of a community

which in turn is part of their culture. Rituals are the spatio-temporal mile stones which indicate progress of life of an individual. Rituals are, not the least, are reflection of their world view being justified by the popular acceptance by the community which undermines, sometimes, even brutalities like sacrifice of animals or even human beings. Rituals are juxtaposed with major events of an individual's life. Rituals assimilate into ceremonies and through which a communal or community identity is created and consolidated through shared experiences.

Rituals are purpose specific. A Certain ritual is performed to achieve a specific purpose. For example, ritual of 21st day of birth of a child is performed to enable the child to pass from impurity to purity, so that the family and child can mix up with society at large. It has its process and procedure. The child has to be bathed and new clothes to put on. A cock (for male child) or a hen (for girl child) is to be sacrificed. Grandmother and grandfather have to give an elaborate blessing holding the hand of the baby and at last have to spit on the palm of the baby. Hence, it is called "*Depokasoopa*" or spitting (on the child) ritual. Death rituals like "*Jiutapka*" or "inviting the soul" of the deceased is one such ritual that culminates the death rituals in Kui culture. The soul of the deceased is invoked saying :

*Pideripitati, dihaaaa-aa, dingeriaa-aa,
Kodibaasaari jotaamu, kaataamu,
beotiaajaanaa, nakitiaajaanaa,
Kraditangi, alitanginaasaajaa-aatrotaajaa-aa,
Midaatini bodaatini lokumu, jomu,
takasiaamu, sunasiamu, kodisiaamu, koru siaamu,
dangigaataari kepaagaataarimuhigimu, bidrigimu,
paaitiginaari, kaabaadiginaarisaanjaakaari gaanjaakaari.
Idutaani kumbutaani lohaanaai,
Atharbaasaari kudiebaasaari jotaamu, kaataamu,
sipkimaanjaanaaraa, kelpinjaanaaraa,
baategiaanaa, kaatigiaanaa, tinjumeedu.
Aabaati, prengaati, aaketiboduti, johaari.*

("O ancestors, do not be angry, guard us and wait on us (do not leave us alone) for twenty years. Be in our front, back and do not push us to tiger or a bear. Take care of our children, guard them. Give us money, gold, cow and buffalo. Destroy the envious people, the sorcers. The work we do, let it be fine and settled, stay in our house, in the sacred corner, for twenty years and watch us. The offerings we make, eat it, anoint it, share it, distribute among you, O' fathers, ancestors, elder brothers, grand fathers, uncles, salutations to you all.")

This ritual like "Sradh" among Hindus not only approves "purity" in society but also reflects the world view of people in Kui culture irrespective of caste or community. The Kui version of chants or invocation is produced as follows.

This Sanctifies the belief that:

- (1) The soul exists even after death.

- (2) Soul should be appeased and to be given place of gods.
- (3) Soul of a family member shall remain at home and be protector of the family.
- (4) The souls of all dead ancestors still live with us and on that date they are too offered food as humans. Seven leaves of food symbolize seven generations.
- (5) This ritual also keeps segregation for those who died unnaturally in events like suicide, accident, lightening etc. Such souls are offered food on the reverse side of the leaf and placed with left hand.

Similarly, there was a ritual of throwing away the fever. It was a common practice known to elders in house, maybe due to repetition of fever in family or neighbourhood. The fever, that comes on alternative days was called "Kattanomberi" in Kui language. The process somewhat goes as follows: Whoever every alternate day has fever he believes he has *kattanomeri*. Therefore, about sunset he will cut *jargi* (*sal*) sticks and he will tie these sticks with *jargi* leaves and a length of cotton the same height as himself and in his hand he will hold the small rice (*algupranga*); holding these he will go to some distance from his house to a path leading away from his house. On the path he will put these sticks and invoke as tutored by elders at home :

"My *katta* fever and my *vreu* fever with these leaves and with these sticks I send them to you. With the small rice and with the big rice, I scatter it. With the sun and with the heat, go entirely. Do not touch me, do not play with me."

Having said Johari he will come. Immediately after that if another one happens to go along that path and see those sticks, the cotton and the rice he will be greatly afraid because *kattanomeri* and *varunomeri* with these sticks and rice and cotton. "If I touch these, I also will have fever", he believes.

Needless to say the purity concept also applied to situations when a person returns to his village from outside. When someone returns to village by walk, at the outskirts he will collect a branch of "kendu" tree (*murdigobu*) and thrash his feet and laying on the path he will cross over the branch with a belief that the evil spirits who might have followed him are checked by the *kendu* leaf ritual. The power of *murdi* tree is such that, the village cow-herder or milkman carries the *murdi* stick while taking the cow herd to jungle or can step over any places even a burning ghat or a *jakeribardi* (place of buffalo sacrifice in *kedu*) and returns unaffected. When a person returns from jail he is said to be impure by mixing with outsiders and taking food from others. Then on arrival he is taken to a riverstream and a cock is sacrificed, a line is drawn by blood of the sacrificed cock and the person crosses over the line. It is a leap from impurity to purity. If a person is expelled from village and forbidden to enter, similar ritual is performed on the path at the boundary (*sandi*) of the village. Long ago, this author had come across a man from village Ardibitin of Deegi Panchayat of Raikia block in Kandhamal district, who was accused of rape of a girl (niece in relation) and was expelled from village. He performed a similar ritual for entering the village and he was pushed out of the boundary with a stern warning not to enter again.

It is a well known observation that, the rituals have a strong psycho-religious effect. In a way or other, rituals have sanction of a belief or social sanction. Rituals have effect on "doing" or "not-doing" also. Above all the rituals create and maintain a fear psyche or personal guilty if

not done in the prescribed procedure. In Kui culture, there is a practice of “sardaita” i.e. displaying an ordeal as a means of protection or even a curse. If someone fears that his crop will be stolen or land will be grabbed, that person after taking bath collects “Tursi” plant and fixing a pole at a place prominently visible hangs the plant with a prayer (curse) that whoever steals the crop will have leprosy. Seeing the pole, hardly any one dared to pick a grain from his land. If someone had leprosy, the people will say the disease must be due to some curse. Interestingly, people believed that ill omen or say curse (*mlipa* or *klega*, *sudaepa*) can be rewinded if it is just oral. If a woman faces difficulty in child birth the village women will perform a ritual called “Ruhpa” to ward off evil omen. It is performed with taking water in a bitter gourd and strands of wild grass used to thatch the roof. The utterings are nothing but an appeal to ancestors to excuse the lady in labour and assist in easy delivery. This ritual may not have any scientific objective count of effect but it gives a psycho-solace for the lady in labour. In caste society there are rituals like “Pinda Daan” by the person for self when he enters into the sect of Naga sadhus. Such a ritual of performing one’s own death ritual is a passage into a relation-less stage of life.

Ritual Dynamism :

Over a period of time rituals are subject to change. This change is more pronounced in the tribal societies which are made subject to push and pull of the civilization. The concept of upliftment, development, assimilation, displacement, joining the main stream and so on have little scope for maintaining all the rituals. The old rituals have the problem of people, procedure, questioning and logistics. Man is a learner from surroundings and people he comes across. For a tribal or a rural man in general, the dazzling lights of advanced civilization weigh more than the intrinsic values of their age-old uncodified culture. Change in rituals can be attributed to many factors and few of these are cited in the following:

- a) Hinduisation
- b) Sanskritization
- c) Infiltration of outsiders
- d) Modern education
- e) Change in occupation
- f) Modern health care facilities
- g) Displacement
- h) Changes in house construction
- i) Impact of modern mass media
- j) Other development induced changes
- k) Burden of continuity versus easiness of change

To discuss in brief, Hinduism has adopted and engulfed the tribal religion in its fold extending the ambit of “Adisanatan Dharma”. After infiltration of religious organizations, plains dwellers as government and non-government functionaries and as part of government policy the people practicing animism were returned as Hindus. On the religious front, the new parallels were drawn to create a sense of similarity (a sense of equality) between two distinct cultures and communities. For example, Burapenu and Tanapenu of Kui culture were made God of sky and goddess Kali/Durga of Hindu pantheon. In the long run the Hindu gods and rituals crept in and pushed the gods of animism into oblivion or beyond the

boundary. Kui language had no word for religion and no idols for worship. The animism followers found personal gods from Hindu pantheon in the form of temple statues, framed photographs and deities riding on animals and they revered animals viz, tiger, lion, elephant, bull, crocodile peacock and many more. It was the second tidal wave that brought change in tribal culture. In the process of following the finer elements in the new religion they tried to distinguish themselves from the common folk. For example, people who stopped eating non-vegetarian food or on specific days kept themselves aloof, even did not touch those who take non-veg food indiscriminately. In Kui culture where almost every ritual had provision for sacrificial killing of fowl or an animal or even an egg, such a superior acquired practices made it quit the animism practices. Modern education irrespective of medium of instruction had little or nothing about Kui culture or religion. So the age old rituals could not produce a convincing and appealing logic for their relevance and continuance other than obedience and allegiance to ancestors. For instance, the purification rituals after an un-natural death due to lightning, suicide or tiger attack is very elaborate and takes about a week to complete. In that series of activities there comes a ritual of mass bathing "*sirulanja*" in a stream of flowing water. On that day, the *guru* claims that he has captured the spirit of the deceased in a stale egg and to prove his accomplishment he shows the egg towards the sun where few strands are slightly visible inside the egg. He carries the egg to a far off place. If a student in higher class doubts it and sees a stale egg on spot light he will find the same thing. But, challenging such act is not encouraged because people want to get rid of the ordeal. Introduction of modern ways of treatment of disease or epidemics such as small pox, cholera etc. has eradicated them and people get assistance in easy delivery in hospitals. It is widespread awareness through government and NGOs that surely shut door to the rituals and practices which were causes of economic exploitation by Gurus and deities. Incidents like calling a Kuta *guru* for curing a disease, presenting copper and silver snake figurines to Lord Birupaksha at Chakapada village are drastically reduced if not fully eliminated. In places where people are still depending on such practices are more due to non-availability of medical treatment facility near the vicinity and the cost is unaffordable.

Occupational change is another major factor that engages people's mind to somewhere else. People of Kuidina who are engaged in government or private service, army etc at far off places are more vulnerable to drift away from such rituals. Not the least to mention that people are acquiring new rituals from other cultures which they find of superior or pure culture and affordably easy. This, they consider will enhance their social status and demonstrate "I am not far behind" attitude. People of Kuidina, after their close association with plains migrants and Hindu revival campaign have adopted rituals like *shradha* after ten days of death along with head tonsuring, emersion of mortal remains (bones) in sea or holy water of Ganges and make rituals to be performed through a middleman or priest (Purohit) not since long. The trend has been more expensive but it is getting popular due to yearning for enhancement of social status.

Identity through rituals :

It is undisputed that rituals are the axioms that create an identity of an individual. The manners and rituals are so interwoven to the personality of the individual which makes them unique. To an amateur social researcher, what a tool rituals is? If rituals are marks of identity, then what is the cardinal limit of compliance? If a person, for one reason or other, stays

bereft of rituals, does he lose his identity? Or, to say, in an era when genomic studies and physical traits are considered to establish ethnicity of original lineage, what weightage the ritualistic rituals do carry?

More than an academic or medical subject, the caste and tribe identification is an administrative affair in India. To add, the subjectivity of government officer in this matter is another factor. People agitate and block the roads to recognise them as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) or Scheduled Caste (SC). The claims of Gujjars, Jats, Kui Kandhas etc. for ST status have turned into political as well as ballot issues more than academic research. If an educated and Christian Oraon of Jharkhand retains his tribal identity in spite of the fact that he hardly follows any ritual of tribal life, whereas the "Damanga" of Kuidina lose their caste status by changing their religion. The logic is that a tribe is beyond the caste system of Hindu Society but under *varna* system he too falls under "Sudra" category.

