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## FESTIVALS OF TRIBAL ORISSA

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BASCOM, W.R. 1951 Yoruba food, Africa 21.

BOVILL, E.W. 1933, Caravans of the Old Sahara, London: Oxford University Press.

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## EDITORIAL

The motley crowd of tribal communities living across the length and breadth of the state of Orissa has enriched the cultural heritage of the state by their cultural diversities. Their rich folk traditions of song, dance, music, rituals and festivals celebrated round the year add colourful dimensions to their very existence as well as their cultural man-nature-spirit complex. Every dimension of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion and the beliefs and practices associated with it. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure. Their unquestionable belief in supernatural, which regulate human existence in the world, is the basis of observation of many festivals and rituals.

Tribal festivals are celebrated at three horizontal levels - family, village and region. These are observed for specific purposes, such as, for good rains; good harvest; first eating or consumption of seasonal crops, fruits, roots, flowers, leaves, tubers, etc; protection from dreadful calamities, epidemics and attack of wild animals; safety, security and sound health of humans and livestock and the like for which the blessings of the supernatural beings and the ancestors are indispensable. Therefore, the Gods and Goddesses, the forefathers and malevolent and benevolent ghosts and spirits are worshiped with equal awe and respect and kept in good humour. Every festival has two sides - sacred and secular. These rituals and festivals also provide them an occasion to break the monotony of their struggle some routine life and enjoy moments of leisure and recreation by participating in eating delicious festive dishes, drinking, dancing, singing, merry making and socializing.

To open an window to this colourful dimension of diverse tribal cultures of Orissa, this issues of *Adivasi Journal* (Volume-48, No.2) has brought out a basket containing 12 articles contributed by eminent scholars on the theme "Festivals of Tribal Orissa"

The first article, *Kedu: A Big Festival of the Kutia Kondh*, describes the celebrations of the most important festival of a primitive section of the Kondh tribe, which has great socio-cultural, economic and religious significance for the tribesmen. This festival is in vogue since the suppression of the historic and infamous Meriah sacrifice and substitution of a buffalo in place of human being. The main objective of celebration is to please the Earth Goddess (*Darni Penu*) by propitiating her with prayer and sacrifices, which used to be human beings in the past and are buffaloes at present.

The second article, *Tribal Festival: Assortment of Pure Pleasure, Ecstasy and Celebration*, is rather a concept paper on the theme. It says that for tribal people, festivals are the vital factor of their life by which the individual finds the ample scope to identify with the collective self of the tribe. The tribal festivals pre-suppose an integrated world, where God and the ethereal man, all treated as one having different dimensions only.

The third article, *Festivals, Rituals and Shamans among the Dongria Kondh*, is based on an empirical study of the magico-religious aspects of the fascinating tribe called Dongria Kandha - the denizens of Niyamgiri hills of southern Orissa. In their society the institution of shamanism hold sway and their male and female shamans are cult figures to ensure a happy and secured life for their fellowmen.

The fourth article, *Development Significances of Tribal Rituals and Festivals with Reference to Primitive Tribal Groups*, contends that tribal worldview practices are always integrated with indigenous knowledge and every ritual / festival has its own rationality and application of specific indigenous knowledge based components. These development oriented worldview practices and indigenous knowledges are integrated systematically with their cultural and socio-spiritual practices, to maintain the stability and sustainabilities, so as to ensure the sustainable livelihoods of these communities.



The fifth article, *Bhumija Festivals: Continuity and Change, An Anthropological Study*, presents an empirical observation of tradition of observance of the major annual festivals of Bhumija tribe and their gradual transformation, due to influx of cross-cultural influences over period of time.

The sixth article, *Tribal Non-Tribal Interaction with Special Reference to Dalkhai Festival in West Orissa*, is based on the assumption that in the folk religious worship in west Orissa, one finds the fusion of the two processes of *Sanskritisation* and *Tribalisation* which effects, contrasts and complements the processes of folk religious worship in west Orissa. *Dalkhai*, the centuries old ritual as well as popular folk-dance performed by the tribal people of west Orissa has lost its religious significance in modern times and is merely being treated as a means of recreation. Though it is difficult to free it from the shackles of urban influence, attempts should be made to preserve its religious sanctity.

The seventh article, *Chaiti Parab in Maa Majhi Ghariani Temple*, describes the celebration of the important tribal festival in the temple of a tribal goddess, which blends Hindu elements of Saktism with tribalism. The tradition and change has been highlighted at the end.

The eighth article, *Tribal Festivals of Koraput*, describes a number of festivals observed round the year by the tribals and non-tribals of Koraput to propitiate their deities with total freedom of feasting, singing, dancing and drinking. Though these are closely associated with religion, their main purpose seems to be recreational.

The ninth article, *Tribal Dussera in Kandhamal*, gives an eyewitness account of the celebration of the grand festival of Durriga puja following the tribal tradition over generations in which the Kandhas play a major role. The paper is based on empirical observation of Dussera festival at Balaskumpa and adjoining Kandha villages in and around Phulbani town during 2002.

The tenth article, *Panorama of Santal Festivals: The Pious Beauty and Precious Sanctity*, describes various annual rituals and festivals performed by the Santals and shows how the tribesmen enjoy life in their festivals which are manifestation of pious beauty and precious sanctity of Santal's paradise on earth.

The eleventh article, *Mage Porob*, gives a vivid account of this grand post harvest festival of the Ho tribe observed with pomp and ceremony marking the end of the year.

The twelfth article, *Sohrae Festival*, describes the celebration of the grand festival of the Santal tribe, which is one among the series of seasonal rites, and festivals marking different stages of their agricultural activities. The important finding of this paper is that for the Santal there is no individual worship, and it is always communal.

I express my heart-felt gratitude to all the paper contributors for their articles for this volume of Adivasi without which this thematic issue would not have seen the light of the day. My sincere thanks goes to our Associate Editor, Shri S.C.Mohanty for taking the pain of thorough reading, editing and computerizing of all the articles and sparing substantial time and effort for bringing out this volume. I also hope that the articles presented in this issue will be helpful to the researchers, academicians, development practitioners and all those who are interested to see the beauty of our tribal world through this window called *Adivasi (Journal)*.

31<sup>st</sup> December 2008  
Bhubaneswar

A.B. Ota  
DIRECTOR

## KEDU: A BIG FESTIVAL OF THE KUTIA KONDH

K. Mohapatra \*

The amazing conglomeration & traditions, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the religion of the tribes have descended from antiquity and have been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every facet of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure. Among the tribe spiritual needs -the unquestionable belief of the tribals in supernatural which regulate human existence in the world is the basis of observation of many festivals and rituals.

The festivals are celebrated in three levels - family, village and region. Most of the celebrations are fixed in time and place and are observed for definite purpose, such as, good farming, sound health, safe living and so on. Besides Gods and Goddesses, the forefathers are worshiped with equal awe and respect. Every festival has two sides - sacred and secular. Along with performance of the rituals, they participate in eating, drinking, dancing, singing and socializing. Thus religious and socio-cultural aspects are always twined together in the tribal life. One such festival is 'Kedu' observed by the Kutia Kondh -a primitive section of the tribe Kondh.

KEDU in Kui, the language of the Kondh tribe, means in broader sense a large celebration, a festival. This festival is in vogue since the suppression of Meriah sacrifice and substitution of a buffalo in place of human being. The other local names of this festival are Biha, Jhagadi, *Korubiha Dakina*, and *Meriah Puja*. But the rites and mode of sacrifices differ from region to region. However, it is celebrated everywhere with great solemnity and lavish festivity. The main objective of celebration is to please the Earth Goddess (*Darni Penu*) by propitiating her with prayer and sacrifices, which used to be human beings in the past and are buffaloes at present.

It is observed at community level in any one of the villages of the Mutha organization. The festival is observed at intervals of 5 to 10 years at a place in a cluster of villages and the duration varies from 3 to 5 days. It is held on the 1st Sunday or on the subsequent Sunday, which comes after *Phaguna Punei* (fullmoon day between February and March). But the festival starts from Saturday and ends on Monday.

A suitable date is fixed in a meeting of the villagers and their traditional leaders, contributions are raised from the households, preparations begin in advance and guests and relatives are invited. The houses get cleaned and painted, people put on their best clothing and body decorations, kinsmen and relative flock with presents and drinking of the millet- beer 'Katul' goes on and on to make them forget all the worries, anxieties and hardship of the routine life. Except the cruel superstition of pleasing the Earth Goddess by blood for better harvest, all other paraphernalia of the festival have much socio-cultural significance.



It is a practice with the Kondhs to tease and torment the buffalo tied to the sacred post near the seat of the Mother (Earth) Goddess by twisting its tail, molesting the genitals, ringing bells at the ears etc. The following utterance in their singing reveal the underlying purpose of their cruelty, inspite of sympathy for the victim:

We are sacrificing you like a human being  
Like a beloved wife and mother,  
You are like a silver and golden mother.....  
Your master sold you  
Let the sins from your anger lie on your master  
and not on us.....  
At present through fear of the Sahib, sons, the Pathan sons  
From thy shoulder, thy cheek we take the flesh  
In the country of former times  
We used to bury a human being.....  
Do not cry out to me, O beautiful buffalo  
Do not cry out to me, O curved horn buffalo  
As the tears stream from thine eyes  
So may it drizzle at intervals  
As the blood gushes forth  
So may the vegetation sprout  
As thy gore falls in drops  
So may the grains of rice form!

*(The Konds -Barbara M. Boal, 1982)*

It is clear from the above utterances that the cruelty is based on such superstition that if the victim suffers more the Earth Goddess will be pleased more. Hence, though they heartily feel for the sufferings of the victim, they act in a cruel manner to make it cry and bleed more and more.

Since this particular aspect of the festival hurts our feeling for the poor animals on one side and the superstitious Kondhs on the other, attempts may be made for some, reformation in the rites. But in a secular and democratic country as ours it is a delicate issue to impose any restriction on the religious practices of any community, particularly of a tribal community. Even the British Government had to take very cautious steps to abolish human sacrifice after it was first discovered in 1835 by Lt. C. Macpherson and G.E. Russell.

Centuries ago ie, in August 1836 this tribe for the first time featured very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice in the report of Mr. Russell to the Madras Government. Then the British Government was quite concerned to stamp out the barbarous practices. The suppression of human sacrifice was quite a difficult task because the rites had become a national institution of the Kondhs. The primary policy pertaining to the suppression as suggested by Russell was to accomplish it by slow and gradual process and not by rash action. Time and contact of civilization were over the superstitious beliefs of the tribe. Another officer A.J.M. Mills had suggested to the Government the adoption of a persuasive and conciliatory policy. Finally, in July 19, 1845 a Meriah Agency was

formed and the preamble of the Act began with the intention of the government to pursue practical measures to repress the crimes arising out of mere superstitions. Such measures were promotion of education and medical aid, construction of roads, establishment of fairs etc. An officer Captain Frye learnt Kondh language and wrote books for their education in Oriya script. As a result, gradually the Kondhs came to terms and agreed to relinquish the rites of human sacrifice on two conditions that (1) they should be at liberty to sacrifice buffaloes, monkeys and goats to their deities. With all the solemnities which were observed in human sacrifice and (2) they should be at liberty to denounce before their deities, the Government and some of its officers in particular, as the cause of their having at length relinquished the great rite. In the process, at last the practice of human sacrifice was abandoned and the Agency was abolished in 1861. But the rites have continued till today with the substitution of buffalos for sacrifice.

After the human sacrifice stopped and the human being was replaced by a buffalo, with it the name of the festival changed from *Meria* to *Kedu*. But other items of the rite such as the duration of the festivities, the solemnity with which the rite was being observed and the joyous congregation of people remained as before.

Keeping these facts in view, careful steps and persuasive measures need to be taken by the present Government and voluntary Social Organizations to impress upon the Kondhs to reform their superstitious and cruel practices. First of all the belief that Goddess Earth gets pleased with the sacrifice has to be proved false. Secondly, they may be allowed to have substitutes with less costly and less useful animals such as goats, pigs, chicken, etc. Thirdly, the festivals have to be made a great socio-cultural event with Government assistance in order to divert the focus on sacrifice alone and to minimize the religious overtones.

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**\* Former Director, Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture,**



## TRIBAL FESTIVAL: ASSORTMENT OF PURE PLEASURE, ECSTASY AND CELEBRATION

*Harihar Das \**  
*Lata Bhol \*\**

The conceptual ring that surrounds the tribal festivals speaks of pure pleasure culminating in ecstasy and entertainment unlimited in certain specified days of a rolling year when the burdened self of the tribal man is found relieved from the monotony of daily chores of life. The unbound self finds the kindred shelter in the endless of bouts of drinking, dinning and non-stop dancing pushing the trying world to the edge of oblivion. They escape to a world where worries and anxieties are suspended for time being allowing the heaven to revisit them. This principle governing the tribal festival in course of time searches context and background for replicating the sequence of celebration. The organized religion comes readily to provide the required dates and calendar for the festivals to gather. Tribal people living in groups and communities and joined together by webs of interacting relationships finds in the institution of festival an appropriate mechanism to renew their group activities and socio-economic bonding.

For tribal people, festivals are the vital factor of their life. The individual finds the ample scope to identify with the collective self of the tribe. The emotional escape from the mundane day realities also get rooted in to the matrix of tribal society when dust of celebration and festive mood settles down at the end of the celebration. The purged-out tribal persona once again comes back on track to make renew his effort to sail the choppy sea of his toiling life.

The tribal festival pre-supposes an integrated world, where God and the ethereal man, all treated as one having different dimensions only. One can feel the embrace of almighty through the observance of festivals where deepening faith enables them to meet the all-pervasive divinity lively. Honesty of intention leads one to the designated destination of meeting the divine principle. The principle that creates the world, the forest and the sky kissing mountain range and also the very cause of origin of tribal man in this world. We found the tribal festival is a rainbow of many ideas of sociological, social and economic interests that unites effortlessly to evolve an entertainment mode. But the entertainment transcends the mundane boundaries erecting a bridge between the earth and heaven. Tribal people consider them as not belonging to the world of divided aims and cutthroat competition nor of the existential desert of a meaningless world. On the other hand the tribals are very much obligated to the almighty that they are here on this earth because of his grace. That is why they like to celebrate their life dedicating them to the principle of God. They have a unification of sensibilities and purpose. They don't apprehend mishaps so long as the grace flows from the divine elixir. They don't have any hidden agenda except to celebrate their life.