Besides, the language of rituals is one more powerful yardstick of identity. The ascent of the same language is used to trace the regional residency. For example, "dega" means 'to run' in G. Udayagiri area whereas it means "jump" in Raikia-deegi area of Kandhamal district. Examples are abundant. Language can be learnt but it is not easy to master. The use of vocabulary, idioms and even slangs and creativity creates a special place for the individual. As on date the declining use of tribal languages is a matter of serious concern. The rate of inter-generation transfer of vocabulary and traditional knowledge is alarmingly low. The most popular family relation names like *aaaja*, *aaba* are being replaced by words from other languages. Identity has been a matter of acceptance for self-declaration.

The turmoil of socio-religious rift, duly fanned by political interests has made societies of hill dwellers more polarised and complex. Revival of age-old rituals such as *meriah*, *kedu* etc for the sake of identity is not advisable, but the onslaught of outside religion, rituals and practices has their kitty of problems. Above all, respecting each other's identity among the traditional residents with harmony will only be conducive for betterment of life and living of people who have been neglected and kept at bay.

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IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA ON HEALTH AND HYGIENE PRACTICES AMONGST MISHING TRIBE: LOOKING FROM A GENDER LENS

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ABSTRACT

Health is of universal interest and concern to every community. All human societies, notwithstanding the socio-economic level they perform or operate in certain development paradigm, have a concept of what makes a healthy living as well as what causes illness. Health evolves as a system that not only results out of an interaction between an individual's hereditary contributions with his/her natural and cultural environment but also it is largely determined by the biological and cultural adaptation and evolution of a particular community. Tribal communities are relatively isolated and autonomous groups, where each group lives within its own health system. Health of men and women are often looked at differently, especially in respect of sexual and reproductive health of women. It carries deeply rooted cultural notions and practices like many other communities. As a result the women take disproportionate burden and suffer from certain stigmatised practices. Mishing is one such tribal community in Assam which has its own ethno-medicinal body of knowledge wherein stigmatised practices against women are not uncommon. Quite interestingly, almost akin to the concept of 'Health' defined by World Health Organisation, the Mishing community consider health as an absence of any disease of physical, mental, spiritual and social nature. The community, in their day to day life, traditionally observe certain health practices such as taking food in time, observance of certain religious practices, wearing of talisman, etc as prerequisites of keeping good health. They believe that performance of religious activities can satisfy the gods and goddesses who are responsible for particular diseases. Thus, their health system is built on certain psychosomatic and supernatural determinants. However, due to impact of acculturation, exposure to modern education system, mass media and changing life styles the world view on health and its care has also been undergoing significant change amongst the community. The present study is an attempt to understand how mass media (including internet) has impacted changes in health system and health behaviour including gender discriminations amongst the Mishing community.

Key Words: Health and hygiene, Gender, Mass media, Mishing Tribe, Assam.

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Introduction:

Health is a very important and universal component of human life. It is not only the result of interaction between an individual's hereditary contribution with his natural and cultural environment but also largely determined by the biological and cultural adaptation and evolution of the society and the population (Mukherjee & Nandy, 1986). Every community has its own cultural and health care system which impacts lives of its members in many ways. In this respect Tribal communities are no different. Tribes are considered to be a group who, by and large, prefer to live isolated from non-tribal communities and autonomous in nature. Every tribe has their own set of cultural and medical beliefs which are considered to be the unique feature of indigenous population. The knowledge of disease, their classification, and aetiology are constituents of their cultural system and they develop methods and ways of curing and management of the diseases.

The concept of health and illness are distinguishable in nature for a qualitative understanding. The most widely accepted definition of health is given by World Health Organisation (WHO) is

'Health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity'

Human body's connection with mind is a separate level of entity which often gives rise to emotions, feelings, psycho-social interaction that are crucial for maintaining a good health of an individual. Illness refers to person's lack of health accompanied by feeling of physical pain and discomfort. To say that a person is ill implies that the consequences of such a state transcend not merely the biological and physical consequences of organic malfunction, but also affect his social life in important ways (Field, 1976).

Health can be considered as situational concept. One may be healthy as 'now' and 'then' and the next moment, the same person may become sick and ill. This implies that health is to be viewed in a time frame and in the context of a socio-cultural or physical environment. However, in a tribal society, the foundation of health rests on two planes - one, the individual may be committing or omitting certain acts which may bring upon the individual or the household some affliction, while the other is the belief in some benevolent and malevolent spirit, ghosts. Needless to mention, the spirits of the ancestors in every culture play an important role in ensuring health, prosperity and protection to the family as they do in every culture. Further, the health in tribal societies is believed to be threatened not only by the spirits, but also by persons possessing evil touch or witchcraft (Mahapatra, 1994).

Like many communities, among the Mishng community health is considered to be an absence of any illness of physical, mental, spiritual and social nature. Taking food in time, observance of certain religious practices, wearing of talisman, etc are considered to be prerequisites for being in good health (Medhi, 1995).

The Mishng community is an Indo-Mongoloid tribe by origin, live between the segments of river Brahmaputra. It is said, they have migrated from hill areas of Arunachal Pradesh since many generations. They mostly inhabit in the districts of Sonitpur, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. According to Census of India 2011,

the population of Mishing in Assam is 6,80,424; of which 3,45,786 are male and 3,34,638 female, with sex ratio of 967 per thousand.

Akin to other communities, religion and faith plays an important role in all aspects of their life including the realm of health. In matters of faith they are the worshippers of 'Dony' (The Sun) and 'Polo' (The Moon). They practice various rites and rituals with prayer, offerings and sacrifices for the wellbeing of the community. The Mishings believe that a spiritual relationship with the deities and ancestral spirits will ensure good health for the members of the community (Medhi, 1995). So, they perform various ceremonies every year during the annual festivals, to renovate and reaffirm their relationship with the supernaturals, and thus ensure the protection of the community. They also believe that if proper propitiation is not offered to the deities and to ancestral spirits, they will get angry and send diseases and other calamities to the members of the community. They derive the cause and management of many of the diseases from religious teachings.

On the basis of aetiological factors, the Mishings classify diseases into four categories; viz., (i) body-linked illness, (ii) deity-linked illness, (iii) spirit-linked illness and (iv) sorcery-linked illness. Any physical symptom or illness is generally attributed to a deity, spirit or sorcery based if it does not respond to therapies applied to seemingly to body-linked illness. As a result majority of the illness are found to be not body-linked and therefore dependency on spirit, sorcery and supernatural ways of curing illness is high. Besides, vulnerabilities like accidents, miss- happenings, crop failures etc are also attributed to similar causes.

Like in many tribal communities the phenomena like acculturation, modernisation and exposure to media and mass communication has brought varied changes in the cultural practices and belief system which is expected to have some bearing in health care practices too. Across the human civilisations, cultural interfaces amongst different communities coupled with the interventions by the state in economic, social and political life of the people has further accelerated such changes. (Schramm, 1963). It has been established that the use of mass media has been an intervener in the modernisation process. (Rogers, 1965-1966). Therefore, the Mishing community, who live in close proximity to other non-tribal communities of Assam, is most likely to experience various socio-cultural changes in which health care system is an important component. Collins et al. (2003) argue that mass media plays the role of a change agent. It can influence the behaviour of people for the sake of better health by adapting to preventive measure which stops the spread of diseases. By informing and educating about different health issues, media help promote healthy lifestyle and positive behaviour changes among the common public.

When we call mass media or media, it means the different channels of mass communication which send messages to millions of people simultaneously i.e. Radio, TV, Newspapers/Magazine, Satellite / Cable TV, Internet; and Social Networking websites etc. Amongst the Social Networking sites, Whatsapp and Facebook are most popular. In this paper the words media and mass media have been used interchangeably.

Rational and Scope of the study:

Needless to mention that, mass media influence the modernisation process significantly in any society and therefore must have some bearing on the health care practices too which has been largely culturally rooted over ages. The Mishing community, known for its ethnicity

and distinct culture amongst the indigenous population living in Assam is also expected to experience various changes in their ethnomedicinal practices due to the impact of modernisation and mass media. In this context the present study was conceptualised to understand how the customary health care, hygiene and belief system have undergone changes, especially in the context of exposure to mass media by the people. In fact, the present study has limited its scope to look at what changes the mass media has brought in the traditional health care practices, especially in women's health care.

Within the realm of health, women's health is considered to be a separate domain, especially in the context of their reproductive health system. It has been an experience across that the customs and rituals relating to women's sexuality and reproductive health are more categorically defined and often followed with more rigidity by different communities. In the present study an attempt has been made to analyse whether there has been any significant impact of mass media in changing the perspective of women's health.

Objectives of the Study are:

1. To understand the impact of mass- media in bringing changes in health care practices amongst the Mishing community
2. To understand if mass media has brought any significant changes in certain customary health practices relating to women.

Research Design and Methodology:

The study being a qualitative one, it adopted ethnographic research design for collecting field data using focus group discussions (FGDs) with women along with participant and non-participant observation. The FGDs were conducted in two Mishing villages (where the entire community is Mishing) of Golaghat district of Assam, namely Dhansiri Temera and Balichapori. Total six FGDs were conducted in two villages (four in fist village and two in the second village). Besides, discussion was also held with two senior traditional healers and two respected men from the community (who are educated above secondary school and working with government) to assess the impact of mass media as well as cross-validate the opinion of the people and observation of the researchers.

Profile of the Villages:

Dhansiri Temera: It is a medium size village located in Bokakhat Block of Golaghat district having 290 households. As per Census of 2011 data, the village has a population of 1681 of which 857 are males while 824 are females. However, the present households have crossed 300 mark. The average sex ratio of the village is 961 which is higher than Assam state average of 958, whereas Child Sex Ratio shows a better figure at 982, which is again higher than the state average of 962. It has lower literacy rate of 56.87% compared to the state average at 72.19%. The male literacy stands at 69.08 % while female literacy rate is 44.11 %. It is believed that it must have increased substantially at present.

Bali Chapori is another medium size village with total 99 families residing. It has a population of 667 of which 344 are males while 323 are females as per Population Census 2011. Unlike Dhansiri Temera, average Sex Ratio of Bali Chapori village is 939 which is lower than Assam state average of 958. Child Sex Ratio for the Bali Chapori as per census is

1019, higher than Assam average of 962. The village has lower literacy rate compared to Assam at 60.75 %. The Male literacy stands at 75.17 % while female literacy rate is 45.15 %.

The main stay of their livelihoods is agriculture, livestock, fishing and wage labour. For wage labour, people normally go during lean period of agricultural seasons and preferably go to places nearby national highway within a distance of 5-8 km as more construction activities happen there. They also get work sometimes under MGNREGA, which is though uncertain and the wage rate is relatively low. Fishing is more of a seasonal activity during monsoon.

The primary health centre is located at a distance of about three kilometres and for serious illness people prefer to go to Golaghat District Hospital or Jorhat Medical College, which are located at a distance of 25 and 60 kilometres respectively. Both the villages have elementary schools, but for high school education children need to commute 3-4 kilometres. As a result girls normally drop out after they complete elementary education or drop out amidst joining the high school.

The village roads are still *kaccha*, which get damaged at some points every year during monsoon. The village is being affected by flood at least twice in a year (once in April-May, again during June-July making the roads farm lands marooned during the time. The structure of the houses here are therefore different - built on a stilt platform (of 5-7 feet height, popularly known as *Chhang Ghar*) to save it from vagaries of flood. Both the villages have partial access to electric power, which means households close to main road of the village have got electricity connection, whereas housing clusters away from the main road do not have. Even, those who have power connection, they hardly get 4-5 hours of current supply.