The impassioned celebration of festival is centering round the man. Tribals do celebrate the life from cradle to grave. Each occasion in tribal life is associated with rituals that have some thing remotely related with the divine grace. They celebrate with obligation to all life-supporting elements that they think is the blessing of God that comes to them for sustaining their material existence amidst incessant hostilities.

Tribal festival has intimate interface with the whirl of seasonal go round. It is also the time to help push the tribal soul jump into festive mood. The retreating yet pleasurable bite of dying winter and the silhouette of vernal setting form in the distant mountain range provide them instantly the stage to dance upon and gather in festive congregation.

The happiness triggering time provokes the hibernated jovial self of the tribal people to come out from the cocoons of butterfly and bask in festivities and festive mood.

Most tribal festivals falls in the interstices of time heralding spring season followed by time just before to the beginning of agricultural season. All tribes are alike in celebrating various ethnic festivals though in different names and manners only. All the tribes uniquely celebrate the onset of spring and used to welcome it with traditional gaiety and fervor. The post harvest time with assured food security and a thawing yet intoxicating nature on the back-drop the tribals engage ritually through festivals to offer their collective thanks to God with endless mirth and happiness

### **Tribal Festivals of Orissa**

The diffused 62 tribes sprinkled all over the state make the land colorful and elegant through their cultural activities. The activities have intimate interface with socio-religious and economic phenomenon of their life process.

The tribals' indigenous institution of festivals and festivities center round the prominent motifs of celebration of life process and also in response to variation in seasonal equinox that stir them to make offerings to super natural power, village deity and to the soul of their departed near and dear ones. The motif is also related to their agro-economic life hovering around subsistence agriculture. The bountiful harvest exudes in them the satisfaction of being rightly placed in the helpline of the God. They celebrate the festivals as contented soul. The Santal tribes in the north corridor of the state celebrate the spring festival, so also the Kolha and Munda tribes who used to live face to face with the Santals. Likewise the echo of the spring celebration reverberates in the mountain valley of the distant southern Orissa. The Bonda, Paraja, Koya and Gadaba people come out of their encysted self to welcome the spring with newly leafed forest and flower-bedecked mountain. The celebration becomes all pervasive through out the tribal Orissa.

The spring time, divisible into early and distant spring is the time for most of their observance relating to celebration of life. The flaming colors of the jungle environs with exotic foliage, the trespassing south wind coming after the phase of hard winter make them simply restive. The Santal and Mahali get ready to celebrate Baha festival. The Oraon and Munda do celebrate the Phagu and Phalguna festivals. In this time the Koya starts preparation to celebrate the Bimud pandu festivals and at this opportune time Ho and Kolha do celebrate the Maghe parab.



Most of the tribal festivals fall in the post harvesting time; it lasts till the onset of monsoon. When the agricultural season begins, tribal festival comes in reduced numbers. What ever comes has link with agriculture -the provider of food security to them.

### **Present day scenario**

Culture cannot be insulated at any cost. The original nuance and flavor of tribal festival is seen losing its sheen due to influx of cross-cultural influence. The festivals of the segregated hills and distant mountain range are exposed to the rapidly proliferating mass and pop culture. It brings the entertainment to the doorsteps of the tribal people. The generation-next tribal people no longer stay put in their tradition. They bring radical changes to the organization and celebration of the ethnic festivals. The tribal festivals as observed today lack its pristine glory and flavours. The mutation and permutation is getting accelerated in the aftermath of the globalization. It is present in form only with the spirit, no more present.

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***\*/\*\* Elwin Gabesana Parisad, Bhubaneswar***

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## FESTIVALS, RITUALS AND SHAMANS AMONG THE DONGRIA KANDHA

A.K. Gomango \*  
S.C. Mohanty \*\*

The Dongria Kandha, a picturesque tribal group constitutes a primitive section of the Kandha a major tribe of Orissa. They stand apart from others for their famous *Meriah* festival, expertise in horticulture, separate language -*Kuvi* and colourful life style. They are also shifting cultivators. They inhabit the lofty *Niyamgiri* hill ranges spread across Bissamcuttack, Kalyansingpur, and Muniguda blocks in Rayagada district. It is an enchanting hill country endowed with bounties of nature. The Dongria Kandha with their colourful costumes and adornments, scintillating dance and music display their spirit of freedom and spontaneous joy of life in close harmony with nature.

Like other primitive tribes they, through their age-old experience, have evolved certain traditional mechanisms and institutions to meet their needs in everyday life. There are socio-religious and economic organizations and institutions for achieving different objectives. Religion is one of them, which plays a significant role in establishing peace, harmony, and solidarity in their society and guides them to follow the right path for prosperity.

They are polytheists. They have adopted number of gods, deities and spirits into their pantheon. They observe certain festivals and rituals round the year to worship and appease the supernaturals, and also for recreation. The Dongria Kondhs are well known even today, as in the past they had the custom of human sacrifice called *Meria*. Due to the intervention of the British rulers this barbarous practice was stopped and buffalo was substituted for the human bait.

They are very sincere in observing religious rites and rituals and could go to any extent to get the blessings of supernatural beings. Like any other society they have their religious practitioners to mediate between them and their supernaturals and thereby help them to meet their religious ends. Their age old institution of shamanism still has a powerful influence on them and their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni (Pejni)* respectively are among the most distinguished and respected magico-religious functionaries in their society.

Though, the Dongria Kondh might differ from other ethnic groups in their religious beliefs and practices, they have one thing in common with others that is, they have different kinds of magico-religious specialists like priests and shamans. Such positions are based on the premise that there will always be an uneven distribution of knowledge and of personal abilities, and that individuals with higher level of ability are in a better position to relate to the super naturals. They can be primarily religious in the sense that they seek help from the divine or spiritual world, or they can be more magical in that they attempt to manipulate the spirit of the supernatural forces. Such people who have special religious knowledge either control supernatural power out rightly or facilitate others in their attempt to influence it. These specialists are called shamans and priests.



## Magico-Religious Functionaries among the Dongria Kondh

There are number of magico-religious and secular functionaries in a Dongria village. They operate in their respective domains of duties and responsibilities. They propitiate deities and spirits through different types of rituals. The Dongria have large pantheon of deities and spirits to reign in different domains and the responsibility of appeasing them also have been distributed among several magico-religious functionaries. During festivals, rituals and ceremonies they perform rituals offering liquor and animals sacrifice, pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessings and protection. These functionaries are called, *Jani*, *Lambajani*, *Ichanjani*, *Pujari*, *Bejuni (Pejni)* etc. Besides, there are *Gurumeni* and *Barik* who assist them whenever necessary. In certain occasions the family heads perform certain rituals to appease ancestral sprit and household deities and spirits at the family level.

In brief, traditionally *Jani* the high priest is also the secular head of a Dongria Kondh village. He plays most important role in both the religious and secular spheres. He is the principal worshiper of *Dharani Penu*, the Earth Goddess and commands great respect in the society. There is an *Ichan Jani* from the *Jani*'s lineage to assist *Jani*. He prescribes and arranges items for rituals and assists *Jani* during worship. The *Jani* who has vast experience and officiates in *Meria* festival is called *Lamba Jani*. *Pujari*, a hereditary, functionary performs special duties in the *Meria* festival. He makes an umbrella out of bamboo and during rituals he joins with *Jani*. He also takes part in other communal festivals and functions. The *Bejus* and *Bejunis*, have special responsibilities in their society. They are expert in magico-religious rituals.

### Dongria Shamans

The shaman is the kind of spiritual specialist who derives his power directly from the supernatural agencies usually through mystic experience. He/she is adept at trance, divination and curing. Though the priest and the shaman coexist in the same society, the latter serves as a medium of communication between human and supernatural. He often establishes a personal relationship with the supernatural beings and/or knows the secret medicines and spells necessary to manipulate supernatural power. On the contrary the priests as religious specialists also mediate between people and super naturals but usually do not have powers to control the supernatural agencies. While the shaman controls supernatural power and conducts rituals as and when required, the priest mediate between human and supernatural and lead congregations at regularly held cyclical rites.

In Dongria Kondh society their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni (Pejni)* respectively perform the art of shamanism. They have their own adopted spirits to whom they regularly worship to get their favour and help in occult practices. They can communicate with spirits and deities who are believed to be responsible for causing human problems. In order to make communication with spirits, they get into trance through divination, prayer, offerings, oblation and certain rituals. In the state of trance they tell people about their problems and solutions by communicating with the concerned spirits. They prescribe the remedy through the rice supplication process called *puchana*, which is an important part of the shamanic ritual. They advise and sometimes forcibly demand performance of rituals and animal sacrifices to appease supernatural powers.

The Dongria Kondh strongly believe that shamanism is a magico-religious art, which is gifted to certain persons by supernatural powers. Their success in learning and practicing the art depends upon supernatural will and sanctions. Becoming a shaman can be the result of a mythical experience, such as a vision or a period of special training or both. Though in actual practice they learn the art from the veterans, they deny such learning and training and ascribe supernatural blessings to their taking up of the practice. In reality the shamanic practices of the Dongria Kondh is a learned behaviour acquired by proper training and orientation to the trade by the persons having the interest and aptitude for such work.

### Initiation to Shamanhood

The path to shamanhood runs through a series of steps and stages. During this time the future shaman or shamanin is supposed to master his/her mystical techniques and to learn the religious and mythological traditions of his tribe. This preparatory stage, more often than not, commences amidst a series of rituals and ceremonies as well as apprenticeship under a veteran shaman/shamanin as the case may be.

The process reportedly, begins with the receipt of supernatural message through dreams, vision, pathological sickness, ecstasies etc. The commonest kind of experience for the "chosen one" comes through a divine or semi divine being who appears during a dream, a sickness or some other circumstances, informs him/her that he/she has been chosen to follow the path of shamanhood. It is said, those who ignore such message face fatal consequences.

After the message is received through ecstatic experience, the next step for the chosen one" is to receive theoretical and practical orientation and instructions from the old masters. On successful completion of training and apprenticeship, the candidate goes through a series of prescribed rituals to attain full-fledged shamanhood and receive social recognition as such.

**The early stage:-** Vision, Early Signs Test and Ordeal, Diagnosis and Detection, Apprenticeship etc.

When a person experiences such dreams he informs his family members, friends, and relatives. Sometimes people become aware of person's early signs by observing certain behavioural changes. Whenever there is performance of dance and music during rituals and festive occasions, the person loses control of him self and starts dancing and gradually enters into a state of trance. At this time persons having joking relationship with him test him by giving him a handmade cigarette stuffed with chilli powders to smoke, or by putting the burning tip of a cigarette on his skin or by piercing his ears with a pointed twig. If the person come out of the ordeal successfully he is recognized a prospective shaman. If he fails he is rejected and faces social ridicule of being a pretender.

When such behavioural changes are noted in a person his family members consult an experienced shaman. The latter perform divination by rice supplication process and goes into trance to find out the cause and identity the spirits responsible for this. Then he prescribes appropriate rituals to initiate the novice into shamanhood.



But it takes sometime for the new candidate to achieve fullfledged shamanhood and join the ranks of the shamans. In the beginning he works with experienced shamans to gain experience. In this early stage of practice, his family members provide him with a winnowing fan and *ragi* for supplication instead of rice, because as a beginner he may not be able to control himself and thereby cause harm.

Every Beju and Bejuni has their personal deities of spirits whom they call *penu*. Usually they worship ancestral spirits who help them for performing shamanic rituals. It is said that Bejunis adopt male spirits and Bejus female spirits.

Other anthropologists have made similar observations. "The Bejunis are believed to acquire power through the special grace of their own ancestral spirits of the *penus*. It generally comes to the persons who have a temperament towards it with the increase of their earnestness or rather yearning and evotion, they begin to pass sleepless nights in contemplation of certain *Penus*... For days together there different *Penus* are contemplated deeply, incantations are made in their honour. Dances are performed regularly. During there processes, the Bejuni in her dream of infrenzied state visualizes the respective *Penus* and solicits blessing form them. It is believed that the *Penus* ordain different sacrifices to be offered to them on various occasions. Once the vision is realized, she is possessed by the spirits frequently and remains in trance. Then the public comes to know that the concerned woman is at the first stage of becoming a Bejuni. At the second stage the Bejuni contracts a 'spiritual marriage', with the Gods... Beju and Bejunis are considered profane and inexperienced until such marriage is performed... the Bejunis worship female ancestor spirits and the Bejus worship male ancestor spirits. But there is no difference among them as far as their power over men and nature is concerned". (Das Patnaik; 1972-73: 12-13)

#### The Final Stage: Spritual Marriage

The next phase involves the spiritual marriage with adopted spirit(s) without which it is impossible to achieve full-fledged shamanhood. It is an expensive affair as it requires purchase of clothes, birds and animals for sacrifice, and hosting a feast for the participants at the end of the ritual. Hence the ritual is performed when the aspiring Beju / Bejuni have the financial capacity to afford the expenses.

In this stage a series of rituals are conducted in a selected spot on scheduled dates and times. The spot usually lies under a mango tree near a stream. The rituals items consist of *arua* rice, turmeric paste or powder, *ragi* powder, resin, vermilion, new clothes, fire wood, *siali* leaves, mango leaves, sacrificial birds such as cock and pigeon etc. Apart from the apprentice, the shaman and his/her spouse, who are the main actors, the fellow villagers, friends and relatives, experienced shamans, assistant shamans (*Gurumai*) other apprentice shamans and the *Dom* musicians participate in the proceedings.