Major Findings

Access to mass media

As far as access to mass media of the people is concerned majority of the households having electric connection have got TV; radio has been virtually non-existent as mobile phones having FM radio channels have replaced it; and subscribing Newspapers/Magazine has come down significantly as people depend more on TV and mobile phones for news and entertainment. Needless to say, audio visual media has virtually replaced the reading habits ubiquitously, though a couple of elderly persons having early exposure to modern world still continue to subscribe newspapers. Internet and Social Networking platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp have been the most popular forms of mass media amongst people. Almost every household has at least one smart phone to have access to news, entertainment and electronic-social networking, irrespective of their economic conditions. Cheaper mobile data and call plans make it affordable for everybody. A little better income in the households can be observed with multiple smart phones- each earning adult has invariably a smart phone. Even non-electrification in the parts of the villages has not deterred people buying smart phones. They recharge their phones mostly in the household having electric power connection whereas a few has solar mobile charger. It can, therefore, be concluded that TV and mobile phones are two most dominating mass media people have access to.

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) through Mass Media

It is observed that overwhelming majority listen to news bulletins in the TV, the number of men is much more than women, whereas in case of the serials (sops) the women are more. Besides, they watch films, music albums - folk and modern. The women watch for maximum time as they mostly remain at home. The duration depends on the availability of power supply. People having no TV or no power connection also gather at homes having TV during post-lunch and in the evening hours. Whether it is news or films or serial sops a number of commercial advertisements and messages on public schemes and programmes are also telecasted during commercial breaks or in between the programmes. It is understood that majority of them watch seriously those commercial advertisements of consumable and consumer durables as well as messages broadcasted in the public interest from government and other sources. Efforts were made to understand more about the impact of the messages broadcasted in public interest, especially relating to health, sanitation, hygiene, menstrual hygiene and reproductive health. There are also some commercial advertisements focusing especially on sanitary napkins for better menstrual health, dental care and multi vitamin/mineral supplements. From the discussions, it is observed that the following messages and advertisements are understood to have relatively more impact in the minds of the people.

- Immunization of the children
- Regular health check up of the pregnant women
- Taking supplementary multi-vitamins/mineral for the pregnant mothers
- Drinking water and sanitation (toilet scheme of the government)
- Use of sanitary pad for menstrual hygiene
- Birth control, use of contraceptives and spacing between the children
- Benefits of institutional delivery
- Incentives for giving birth to girl child
- Maternity and child care
- Treatment of Tuberculosis
- Awareness and first aid on Diarrhoea, Malaria, and Dengue etc.
- Awareness on anaemia, balanced nutrition
- Appropriate age of marriage for girls
- Health advisories during disasters like flood, which is a quite common in the area
- Awareness on health hazards due to consumption of tobacco, *gutka* etc.

People agree that most of the messages (in the Assamese as well as Hindi channels) relating to the areas mentioned above repeated in different TV programmes draws attention of the people and often becomes a matter of discussion amongst them. Women discuss more about the messages relating them such as menstrual health, birth control and maternity and child health. Men are found to be less attentive to these messages, while they become more attentive to messages relating to benefits available in agriculture – irrigation, crop loan and insurance etc. In matters of sanitation such as benefits available for constructing toilet under ‘Swachh Bharat’ scheme more or less draws equal attention of men and women.

Interestingly, majority of the people do not believe or take the messages for granted by hearing and watching from the TV. They try to verify and validate from the immediate

service providers available at the community level about the authenticities of the messages. For example, any health related messages are verified from the ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) and ANM (Auxiliary Nursing Midwife). And, once they are convinced about the message, the behavioural changes do not happen immediately. They listen to the individuals who have already got some exposure in these. However, they believe that repeated broadcasting of the messages builds knowledge and information amongst people and gradually it brings changes in the attitude and then people slowly start practicing.

As far as radio is concerned few households have radio and they mostly listen to devotional songs, film songs, theatre, weather forecast, and various social and commercial messages amidst those programmes. Since being in the rural areas they do not have any connectivity of FM (Frequency Modulation) channels, the interest in radio is diminishing.

The second dominating mass media is mobile phones, especially with internet access. Since 3G and 4G internet services are cheaper and penetration is reasonably good in most of the areas, some people also watch different TV programmes on mobile, including news channels. Facebook and Whatsapp are the two most popular media where people do social networking and off late the Instagram and Youtube are slowly catching up the popularity. It is found that majority of the young girls and boys have Facebook account and are connected in Whatsapp. Even a few of them having no smart phones also have opened Facebook account in their friends' phones. Lots of information- message, audio, photographs and video spread virally in the Facebook and Whatsapp, some of which are useful, some are not so useful, and some seem to be absurd and bogus, however majority of them have no scientific basis and shared without any authentication. From the discussion with the people it is understood that majority of them believe in those messages without going through any verification process. After a further probe it is found that most of those messages are relating to religious/faith based, politically motivated, miraculous events, and crime related materials. Needless to say that, people have a tendency to forward the message they receive to friends/network without giving any thoughts on what repercussions the message would have on the receiving individuals and or the society at a large. People remain non-committal, casual and clueless when asked by the researchers - 'Should we forward the message without verifying its source and authenticity and should we not have a social responsibility not to spread the negative messages which disrupts the social harmony?' It is found that, people receive least amount of messages relating to health and hygiene in Facebook and Whatsapp. There is one more mass media platform available through internet, which is getting fast popularity amongst younger generations, called 'Youtube'. People mostly watch it for entertainment and to know about different new invention/exploration in science, technology and other areas. This requiring more amount of data and bandwidth, is not yet very popular amongst many in rural areas.

Some major observations from the FGDs and Key Informant interviews on mass media are as follows:

- a. Majority agree that media spreads awareness, inter alia, on health, hygiene and sanitation, therefore plays an important role in the lives of the people
- b. Majority agree that media is an important tool for health and hygiene related communication and therefore effecting behaviour change amongst people

- c. Everyone agrees that TV is the most powerful and therefore most effective media amongst all, as it provides lively simulations of the circumstances in very interesting manners
- d. Women and young girls are most influenced by TV as it gives entertainment sops mostly based on tradition and cultural ethos. Social messages on health, hygiene, sanitation, gender equality etc. amidst those entertainment programmes always draw their attention.
- e. Internet based media like Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube and Instagram are also making significant impact in shaping the thought process and opinions of the people on different aspect of life, where health related things do not get much prominence.

Theorizing about information, education and communication is multi-disciplinary in nature and therefore encompasses knowledge from various fields of science. Considering its multi-disciplinary nature, mass communication has different applications especially in humanities and sociology. An attempt was made to relate the field reality with an established theory known as "Uses and Gratification Theory", (Blumler and Katz, 1974) which is considered to be one of the most influential theories in communication focusing on the user. Looking at the most popular media such as TV and Internet through smart mobile phone in the community, the natural questions come into mind - 1) why are people attracted to this particular media? and 2) what kind of satisfaction does media provide for people?

The obvious answers to the above questions are as following :

- A large section of society are socially inactive and in need of some fancy entertainment without making much efforts and paying a transaction cost. Besides, people are inquisitive and open to new and scientific information on matters relating to their life and environment.
- Many of the sops showed in various programmes are either culturally akin or closer to the community. Besides, fantasies, wonders of world and biodiversity also give entertainment and gratification to the people.

Summary and Conclusions

The traditional health care system of the Mishings are based on three major belief systems - (i) beliefs about the creator of the Universe, (ii) beliefs existence of the spirits of the ancestors (iii) beliefs about the human soul. The thoughts and beliefs of the Mishings have largely influenced by a mixture of Animism and the Hinduism, especially Vaishnavism (propagated by Mahapurusha Shankardev) .

Though media has made significant changes in certain health and hygiene practices amongst the Mishings, the supernatural beliefs and therefore traditional rituals attached to health, menstrual health and maternity have not undergone much radical changes and continue to reign their importance. However, by transecting through the observation of elderly people to young generation it is understood that the belief system is undergoing changes, though at a slow pace. This holds true to many traditional communities. Like other tribal communities, Mishing people too believe that a cordial relationship with supernaturals and ancestral spirits will ensure good health for the members of their community. So, they perform various

rituals/festivals every year to renovate their relationship with the supernatural forces and thus ensure their protection.

Mishings continue to perform various ceremonies every year during as annual rituals, to renovate their relationship with the supernaturals for good health and wellbeing. However, the rituals have been converted more into festivals (such as *Dobur*, *Dotgang*, *Urom Apin*, etc) for fun, entertainment and socialisation. Besides, they also have a belief that if proper propitiation is not offered to the deities and ancestral spirits, they will get angry and send diseases and other calamities to the members of the community. It is also a fact that mass media has never made any systematic attempt to portray these festivals as superstitious and unscientific; rather they have become part and parcel of the cultural ethos.

However, certain beliefs relating to women's health continue to guide the rituals and practices more religiously. For example, sexual intercourse by a man with a menstruating woman is prohibited and is considered to be a taboo as it is portrayed to be very harmful for the woman's health. Entry of a menstruating woman into a crop field is strictly 'no' as they believe, it will be harmful to the crops. Nevertheless, with impact of media and exposure significant change has come in the practices of menstrual hygiene of girls and women in term of using clean clothes and or sanitary pad available in the market, though it is still considered to be polluted thing. Though awareness on birth control has gone up amongst people use of modern contraceptives are not yet popular. People rather prefer abstinence and other herbal medicines to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Ethno medicinal practices still continue to have demand amongst the people as primary health care. The traditional healer (*Bej*) commands respect in the community. Disorders like hysteria, insomnia, convulsion, delirium, emaciation of children, mental disease and deformity of limb, congenital malformation, blindness, impotency, barrenness and prolonged illness are some of the conditions are still considered to be supernaturally caused. Educated people also partly believe this phenomenon. Further, these disorders amongst women are considered to be more serious and stigmatised.

Smoking *Biri* and drinking *Apong* (the traditional drink made from rice) are never considered to be harmful for body, however excessive consumption is always considered bad for health.

Education, exposure to outer world(the world which is relatively more modernised), access to mass media and regular contacts with the community level service providers like ASHA and ANM have contributed to effect some changes in health care practices in general and women's health in particular. Needless to mention, culturally more taboos are attached to menstrual and reproductive health of women in most of the rural communities. Interestingly, some young women wish to do away with certain practices as they think them as outdated and irrelevant, but refrain themselves from the fear of being reprimanded by the elders.

Though mass media plays a very critical role in creating awareness, effecting behavioural and to some extent cultural changes it often get reinforced when people emulate their change agents such as community level service providers, community leaders/role models and peers/members of the community that adapt to certain modern practices.

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SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS: COMMITMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBES IN ODISHA

Bigyana Nanda Mohanty ¹

ABSTRACT

Odisha occupies a unique position among the Indian States and Union Territories for diverse ethnic groups and tribal population. The Scheduled Tribes constitute about 22.85% of the State's total population. These STs have been historically disadvantaged and discriminated which has resulted in their social and economic deprivation. After independence several constitutional provisions were made for holistic tribal development, especially in the sectors of social, educational, economic, political and cultural development. Various approaches have been taken, programs and schemes implemented, different models have been replicated, multi-pronged strategies have been tried, and theories of development have been propounded through different five-year plan periods.