#### First Ritual -

The day before the ritual, the aforesaid ritual spot is cleaned and an altar is made below the mango tree enclosed under a wooden structure covered with mango branches and leaves at the top. On the scheduled date the apprentice Bejuni accompanied by her husband, another apprentice Bejuni or an assistant called *Gurumai*, drum beaters belonging to *Dom* caste, and some fellow villagers proceed to the spot

carrying all the ritual items and accessories and the birds for sacrifice. The Beju couple take bath in the nearby stream and put a mark of ragi powder on their foreheads. Their assistant also takes bath. They bring a pitcher full of water from the stream, put a pinch of turmeric paste or powder in the water, cover the mouth of the pitcher with *sal/siali* leaves and fasten a garland made of mango leaves around its neck.

While the Dom musician beat drums, the Bejuni throws a handful of *arua* rice over the holy pitcher uttering incantation first to solicit the blessing of their Supreme deity -Dhani Penu and then to invoke concerned patron spirit to whom she intends to marry. Suddenly with a jerk she starts trembling and dancing showing hysteric fits and losing self control gradually. This is taken as the sign of spirit possession. At this time her husband wearing a new saree along with some onlookers join with her in dancing and her assistant fills the air with the smoke of the burning resin and incense. When the rhythm of the dance and drum beat enter into a frenzied state, the Bejuni goes into trance. At this moment, the onlookers ask her question which she answers satisfactorily.

After the question -answer session, the assistant Bejuni, gives *arua* rice to the bride Bejuni and her husband and keeps her right hand over their heads. Then she moves 7-15 times around the mango tree chanting verses and repeats the rice giving process. During these rounds she also feeds the rice each time to the cock and the pigeon brought there for sacrifice. Completing the rounds she pulls a feather from these birds and touch it over the heads of all the participants including the Bejuni couple. Then she kills birds and sprinkles the blood over the holy pitcher to appease the patron spirit. After that the bride Bejuni comes out of her trance and regains her senses. The music and dance stops. The first ritual ends and all of them return home.

#### Second Ritual -

The ritual takes place after a couple of days following the first ritual and it symbolises the wedding ceremony.

On the scheduled day, the bride Bejuni stands at the spot facing east holding her husband's little finger. Accompanied by her assistant and husband she circles around the mango tree seven times. It is called Satapadia. New clothes dyed with turmeric are tied around the heads of the couple. The onlookers carry the couple on their shoulders to the spot where the holy pitcher is kept. The right foot of the bride Bejuni is placed over the left foot of her husband. A handful of *arua* rice is placed on their feet and the spiritual bird i.e, the cock is made to peck the rice seven times after which the assistant Bejuni kills it and sprinkles the blood over the feet of the bride Bejuni and offers the head to the groom spirit by placing the birds head over the mouth of the holy pitcher. The wedding ritual ends here.

#### Third Ritual:-

It is the concluding part of the wedding ceremony. It may either be done sometimes after the preceding ritual on the same day or be postponed to a later date as it includes a feast to all the participants.

It is the ritual of the holy bath. At the same spot, the participants take out the holy pitcher containing turmeric water and bathe the Bejuni couple pouring the holy



water over their heads. They also wash their feet. The Bejuni couple entertains their companions arranging a feast with alcoholic drinks. It is believed that with this holy bath, the patron spirit enters into the body of Bejuni and the latter attains fullfledged shamanhood. She gets social recognition and respect to enter into the rank of Shamanins.

### Rituals & Observances for becoming a Pat Beju or Pat Bejuni

Among the Bejus and Bejunis, few attain the rank of principal shaman and shamanin ie, Pat Beju and Pat Bejuni. To qualify for this prestigious and coveted rank, a Beju or Bejuni is required to have long years of practice and experience. Then he or she must conduct a series of elaborate rituals, which are very expensive. Thus the status of principal shamanhood comes at a price. The Beju of Bjuni aspiring for this title should have the capability to afford the price.

The Bejus and Bejunis interviewed during our study agreed on the point that professional experience is the first and foremost criteria for qualifying for the post of principal shaman or shamanin. But they remained tightlipped about the ritual performances. However with the help of the data from secondary sources, a brief account of the ritual described as a case study is given below.

The rituals and observance continue for 3 to 4 days. "It is a very expensive and a lot of expenditure is incurred to purchase different animals and food items, accessories to satisfy different ancestors, spirits and also to feed the entire village. ...each Bejuni has got different Penus and different animals are prescribed to be sacrificed for each. In this connection the case history of Malo, aged 40, the wife of Jagli Sikora may be given." (Das Patnaik, 1972-73:12)

"Malo is the worshiper of four Penus such as Jati-Guru Budi guru, Silka-Peju and Bangari-Peju". For this ritual "she purchased four earthen pitchers, six fowls, three pigeons, one goat, five Karies (lambs), forty kilograms of rice and other food materials .....Before the day of ritual an altar (*pat*) with an enclosure... covered with leaves was constructed" (Das Patnaik, 1972: 13).

#### 1st Day:-

"On the 1st day the Pat Bejuni accompanied by 10 Bejunis, who were apprentices came to her house...The Pat Bejuni held a bundle of peacock- feathers and a winnowing fan and the Bejunis held a winnowing fan each". The Domb musicians also came to the spot. "Malo appeared... with disheveled hair. She was wearing a new saree and had vermilion marks on her forehead. There were chains of tinkling bells on her ankles. She held a hand full of peacock feathers"... and "an earthen pitcher...full of water and mango leaves had been fastened to it. She handed over the pitcher to one of her apprentices and besmeared a portion of the altar with cowdung. After this she drew up an icon square on the besmeared place ...A lump of vermilion was placed at the middle of the square around which another square was drawn up. In the small square about 1/4<sup>th</sup> kilograms of *aru* rice was strewn and the pitcher was placed upon it...the pitcher represented Jati-Guru Penu, a goddess... considered to be powerful. She protects the life and property of the people. ...The Bejunis (disciples), the pat-Bejuni and Malo sat before the pitcher in a row. Pat-Bejuni first started uttering incantations and sprinkled water over visitors to purify them. She offered *aru* rice to Malo in a winnowing fan. Malo also started uttering *mantras*... The disciples joined them ...This



continued for half an hour after which a fowl, a pigeon, and a lamb were placed one after the other over the head of Malo and then tied to different poles posted beside the pitcher. After that the Pat-Bejuni set fire to the resin power and threw the same over Malo and on the pitcher. Immediately after this Malo started shivering and danced to the tune of the drum-beating. It started with a slow rhythm but became rapid in due course with the quick beating of drums. It was the sign of the Penu entering into the body of Malo. The Pat-Bejuni and other Bejunis too started shivering and danced with the Malo. The Pat-Bejuni dancing with Malo, bent down, placed left hand at waist, waved the handful of peacock feathers and started dancing. The tinkling of ankle bells of the Bejunis was very loud. During the dance, the Pat-Bejuni embraced Malo twice and thrice and fed her resin-power. Malo gradually became possessed by the spirit of the Penu and nodded her head frantically. The spectators tried to control her but failed ...she danced till she fell down unconscious. The Pat-Bejuni, too fell down. Other dancers were restrained by the spectators. After a few minutes they all came to their senses and last phase of the Puja was initiated by the Pat-Bejuni. Malo again supplicated with *arua* rice and muttered the *mantras*. The animals were again brought one after the other. They were bathed and vermilion was put on their heads. After this they were kissed by Malo. The fowl and pigeon were again touched to the head of Malo and then strangled to death by the Pat-Bejuni. Their blood was sprinkled on the pitcher and the icon square and also on the head of Malo. The lambs were not killed and tied again at the pole. Puja for the first day was over... Small feast followed. The Mandal (village leader), Bishmajhi, Jani and some relatives cooked rice separately. This was eaten exclusively by Malo, her husband and Bejunis who participated in the dance". (Ibid)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Day :-

" On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day the same process was repeated with some divinations. On that day another pitcher representing Budiguru Penu was placed in place of the first one. ... As on the previous day, two fowls, one pigeon and one lamb were brought. Fowls and pigeon were killed but the lamb, instead of being tied, was set free. The children of the village chased it and drove it out of the village, so that it could not return or even look back. It is believed that the lamb is the messenger who conveys the prayers of the concerned Bejuni to Budi Guru-Penu. Malo danced twice and became possessed by the spirit. She was applauded and garlanded by the spectators. Pat-Bejuni taught Malo "Puchna" ie, the art of asking questions to the deity while supplicating with *arua* rice. While asking questions, the answers from the deity are believed to be clearly audible to the Bejuni" (Ibid). The second day ceremony ended there.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Day :-

"On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the ceremony started from 4 A.M. in the morning and continued for two hours and completed before the break of the day. Neither the drumbeaters nor the public were invited. Only the Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices were present. At 3 Am. Malo took bath with other Bejunis, put on a new black Sari (cloth) and came out of the house with the third earthen pitcher. She placed the ... pitcher in a square drawn with charcoal powder. A black cloth was wrapped over the pitcher. This pitcher represented the spirits, Silka Peju and Bengrai Peju, who are considered to be very pugnacious".



"During this performance the ritual procedure was almost the same as other occasions. Supplication was made with *arua* rice by the Pat Bejuni in a winnowing fan...two black fowls were kept one after the other on the pitcher. Vermillion marks were painted on them. This process was repeated for 15 times. A pigeon was brought and the same procedure was again repeated. Lastly a lamb was brought. The 3<sup>rd</sup> pitcher was lifted and placed on the back of the lamb and animals were forced to move around the black square. Then Malo set on the back of the lamb and rode thrice around the square. After all those rituals, Malo again started supplication with rice, and began to dance in a frenzied state. At the height of it she started rolling on the ground. The Pat-Bejuni immediately got up and threw a lump of resin-power at her and the apprentices caught hold of her and pressed her on the ground. This frenzied state symbolized her successful attainment of the status of Pat Bejuni. When she came to her senses, she again supplicated with rice. The Pat Bejuni, while doing this along with Malo, whispered thrice in her ear. This is considered as the final lesson taught to the apprentice. The animals and birds ...were killed one after other. Their blood was sprinkled over the earthen pitcher. The carcasses were left at the altar". (Ibid).

"After completion of the rituals on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day Malo, accompanied with Pat-Bejuni and other disciples went to Dharni Penu of their villages and started dancing there. The Pat-Bejuni with other three Bejunis went round the village to ward off the evil-spirits...the party...joined with others in a communal dance with the accompaniment of drums beating. This was done to give a public recognition to Malo as a full-fledged Bejuni... Then Malo with her party moved round the nearby villages in the Mutha to acquire wider public recognition and collected *arua* rice and animals for sacrifice". (Ibid)

"Persons in difficulties (such as disease, barrenness, etc) promise to offer animal sacrifices after getting proper remedy. They offer these sacrifices, during the ceremony ...called Ghanta Parab. Ghanta is a small earthen pot in which the offerings are made. When Malo remained busy in moving round the villages, the unmarried young men and women of the village, made necessary arrangements for Ghanta Parab... All these arrangements were completed by the evening so as to start the Parab next day". (Ibid)

4<sup>th</sup> Day: The Ghanta Parab:-

"On the 4<sup>th</sup> day the Ghanta Parab the festival of the earthen pitchers took places. Kumte Kane and Bamune Kane are the two principal deities, grouped together as 'Thakrani Penu', are worshiped during the occasion. It is believed the Thakarani Penu is very ferocious and inflicts small pox on human beings and animals if she is not propitiated..." (Ibid). Ghanta Parab though a communal festival, it is not observed regularly every year like other seasonal festivals. Observation of this festival is scheduled as and when required to help a Bejuni to attain the rank of Pat-Bejuni on one hand and on the other, it provides a ritual occasion to the villagers to fulfil their vows to their deities and spirits to come out of their personal crises by offering foods and sacrifices.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, Malo, Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices reached the altar with the drumbeaters and the village leaders. Each worshiper carried a Ghanta on the head, a winnowing fan with *arua* rice and other puja items occasions in the left hand and a fowl or pigeon in the right hand. The previous procedure continued. The sacrificial



animals like, a lamb, a goat, a fowl and a buffalo were brought to the alter one after the other where Malo sat for a few seconds after which those animals were taken back.

"The 'Ghantas' were passed on, one after another to Malo and she worshiped it, with vermilion and *arua* rice. This process was repeated four times. During intervals, the supplication with *arua* rice and feeding of it to the fowls continued. While this process was coming to an end she suddenly wept aloud...The males clapped. The drum beating became more loud and rapid. Malo danced in ecstasy, holding the fowl ... After being possessed by spirit she lost her senses. The animals, excepting the buffalo, were killed one after another by the Jani and the blood was sprinkled both over the pitcher and over Malo. Ultimately the buffalo was dragged by the young men of the village and tied to post at the outskirts of the village where a small platform had been prepared. Malo came to her senses. ...She took her pitcher (Ghanta) on her head and others followed her. they walked in a file towards the platform. Before reaching the platform the boys, girls, men, and women who had suffered from small pox came forward and lied prostrated on the road by which Malo was to pass. She walked on each adult and touched the children with her feet".

"Malo reached the outskirts and placed her 'Ghanta' first at the middle of the platform and others kept their respective 'Ghanta' on both the sides of the main pitcher. Malo again, possessed by spirit while supplicating with *arua* rice. Simultaneously, the buffalo was cut by the young mass and its head was placed over the main pitcher and then on the floor. Other animals were also sacrificed. The individual worshippers also sacrificed their own animals. The heads of the sacrificed animals were heaped up near the buffalo head... the platform specially prepared for Thakrani Penu is considered to be purified by this pool of blood. One 'Ghanta' was first it to drive away Thakrani penu from the village, ...All Bejunis cannot afford the expenses of the ceremonies. They cannot therefore attain the status of Pat Bejuni...". (Daspatnaik; 1972-73: 14-20)

### Services of the Shamans rendered for various kinds of Rituals & Festivals

The Bejus and Bejunis perform large variety of shamanic rites at the individuals' family level and at the community level. While the Bejus combine the works of shaman and medicineman, Bejunis restrict their field of activities to shamanism only, though there is no difference in their shamanic practices. But interestingly people consider Bejunis to be more effective in this art than their male counterparts and therefore Bejunis outnumber the Beju in Dongria Kondh villages. It may be for the reason that the Beju divide their time between practice of medicine and practice of Shamanism whereas the Bejunis are totally dedicated to shamanic practices.

Various kinds of shamanic jobs are undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis to serve the individuals families and the village community. It is evident from our study that their services are more demanded to deal with a multitude of problems at the individual level than at community level. Nevertheless their special role and responsibilities to interact between the concerned supernatural agencies and the village community and obtain the former's favour in the interest of the latter during various seasonal festivals and rituals can not be dispensed with in anyway.



confined to the back room of her house and attended by her mother, sister and other female members. She is not allowed to do any work especially household works and tabooed to attend any rituals and functions, during this period of pollution.

During this period the girl is considered vulnerable and susceptible to the attack of malevolent deities and spirits and evil eye. Therefore she is subjected to certain taboos and restrictions as a preventive measure. A Beju is called upon to perform rituals to save her from the evil agencies and especially a deity called Gangu Penu, who becomes very active in this time.

On the seventh day the girl goes to a stream with her companions and the Bejuni. She takes bath in the stream anointing turmeric paste on her body. After bath she stands on the bank. There the Bejuni performs rituals offering *arua* rice, vermillion, and burning incense to the *penus*. She recites hymns, ritualizes the chicken and handful of rice and waves them from head to feet of the girl. She repeats the process thrice and throws away rice, to ward off the spirits. The chicken is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the pile of rice and on the girl's feet. She is considered free from pollution after this ritual.

### Marriage

All the religious functionaries including the Bejunis have certain responsibility to solemnize the Dongria Kondh marriage. The Bejunis chant verses and weave peacock feathers to drive away malevolent spirits from affecting the newly wed couple.

The Bejunis perform a ritual during the wedding ceremony. After the arrival of the groom in the bride's village on the day of wedding the Bejuni accompanied by Domb drum beaters, goes to a stream to fetch water in an earthen pitcher and then she cooks rice with that water. This food is offered to ancestral spirits Dumba in the sleeping room of the bride. At that time the Bejuni invokes spirits and deities and prays them to take this food and protect the life of the married couple.

After marriage, the bride accompanied by the Bejunis and others again goes to the stream. There she prepares food. The Bejuni performs rituals in which a fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed. Then the blood of the animal and cooked food are offered to the deities and spirits by the Bejuni. Then she wards off the evil spirits with the help of peacock feathers and *arua* rice

### Death

In normal cases of death the Bejunis have no role to play. But in unusual and unnatural deaths caused by suicide, snake bite, small fox, cholera, pregnancy and child birth, tiger attack etc. and in case of serial deaths occurring in a family or village, the action of evil and disgruntled spirits are suspected. Further the unhappy and restless spirits of the victims of abnormal death are believed to turn into dreadful ghosts and attack the humans at the earliest opportunity. During such time, the tribesmen badly need the services of the Bejuni to conduct protective and preventive rituals for identifying and appeasing the concerned supernatural agencies.

### Agricultural Rites

### **Dongar Puja:-**

These important seasonal agricultural rites are connected with the beginning and closing stages of shifting cultivation. As these are connected with the swidden (Dongar), they are commonly referred as Dongar Puja. One of them called Kutali Perpa is linked with the starting phase of shifting cultivation and the two others called Lahi Penu Laka and Mendo Puja are connected with the concluding phase ie, the harvesting of crops.

#### Kutali Perpa:-

This ceremony is held every year in the month of Chait (March-April). The shamanin performs rituals to appease deities like Lahi Penu, Budha Raja and Niyam Raja to please them and obtain their permission before felling of trees in the swiddens. No one starts cleaning the swiddens before performing this ritual. Before this ritual a spot in the Dongar land is cleaned and a square is drawn and crossed. On the appointed day the Bejuni accompanied by the owner and his family members goes to the spot and fires a bundle of dried twigs. In the square three balls of rice are kept for Lahi Penu, Niyam Raja and Budharaja. Then the Bejuni offers other items like incense sticks, liquors and worships the deities by her incantations. Gradually she goes into trance, talks to the deities and conveys their desire for animal sacrifice. After getting her indications a fowl and a pегion are sacrificed and the blood ssprined on the heap of rice. Then the cleaning of the swidden plot starts. This ritual is observed independently by all families possessing swiddens.

#### Lahi Penu Laka:-

This ritual is also observed in the Dongar before harvesting of crops independently by every family. Both the Beju and Bejuni can perform this ritual. But most often people prefer the services of Bejuni for this purpose.

Beju and the owner of the Donger land with his family members go to the spot with all the *puja* items. The spot is cleaned and plastered with cowdung. Bejuni draws there a square and cross it with ragi/rice powder. She keeps *bel* leaves, three pits of rice, burning incense, resin and heaps of different crops, in and near the square. She recites the names of Darani Penu, Lahi Penu and Loda Penu and other local deities. She feeds rice to a fowl and a pigeon before sacrificing them. After sacrifice she sprinkles the blood over the spot and keeps their heads in the square. The heart of fowl is roasted in fire and offered to the Penus in leaf. The family members prepare food and everybody present there enjoys it. After the ritual they expect to harvest a good crop from their *dongar*.

#### Mendo Dakli/Mendo Puja:-

Like other two agricultural rites called Dongar Puja, this ritual is held in the *dongar* with the help of a Bejuni. This is performed by individual *dongar* owners in their respective *dongars* during December - January after the Lahi Penu Laka and just before starting the harvesting operations. In this ritual they worship the deities of *dongar*, namely, Lahi Penu and Sita Penu and solicit their permission to harvest the crops.



On the scheduled day the Bejuni, the farmer and his family members go to the site carrying *puja* articles and sacrificial animals. The ritual procedure is same as other two *dongar puja* rites described above. A fowl and a pigeon is sacrificed to please the deities. Well-to-do families may offer a goat and a pig instead. Then threshing and processing of crops start and grains are kept in a cleaned spot. A person carries some Kosla grains in a bamboo basket to the owner's house. On reaching there, the family members wash his feet with turmeric water and sprinkle some water on his head. After that he enters into the house to store the grain. Then the operation of harvesting and storing of crops begins there after.

Besides the above three rituals, there are some other rituals conducted by the Bejus and Bejunis for the individual Dongria Kondh families as described below.

#### Mala Manji:-

This ritual is observed in every household, in the month of Kartika (Oct-Nov) with the help of the Bejunis on specified days such as Sunday, Tuesday or Wednesday. It is meant to appease household deities and ancestral spirits to keep the family well. For this ritual articles like *tingulu* (small earthen pot), wine, pigeon, fowl, *arua* rice, ragi gourd, ragi and rice powder, incense, winnowing fan are required. After drawing squares with rice or ragi powder, the shamanin starts the proceedings. In front of the squares she keeps piles of rice and ragi on which *tingulu* and gourd are placed. She offers some rice, burn incense, recite incantations and shakes rice in her winnowing fan. Then the Bejuni gets into trance and answers questions. Then the fowl and the pigeon are sacrificed. The ritualized rice and ragi are put into the *tingulu* and gourd, and hung in the ceiling of the house.

### Services rendered by the Bejus and Bejunis at the community level during observance of Rituals & Festivals

#### Meria Parab

Maria or Kodru Parab is and the most important communal festival held in the month of Magha (Jan-Feb) to worship Darani Penu and other village deities. It is believed that this festival brings them good rain, good crops peace and prosperity. This festival is observed in all the villages belonging to a Mutha in rotation. Hence each village makes arrangements for this festival when its turn comes after a gap of several years depending upon the number of villages in its Mutha. It is a great socio-religious occasion to which the heads of other villages of Mutha and neighbouring villages, friends and relatives are invited to attend. Preparations are made much before the date of the festival, which is observed with pomp and ceremony for 8 days.

The villagers erect a *munda*, a wooden post under the supervision of Jani before two months of the festival. During this time the Domb musicians beat drums and play other musical instruments. Soon after the Bejunis recite incantations and dance to get into trance to tell if any mistake made during the installation. They perform a ritual there sacrificing a fowl and pigeon to please the deities.

Lamba Jani plays a leading role in the festival. Other functionaries have their specific respective roles to play, which are never considered minor. On the first day Lamba with others brings utensils and ritual items, keep them at Sadar and perform

rituals. Pujari's main duty is to prepare a Meria Chhatri (umbrella). It is used in the processions to ward off evil spirits and fixed at Jankad.

The festival starts on a Friday or Saturday morning. Bejunis led by the Pat Bejuni go to the seat of Darani Penu. There they recite incantations and dance to the tune of the music to please Darani Penu. Then Pat Bejuni gets into trance. There they sacrifice fowl, pigeon and a goat, under the supervision of Lamba Jani.

In the mid night Lamba Jani, Ichan Jani, Pujari and Pat Bejuni perform rituals at the Darani Penu. At that time near Koteiwali the sacrificial animal ie, a buffalo is brought for *meria* sacrifice is bathed with turmeric water by the Bejuni to purify it.

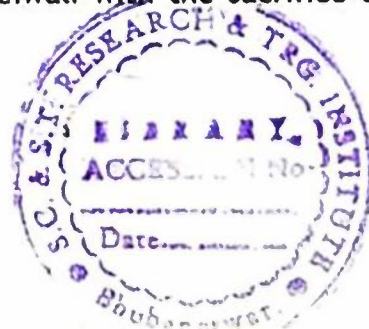
In the meanwhile every household also sacrifice goats, sheeps, fowls and pigeons in their individual capacity before Jatrakudi. The *meria* buffalo is tied to a wooden post erected for the purpose. Before sacrifice all the functionaries utter *mantras* to pray Darani Penu to accept this sacrifice. The Bejunis and Lamba Jani get into trance time and again. They dance in the state of trance. At the auspicious moment ie, just before the down the Pujari gives the first blow with this axe to the buffalo thrice obeying the direction of Lamba Jani. Then the madding crowd joins the torturous killing spree to cut the animal into pieces, which are shared among them. The head of the animal is offered to Darani Penu. The main ritual ends with this. The remaining days, they spend in dancing, drinking, feasting, merry making and socializing with their near and dear ones.

### Enda Penu Puja

Enda Penu is revered as a dancing deity. Her seat lies in the village Batiguma. She is to be worshiped at any time according to her wish. However, the worship is invariably conducted during the months of October-December. This festival is a grand festival next to the *meria* Parab that involves participation of the Bejunis, the unmarried boys and girls and the villagers of a number of villages for a fortnight to a month.

It starts from the village where the deity appears in a dream of a Pat Bejuni and expresses her desire to visit some neighbouring villages. The concerned Pat Bejuni being possessed by the deity announces her wish before her assistant and fellow villagers. The villages make necessary arrangements for the celebrations. It begins with the worship of, the village deity, Koteiwali. There, the Pat Bejuni accompanied by fellow Bejunis, her assistants and unmarried village youths get into trance and starts dancing. In the meantime, the villagers prepare a schedule for the visit of the deity to different neighbouring villages on different dates. Accordingly, the dancing party led by Pat Bejuni who is possessed by the deity moves from village to village in a procession. They cover 10 to 15 villages in one or two weeks in a circle and finally return to their own village completing the full circle. During their visit they are given grand reception in every village. The villagers and the Bejunis of these villages also join the precession. They are entertained lavishly with food and drinks. While the dancing party makes rounds in the villages the unmarried youths collect rice in a winnowing fan from each and every household as a matter of custom. There movements are called Enda Penu Trepha.

On their return to their native village the villagers organize a festival called Enda Penu Jatra. During this festival, they worship Koteiwali with the sacrifice of a





fowl and pigeon and also appease Jatra Kudi Penu by sacrificing a buffalo. This celebration concludes with a grand feast attended by the whole village and the guests.

### Balikorepa

It is observed at the village level in every three years to solicit the protection of Darani Penu for Kosla and ragi crops. It is held in the month of April for 8 days in which Bejunis play important role.

It starts on a Wednesday. Near the seat of Darani Penu a wooden structure is raised and shaded with green branches. Below the shade a rectangular sand bed is laid.

The Bejunis conduct rituals under the structure and worship the deities offering steam cake made of ragi powder, incense, resin, and flowers. The Pat Bejuni along with other Bejunis chants verses and goes into trance. Then she dances to the tune of music and answers questions. At the end of the ritual green gram and maize seeds are sown in the sand bed and watered for germination. This ritual is called Dongabali. The rituals are repeated for days together in the evening and morning hours. Bejuni in charge of the rituals observes fasting through the day and takes food during night only. In the mean while when sprouts come out of the bed, people consider it a good omen indicating supernatural blessing and become very happy. They take proper care of the seedlings till the 8<sup>th</sup> day. On the closing day, they offer these seedlings to Jatrakudi Penu. There they sacrifice a fowl, a pigeon and a goat to please the deity and consume the meat in a feast.

### Bichahopan

It is a week long agricultural festival held in the month of Chait (March-April). It is observed to ritualize seeds of various crops before sowing in the field. The deities worshiped during this festival are Darani Penu, Hira Penu and Sita Penu. It is held both at the village level and the individual level. Jani, Ichan Jani, Pat Bejuni and other Bejunis take an active part in the ritual. While the Jani collects crops from every family and conducts rituals at the seat of Darani Penu sacrificing a fowl and pigeon there, the Bejunis render services to individual *dongar* cultivators by conducting rituals in latter's *dongars* to appease Hira Penu and Sita Penu with the sacrifice of a chicken.

In the evening hours of the festive week another ritual performance is held. A young boy carrying a string cot over his head moves around the village dancing to the tunes of the drums encircling the seat of Darni Penu and women throw turmeric water over him. Others join the dance by throwing crops at each other. As a result the village street is littered with a variety of crops, which the Dombs collect in the morning.

Also during this festival communal hunting expeditions are organized. Before the expedition, the weapons such as bows, arrows, swords, axes, guns etc are ritualized before the village deity. If the hunting party returns to village after successful hunt, the celebrations reach a feverish pitch. The kill is shared among all land women are forbidden to share the meat.

### First Fruit Eating Rituals

The Dongria Kondh observes, some seasonal festivals associated with the first eating of seasonal fruits and various crops harvested from their *dongars* in succession.

Puna padi is one of such ritual connected with the first eating of Kosala, Arka, Jana and Ganthia crops after offering the same to Jatrakudin Penu and ancestral spirits.