During 11th Plan period (2007-12), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India laid focus on conservation of PVTG culture along with their socio-economic development. As such both conservation of culture and development have been carefully balanced in the development approach for the PVTGs. The principles of 'Panchsheel' specially recognizes the importance of tribal culture and their traditions. As pronounced in the Second Five Year Plan, 'Welfare Programs of Scheduled Tribes have to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the social, psychological and economic problems with which they are faced'. One of the major purposes of conservation of tribal culture is to retain and maintain the tribal identity. Over the years a trend is seen that under situations the tribal people are gradually moving away from their traditional culture, customs and traditions, threatening loss of their identity. Thus, preservation and promotion of tribal culture remain as an integral concern along with other tribal development programs.

In order to ensure more holistic, effective, inclusive and participatory tribal development, the State Government felt the necessity to involve tribals extensively at all stages of the development process, taking the cultural development aspects on priority basis. Keeping the above objectives in view, the State Government has set up Special Development Councils (SDC) in 9 districts of Odisha. The paper provides an insight on the commitments and challenges of the Special Development Councils towards conservation of tribal culture along with their development.

Key Words: Tribal development, culture conservation, Special Development Councils, tangible and Intangible cultural heritage

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Introduction

Odisha occupies a unique position among the Indian States and Union Territories for having one of the largest tribal population and diverse ethnic groups. Out of 635 Scheduled Tribe communities in India, 62 are found in Odisha including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The Scheduled Tribes constitute about 22.85% of the State's total population and 9.17% of total tribal population of the country as per 2011 census. About 44.7% area of Odisha has been notified as Scheduled Area which extends over 119 blocks in thirteen districts covering 68% of the ST population of the total population of Odisha. These STs have been historically disadvantaged and discriminated which has resulted in their social and economic deprivation. But, the scheduled tribes in Odisha are largely heterogeneous and each community is unique in its traditions, social custom, beliefs, rules and practices. Overall development of ST communities, elimination of all forms of exploitation and improvement of their quality of life has been the prime objectives of development policies of Central and State Governments.

Tribal Development through the Five-Year Plans

After independence several constitutional provisions were made for the development of scheduled tribes. Many schemes of development were formulated and implemented through various five-year plans targeting to their social, educational, economic, political and cultural development. Various methods have been implemented, different models have been replicated, multi-pronged strategies and approaches have been tried, and theories of development have been propounded through different five-year plan periods. The Constitutional commitments prompted the policy-makers and the planners to accord high priority to the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes right from the beginning of the country's developmental planning, launched in 1951.

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) clearly laid down the principle that 'the general development programs should be so designed to cater adequately to the Backward Classes and special provisions should be used for securing additional and more intensified development'. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) envisaged that the benefits of economic development should accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society in order to reduce inequalities. The welfare programs in the second FYP was in tune with PANCHSHEEL - the Five Principles of Tribal Development - enunciated by the first Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. An important landmark during the Second Plan was the creation of 43 Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPTBs) later called Tribal Development Blocks (TDBs). The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) advocated the principle to 'establish greater equality of opportunity' and to bring about reduction in disparities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power. The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) proclaimed that the 'basic goal was to realize rapid increase in the standard of living of the people through measures which also promote equality and social justice'. An important step was setting up of six pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in 1971-72 as Central Sector Scheme with the primary objective of combating political unrest and left wing extremism (LWE). A separate Tribal Development Agency was established for each project.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) marked a shift in the approach as reflected in the launching of Tribal Sub- Plan (TSP) for the direct benefit of the development of Tribal. The TSP stipulated that funds of the State and Centre should be quantified on the population proportion basis, with budgetary mechanisms to ensure accountability, non-divert ability and utilization for the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes. With this thrust the concept of Tribal Sub-Plan came into action during the Fifth Plan. There has been a substantial increase in the flow of funds for the development of Scheduled Tribes under this arrangement, resulting in the expansion of infrastructure facilities and enlargement of coverage of the target groups in the beneficiary-oriented programs.

The basic objective of the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) was to bring the entire tribal population under suitable development programs. Emphasis was on family-oriented economic activities rather than infrastructure development schemes. A "Modified Area Development Approach" (MADA) was devised and 245 MADA pockets were delineated. In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), there was substantial increase in the flow of funds for the development of Scheduled Tribes, resulting in the expansion of infrastructural facilities and enlargement of coverage.

In the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), efforts were intensified to bridge the gap between the levels of development of the Scheduled Tribes and those of other sections of the society. The plan not only emphasized elimination of exploitation but also paid attention to the special problems of suppression of rights, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on right to collect minor forest produce etc. A review of tribal development in early Nineties revealed that the TSP Strategy has yielded but has not been commensurate with the efforts put in and investments made'. The main objective of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) was to intensify the efforts to bridge the gap between Scheduled Tribes and the rest of the population, with literacy status as one of the key indicators. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) laid down its first priority in finding solutions to many unresolved Issues. It thus adopted programs for eradication of deprivation/exploitation of tribes as the centre-point in its approach, while pursuing simultaneously the Ninth Plan commitment of empowering the tribes.

The Eleventh Plan (2008-13) has experienced a paradigm shift with respect to the overall empowerment of the tribal people, keeping the issues related to governance at the centre. The operational imperatives of the Fifth Schedule, Tribal Sub Plan 1976, PESA 1996, RFRA 2006; the desirability of a tribal-centric, tribal-participative and tribal-managed development process; and the need for a conscious departure from dependence on a largely under-effective official delivery system were the key features during this shift. The perpetuation of socio-economic backwardness among the Scheduled Tribes, in spite of the efforts made so far, presents a formidable challenge demanding effective and result-oriented steps in every developmental sector in the Twelfth Plan. The approach of the Twelfth Five Year Plan targets to achieve overall improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes.

Tribal development initiatives during the various five-year plan periods over six decades as on now has considered many issues, devised many strategies, took several approaches, and put in lot of resources. From the initiatives in tribal development taken so far one can comprehend that it started with welfare approach, moved through rights-and-resources-based solutions, and now resorting on empowerment paradigms. The journey so far has

resulted achievements and failures, encouragements and frustrations, insights and foresights, enabling us to understand the paradigms and look ahead for pragmatic programs to ensure all-round tribal development.

Focus on Conserving Tribal Culture during the plan periods

During 11th Plan period (2007-12), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India took a re-look at the strategy of development of PVTGs with focus on conservation of their culture along with their socio-economic development. As such both conservation of culture and development have been carefully balanced in the development approach for the PVTGs. As per the guidelines of MOTA, the State Government has formulated Conservation-Cum-Development (CCD) plan for 13 PVTGs of Odisha which aims at addressing the critical felt needs of the PVTGs by improving infrastructure and providing basic facilities within their easy reach with a view to eliminate poverty, increase literacy level, improve health status, ensuring food security, improvement of quality of life and conserve their traditional culture. As such, during the 12th plan period (2012-13 to 2016-17) the state government has prepared new CCD plan with various thrust areas like social sector, sustainable livelihood development, conservation of culture, infrastructure development and capacity building and institutional mechanism. Under conservation of culture, focus has been given to the following items.

- (i) Construction of Community Centre
- (ii) Promotion of Traditional Art, Craft & Dance.
- (iii) Construction of Tribal Museum in Micro Project Area.

During last two plan periods (from 2007 to 2016), the government has taken utmost care for socio-economic and cultural development of PVTGs through CCD Plan which was only focused towards the socio-cultural development of PVTGs, not for other STs in Odisha. Besides, in CCD Plan, the cultural component of development has not been taken up independently - it was an integral part of the socio-economic development.

Tribal Development Administration and development in Odisha

Since independence, government is making all out efforts to integrate the Scheduled Tribe population with the main stream by bringing about their all-round development. To achieve these objectives the state government has formulated and implemented several suitable plans and programs for economic, educational and social development of ST communities during different plan periods. For social, cultural and economic development of STs in Odisha, 22 Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDAs) covering 119 blocks of Odisha, 17 Micro Projects for 13 PVTGs in 20 blocks of 12 districts, 45 Modified Area Development Agency (MADA) in 46 blocks of 17 districts and 14 clusters in 13 blocks of 10 districts have been set up under Tribal sub-schemes which is based on area development approach with adequate emphasis on family oriented income generating activities with a view to narrow down the gap of socio-economic development between tribals and others. This strategy has been re-oriented to cover the employment-cum-income generation activities and infrastructure development programs incidental there to.

During the 5th Five Year Plan, the Government of India decided to plan and implement specific programs focused on all-round development of PVTGs found in specific compact

area spread over 12 districts of Odisha. For this, 17 Micro projects have been constituted in the State, out of which 13 Micro projects are located within the Scheduled Area and remaining 4 are outside the Tribal Sub-Plan Area with a view to assist the PVTG families under various schemes like agriculture, horticulture, soil conservation and animal husbandry etc. Besides, basic infrastructure facilities like drinking water, education, health and approach roads are being provided in the Micro project areas with focused attention.

Unique initiatives in Odisha for Tribal Culture Conservation vis a vis Development

One of the major purposes of conservation of tribal culture is to retain and maintain the tribal identity. In a cash centric economic motivation, the tribal people have been gradually moving away from their traditional culture, customs and traditions, that may lead to the loss of their identity in course of time. The principles of 'Panchsheel' specially recognizes the importance of tribal culture and their traditions. As pronounced in the Second Five Year Plan, 'Welfare Programs of Scheduled Tribes have to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the social, psychological and economic problems with which they are faced'. Thus, preservation and promotion of tribal culture should always remain as an integral concern in formulating various developmental programs for the well-being of the tribal. However, with accelerated development, tribal have been exposed /subjected to the rapid modernization and industrialization bringing them into sudden contact with non-tribal culture and social mores - which have had deep influence on the tribal life-style and culture, positive as well as negative. The 11th Five Year Plan laid adequate emphasis on conservation of tribal culture along with development. However, by and large, it addressed to the conservation of culture and development of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The conservation of tribal culture as an integral component in tribal development was relatively less addressed in the case of the non-PVTG tribal communities. During this period cultural development of STs including PVTGs has not left any significant mark to the society even if CCD plan has been implemented.

Therefore, along with various developmental policies and programs initiated to improve the socioeconomic conditions of tribal people, there is also an urgent need to preserve and promote various aspects of tribal culture and heritage, including their values of cooperation, community feeling, music, dance, literature, language, festivals/ religion, knowledge and indigenous technology, skills, arts and handicrafts etc. The uniqueness of the tribal culture which enriches the country's cultural mosaic, is fast disappearing and even getting distorted under powerful influences of the dominant culture.

Special Development Councils (SDC)

The Government of Odisha has set a unique example of culturally sensitive development model through its flagship program Special Development Councils in nine tribal dominated districts of the State. This is considered an appreciable stride to ensure holistic tribal development. In order to ensure tribal development is more holistic, effective, inclusive and participatory, the State Government felt the necessity to involve tribals extensively at all stages of the development process, starting from identification of deficit areas, plan formulation, implementation and monitoring taking the cultural development aspects on priority basis. Keeping the above objectives in view, the State Government has set up Special

Development Council in 9 districts of Odisha having the highest concentration of tribal population (45% ST population) such as Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundergarh, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri covering 117 blocks, 2022 Gram Panchayats, 18,687 villages, about 14 lakh ST households and 63.43 lakhs ST population under the chairmanship of an eminent tribal person of the locality to be nominated by the State Government. It is a historic decision of the state government. No other states have such provision. These councils specially focus on promotion, protection and preservation of tribal culture and tradition, heritage and unique identity of each tribe that are facing the threat of gradual disappearance in the name of development; and making tribal development more participatory by trapping local resources and existing traditional skills and expertise.

The broad objectives of the SDC are as follows.