### Puna Padi

It held in the month of Kartika (Oct-Nov) at community level. The Bejuni of the village officiates in the ritual. A day before the observance of the ritual, the temporary thatch of Jatrakudi Penu is repaired and new bamboo-splits are replaced by the Dhangdas (youths) of the village. Three of the Dhangidis (maidens) go from door to door for collection of new crops and pile them up in front of the *penu* and watch them for the whole night.

Next morning, after the arrival of the Pat Bejuni along with three other Bejunis, three Dhangdis carry three new pitcher-full of water from the stream and place them separately on the pile of various crops. The Bejunis start their chourous and the Pat Bejuni gets into trance. She gets into trance three times, and each time when she regains consciousness, she pours unboiled rice from her winnowing fan into the water filled pitcher. It is believed that three dreadful disciples of Jatrakudi Penu are satisfied by that. Ultimately the Pat Bejuni is spirit possessed for the fourth time indicating the presence of Jatrakudi Penu. Other Bejunis then start reciting incantations forcefully and throw burning incense on the pile of crops. The Pat Bejuni after regaining her senses, sacrifices a pigeon and two fowls one after the other in the name of Darani Penu, Jatrakudi Penu and for her disciples respectively

The relatives, who are present on the spot, also offer animals for sacrifice. It is called Bopani.

Ultimately a buffalo, brought for sacrifice, is tied at a tree by the Barika. The Pat Bejuni stands over it and starts dancing. In the meanwhile, three other Bejunis throw crops from the pile at the buffalo. While dancing the Pat Bejuni is again spirit possessed, which is indicative of the fact that the Jatrakudi Penu is asking for food. Immediately after she regains her senses, the buffalo is slaughtered by the Barika and blood is sprinkled over the pile of crops. The meat of all the birds and buffalo is cooked separately which are eaten by the villagers in a feast. After this usually crops can be sold or eaten.

### Conclusion

In the tribal society beliefs and practices connected with religion and shamanism go side by side. So it cannot be separated. It is true that shamanism is strongly linked with their socio-economic and religious life.

The shamanic functionaries like the Beju and Bejuni of Dongria Kondhs play most important role in their respective societies. They receive great respect as experts in performing magico-religious rituals and festivals. It is believed they stand between supernatural agencies and people. They are capable to carry message of people to gods, spirits and ancestors and get their blessings in the shape of prosperity, peace, good harvest, good health etc. for individuals and society.

Shamans are part and parcel of the Dongria Kondh society. They still have preserved their values and traditions to great many extents from the influence of



advanced cultures and societies. Yet there are magnitude of factors slowly and steadily shaking their age old magico-religious importance, utility and its spiritual significance.

Usually factors which disturbed their traditions, more or less are different developmental activities, spread of education, visiting by outsiders, actions of voluntary organizations, invasion of mass media, etc. It is found most of younger generation showing interest in moderenisation while older people still like to follow their tradition. However importance and belief in magico-rigilious tradition still exists. The services of shaman and shamanin are still in demand for various purposes.

Religion is a cultural system. The understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of a society would require a sound knowledge of its culture. On the other hand the study of the religious system of a society would provide some understanding of its society and culture. In the Dongria Kondh society, their shamans continue to retain their stronghold in the supernatural domain despite the acculturative impacts of the modern agencies of change. Hence, the study of shamanism in their society is needed to get some idea about their social system and way of life, which will ultimately help, in effective developmental intervention.

\* *Resarch Officers, SCSTRTI*

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# DEVELOPMENT SIGNIFICANCES OF TRIBAL RITUALS AND FESTIVALS WITH REFERENCE TO PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUPS (A Tribal Endogenous Development Experience of IDEA)

K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar \*

## Introduction

Tribes of Orissa in Eastern Ghats mostly belongs to proto-astraloid and mongoloid racial stocks, the first group being the major stock. Most of them speak their tribal languages, which are mostly of Munda (austric), Dravidian and Indo-Aryan group of languages and major being Mundari linguistic groups (26) followed by Indo-Aryan (22) and Dravidian (14) linguistic groups. Of the 62 scheduled tribes of Orissa with a population of 81.45 lakhs (22.13% of total population of the state), 13 tribes have been classified as primitive tribal groups with an approximate population of 70,500 (2001 census).

Their subsistence economy is agro-forest and animal husbandry based, besides surviving on food gathering hunting and collection of NTFP and raw drugs. The shifting cultivation/ mountain agriculture is the major occupation, besides plain land and terrace cultivation of most of these primitive tribal groups.

## Tribal Worldviews and Indigenous Knowledge

These tribal communities live in inaccessible mountain (altitudes approximately ranging from 750 - 1000 MSL up to 3500 MSL) and forest areas with diverse cultural practices and related worldviews and indigenous knowledge systems with well-knit traditional village councils and functionaries. Tribals believe in the existence of human, nature and spiritual worlds and the continuous interaction between these three worlds is well established, since the origin of their animism, and maintained with proper reciprocity. Their strong belief in the influence of spiritual world and divine beings (benevolent and malevolent nature) is the main basis for their sustainable livelihood activities. Based on this belief, they have refined their indigenous knowledges for survival. This is predominantly seen in all the tribal communities in the Eastern Ghats, in different forms, where tribals propitiate the spiritual beings of different origins through rituals, ceremonies and festivals to get the blessings in the form of good social life, health, crop etc. and also to ward off the problems (diseases, pest etc.). Tribal worldview practices can be understood as not only a spiritual practice, but also a way of demonstration and application of their knowledge to prevent and control specific problems. The traditional village institutional functionaries (TIF) known as *Dhisari*, *Poojari*, *Guniya* and *Gurumayi* etc; are the spiritual and magico-religious people (the names differ from area to area and community to community), to act as the communicators between the communities and the divine spirits.



## Development Significance of Tribal Worldviews and Indigenous Knowledges

Most of their knowledges are in the folk form (oral), which are preserved in different folk systems. The worldview beliefs, also known as cosmovisions beliefs, are mostly practiced to maintain the sustainability of the folk knowledge and to conserve and disseminate the same. They are preserved in the form of festivals, rituals, ceremonies, dance, song and music.

Tribal worldview practices are always integrated with indigenous knowledges and every ritual / festival has its own rationality and application of specific indigenous knowledge based components. As said, these development oriented worldview practices and indigenous knowledges are integrated systematically with their cultural and socio-spiritual practices, to maintain the stability, equity and sustainabilities, so as to ensure the sustainable livelihoods of the communities. The basis for evolution of these animistic philosophies / sciences is for the maintenance of sustainability of those socio-cultural identities. The tribal community life is always based on these customs, worldviews, traditions and related practices and taboos. If not every practice, few of them are contemporary and relevant, which can also be proved scientifically with proper tools.

### Revival of Development Significant Rituals, Based on Worldviews

As is in the case of other indigenous knowledges, which are on the verge of extinction due to modernization and rapid acculturation, most of the tribal worldviews are also vanishing rapidly but the reality reminds that still many of the tribal communities, specially the isolated and primitive tribal groups, have to depend on their indigenous knowledge and worldviews. In spite of advancement of modern sciences and states provisions, many of the technologies are not reachable (and in many cases are not understandable too), to interior and remote villages. In such cases, it is inevitable to the tribals to depend on their indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Realizing this fact, IDEA has decided to enhance and revive, atleast few of the practices, for the good of the communities.

The author being the main researcher, the IDEA has extensively documented and compiled various worldview practices of tribes of India including the tribes of Eastern Ghats, over the last two and half decades. It has also analyzed them through scientific approach and validations, and prioritized some of the development significant tribal indigenous knowledges and worldviews for revival and integrated them successfully with modern knowledge systems to promote endogenous development. Some of the examples are cited here for the interest of the readers. IDEA has selected the following worldview related practices such as - *Bali parob* (soil testing and, some times, seed testing festival), *Chait parob* (seed testing, traditional NRM, conservation of clan totems and sustainable harvesting practices), *Ashad jatra* (human, cattle and crop health preventive and curative related ritual), *Nuakia* (food and nutritional security related ceremony).

Following are the main rationalities and development significances of festivals and rituals being celebrated by primitive and general tribes of Orissa-Andhra border such as Kondh, Paroja, Gadaba, Kotia, Parangi Paroja, Konda dora and Nooka Dora (A.P.) etc;

Sl. No	Festival / ritual	Significance	
		Physical	Cosmovision
1.	Bali parob	• Soil testing based on the colour, size and appearance of the germinated seedlings.	Sacred cosmic powers to soil for vitality and health.
2.	Chait parob	• Seed testing based on the quantity of germinated seeds	Sacred cosmic powers to seed for good crop fertility.
		• Protection of clan totems through advices and sustainable harvesting techniques through songs during ceremonial hunting.	
3.	Ashad jatra	• Pest control by prescription and demonstration of specific botanical pesticides.	Sacred cosmic powers to get immunity to crops, cattle and humans against seasonal diseases.
		• Advice to farmers on cattle and human health by traditional healers to take up preventive and curate steps.	
4.	Nuakia	• Conservation of food grains and forest products for food security (touching and eating the produce from the farm / forest without celebrating the ritual is a taboo.	Sacred blessings of the ancestral spirits of human origin for sustainability of the food security.

## Broad Rationalities of the Festivals

### Festival - 1: BALI PAROB

#### Process:

This is a community festival, celebrated for every 2-3 years, during November / December for the testing of the fertility and nutrients of the respective farm land of the individual farmers. The traditional institutional functionaries advise the farmers on the soil management practices, based on the colour and size of germinated seedlings. The soil testing by individual farmers will also be conducted in the houses before commencing *rabi* crop cultivation.

Individual farmers collect the soils from the respective fields in small baskets made of *siali* leaf, bowls or bamboo and broadcast different seeds of crops, collected from their houses, selected for the ensuing *kharrif* and *rabi* seasons. The baskets are kept in front of the god *bali demudu / dharani pennu*. The tribal priest performs ritual and offers these baskets and sprinkles the sacred water on the soils and allows them to be in front of the god for 8-10 days.

The traditional institutional functionaries headed by the priest shall inspect the germinated seedlings after 8-10 days and advise the farmers for the management of the soils depending on the colour, size and physical health of the germinated saplings.

#### Season:

Month : December (Margasira Maasa)  
 Star constellation : Friday before full moon day (Suklapaksha)  
 Presiding deity : Bali Demudu / Dharani Pennu (Earth Goddess)  
 Origin : Natural



### Main rationale:

1. Worldview (cosmovision / spiritual) : To get sacred cosmic powers to soil for vitality
2. Physical/material (economic) : Soil and seed health testing.

### Other rationale:

1. Agriculture : 1) To advise farmers on specific soil treatments in community ritual.  
2) To advise individuals from clans on testing the soil and seed.
2. Social : 1) To regulate community to maintain social relations.  
2) To advise youth to maintain social norms related to homogeneity of the community

\* **Note:** Festival time during the specific month and the astrological calculations and presiding deities are area and community specific.

### Festival - 2: CHAIT PAROB

#### Process:

This is a community festival. The traditional institutional functionaries (TIF), headed by the priest collect the seeds from individual farmers and mix them together and offer them to the goddess *nisani* and mix them in the soils and sprinkle the sacred waters and allow them to germinate within 10-12 days. Depending on the quantity of the germination of different mixed seeds, the TIF in consultation with the senior farmers decide the cropping patterns to be followed by the farmers in the ensuing *kharrif* and *rabi* seasons. The seeds, which are offered to the goddess shall also get the sacred powers and become disease resistant and also possess vitalities. Hence, they distribute these sacred seeds to the farmers. These sacred seeds will be mixed with other seeds in their houses, with a belief that all the seeds get the sacred powers and become disease resistant, healthy and produce good yields.

There are diverse seed testing practices in different localities.

#### Season

Month	:	April / May ( <i>Chaitra masa</i> )
Star constellation position	:	Magha / Swathi before fullmoon day ( <i>Suklapaksha</i> )
Presiding deity	:	<i>Sanku / Nisani Demudu</i>
Origin	:	Supernatural / Human origin

#### Main rationale

1. Cosmovision / spiritual : To get the cosmic powers to seed for pest and disease resistance.
2. Physical / material : Good crop yield and productivity

## Other rationale

1. Social : 1. Socio-economic freedom to women on decision-making, and to enjoy traditional gender rights during the festival.
2. Environment : 1. Informal natural resource survey in the name of ceremonial hunting (*shikar / veta / akhand shikar*)  
2. To plan for natural resource management and forest based economic and health activities.  
3. To plan mechanisms to regulate shifting cultivation practices.  
4. To follow clan traditions to conserve totems.  
5. Guidelines to community for natural resource conservation through - song, dance and music: Rela, Dhimsa, Kommu etc.  
6. Sambor Nisani, Pathorthola, Kandulbaja etc. songs related to natural resource management.

## Festival -3: ASHAD JATRA

### Process:

This is also community festival, which is celebrated normally during the month of August. This is the season for the spread of many pests to the crop and also spread of seasonal and contagious diseases to the cattle and human beings. The TIF perform the ritual to the presiding deity *mata takrani* and offer prayers and offerings to get her blessings to protect the health of the cattle and human beings. While performing the ritual, they also advise the communities on the preventive and curative health care aspects.

Once this process is completed, for the health of human and cattle, they attend to the crop health. Each individual farmer is asked to collect the plants from their respective fields and offer them to the goddess *mata takrani* with prayers and sacrifices.

TIF also collects plants such as - *Terminalia bellarica* bark (Tani), *Emblica officinalis* bark (Usiri), *Curcuma longa* (*holdi*), *Cynodon dactylon* stems (Garika), *syzygium cumini* bark (Neredu), *Mangifera indica* bark (Aam), *Curuma aromatica* (*kasturi holdi*) etc. and prepare the botanical pesticides in front of the farmers and offer it to the goddess to get cosmic powers, and distribute to the farmers in small quantities. The individual farmers shall prepare their own pesticides based on this formula and mix the collected pesticide with cosmic power and apply in their respective fields by sprinkling.

This pesticide acts as a preventive as well as curative medicine for crop health. There are diversities within these practices, and also on the preparation of plant based pesticides.

### Season:

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Month                       | : August ( <i>Ashad masa</i> )                             |
| Star constellation position | : Tuesday, before the full moon day ( <i>Suklapaksha</i> ) |
| Presiding deity             | : <i>Mata Takrani</i>                                      |
| Origin                      | : Supernatural   |



- Main rationale**
- 1. Cosmvision / spiritual : To get the cosmic powers of *Mata Takrani* to control pest and disease in crops, contagious diseases and other minor ailments in animals and human beings.
  - 2. Physical / material :
    - 1. Good crop health and yield
    - 2. Good animal health and productivity
    - 3. Good human health for more productive work
- Other rationale**
- 1. Social :
    - 1. Controlling of inter - farmers conflicts by regulating cattle grazing activities.
    - 2. To promote community participation in preventive and curative health activities of the village.
  - 2. Environment : To advise farmers on different forest fodder species - their usage and conservation.

#### **Festival - 4: NUAKIA**

##### **Process:**

This is a festival related to the maintenance of the food and nutritional security balance, to the community and also to the wildlife.

This is celebrated in different harvesting times of agricultural crops and also fruits, edible tubers and leafs from the wild.

This festival is celebrated by the individual households under the strict guidance and supervision of TIF. Until and unless the celebration of this first harvest eating ceremony and offering of the produce to the divine spirits of human and natural origin is made collecting or eating of ripened agricultural crops, fruits, or edible tubers from the wild are strictly prohibited and is considered a serious taboo.

This taboo is a cultural mechanism that is imbibed and integrated in the tribal socio-cultural and spiritual practices and it should be strictly followed by the communities. The main rationale of this festival is to maintain the food and nutritional securities to the communities on sustainable lines.

Secondly, this first harvest eating ceremony celebrated before commencing the collection of matured forest fruits, edible tubers and wild leafy vegetable etc; also helps and ensures food security of the wild animals and for the re-generation of the specific species for the sustainability of the ecology, and also to maintain the food chain.

##### **Season:**

- Month of the festival : August (*Ashad masa*)
- Star constellation position : *Punarvasu / pushyami* before full moon day (*Suklapaksha*)
- Presiding deity : *Jakara devatha (female)*
- Origin : Human origin

### Main rationale

1. Cosmivision / spiritual : To reciprocate blessings of divine beings of super natural, human and natural origins.
2. Physical / material : To conserve food grains / fruits to maintain food-chain balance to human and wild life. To maintain stability and sustainability of food security of communities.

### Other rationale

1. Social : To maintain the concept of equity and equal distribution.
2. Environment : 1. To maintain the sustainable use of natural resources.  
2. To ensure food security to wild animals and birds.

### RESULTS OF REVIVALS

IDEA has revived these development significant worldviews and indigenous knowledges successfully in the tribal belts of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa in North Eastern Ghats. This has helped the farmers not only to revive the indigenous knowledge and worldviews, but also to integrate the modern knowledge inputs to promote endogenous development in North Eastern Ghats.

### FURTHER DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT WORLDVIEWS

IDEA has, so far, prioritized more than 80 indigenous knowledge and practices, which have been validated, efficacy tested and assessed with internal and external criteria. A strategy and methodology has also been developed to understand the ontology (worldview), gnoseology (rationalities) and related practices and their epistemologies. This documentation and assessment has given more insights and understandings of the worldview rationalities, their origin and the efficacies. More diverse, area and community specific and heterogeneous practices have been observed with the similar rationalities in different communities. Most of the physical inputs such as soil testing, seed testing mechanisms and pest control practices have been correlated with Ayurvedic *guna* and modern pharmacological compound properties. More in-depth studies are being carried out by IDEA, to promote effective interventions for revival and integration. The author is presently working on the theory building of some of the worldview practices and indigenous knowledges, which are mostly in the folk form with the tribals. This would help them to enhance and codify their folk animistic sciences and join the mainstream classical and modern sciences.

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\* IDEA, Flat 4C, Maharaja Towers, R.K. Mission Road, Visakhapatnam - 530 003

Author is a sociologist with specialization on development ecology, social anthropology, ethno-botany and tribal indigenous knowledges and specialist on tribal endogenous development. He is the founder and head of the organisation, IDEA, which is working for endogenous development of tribes of Eastern Ghats including Orissa.



# BHUMIJA FESTIVALS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE, AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

A.C. Sahoo

*The present article is based upon the Anthropological study in the typical Bhumija village Patasanipur in the district of Mayurbhanj in Orissa during the year 2008. The ethnic data and information are exclusively based on the inputs collected from the village Patsanipur.*

Festival is an important symbol of any group life. Festival is a time for get-together and sharing of joys and sorrows. A festival is a celebration by a community marking a specific event, occurrence or an aspect of the community. Festivals could be both religious and secular. While religious festivals are observed to appease the Gods and Goddesses or other supernatural powers, the secular festivals celebrate occurrences of significance (victories, birthdays etc.). Each community projects its own socio-cultural significance, identity and uniqueness in its observances and celebrations. Most of the festivals have their respective history of origin and ritual exercise. Festivals not only provide an occasion for fun and frolics but also give an opportunity to the people to remember their past history and renew their cultural identity

For a tribal, festivals are the essences of life. He/She looks forward to the celebration of festival as an individual intimately identifying with the collectives. Most of the tribal festivals reflect the ingenuity and belief system, which are inlaid in different pursuits of life. Every tribal village observes festivals, which punctuate the entire year. They are organized primarily in two streams: life cycle occasions (Rites de Passage) and occasions of agricultural (seasonal) operations. A well-established fact is that the tribal festivals are directed towards appeasing the Gods/Goddesses, seeking their goodwill for the community life. However, there are some festivals, which are for entertainment, full of gaiety, fun, humour and interesting banter. Festivals impart meaning and significance to the tribe-person's life. Dancing, singing and ritual performances are integral to the form of the tribal festivals. Animal sacrifice is a common feature practiced by the tribes in most of the rituals. The entire community participates in the celebration; there are no performers as separate from viewers. The fairs and festivals observed by tribes round the year have socio-religious-economic manifestations as well.

Every festival has a separate function. In the religious ceremonies the tribesmen seek to establish an intimate relationship with the Gods and Goddesses, ancestral spirits and other supernatural forces that would secure for them all kinds of material prosperity and render them immune from all fatal diseases. Fairs and festivals are also staged for the welfare of agriculture, household life and livestock breeding. Since tribal economy is mostly agro centric and partly pastoral in character, all rituals centering round the same are slashed into three phases in the year -the early phase of the commencement, the middle and finally at the year end. The fairs and festivals keep their rhythm with the seasonal changes. The entertainment transcends the mundane boundary of its immediate import.



We know that, tribal people are not denizen of an existentialism triggering world, where they roam in a meaningless world and are completely free to choose their actions. On the other hand the tribal are very much obligated to the almighty that, they are here by his grace. That is why they like to celebrate their life and enjoy it to its last lees. They don't apprehend mishaps so long as the grace flows to them as an elixir. They don't have any hidden agenda except to celebrate their life, nothing else. The present article tries to look at the major festivals celebrated by the Bhumija Tribe in Orissa in a given year. Further it attempts to outline the changes occurring in the modes of celebrations of these festivals.

The Bhumijas are one of the Hinduised agricultural communities mostly found scattered across Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balesore and Sundargarh districts of Northern Orissa. Bhumija means the one who is born from the native soil; however this naming of the tribe is perhaps made by the neighboring Hindu castes or the then rulers of the area. Racially they are Proto Australoid and belong to Mundari speaking group. The original abode of the tribe was Tamundia in the present Jharkhand state. As their number multiplied, they migrated to different places and a particular group made their way to Mayurbhanj district for settlement. Bhumija society is divided into four endogamous groups such as Tamudia Bhumija or Tamaria Bhumija, Haldipokhria Bhumija, Teli Bhumija and Desi Bhumija or Dehuri Bhumija. Further each section is divided into a number of sub sections called 'Kili'. Each Kili represents an animal, flower, plant, hog, earth etc. that are totemic in nature. The members of each group observe certain taboos in respect of their totemic symbols and marriage within one Kili is strictly prohibited. The kinship terminology is mostly of classificatory type. The headman of the Bhumija village is called Sardar who has immense temporal power over his fellow men and decides all types of disputes and cases of violation and infringement of social rules. The Bhumija people rever Sun God - Sing Bonga and Dharam who are their supreme deities. A number of village deities in the nomenclature of Guru and Buri are used to be worshiped in Jaherathan - the village sacred groove. They also believe in ghosts and spirits. The Dehuri is the village magico - religious specialist who invokes Gods and Goddesses, ethnic deities and spirits at Jaherthan. The Dehuri usually belongs to Shabar community. The village religious functionary Hatu Dehuri performs all village level rituals and worships. However, each head of the family performs all individual family level rituals at home. They utilize the services of Brahman, Barik, Dhoba, blacksmiths, potters, basket makers etc. These service castes belong to other ethnic stocks. They abstain from eating beef and pork but take rice beer and wine distilled from Mahua flower on different occasions. They celebrate a number of festivals through out the year in the prescribed months in a calendar year.

Patsanipur, a typical Bhumija village is found situated on the foothills of Similipal mountain range. The village is situated 29 Kms away from sub-divisional headquarters of Kaptipada of Mayurbhanj district in Orissa. One can approach the village proceeding 20 Kms straight towards left after covering 9 Kms on PWD road from Udala leading towards Baripada. The village is connected with an all weather black topped road. The river Nahua flows at North West side of the village and river Sanja is found towards North. Pata Thakurani is enshrined in western side of the village where Jahera deity used to be worshipped by Dehuri- the community level priest of the village.

Patsanipur, the village is the cultural hub of ethnic Bhumija tradition and sits from the North to South in a linear fashion. This is a composite village giving shelter to



various tribes of the district like Bathudi, Mahali, Lodha, Kolha, Santal etc. and castes like Bindhani, Weaver, Washer man, Potter, Blacksmith, Domb and Barber. Non-tribal caste people render various services to the Bhumija people. Even some Santal families found in the village share ethnic hostile relationship with the Bhumija people.

The village reflects the vibes and ambience of a prosperous farmers village symbolizing the predominant agricultural pursuit in the economic life of Bhumija. The two lanes of thatched houses punctuated here and there with tile-roofed houses have the village lane as the divider. Each houses of the village has a cowshed and hen pen for the poultry population. Rich Bhumija farmers have their own thrashing field in their backyards. Marginal farmers have collective thrashing arena. They raise various kinds of crops and vegetables in their agricultural fields. Small rivers and streams coming out from Similipal Mountain range criss cross the-village, supplying water and irrigation facilities to the village farmers.

There are educational institutions like U.P. School and High School, and infrastructural facilities such as Panchayat office, dug wells, tube wells, rice hauler, Post office, Anganabadi centre, Dhai centre, youth club, jatra pendal for drama and dance, playground etc. available in Patsanipur. The villagers at community level celebrate Laxmi Puja and Durga Puja like other Hindu castes. The players from neighboring villages take part in volleyball, football and cricket competition, which used to take place in Patsanipur in different seasons. On every Saturday a weekly market sits in village Patsanipur where all the people from neighboring villages come for procurement of their daily necessities and disposal of agricultural surplus and forest produce at fair price.

The locale and location of the village has ethnic ambience. The village deities are Biratpat enshrined towards west flank and Kutasuni towards east flank of the village. They sit in their worshipping pedestal just on the North and South of the village shaded by Jahira. They have a belief that, the powerful ethnic goddesses do protect them from all sorts of problems and insulate them from external danger. Hereditary priests Dehuri from Shabar community and Hatu Dehuri from Bhumija community used to worship the deities on different festive occasions. The deities are offered votive terracotta horses, elephants and tigers. They believe that their traditional deities can assure them safety and security if satisfied. The deities get annoyed and do harm if there is any deviation and default in conducting prescribed ritualistic observances. Deona is meant for appeasing evil spirits and saves people from evil eyes. The Bhumija people depend on him to get rid of unavoidable situations connected with socio religious matters.

The Bhumija people celebrate different festivals at individual family level and at community level. In all the community level festivals, services of Dehuri is required. In case of family level festivals Hatu Dehuri or the house owner acts as the priest and worship prescribed deities and spirits. For appeasing different ethnic Gods and Goddess the required worshipping materials are sacrificial animals and birds, sun dried rice, coconut, banana, terracotta human figurine, elephant and horses, leaf cup and plate, ghee, oil, milk, *jhuna*, *dhupa*, *tulshi* leaf, sun dried rice powder, rice cake, charcoal powder, powder of bricks, lamp, pumpkins, maize, edible green leaf, flower, turmeric powder, *methi* powder, *barkoli* leaf, *duba ghash*, *sal* flower, *mahua* flower, mango, *bell* leaf, earthen pot, winnowing fan, eggs, rice beer, wine etc. The color of



the animals and birds and specific items like votive objects and ritual food etc. are prescribed for each Gods, Goddess, deities and spirits. Some of the most important festivals celebrated by the Bhumijas are Herpuna Banapuch, Raja Parab, Jargi-asalia or Chitau Parab, Gahma Parab, Dassain (or) Dasahara Parab, Saara (or) Bandana or Dipabali Parab, Khetabadha, Pus Parab (or) Makar Parab.

#### **Herpuna Banapuch:**

The Bhumija people celebrate Herpuna Banapuch in the month of Baishakh (April - May) before broadcasting the paddy in the field. In this festival they worship Hapanum -the most revered ancestral spirit. The male head of the family acts as the worshipper as this is mostly celebrated at individual family level. On a prescribed day the concerned family organizes the ritual in the courtyard of the house. The courtyard is plastered with cow dung at its centre. They organize the ritual by placing the measuring pot, wooden stool, and baskets duly washed with cow dung and rice powder and painted with beautiful drawings of traditional designs. The house owner takes a sanctified bath and dressed with clean or new cloth and keeps the paddy seeds inside the measuring pot and basket kept on a wooden stool. The worshiping materials like sun dried rice, *sal* leaf cup, rice beer, and vermilion are required during ritualistic performance conducted to appease the Hapanum. While worshiping the house owner invokes Hapanum and Goddess Laxmi and after completion of the ritualistic observances the owner proceeds to his own agricultural land for sowing the seeds. All the neighbors, near and dear ones are invited for taking the ritually cooked rice and rice beer. According to the most experienced members of the community, without the performance of this ritual sowing paddy seeds may not yield the desired harvest. However, Hapanum and Goddess Laxmi, if satisfied, bring prosperity and bountiful production to their home. In spite of several changes one can find Bhumija farmers are very much enthusiastic to celebrate this occasion with utmost sincerity and devotion.