- Conservation and propagation of tribal culture for retaining tribal identity.
- Recognition and promotion of the indigenous knowledge system of the tribal.
- Documentation of tangible and intangible tribal culture, tradition and practices.
- Identification of tribal resources and making the indigenous knowledge / unique culture a means of livelihood.
- Organization of exposure visits on the range of development issues.
- Promotion of tribal languages and dialects for development communication.
- Optimal utilization of available resources in tribal areas for sustainable tribal development as per felt needs of tribal.
- Promotion of sports and youth activities among tribal at various levels.
- Critical gap filling including last mile connectivity and other basic minimum needs, which are otherwise not available from normal development programs.

The fund allocation for each SDC shall be provided by the State Government in shape of Grant-in-Aid on the basis of number of blocks in the district and @Rs.1.50 crore per block per year. Intense allocation of funds among the blocks within the district shall be determined by the council, preferably in proportion to the population of each tribe in the district on priority basis. A total of Rs.175 crore will be spent per annum through these councils. This fund can be used as seed money for important Tribal Development Programs which may be decided by the councils at district level in accordance with government guidelines. At least 50% of the council fund shall be utilized for promotion/conservation of tribal culture and human resource including IEC activities.

Activities for restoration/conservation/development of cultural markers for ensuring tribal cultural identity, including shrine crafts, sacred groves, music, arts, performing arts, *haats* and supply of musical instruments, accessories, costumes, equipments and other items to tribal culture clubs have been taken up by the SDCs since 2017-18 onwards. The following focused activities have been carried out by the SDCs for protection, preservation and propagation of tribal culture in Odisha.

(1) Protection/Conservation of Sacred Groves

Sacred groves are any grove of trees that are of special religious importance to a particular culture. These are the cultural markers of tribes. The supreme deities (god or goddess) of tribal represented by the stones, trees or other natural objects are seated inside the groves. They have a significant religious connotation for the protecting community. Hunting and

logging are usually strictly prohibited within these patches. Indian sacred groves are often associated with temples, monasteries, shrines or with burial grounds. Rituals and festivals of the community are performed inside the site of sacred groves which is binding the communities together (Murugeson, 2016, Kandari et al, 2014). Sacred groves are named differently in different parts of the state by different ethnic groups like *Jaheera* of Santal, Munda, Bhumij, Ho, Kolha, Hill Kharia and Mankirdia; *Sarna* of Oraon, Munda, Kharia and Kisan; *Shal* of Bathudi, Sounti, Rajuar and Bhuyan; *Pat* of Bathudi, Gond and Saora, *Demul* of Bhuyan and Oraon; *Hundi* of Paraja, Gadaba, Pentia, Bhatra and Omanatya; *Darni*, *Tuleni*, *Gangama* of Kandha; *Gudi* of Kisan, Kuda, Matya and Binjhal and *Patkhanda* of Bonda and Didayi tribes. Sacred groves act as a repository for various Ayurvedic medicines. The vegetation cover helps reduce soil erosion. In modern times, they have become biodiversity hotspots. Many sacred groves have very old trees and their typical natural associations which are important from germplasm conservation as well as conservation of tribal culture in mind, keeping the importance of the sacred groves of tribal society, the state government through SDCs has taken steps for protection and conservation of sacred groves to revive and re-establish the link between culture, environment and development of tribal. 3562 sacred groves have been completed out of 3850 projected in 9 SDC districts of Odisha since 2017-18.

(2) Establishment of Tribal Culture Club

In tribal cultural heritage, dormitory – a culture club is the most important social institution in the tribal social organization which is communal living space for tribal youths of Odisha. This is the learning centre for traditional skills like hunting, painting, crafting, dance and music, folklore and wisdom. The dormitories create a sense of community and ensure longevity of the tribe and its culture. Elwin (1947) categorizes two types of dormitories according to their significance. One type prepares male youth as semi-soldier for community protection. In such type of dormitory, they learn fighting, hunting, magic etc. Second type of dormitory is of either sex where music, dance and entertainment is visible.

The dormitories are found practically in all parts of the country where the tribal people have their habitation. The institution is found among most of the tribes such as the *Munda*, *Ho*, *Oraon*, and *Kharia* of Chotnagpur plateau and Odisha, *Gond* and *Bhuiya* of Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, *Konayak Naga* of Assam and among the *Bhotia* of Bihar.

These dormitories are known by different names by different tribal communities like *Majang/Mandaghar* of Juang; *Dhangda Basa/Dhangdi Basa* of Kandha; *Ingerising/Salenidingo* of Bonda; *Pikin Kudma* of Koya; *Gulisung* of Didayi; *Basaghar* of Paraja, *Ghotul* of Gond; *Daas Sala* of Dongria Kandha; *Goshane* of Santhal; *Dhumkuria* of Oraon; *Gitiora* of Ho/Munda; and *Dhangarbasa* of Bhuiyan.

In order to preserve tribal culture, the construction of Tribal Culture club at Gram Panchayat level has been planned and executed by the Special Development Council of Odisha. 842 tribal culture clubs have been completed out of 1533 identified since 2017-18.

(3) Supply of Musical Instruments to Culture Club

Dance, music and orchestra are part of the intangible cultural heritage of tribal communities. Typical musical instruments narrate the diversity of cultural scenario of tribals in Odisha. Through typical rhythms of music and dance their communal emotions are expressed.

In most of the tribal communities, the typical musical instruments are not found due to paucity of funds. So, the SDCs have taken steps to purchase and supply traditional musical instruments of tribal communities of his district to identified culture club of tribal communities to preserve their culture and tradition. Since 2017-18, the SDCs have purchased and supplied the musical instruments to 1530 tribal culture clubs. Out of 1544 identified.

(4) Empanelment of Dance Troupes, Supply of Dance Costumes to Dance Troupes and Sponsoring them to Various Events

Performing art forms are the methods through which tribal customs and cultures are kept alive. Tribal dance involves not only dance performance, but also traditional ethnic music, costumes and attributes as well. There are many tribal dances performed in various seasons for various reasons. Each dance form is unique in step and design, as it is related to the life style of the local population. These dances connect them directly from the present through to the past. Each dance is symbolized by specific costumes and music. But, now-a-days, they may disappear or become adulterated by other dances if they are not preserved in their original form. Keeping this in mind the state government has taken steps to preserve the tribal dance form by identifying and empanelling different dance troupes of different tribal communities through Special Development Council and supply traditional dance costumes to identified and empanelled dance troupes. The dance costumes have played an important role in the preservation of ethnic values and cultural heritage and give the identity of a tribal society. One can easily distinguish tribal identity from their typical dance costume. For tribal dance in Odisha, *Dharua, Kisan, Oraon, Koya, Lanjia Saora, Santal, Dongria Kandha* and *Lodha* tribes are highly noticeable. Government of Odisha is putting all out efforts to preserve, promote and popularize the traditional art, craft, culture and heritage of these tribes through SDCs. So far 647 dance troupes have been identified and 649 troupes have been empanelled and provided with dance costumes by 9 SDCs. To promote the traditional tribal dances, in state, national and international level, the SDCs will be taking steps to sponsor the tribal dance troupes to various events at different levels.

(5) Organization of Cultural Festivals at Block and District Level

The social and cultural heritage of tribal is a mixture of customs, traditions, moral values, attitudes, festivals, folklore, beliefs and ideals of the tribal communities. Festivals is an effective way of recalling their culture and tradition. Every tribal community has its own set of festivals. Three kinds of religious activities such as worship of nature and natural objects; worship of ancestors; and worship of gods and deities form the foundation of tribal cultural festivals. In development context, the tribal festivals play an important role in showcasing traditional handicrafts, spotting artistic and sports talents, exploring ways and means for development communication. Tribal festivals are social institutions to promote fellow feelings among the members of the group. To promote traditional tribal culture festivals, the SDCs play a vital role to organize various cultural festivals at block and district level to showcase the talents and skills of the tribals of the districts. Keeping this in view, 9 SDC districts have organized 86 block level and 6 district level cultural festivals since 2017-18 by performing various tribal dances, songs, plays etc involving the tribal communities residing in the district.

(6) Organization of Sports for Tribals at Block, District and State Level and Distribution of Sports Kits

Indigenous games in tribal cultures are an efficient means of conveying values of unity, diversity, inclusiveness and culture. Traditional games are the products of society or culture and they have enriched the heritage of tribal society. Many traditional games of Odisha are associated with rites and rituals. Some of them are named as *Kati*, *Gedi* or *Ghudel*, *Ganthi Ganana*, *Gaur Badi* etc. Performance of traditional games creates a bridge of unity between playgroups as well as in society. In Odisha, there are many tribal sports luminaries who have added to the glory of Odisha by performing at National and International level sports events. In consideration to required institutional set up for promotion of games and sports in tribal areas, Odisha stands at a better position compared to any other tribal dominated states. Still there are hundreds of unnoticed sports talents in tribal areas having potential to excel in the recognized sports categories. Keeping this in views, the SDC has under taken the sports activities for tribals at block, district and state level, to ensure that not a single sports talent is left unidentified, to generate sports consciousness and mass participation in sports in SDC districts, to strengthen sports at the grass root level, to provide opportunity to tribal children and to supply sports kits to the players. SDCs also try to conserve the indigenous games and sports as part of intangible cultural heritage of tribal communities of Odisha. Since 2017-18, around 3019 tribal youth clubs have been identified for providing sports kits for promotion of tribal sports and 2059 kits have been distributed to youth clubs.

(7) Promotion of Tribal Language

The ST populations of Odisha speak 21 languages and 74 dialects. Out of 21 tribal languages, 7 have their own scripts. Like any other society, language is an important part of tribal society, because it enables people to communicate and express themselves. When a language dies out, future generations lose a vital part of the culture. As a significant step to keep vanishing tribal languages in circulation, the Odisha Government has come out with lexicons of 21 such languages. Multilingual Education (MLE) has a pivotal role for preserving tribal language. In tribal dominated districts the bilingual tribal dictionaries have been used in MLE initiated by the State Government at the elementary level of education. Towards preservation and promotion of tribal languages in Odisha, the SDCs have taken steps to prepare and publish the bilingual tribal dictionaries for MLE and trilingual tribal language proficiency modules in 21 tribal languages such as *Ho*, *Bhuiyan*, *Santali*, *Juang*, *Munda*, *Sadri*, *Oraon*, *Kharia*, *Kisan*, *Binjhal*, *Kui*, *Saora*, *Kuvi*, *Gadaba*, *Desia*, *Gondi*, *Bhunja*, *Bonda*, *Didayi*, *Koya* and *Desia (Bhumia)*. The trilingual tribal language proficiency modules will help build bridges between the government functionaries and the tribals for effective implementation of the various programs and effective communication.

(8) Improvement of Existing Tribal Haats

Tribal *haats* are the heart of tribal village economy. They are not merely a place of selling and purchasing goods, but provide a platform for the rural folks to communicate and share views, ideas and news. It also provides opportunities for social interaction and recreation. There, the tribals exchange information about family, marriages and festivals. So *haats* are the nerve centre of tribal life. Tribal *haats* provide a glimpse of the social, cultural and commercial life style of the local tribals. Mohanty (1970) describes market is not only a place for selling and buying, it is also a place for communal gathering. Keeping this in view, the

renovation and beautification of tribal *haats* have been undertaken in all SDC districts. Since 2017-18 658 tribal *haats* have been renovated and strengthened out of 797 identified by 9 SDCs in Odisha.