#### **Raja Parab:**

The Bhumija celebrate Raja Parab in the month of Jyesta (May-June) particularly during Raja Sankranti. This festival is celebrated continuously for a period of three days. The festival is celebrated for their respective forefathers at individual family level. The revered deity Hapanum is worshiped with devotion and care during this occasion for safety and security of their family and community members. The head of each family acts as the ritual head to satisfy their most powerful deity - Hapanum by offering socially prescribed requisites. The family members relish various types of traditional cakes, fried rice, ripe jackfruits and such other food items available in this season. All the family members refrain from physical work and enjoy festive food items and make merry in groups. During the Raja Parab the women enjoy song and dance during the night and male members beat drums and play musical instruments out of sheer pleasure. Boys and girls as well as adult women enjoy swing play. Friends and relations living very close, visit each other's village to take part in the occasion.

#### **Jargi-Asalia or Chitau Parab:**

In the month of Asadha (June-July) the Bhumija people celebrate Jargi Asalia or Chitau Parab. This is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of Asadha (June-July). During this festival they worship their adored deity Hapanum and the head of the family performs rituals at family level. The ritualistic materials required for performance of the



prescribed ritual are rice, rice powder, vermilion, *sal* leaves, *tulashi* leaves, green edible leaf, chicken etc. During this festival all the family members relish palm cake as special festival food item. All the boys and girls enjoy the occasion up to their hearts content.

#### Gahma Parab:

The landowners celebrate Gahma Parab in the month of Sraban (July-August). The head of the household performs rituals at family level to please their supreme deity and to remember their respective forefathers. It strengthens the relation between brothers and sisters and helps retaining their eternal love and affection towards each other for all time to come. The great attraction in this occasion is the cake and stew prepared out of molasses and rice along with rice beer. During the celebration boys and girls, men and women dance together along with performance of traditional dance and music throughout the night. Enjoyment of rice beer and wine distilled from *mohua* flower are common for all adults in the occasion.

#### Nuakhai:

The Nuakhai falls in the month of Bhadrab (August - September). The Bhumija eagerly wait to celebrate this festival on the occasion when crops are ready for harvest in the field, preferably during first week of lunar phase. The house owner worships the ancestors Buru Banga for safety and security of the family. The head of the family performs all prescribed rituals. Sun dried rice prepared from newly harvested paddy, roasted maize harvested for the first time in the field are powdered and offered to the deities on *bhalia* leaf. According to prescribed social practice some of the observers offer sacrifice of goat and chickens to appease different Gods and Goddesses those are considered directly or indirectly responsible for newly harvested paddy, maize etc. The head of the family after taking a sacred bath performs the rituals and offers items prepared from newly harvested crops to Happanum, Buru Banga along with molasses, milk, rice beer etc. in order to please them. After the ritual, all the family members can take the items offered to the deities in this occasion. Through out the night the boys and girls, men and women sing and dance in group and sing traditional music.

#### Dassain (or) Dasahara Parab:

In the month of Aswinya (September - October) all the villagers celebrate this festival for seven days. One of the male Bhumijas dressed with all the traditional costumes of Goddess Durga is carried in a procession from house to house where all the participants are expected to wrap a saree and dance keeping two sticks each around the living goddess. Each house owner is expected to contribute in kind. The party may move to nearby villages where they receive the same treatment. It is celebrated to appease Karma Kampaguru- a deity looking after the well being of the people. The village magico-religious specialist appeases Karma Kampaguru with rituals and incantations. Finally on the 10<sup>th</sup> and last day of the occasion the collected subscription is utilized for hosting a community feast for all the participants and villagers. The Hatu Dehuri at the community level and house head at the family level worship the deity as priests. Rice, vermilion, pumpkin, *sal* leaf cup and rice beer are main requisites for the ritual. All the male members enjoy by beating drums and singing songs drinking rice beer and wine distilled from *mahua* flower. The women also enjoy dance and remain busy for preparation of festive food-items. By and large, all the members irrespective of their age, sex and status get involved in enjoyment and merry making.

### Saarai or Bandana or Dipabali Parab:

Dipabali or Bandana or Saara festival is celebrated in Kartika (October - November) for three days at the community level during the Kartika Amabasya time. Puja is performed at the community level to appease Gaat Banga. The head of the family performs the rituals to satisfy Hapanum. The requisites in the ritual are *sal* leaf cups, vermilion, flower, sun dried rice, plantain, cakes, etc. The family head offers sacrifice of chicken and festival cake prepared in the cattle shed to satisfy the deity who safeguards their cattle wealth. They worship their Buru Banga, ancestral spirit along with other deities with the belief of maintaining peace, health, happiness and harmony in the family. They believe that their cattle become disease free and protected from all types of dangers by the blessings of the concerned deity. All the family members gather in the courtyard where the family head performs the ritual using vermilion, hen, egg, rice beer etc. The cattle are worshipped and fed well. Relatives, and friends are also invited to participate in this festival. All the family members go to everyone's cattle shed singing and playing music. It is obligatory in the part of the women to take active part in group in each others cattle shed to honour the domesticated animals. In every house they are offered rice beer and wine to drink as a symbol of hospitality.

### Khetabadha:

The Landowners celebrate this festival in the month of Margasir (November - December) after cutting paddy crops. After end of the crops cutting owner keeps a very small portion of standing paddy crops in the land untouched, this is harvested with divine care. It may be noted that the standing crop is up rooted and brought to thrashing floor for worship. In this festival they worship their forefathers. In this occasion the head of the family plays the role of priest to appease the supreme deity. In this ritual the prerequisites are rice, tobacco, rice beer, eggs, leaf cup, vermilion and such others. They invite the neighbors at home to drink rice beer and eat festival food. There after, in group they recite songs and marry-make together. Later on the harvested crop is kept with utmost sincerity and devotion at the threshing ground subsequently in the grain storing containers. The owner and his family members take an adequate care of the invited guests by rendering all possible hospitality. They believe that during this festival the Goddess Laxmi enters into their house, hence the guests need to be treated in best possible manner and the deities are to be satisfied whole heartedly with reverence.

### Pus Parab (or) Makar Parab:

Pus Parab or Maker Parab is the most significant festival celebrated in the month of Pausa (December - January). This is observed during Maker *sankranti*. In the Makar Parab they worship their revered Hapanum and deities looking after health and wealth. Mainly they use rice, white hen, *sal* leaf, leaf bowl, and rice beer at the time of worshipping.

Makar Parab is essentially a festival of remembering their revered ancestors. During the time they religiously worship them, by offering their favourite food items. They usually prepare ethnic food items; meats and others sweat condiments for the purpose. After the offering they take the foods.

The three day long Makar festival has its own schedule and agenda. The first day is utilized for the grand preparation for the celebration. They clean their houses



and make required purchases and wait expectantly for the day of the celebration. On the Sankranti day - they invoke the spirits of their forefathers to come to their houses. On that day they observe rituals for appeasing their ancestors with religious fervor and sanctity. On the penultimate day they make social interactions. They visit the neighboring families early in the morning in a spirit of bonhomie and brotherhood. It signifies that Makar festival - the beginning of the ethnic New Year may bring prosperity and happiness to all the villagers dissolving the animosities and hatred if any.

On the last day they exhibit a special ethnic feature. They make the image of an old woman in clay and place it at the village cross road situated on the eastern flank of their village. The virgin and unmarried boys and girls congregate in the place and offer water, rice, cakes, molasses and flattened rice to the image. This shows proper respect to gerontocracy, which is unique in Bhumija community.

#### **Magh banga or Magha puja:**

In the month of Magha (January-February) the festival of Maghbanga is celebrated at the community level. The Hatu Dehuri- the village priest acts as the ritual specialist. The ritualistic requisites are plantain, flower, vermillion, turmeric powder, sun dried rice powder, *methi* powder, *sal* leaf cup, rice beer etc. The deities and ancestral spirits are worshiped for benevolence of the community men. The Hapanum, Nagaera, Bijiera, Goddess Laxmi and other associated deities are appeased with prescribed rituals. The community level ritual is followed by individual family level worship. Every body is strictly prohibited to cut a plant even dry wood in the jungle before performing this ritual. After celebration of the most important festival Makar, all the villagers eagerly wait for observation of Maghbanga to get formal social approval to use forest and stream water after this festival. In case any one violates this taboo of collection of forest produce before this festival, the matter is seriously viewed and the defaulter is punished by the traditional village council.

#### **Baa-Banga(or) Phula puja:**

This festival is celebrated at the individual family level to appease Hapanum in the month of Phalgun (February-March) during moonlit period. The family heads worship their respective ancestral deities for whom ritual requisites are sun-dried rice, vermillion, *sal* leaf cup, *sal* flower, *mahua* flower, mango, tobacco, rice beer and a chicken. They believe that any newly grown forest produce including new mango fruit are to be offered to their ancestors before they consume the same. Even the children are restricted to do so. Deviation to the rule may lead to illness of the family members and cattle. Loss of health, wealth and happiness are expected if there is any laxity in ritualistic observances at the household level. In this occasion, rice beer and non-vegetarian food items are enjoyed in group by inviting neighbours and friends.

The Bhumija tribe of the village Patsanipur have their indigenous tradition of festivals and festivities centering on life process relating to supernatural powers, village deities and their ancestors. The other motive is related to their agro-economic life revolving around subsistence agriculture. The bountiful harvest exudes in them the satisfaction of being in the God's helpline and they celebrate the festivals as contented souls. The celebration of festivals is intimately connected with bouts of drinking and dining in the company of near and dear ones. The celebration is both collective and individual, where the reciprocity is unlimitedly institutionalized.



On the whole, it may be said that these festivals are communally sponsored and not keyed to the prestige of an individual; the main purpose is community welfare; there is no reference to a precise sacred lunar calendar; the prayers are simple and not sufficiently specialized in terms of different festivals; the villagers as a whole, are aware of the supernatural connotation of the festivals; there is little specialized performance and differentiation between the audience and the performers; there is no reference to a complex and elaborate sacred lore or myth; and villagers meet on a footing of equality in social participation.

Simultaneously, the original nuance and flavor of tribal festivals witness gradual transformation, due to influx of cross-cultural influences. The festivals on the once segregated hills and distant mountain ranges are now exposed to the medium of rapidly proliferating mass communication from the plains. The festivals admit, besides the members of the tribe, only of few outsiders and caste people for participation. They may be the village Brahmins, Barbers, Potters, Blacksmith, Weavers, Basketry makers or Sweepers. The exposure has brought modern modes of entertainment to the doorstep of the tribals. One can see radical changes in dressing patterns and food habits. In addition to it, the process of conversion to Christianity and Sanskritisation has had its impact on the trends. The Shiva Temple constructed in Patasanipur, attracts number of tribal people and they are found reasonably comfortable in the new faith and values. Globalization has also impacted the festivals in multifarious ways.

It may be stated that there has been a distinct "shift of prestige" to the introduced non-aboriginal, Hinduised festivals. On the other hand we find the Bhumijas' sentimental loyalty to their traditional festivals. It is mentioned before that the neglect of such essential element as the offering of fowl and rice-beer, ceremonial group dancing by women, etc, in the traditional festival under the pressure of prestige drive, create in them a feeling of guilt and also a fear that the neglect of their long standing friendly Gods might be unhappy and bring them harm.

The transformation in Bhumija ceremonial cycle cannot be described by such blanket terms as "secularisation". Transformation here is not consistent in the direction of "holidays" from "holy day". In fact we might say with some confidence that sacred cultural performances in the festivals of the Bhumija have become more elaborate through Hindu influences and also through internal development. This however, does not mean that the festivals as a whole have become more sacred in terms of the "attitude" of the Bhumija villagers. With reference to most of the large scale festivals outside the village, one may say that for the Bhumija of Patasanipur those are mainly sites of fun (although the festival have elaborate ritualistic relevance to the sponsor families), there being little sense of a supernatural gain by participating in those festivals. There are, however, exceptions, as in the case of Maker Parab at Chhata Pukur or Satighata where taking sacred baths in the Subarnarekha river has much ritual significance as in any aboriginal festival. One may also note that the Bhumija villagers of Patasanipur are occasionally found to offer sacrifices to Goddess Durga during the Durga Puja festival at Bamni, as fulfillment of a vow to the Goddess for during sickness. For such persons Durga Puja has deep a ritualistic importance.

The cases where the process in the direction of universalisation appear transparent are those where "little tribal tradition" have become conjoined with the Great Tradition of



the Hindus, the latter were often being sponsored by feudal chiefs. In the conjunction of aboriginal Karama Parab and more universal Ind Parab one such case may be found.

Taken as a whole, in comparison with their aboriginal pattern, it may be said that the contemporary Bhumija villager has been participating in relatively more secularized form of behavior in some of the orders of festivals than they ever did before. At the same time, they are participating in a relatively more complex sacred culture. If we look at the immediate or recent perspective of history, we would see in them the interaction of two distinctive configurations of religious traditions - a case of heterogenic development. It is futile to argue whether the transformation of Bhumija festivals is heterogenic or orthogenic in a specific historic sense. Culture cannot be insulated from the contemporary realities. If we study in this sense it becomes instantly clear that the Bhumija culture - scape falls prey to the flux of ongoing all round changes.

With the change of time, the village Patsanipur has witnessed rapid developmental works. Modern time has its alchemy touch with the modern day polity and cultural canvas. The study village amply reflects the touch.