(9) Establishment of Tribal Museum

Tribal Museums try to give a representation of tribal life and culture by educating the general public and they are the important cultural resources for the local tribal community. These Museums would provide an alternative perspective of pride in heritage and homeland, in tribal context. It is the place for preservation of community use documents, photographs, oral histories, sound recordings, art and artefacts, cultural learning, employment and a source of cultural pride and place for the public to participate and interact with tribal communities. In this context, SDC intervention for development of tribal museums in each SDC district is very essential. Land for construction of Tribal Museum has been identified by all the 9 SDC districts and the construction of the boundary wall has already been started in 4 SDC districts namely Gajapati, Nabarangpur, Sundergarh and Keonjhar districts.

During last two and half years, the State Government has given a lot of emphasis for conservation, protection and propagation of tribal culture of Odisha at grassroots level through Special Development Councils in 9 tribal dominated districts. However, more efforts are to be made by the government and the SDCs in order to identify frontier areas of culture conservation without ignoring development in other sectors. The importance of culture conservation should be ingrained in the government authorities and others implementing culture sensitive development programs. It is a felt need that the tribal communities should be sensitized by conducting various IEC activities at various levels.

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EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS ON MOTHER AND CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION AMONG PVTGS OF ODISHA

Sukruti Sarangi¹

ABSTRACT

The health status of tribal communities, especially the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha is in a vulnerable condition because of multiple factors like poverty, illiteracy, lack of safe drinking water, bad sanitary conditions, difficult terrain, malnutrition, poor maternal and child health services, unavailability of health and nutritional services, superstitions and environmental conditions.

Tribal concept of health, of disease, of life and death is varied as their culture. Accordingly, the tribal society is guided by traditionally laid down customs and every member of the society is expected to conform to it. Most of the studies made on tribal communities have indicated the importance of understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of health and disease. The common beliefs, customs, practices related to health and disease, among the PVTG communities influence the health seeking behaviour of the community. A number of deities are often associated with diseases or disease is connected with the interference of supernatural agency and naturally the nature of treatment in such cases is also made accordingly. The paper provides an empirical observation on the traditional health care behaviour of the PVTGs in respect of mother and child health.

Through the development interventions it has been always attempted that the programs related to health, nutrition and sanitation with regard to the PVTGs should be acceptable, accessible and affordable. However, the deliverables are by and large unmet because of many socio-cultural and behavioural impediments faced by the program implementers. The general observations on the PVTGs indicate that the effectiveness of health-giving programs depend upon the health seeking behaviour of the PVTG communities which is influenced by their beliefs, culture and tradition. Without understanding the socio-cultural-ecological and behavioural practices of the PVTG communities in relation to health, nutrition and sanitation the development programs may not be able to deliver to their optimum potential.

Introduction

Most of the studies made on tribal communities have indicated the importance of understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of health and disease. A number of deities are often associated with diseases or disease is connected with the interference of supernatural agency and naturally the nature of treatment in such cases is also made accordingly.

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Tribal concept of health, of disease, of life and death is varied as their culture. Accordingly, the tribal society is guided by traditionally laid down customs and every member of the society is expected to conform to it. The fate of individual and the community at large depends on their relationship with unseen forces, which intervene human affairs. If men offend them, the mystical powers punish by sickness, death or other natural calamities.

In the early days of tribal research, more particularly on tribal health, Elwin took great interest in tribal health and medicine and made a number of studies on tribal communities. Some information about tribal health and medicine are also available in ethnographic studies made on tribal communities by S.C. Roy, D.N. Majumdar and others. Studies on healthcare aspects of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Odisha are very sporadic and the available references clearly states there is always overtone of social and cultural belief systems of the healthcare systems of the PVTGs.

The health status of tribal communities, especially the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha is in a vulnerable condition because of multiple factors like poverty, illiteracy, lack of safe drinking water, bad sanitary conditions, difficult terrain, malnutrition, poor maternal and child health services, unavailability of health and nutritional services, superstitions and environmental conditions.

Tribal concept of health, of disease, of life and death is varied as their culture. Accordingly, the tribal society is guided by traditionally laid down customs and every member of the society is expected to conform to it. Most of the studies made on tribal communities have indicated the importance of understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of health and disease. A number of deities are often associated with diseases or disease is connected with the interference of supernatural agency and naturally the nature of treatment in such cases is also made accordingly.

Sporadic studies on tribal health have been able to point out certain prevalent diseases and sicknesses occurring in tribal communities. The sicknesses and diseases like anaemia, upper respiratory problem, malaria, gastro-intestinal disorders like acute diarrhoea, Intestinal protozoa, micro nutrient deficiency and skin infection are common among tribal communities including PVTGs. Many of these diseases, which are otherwise preventable, are occurring because of food habit and food choice, because of typical socio-cultural behaviours, because of information barriers, because of relying more on traditional healthcare practices and for lack of health awareness. The typical health seeking behaviour of the tribal communities matters a lot in uptake of various programmatic interventions operating in the state.

The common beliefs, customs, practices related to health and disease, among the tribal communities influence the health seeking behaviour of the community. There is a common agreement that the health status of the PVTGs is very poor because of their relative geographical isolation, remoteness and being largely unaffected by the developmental processes going on in the state. PVTGs in Odisha, in particular, are at great disadvantage due to illiteracy and ignorance. Various research studies revealed their nutritional inadequacy contributing to poor health indicators. Poor nutritional indicators are not only factorized by inadequate food availability but also due to faulty habits, food prejudices, superstitions or taboos and importantly lack of awareness of right food choices. Several studies have

indicated the gravity of the problems related to health, nutrition and sanitation among the tribal communities including PVTGs which are largely because of their traditional and behavioural practices.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha

There are some groups who are relatively more isolated, archaic, vulnerable, deprived and backward. They have been initially identified and designated since the 5th Five Year Plan as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and recently re-designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) by Government of India for the purpose of receiving special attention for their all-round development.

In common parlance the term primitive means simple-ness and antiquity. The commonly agreed cultural traits of primitive people are (1) homogeneity, (2) small population, (3) relative physical isolation, (4) social institutions are cast in a simple mould, (5) absence of a written language (6) relatively simple technology and (7) a slower rate of change. In the present context the group of aboriginals who continue to pursue an archaic way of life and absorb the changes slowly are distinguished as PTGs.

The Dhebar Commission (1960-1961) stated that within Scheduled Tribes (STs) there existed an inequality in the rate of development. During the fourth Five Year Plan a sub-category was created within the STs to identify groups that considered to be at a lower level of development. This was based on the Dhebar Commission report and other studies. This sub-category was named "Primitive tribal group" (PTGs). The features of such a group include a pre-agricultural system of existence, i.e. practice of hunting and gathering, zero or negative population growth, extremely low level of literacy in comparison with other tribal groups.

Groups that satisfied any one of the criteria were considered as PTG. At the conclusion of the Fifth Five Year Plan, 52 communities were identified as being a "primitive tribal group", these communities were identified on the basis of recommendations made by the respective state governments. At the conclusion of the Sixth Five Year Plan 20 groups were added and 2 more in the Seventh Five Year Plan, one more group was added in the eighth five-year plan, making a total 75 groups were identified as PTG. In Odisha there are 13 ethnic groups identified as PTG/PVTG.

In 2006 the government of India proposed to rename "Primitive tribal group" as "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group". PTG has since been renamed *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group* (PVTG) by the Government of India.

Health and Nutrition of PVTGs

The health status of PVTGs in Odisha is vulnerable because of multiple factors like poverty, illiteracy, lack of safe drinking water, bad sanitary conditions, difficult terrain, malnutrition, poor maternal and child health services, unavailability of health and nutritional services, superstition and deforestation. The sicknesses and diseases like anaemia, upper respiratory problem, malaria, gastro-intestinal disorders like acute diarrhoea, Intestinal protozoa, micro nutrient deficiency and skin infection are common among PVTGs. Many of these diseases, which are otherwise preventable, are occurring because of food habit and food choice, because of typical socio-cultural behaviours, because of information barriers, because of relying more on traditional healthcare practices and for lack of health awareness.

The common beliefs, customs, practices related to health and disease, among the PVTGs, in turn influence the health seeking behaviour of the community. There is a common agreement that the health status of the PVTGs is very poor because of their isolation, remoteness and being largely unaffected by the developmental processes going on in the state. PVTGs in Odisha are at great disadvantage due to illiteracy and ignorance. Various research studies revealed their nutritional inadequacy. Inadequate nutrition is not only due to inadequate food availability but also due to faulty habits, some of them are based on food prejudices, superstitions or taboos and importantly lack of awareness of right food choices.

Several studies have indicated the gravity of the problems related to health, nutrition and sanitation among the PVTGs which are largely because of their traditional and behavioural practices. For example, on the basis of a descriptive cross-sectional study emphasizing anthropometric characteristics, carried out among five PVTGs of Odisha namely, Bhuyan, Lodha, Kharia, Juang and Mankirdia, reveals that the females of the five PVTGs are under serious nutritional stress. Further, the prevalence of CED (Chronic Energy Deficiency) was very high (e"40%) in both the sexes of all the tribal groups, indicating a critical situation (www.researchgate.net). The general health status of the PVTGs are not satisfactory as the ICMR report says that 'Analysis of health indices of the tribal population in Odisha are worse than the national average...'. A high incidence of malnutrition has also been documented in the tribal districts of Odisha (ICMR, 2003, Shahni & Nandy, 2013).

In India and in Odisha many development schemes and programs have been operating in order to alleviate the health, nutrition and sanitation status among the vulnerable communities. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India in its revised scheme of 'Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), effective from 1st April, 2015 emphasized upon, in para 4.5 (d) the need to undertake health surveys of PVTGs, (i) 100% health facility coverage of pregnant mothers and immunization of children; and in para 4.11 it emphasized on conservation of culture of the PVTGs including documentation of their lifestyle, traditional medicine and medical practices. Prior to that, the National Advisory Council had made specific recommendations on health, nutrition and sanitation in order to arrest the decline in population of some PVTGs (<http://tribal.nic.in>).

Through the development interventions it has been always attempted that the programs related to health, nutrition and sanitation with regard to the PVTGs should be acceptable, accessible and affordable. However, the deliverables are by and large unmet because of many socio-cultural and behavioural impediments faced by the program implementers. The general observations on the PVTGs indicate that the effectiveness of health-giving programs depend upon the health seeking behaviour of the PVTG communities which is influenced by their beliefs, culture and tradition. Without understanding the socio-cultural-ecological and behavioural practices of the PVTG communities in relation to health, nutrition and sanitation the development programs may not be able to deliver to their optimum potential.

Studies undertaken in the country indicate that the primitive tribes have distinct health problems, mainly governed by multidimensional factors like their habitat, difficult terrain, ecologically variable niches, illiteracy, poverty, isolation, superstition and deforestation. Hence an integrated multidisciplinary approach has been adopted by different researchers to study the tribal health problems.

Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health of PVTGs

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and to its functions and processes. In India, maternal and child health was recognised early as a development resource. Mothers and children received high priority in the health services planning. The services entails the provision of all forms of approaches required to promote, re-establish and preserve optimal health of all women in tribal community, during pregnancy, to ensure successful delivery of pregnancy with minimum disability to the mother and health protection and optimal development of the infant and children up to five years of age with immunization and care.

The maternal and child health in tribal areas of Odisha is confronted with several challenges. What matters most in this context is the tribal notions and traditions. The dimensions that are important include sex ratio, age at marriage, fertility and mortality, life expectancy, nutritional status, maternal mortality, mother and child healthcare practices, and family welfare programs. The general observations have been higher mortality rate, low nutritional status, lower life expectancy, higher fertility rate, and high incidence of sickle cell disease.

Many factors influence the general health and maternal health of the tribes. The genetic constitution, exposure to disease producing organisms, imbalanced or inadequate nutrition, low resistance to infection, all determine health. In addition, social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors, as well as the availability of health services, greatly influence the tribal health. Attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, the value attached to fertility and sex of the child, the pattern of family organization and the ideal role demanded of women by social conventions – are all cultural norms that affect women's health.

Maternal and Child Health, food and nutrition of PVTGs in Odisha

Maternal and child health that concerns the health of mothers, infants, children, and adolescents is a commitment in public health towards promoting the health status and future challenges of this vulnerable population. A healthy maternal dietary pattern, along with adequate maternal body composition, metabolism and placental nutrient supply, reduces the risk of maternal, fetal and long-term effects in the offspring.

Maternal nutrition during pregnancy is a critical factor for foetal health and its survival. Failure in supplying the adequate amount of nutrients to meet foetal demand can lead to foetal malnutrition. Studies show that maternal health is essential to ensure the health of children - and, by extension, the whole family. Still, many mothers suffer from lack of access to health, poor conditions and poor quality of life - especially in developing countries. A healthy child needs a healthy mother. Maternal nutritional status influences nutrient partitioning to the placenta or foetus, which subsequently affects disease risk

The tribal communities have their own traditional ways of maternal and child health. It is influenced by their beliefs, customs, traditions, ecosystems and primary productions in their ecosystems. The tribal communities in Odisha live in distinct geographical regions and there is reasonable variation in their ecosystem and primary production systems that influence their food and nutrition and so the maternal and child health. The traditions seem to have been shaped up according to the availability of food, concept of nutrition, preventive and prescriptive food and nutrition through experiences over time across generations. The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Odisha continues with their traditional

beliefs, customs and traditions and have their own notions of maternal and child health. The following encompasses the traditional health care behaviour of the PVTGs in respect of mother and child health.

Kutia Kandha

The prevalent food habit of the tribe includes cooked rice, ragi gruel, millets, maize along with leafy vegetables and pulses grown by them. While preparing ragi gruel they mix whole seeds of pulses and maize, with millets they too mix pulses. They grow a range of pulses that include cow pea, pigeon pea, horse gram, etc. That apart they eat wild tubers, mushrooms varieties of vegetables more particularly pumpkin, brinjal, bottle gourd, papaya, banana, bamboo shoots and other cultivated ones. They are fond of non-vegetarian dishes with dry fish, meat of pig, goat, fowl and minor games including wild fowls and pea fowls.

Kutia Kandha women breastfed the new born upto one year. The child is fed with rice and other foods strictly after completing one year. It is believed that if the child is fed with rice or ragi gruel before attaining one year in age then the child falls sick and suffers from worm infestations. A child is provided with all types of foods when it becomes three years in age. At the age of 7 to 8 a child is occasionally provided with sago palm toddy.

They do not have any particular food prescription for pregnant women. A pregnant woman may eat whatever she likes but there are certain restrictions also. A pregnant woman is prohibited to eat head of any sacrificed animal but can eat its flesh. Normally, she is restricted to eat pork and eggs. They are advised not to eat roasted wild mushroom or meat believing that it may bring blemishes and black spots in the new born. She is given to drink sago palm sap and other liquors occasionally in small quantities. However, protein rich diet is advised up to seven months of pregnancy after which carbohydrate rich food is advised.

Delivery is conducted by traditional birth attendant in the menstrual hut lying in backside of the main house. After delivery the mother is given with warm *ragi* gruel. According to elderly women the mother should not be fed with cold food, pickle or toddy after child birth lest that she catches cold. In case of less lactation the mother is fed with meat.

Chuktia Bhunjia

The principal item in their food is rice. Women neither eat brown rice bought from market nor allow that item into their kitchen. If they so desire to have brown rice, they prepare it by themselves. Earlier they used to eat boiled *mahua* flowers when they ran short of rice. Being forest dwellers, they gather range of tubers from the forest such as Pitkanda, Kulia Kanda, Langal Kanda, Uska Kanda, Bathadi Kanda and eat them boiled. Ragi is a preferred food. It is eaten in form of gruels and cakes. Other millets available with them are eaten like rice or prepared as *kheer* with milk. With rice they take dal made out of horsegram, cow pea, green gram and black gram. They make curry with a range of vegetables and wild leafy vegetables and mushrooms. They are fond of non-vegetarian dishes with fish, fowl meat, goat meat, eggs, but eat them occasionally. The male members eat a wide range of non-vegetarian dishes out of fish, meat of goat, deer, *kutra*, pig and wild boar, hare, monitor, snake, birds, rat, pangolin, porcupine, *sambar* and such; and eggs of fowl, duck, pea fowl, tortoise, etc.

Child is breastfed up to one year after which it is fed with soft cooked rice with milk. Children are also fed with boiled and crushed tubers. When the child becomes two years old they are given boiled *mahua* flower, boiled tuber, rice, dal, curry etc to eat.

The pregnant women are allowed to eat whatever they like. Normally they eat rice, dal and curry. The Chuktia Bhunjia women do not eat fowl meat but they eat meat of wild games and fish. They are given to eat a wide range of leafy vegetables such as *kuliari sag*, *serial sag*, *punjula sag*, *muti sag*, etc that keeps their health in order.

Immediately after child birth, the mother is fed with hot gruel to keep her health in order and enhance lactation. On the second day after delivery she is given hot horse gram decoction to reduce the pain in body. Lactating mothers are advised not to eat watered rice as otherwise it impacts the child with acute and chronic cold. She is advised to take hot food with rice, vegetable curry, fish and leafy vegetables and range of fruits to enhance lactation.

Juang

Juang folklore depicts them as omnivores. Rice is their staple food. They prefer to have watered rice to hot boiled rice. That apart, they eat millets of all kinds, *ragi* being the principal one. For vegetables they usually take range of leafy and other vegetables including carpet legume, tomato, ladies finger, pumpkin, mushroom, etc. They gather wild seasonal vegetables that include tubers, mushrooms, bamboo shoot, buds, flowers and fruits like mango, jackfruit, etc. Their consumption of dal and other pulses is very minimal. That apart, they feed on many kinds of insects, meat of birds and game animals, meat of domesticated ruminants and fowls. They drink rice beverages and tree saps to their contentment.

A new born survives on breast feeding till one year after which the child is introduced to rice. Rice is crushed and mixed with milk to feed a child after one year of age. Occasionally, children above 2 years are given rice beer for a good sleep.

There is apparently no food restriction for pregnant women. However, they are advised to restrain from meat except chicken, for as per their belief, it interferes with growth of child in womb. After four months of pregnancy, a pregnant woman is advised to take hot gruel to relieve labour pain. Pregnant women are advised to eat thrice a day in small quantities with papaya and vegetables in adequate quantities. However, they are prohibited to take wild tubers during the pregnancy. After child birth the mother is fed with hot rice with salt and garlic up to 10 days. To relieve body ache they are given with decoction of bel leaves, roasted sunthi and salt. Excepting yellow dal and potatoes, a lactating mother is prohibited to eat any other dal, pickle or sour items, *gedu sag*, salty dry fish and rice beverages. If a lactating mother has an issue of inadequate lactation then she is fed with earthworm fried with cow ghee and also salt and garlic in relatively more quantity. Milk is not preferred by them.

Dongaria Kandha

The Dongaria Kandha community traditionally give importance to *ragi* gruel, minor millets, salt, chilli and dry fish in their food habit. Their traditional food habit has undergone sea change and in the current scenario they have adopted many mainstream food habit. In the past they used to prepare many kinds of cakes out of mango kernel, tender jackfruit, and varieties of tubers – both cultivated and wild. Primarily shifting cultivators, the Dongaria Kandha has been recognized today as a fruit growing community. Their everyday meal is

carbohydrate loaded and they prefer to have non-vegetarian dishes. Earlier they used to consume varieties of meat of game animals and domesticated animals but in the current scenario they have been reduced to occasional meat eating habit, especially on festive days or subject to availability. Besides the dry fish, whenever they get fish and crab from the streams they feel it a feast. They also grow varieties of vegetables in different seasons and make them part of their everyday food. They cultivate and consume a range of fruits like banana, pine apple, orange, mango, jackfruit, custard apple and other wild edibles. Alcohol is a great fascination of the community members.

In the Dongaria Kandha community there is no prescribed food or diet for the mother and child. A child is breast fed till six months after which are introduced to *ragi* gruel and rice out of little millets in small quantities. Occasionally they also spoon feed a child with locally brewed liquor after the child attains one year in age.

A pregnant mother is advised to maintain the regular food such as rice, *ragi* gruel, vegetables and leafy vegetables, fish and meat and little quantity of liquor at intervals. However, during pregnancy the elderly women advise to take more banana compared to ordinary days. There is, however, some prescriptive food for lactating women. Specifically after child birth, they are given pulses rich diet with vegetables especially bottle gourd and pumpkin. Fish and meat as per availability is also given. Apparently, there is no food taboo for mother and child in Dongaria Kandha community. However, considering the health situation of pregnant and lactating women, sometimes restrictions on chilli, salt and sour items is observed.

Didayi

The Didayi food habit is dependent on their habitat type. *Ragi* and millets along with wild edibles are staple foods for those dwelling on hills while those living on plains mainly subsist on rice with cultivated crops including vegetables. The Didayis maintain a group life and during their resource hunting in the forest whatever is got is equally distributed among them. However, the relatively vulnerable are the highlanders who cultivate millets and pulses under slash and burn agriculture and collect wild edibles from forests that include tubers, roots, buds, flowers, fruits to keep their life going. Their regular food called Ammah consists of rice or *ragi* gruel, millet rice and boiled vegetables. They don't use spices except chilli, salt and turmeric. They love non-vegetarian dishes such as fish, dry fish, and meat of goat, pig, fowls, ducks, cattle and other available wild games. Drinks like *mahuli*, *salap* and *pendom* are taken by men and women.

After birth a child is breastfed up to one and half years and sometimes up to two years. After that a child is given *ragi* and rice gruel, boiled and crushed potato and other millets too. The pregnant women eat normal regular food. Didayi believes that a pregnant woman must be provided with all such food that she desired to have so as to ensure a well grown child at the time of birth. Rice, dal, leafy vegetables, gruel, cow meat, pig meat and brewed liquor, sago palm toddy and rice beverages make normal diet of a pregnant woman.

After child birth the mother is given rice gruel only to take for eight days. They don't eat rice during those eight days. It is believed that the mother remains healthy with only gruel. After eight days she is given rice, dal of black gram and meat to eat. There are also some prohibited foods for the mother and child. New born child is not given rice, dal, gruel, meat and tubers till two years of age. Similarly, hare meat and bat meat are restricted for pregnant

woman. It is believed that if at pregnancy a woman eats bat meat then the ears of the child in the womb is shed off.

Paudi Bhuiyan

The daily main food of the Paudi Bhuiyan consists of mainly millets such as *gangeti*, *disidia*, *kangu* and *suan*. However, *gangeti* rice is most common. Rice is the new addition. With *gangeti* and rice they take leafy vegetables, salt and chilli and vegetables when available. They consume varieties of vegetables, leafy vegetables, mushroom, tubers, available wild edibles and meat of wild games with seasonal variations. A large variety of leafy vegetables make part of their every day food habit. During lean periods they subsist on minor millets, boiled jackfruits and other wild edibles. They make types of cakes during rituals and festivals.

A new born is exclusively breastfed up to one year. Before colostrums feeding they feed a child with sugar syrup. After one year a child is given boiled and crushed rice in small quantities which gradually increase till the child is able to eat rice. A child is also given gruel after it attains six months. A child is fed three to four times in a day. When a child attains four to five years of age it is introduced to brewed liquor and fermented rice beverages.

As such there is no prescriptive diet for pregnant women. According to them a pregnant woman should be allowed to eat whatever she liked. However, she is restricted to take liquor and to do fasting. She is advised to avoid meat or take in very small quantities. She is restricted to eat meat of sacrificed animals and the offerings in rituals. Goat meat is prohibited for pregnant woman.

After child birth a woman is given cooked drum stick leaves to relieve her from body ache. To energize her decoction of *chakunda* bark is given. In some cases, the decoction of bark of bel tree is also given. After child birth the mother is fed with hot rice, preparations with bitter gourd and bitter gourd leaves, drum stick leaves, roasted salt, fried *neem* leaves, bottle gourd, etc. Bottle gourd is given to increase lactation. That apart, after delivery, a mother is given boiled jackfruit, papaya and such. Usually milk and milk products are not given. A mother is advised not to take pickle, sour food, watered rice, and chillies after child birth.

Hill Kharia

The Hill Kharia's main food is rice and wild tubers. In the past they only subsisted on wild tubers. They cook tubers and arrowroot as gruels with sugar or molasses for delicacy. Along with vegetables grown in their kitchen gardens they eat variety of fruits and berries available in the forests. Certain food preparations are done during rituals and festivals that include cakes, fish and meat, rice flake, etc. They are non-vegetarians and alcohol lovers. Chicken is their most favourite.

Kharias believe that feeding a child is the largest responsibility of both parents. A child is exclusively breastfed up to six months after which it is introduced to arrowroot powder, honey, baked or steamed cake along with mother's milk. After 8-9 months a child is fed with boiled and crushed brown rice. During breast feeding days the mother is advised to take lot of vegetables and leafy vegetables for better lactation and child health.

For a pregnant woman there are certain prescriptive diets. They are advised to take rice, fish, meat, dal and boiled wild tubers. Along with that different leafy vegetables particularly

sujuna sag, marisa sag, mati sag, mamudi sag and seasonally available fruits are the foods advised for pregnant woman. Some kinds of mushrooms such as *patada chhatu, katha chhatu, rutruka chhatu* are prohibited for the woman during pregnancy. Similarly, she should not take meat of sacrificed animals or ritual offerings. After child birth, up to six months, mother should not take pickles, sour food, and spicy food but must eat lot of vegetables.

Bonda

The main food habit of Bonda is millet rice, rice along with some curry. They eat two square meals a day with rice or millet or rice and millet cooked together. Ragi gruel is the preferred food at work site. They take their food with additional items like vegetables, dry fish, mushroom, fish, crab, meat, etc. They are very fond of alcohols. It is said that Bonda is an expert in brewing spirit from any kind of vegetables, fruits and cereals. Both men and women are quite used to alcohols. The wild edibles available through seasons constitute significant part in their food habit.

There is apparently no prescriptive food for new born and infants. The child is exclusively breastfed till 8 months to one year. During that period the child is not given any other food. It is believed that before one year if a child is fed with *ragi* gruel or anything such then the child would become pot-bellied. After one-year child is introduced to rice, *ragi* and other millets. A child after attaining two-years of age is fed with *ragi* gruel and rice three to four times a day and when it attains 4-5 years then meat and alcohol is allowed.

During pregnancy Bonda women continue their regular food habit. As such there is no restriction on food types. However, after 4 months of pregnancy pregnant women are advised to reduce intake of toddy and wine. The restricted foods include *siali* seeds, *bulbils, badhisaga, sraban chhatu* and some kinds of fishes or fish parts. They have belief systems on possible impacts of the restricted foods on the child in womb.

The Bondas perform two specific rituals for the pregnant woman. The two rituals are called Tankarani Viru and Pangan Viru. In the Tankarani Viru a special food is prepared with coconut and chicken which is eaten with rice by the pregnant woman and the Disari at the site of ritual. Similarly, in the Pangan Viru, a special food (*surujang*) is prepared with rice, chicken liver and pig liver which is also eaten by the pregnant woman and the *disari*. On the said day, the pregnant woman is given wine to drink. As per tradition the mother of the pregnant woman visits her with some foods after two months of pregnancy. The food items include rice, gruel, curry, dry fish, banana, etc. Again, at the end of four-month's pregnancy her mother comes with cow meat, goat meat, chicken, aromatic rice, millets, berries, cakes and curry, etc. A pregnant woman may communicate her food preferences to her mother.

After child birth, the mother is fed with freshly prepared hot rice or millet till one week. No other food is given. However, wine in small quantities is allowed. If the mother feels pain in abdomen then she is immediately fed with *sindhikanda*. To increase lactation, the mother is fed with earthworm cooked with little millet, or the latex of *tadukui sing* plant.

Mankidia

The Mankadia are a nomadic community. Their staple food is rice. They prefer watered rice better to hot freshly cooked rice. Along with rice they take varieties of leafy vegetables and

mushrooms available in the wild generally. They are fond of meat of wild games. According to local people, the Mankidias are so named for their monkey catching and eating habits.

In Mankidia community new born care means breast feeding. They continue breast feeding as long as the child likes it. The mother waits till the child give up breast feeding. After that the child is introduced to rice and other regular food items. As such there is no prescriptive or prohibiting food for the pregnant or lactating woman. After child birth a mother is advised to avoid non-vegetarian food, sour items, and watered rice till one to two months of child birth. However, it is not very strictly observed. Pregnancy is not celebrated but in advance stage of pregnancy the work burden of a woman is comparatively reduced.

Lanjia Saora

The traditional food habit of Lanjia Saora community by and large depended on varieties of millets including Bajra, Kangu, Paddy, sour hibiscus leaves. They make gruel with rice and millets mixing the leaves of sour hibiscus plant to give a taste to the preparation. Gradually they have turned to rice eaters mainly. They are fond of fish, dry fish, eggs and meat of variety of animals. They are voracious meat eaters. Among pulses they add horse gram, green gram, black gram, cow pea and pigeon pea to their main food habit. The wild edibles constitute a good part of their regular food habit. Compared to early days, the Lanjia Saora have been cultivating and consuming more vegetables.

The Lanjia Saora child care gives emphasis on breast feeding. Till six to seven months a child is breastfed. After that the child is introduced to regular food items. In recent days, the Lanjia Saora have been buying infant food from market and feeding to the children. As such there is no special prescriptive diet for the pregnant women. They continue with traditional food habit till child birth. After child birth a woman is given rice and vegetables till seven to eight days after which there remains no restriction on food. However, the intake of leafy vegetables is comparatively reduced.

Lodha

The Lodha are used to varieties of foods the principal among them being rice and many kinds of wild edible leafy vegetables. A fermented rice beverage (*handia*) is one of the most common food items across all age groups. Boiled *mahua* flowers and jackfruits, roasted snails, crabs, meat, etc are their lean season foods. They do cultivate some vegetables which are consumed by them. Meat of wild games and *handia* are their most preferred food items.

The Lodha child care is relatively different from others. After child birth if the mother has issues with lactation then goat milk or honey mixed in boiled water is fed as substitutes. Mother's milk is considered principal food for the child. When the child grows teeth it is fed with cakes made out of brown rice which is considered palatable. That apart, the boiled tubers, potatoes are also fed to the child.

Prescribed food for the pregnant woman includes watered rice, boiled potato, fish, meat, honey and ghee. That apart variety of vegetables and leafy vegetables is prescribed. Pregnant women are restricted to eat meat of lamb, bison, prawn, salty dry fish, pumpkin leaves, etc.

After child birth the mother maintains some food restrictions, as advised by seasoned women. After child birth the mother is given decoction of horse gram and bark of Karanja

tree for seven days. Among vegetables brinjal, ridge gourd, ladies finger, bitter gourd, papaya, drum stick leaves, pumpkin and bottle gourd are prescribed for lactating mothers. Hot watered rice with garlic is also advised.

The above descriptions provide a glimpse of the traditional healthcare behaviours of respective communities during pregnancy and after child birth. While there are similarities in traditions there are reasonable variations too. In certain case pregnancy is rejoiced and in certain cases it is taken just as way of life. Although the prescriptive and preventive diet and nutrition are not possible to be distinguished community wise yet an impression has been drawn on how socio-culturally maternal health during pregnancy and after child birth is dealt, the way child care is done. The observations regarding maternal and child health practices among PVTGs in Odisha may be summarized as below.

- Maternal nutrition is poor
- No special dietary pattern is followed for expectant mothers during pregnancy
- Post delivery care is not adequate – sometimes certain care with therapeutic value is taken but it is essentially to make the woman fit to work
- There is no consumption of milk and milk products by women. In certain communities it is also observed as taboo
- Their health seeking behaviour shows that they seek relief from seasoned women or traditional healers
- Most delivery occur at home in unhygienic and primitive practices for parturition

Concluding remarks

Regarding the poor health status of ST population, it has been generically said for long that the modern medicine has not been accepted in most tribal areas, where magico-religious health care systems prevail. Health conditions in tribal areas have been described as deficient in sanitary conditions, personal hygiene, and health education. The situation is even worst among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

The tribal population and specially the PVTGs have long been staying in their closed socio-geographic cocoons with sporadic contact with outside. This has immuned them from various socio-cultural changes outside their world. They have a distinct belief system and so traditional knowledge systems which have kept them alive for thousands of years even without any external intervention. Their life philosophy is different from the rest of the social groups. Generally, most of the tribes don't save for a long future and to consume what they earn immediately. Neither 'death' is a big emotional issue for them. The family bonding and the sibling bonding are also not that concrete like their counterparts in rest social groups. In a sense, a close observation reveals a high degree of resemblances in the tribal life philosophy and the law of nature as manifested in other species.

Similarly, even though, high quality food rich in protein, fiber and vitamins are available in their environment, they don't consume them all. They use mostly grains to fill up their stomach. For them the food is just to escape starvation in these modern times, even though they have been consuming various pulses and vegetables earlier. This is because, now with the improvement of connectivity, they are getting a price for these food items.

Whenever any member of the family or the society falls ill, usually they wait for few days for healing automatically. If not, then they use some medicinal plants out of their traditional knowledge for self-treatment. It is observed that this traditional knowledge is generally with all members of the tribal society. In most of the cases they get to work after such medication.

But if they fail to cure after such steps, then they think of hand of any evil power behind such diseases. As per their belief system, the magico-religious healer is an expert in finding the evil spirit and the ways to send the spirit back. They follow the instructions of the magico-religious healer and gets cured though they fail a few times too. The youths too believe in the practice and they proclaim that if the diseases are not due to any bad spirit, then the healer informs them much in advance and advises them to opt for any other method. However, the cure rate in the magico- religious treatment is high enough to keep their faith intact with it.

The idea of prevention of disease is found in their traditional believe system, which is manifested in the shape of prohibition of certain food in certain periods of the year or during a stage like during lactating period or during the menstrual period in case of certain tribes. Similarly, they follow few rituals and worships as a prevention method. But vaccination or hand washing as a prevention method is not yet adopted by them wholeheartedly.

Hence if the modern health care providers need to change their health seeking behavior, then they should place the modern health care practices within the framework of their believe system and within the reach of the tribal both physically and timely.

Through the development interventions it has been always attempted that the programs related to health, nutrition and sanitation with regard to the PVTGs should be acceptable, accessible and affordable. However, the deliverables are by and large unmet because of many socio-cultural and behavioural impediments faced by the program implementers. The general observations on the PVTGs indicate that the effectiveness of health-giving programs depend upon the health seeking behaviour of the PVTG communities which is influenced by their beliefs, culture and tradition. Without understanding the socio-cultural-ecological and behavioural practices of the PVTG communities in relation to health, nutrition and sanitation the development programs may not be able to deliver to their optimum potential.

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