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*\*Officer on Special Duty, SCSTRTI, CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar*

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## TRIBAL NON-TRIBAL INTERACTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DALKHAI FESTIVAL IN WEST ORISSA

Chitrasen Pasayat \*

There are two different views on the issue of relationship between the tribal people and the caste-*Hindus* in India. As discussed elsewhere, Social Anthropologists and Ethnologists / Ethnographers have maintained that many cultural traditions of *Hinduism* have organic linkages with the tribal culture. There is no denying the fact that the tribal people have had continuous contact with their neighboring caste-*Hindus*. This contact goes back, at least to the days of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* when the tribal communities were referred to as *Jana*. Some scholars have gone to the extent of saying that the tribal people are no other than the backward caste-*Hindus*. On the other hand, the colonial administrators, Census Commissioners and Anthropologists have held the view that tribal and *Hindu* traditions are separate; tribal people do not have more than casual contacts with the caste-*Hindus*. Extensive studies made by scholars in different parts of India present varied nature of the social realities. One cannot rule out the existence of isolated tribal people / groups in India and also of those tribal people / groups and caste-*Hindus* who have been living side by side for centuries. In view of this, it would be unwise to think that there has been no acculturation process between the two. In a given empirical situation, there is every possibility of co-existence of the tribal as well as the non-tribal or caste characteristics. There have been instances of individuals and small tribal groups being absorbed within the *Hindu* caste system in India. From 1872 onwards, the successive British Census Commissioners in India have categorically noted that throughout the country tribal people have been transformed or *Sanskritised* into castes. But some of them have also had formed socially and culturally distinct communities and thereby independent identities in contrast to their neighbouring caste *Hindus*.

In the present study also our first assumption is that in the folk religious worship in west Orissa, one finds the fusion of the two processes of *Sanskritisation* and *Tribalisation*. The process of *Sanskritisation* is intimately associated with the process of *Tribalisation*. These two processes are effecting, contrasting and complementary processes of folk religious worship in west Orissa. An element of tribal tradition needs to be transformed into a regional caste culture as an essential first step for it to be admitted into the greater *Hindu* society or *vice versa*. Our second assumption is that transformation or change does not necessarily mean addition of *Sanskritik* elements and replacement of tribal elements or *vice versa* rather this means a harmonious co-existence of both the tribal as well as *Sanskritik* elements in an empirical situation.

*Dalkhai* is a popular folk-dance of west Orissa. It is a centuries old ritual performed by the tribal people of this region. *Dalkhai*, in modern times, has lost its religious significance; it is merely being treated as a means of recreation. Though *Dalkhai* has moved from the villages to the cities one feels sad to note that few people are aware of its religious-cultural sanctity. *Dalkhai* is dedicated to '*Dalkhai Devi*', the divine mother who is worshipped all over India as *Durga*. The goddess *Durga* is also known as *Parvati*, the consort of *Siva*, or *Kali* symbolizing *Sakti*. It is this form of *Durga* as *Sakti* or power, which is worshipped during *Dalkhai*. It is observed in the month of *Dasra / Aswina* (October-November). The eighth day of this month is *Bhaujita* which is



also celebrated in northern India as *Bhaiduya* on the 2nd day of *Kartik Amavasya*. *Bhajitita* is a major festival of west Orissa. Sisters of Sambalpur area, especially the young girls belonging to the tribes namely *Binjhal*, *Saura*, *Kuda* and *Mirdha* fast and pray for the well-being of their brothers in this day. *Dalkhai Puja* continues for ten days. It is interesting to note that the tenth day of this festival is observed as *Dusra* or *Vijaya-Dasami* all over India by the *Hindus*. Thus, it indicates as a strong religious-cultural bond, which exists in several parts of India. *Dalkhai Devi*, in some tribal areas, is addressed as *Vana Durga*.

In villages, *Dalkhai Devi* is worshipped in *Dalkhai Kuthi*. *Kuthi* means a chamber. It is a rectangular or square shaped area. There are sixteen squares and on each square is placed a figure of a deity. In the centre resides *Dalkhai Devi*. Other tribal and non-tribal deities like *Saraswati*, *Ganesa*, *Parvati*, *Brahma*, *Laksmi*, *Iswara* and the Holy Tortoise, *Ravana*, *Hanumana*, *Kartika*, *Aela*, the Holy Fish, *Kubera*, *Raela* and *Baruna* are placed. The Tortoise and the Fish are regarded as the *Avataras* (incarnations) of Lord *Visnu*. *Ravana* is worshipped for his knowledge and wisdom. The myth, which is associated with him, says that he was invited by *Ramachandra* as his priest during the time of *Setu bandha* inauguration. Two friends, *Aela* and *Raela*, are according to some, the two sisters who for the first time performed the *Dalkhai Puja*. Therefore, they are worshipped as the first disciples of *Dalkhai Devi*. The other well known gods and goddesses need no introduction. The influences of ancient folk's beliefs, which are associated with *Dalkhai*, thus, reveal the early socio-political and religious life of the people.

*Dalkhai* begins on the seventh day of the month of *Dasra/Aswina*. The preparations for this festival are made with great care. *Astami* or eighth day is known as *Durgastami* (*Durga+Astami*). Young girls on this day assemble on the banks of a river or a pond and after purifying themselves with a bath start the *Puja*. One of them brings seven palms full of sand from naval deep water and constructs a small platform for worship. The other girls put four leaflets on its four sides and place burning wicks on them. The ritual is repeated seven times as seven girls bring palms full of water and do the same. They then assemble together and pray to goddess *Dalkhai* for the well being of their brothers. Hymns are sung and offerings made to the goddess like this:

*Hari Hari Sri Hari Ram*  
*Hari Hari Sri Ram, Sri Ram...*  
Let Your Name be Chanted Forever  
Let me be there under Your Feet.

The prayers are followed by songs and dances in which all the people, young or old, male or female participate with equal enthusiasm. Inside the village, they rejoice and join in dancing and singing. The maidens who remain outside the village pray for entire afternoon for their brothers with a deep-seated faith in *Dalkhai*. Earlier, young girls and boys joined each other in a question answer session. At present, however the practice is discouraged by the elders of the village due to several social constraints.

At about 3 p.m. in the afternoon (known as *Pantibela*) the girls assemble near the *Dalkhai Kuthi* with their baskets or *Kula* containing sand and other articles required for the *Puja*. One of them is dressed like *Pravati* and the other one like *Iswara*, while the rest of them carry the umbrella, stick and water jug, which



symbolises *Kamandalu*. The entire procession moves to seven houses and thereafter returns to the *Kuthi*. In *Dalkhai Kuthi*, they perform several performing arts from the mythology. One becomes *Bhima* and another becomes *Kubera*. *Bhima* brings paddy from *Kubera* and sows it in the field. Songs and dances enacting various scenes abstracted from the mythology form the core of the *Dalkhai Puja*. The girls then prepare for the days for further ritual. They prepare *Dana* (leaf cups) containing pieces of sugarcane, yellow thread called *Jita*, one hundred and eight pieces of unbroken *Arua Chaul* (boiled rice). Leaf cups are arranged as many brother as a sister has. Branches of *Anla*, *Dahana* and fried paddy along with *Dhupa* and *Agarbatti* (incense sticks) are also put there.

The girls after a bath at the riverbank prepare a sand platform for *Puja*. Fruits like ladies finger, frankincense (*Kunduru*) etc. are placed as offerings to the *Dalkhai Devi*. On return to home, the girls change their clothes and latter carry their respective baskets towards the *Kuthi*. From the house of a devotee, seven clay statues of *Parvati*, *Iswara*, *Narada*, Tortoise, Bull and Rat are brought and placed inside the *Kuthi*. Symbolic object like umbrella is also placed nearby. *Puja* begins with *Dhunkel* music and hymns. At time, a person is possessed by a spirit of one of the deities. During such moments, the music is played and the villagers ask questions and remedial measures for their problems to the deity / *Barua* (spirit possessor). After this session, *Puja* comes to an end and gives way to song and dance performed by the girls till they reach the point of exhaustion. On the ninth day, the girls assemble again near the *Dalkhai Kuthi* wherefrom they collect all the articles used for the *Puja* on the previous day and move in a procession by dancing and singing. The procession moves to seven households of the village. Next day, they proceed towards the riverbank where the holy articles are immersed. There, the girls purify themselves with a bath and return home. At home, the leaf packets containing *Duba* (grass), *Arua Chaul* (boiled rice) and yellow-thread are prepared. A ritual is performed by the sisters for their brothers and it is worn by the brothers. These threads are a symbol of courage and protect them from all dangers. Thus, the *Dalkhai* festival comes to an end, waiting to be revived again the next year. It is not out of context to mention here that *Dalkhai* is believed to be influenced by *Tantra*. There is no denying the fact that west Orissa was once the seat of *Tantra* of *Buddhism* and in all probability, it has influenced *Dalkhai Puja*. The ritualistic orgy of *Dalkhai* in which a non-*Brahmin* priest is engaged clearly reveals the influence to *Tantra*. Chanting of *Mantras*, ringing of bells, incantations, *Tantrik* form of offerings to the deities, non-*Vedic* worship of *Hindu* Lord *Iswara* and *Ravan* (the great *Tantrik*) indicate the influence of *Tantra* in *Dalkhai* ritual. Significantly, *Yantra* or *Jantra* is the name given to the *Dalkhai Kuthi*.

*Dalkhai* and its relation to *Dhunkel* dance is an important aspect of this folk religious tradition. *Dhunkel* or *Dhunkeli* dance is an independent folk-dance of Sambalpur region. It would not be out of context to make a brief note on *Dhunkel* as it is associated with *Dalkhai* in its first phase. It is popularly known as *Rahel-Gour Puja* and is performed by the young girls from the 12th day of the bright half of *Bhudo* / *Bhadra* till the eight day of the dark fortnight of *Dasra* / *Aswina*. On the eve of the first day, even unmarried girls, each carrying a *Kalasa* (earthen pot) and a basket with seven articles for worship of *Sat Bahen* (seven Tantric sisters), move in a procession led by a pair of *Dhulias* (drummers) to the river *ghat* where *puja* is performed by *Deheri* or *Kothi Naiken*, the lady in charge of the dance chamber. The baskets are then filled with sand and carried back to the dance chamber, where the *Deheri* conducts



the worship of the nine deities, whose figures are painted on the wall by the *Maharana*. Question arises whether the *Puja* (worship) of *Dhunkel* and *Dalkhai* is performed in the same *Kuthi*? There is, however, no controversy regarding the two dances as different from each other. At the same time, it is also true that *Dhunkel* music and hymns are performed to begin *Dalkhai*. Some say that *Dhunkel Geets* are nothing but *Dalkhai Mantras* or hymns for *Dalkhai Puja*. *Dalkhai Kuthi* is called *Yantra / Jantra* where sixteen deities are worshipped whereas *Dhunkel* is performed in a separate chamber wherein nine deities are worshipped. There is also a possibility of two separate places of worship for *Dalkhai* and *Dhunkel* respectively, inside the same *Kuthi* or *Yantra / Jantra*. However, some scholars have pointed out that male members are prohibited to enter into the dance chamber and thus are debarred from witnessing the *Dhunkel* dance, which is held within closed doors.

Obscenity in some *Dalkhai* songs is a common phenomenon. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization *Dalkhai* has lost its original character. It is no more treated as a tribal-folk tradition of sacred ritual carrying important message of love and care between brothers and sisters. *Dalkhai* has moved from the tribal areas to the urban centers. Such a shift has resulted in perversion of the sacred ritual into a mere means of entertainment. The simplicity and purity with which *Dalkhai* was originally associated is no more visible during such occasion. Rituals performed during the *Dalkhai* are not given due importance and more emphasis is laid on its lighter side. *Dalkhai* songs are also considered obscene and highly suggestive by some people. It is quite apparent that *Dalkhai* songs and dances are included in some Oriya films for commercial purpose. The manner in which the simple village and tribal folks are exploited and degraded is simply appalling. Even today, professional groups of singers are invited by the rural and tribal people to perform *Dalkhai* dance and songs during marriages and other festive occasions. Undoubtedly, it is a pleasure-seeking device among the labour class too. At this point of time, we have to admit the truth that *Dalkhai* is a part of west Orissa culture and it has a rich religious significance. It is necessary to change our outlook and refine its present form. Though it is difficult to free it from the shackles of urban influence, attempts should be made to preserve its religious sanctity. The educated masses should realize the significance of the pure ritual of *Dalkhai* and thus help in creating a healthy attitude towards sex and so *Dalkhai*. It should be known for what it is; an occasion, which not only strengthens the bond between brothers and sisters, but also it carries a message of faith and love to mankind.

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**\*Development Officer, Western Orissa, Development Council, Rajiv Bhawan, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar**

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# CHAITI PARAB IN MAA MAJHI GHARIANI TEMPLE

Shri Jyoti Prakash Rout \*  
\*\*Miss Kalpana Patnaik \*\*

The district of Rayagada is very rich in cultural heritage and has its own charm possessing a strange combination of the autochthonous tribal, Oriya and Telugu cultures in an osmotic integration. One can find a synthesis of the religious beliefs and cultural celebrations performed at Rayagada as per the prevailing tribals, Hindu, Telugu and Christian practices. Although, the religious beliefs and social practices of tribals are different but in reality they do not differ much from each other. Common features, like totemism, polytheism, occultism, etc. mark them exhibiting unity in diversity.

Among the tribes inhabiting Rayagada region of the remote mountainous wilderness of the Eastern Ghats of South Orissa there is a fascinating *kuvi* speaking tribe called, the Dongria Kondh, a primitive section of the Kondh tribe. Being the denizens of hills, forests and highlands (*dongar*), their neighbours call them Dongria but they call themselves '*Dongria kuan*' or "*Drili kuan*". Dongrias inhabit in the Niyamgiri hills slopes. This primitive tribe has proved that skill, ingenuity and perseverance of the community can tame any rugged terrain without the application of any improved technology.

The Dongria Kondh villages are located in the hill slopes/ hilltops or valleys in a tangle of thickly wooded hill ranges. The habitation site is chosen upon the availability of sufficient sloppy land for *podu* cultivation with perennial source of water.

The eco-system has made the Dongria to be shifting (*podu*) cultivators. They call the shifting land as *haru* where they grow the crops such as cereals, pulses, roots and tubers, fruits and vegetables. Shifting lands (*haru*) owned individually are cultivated for 3 to 4 years and left fallow for about five years for recuperation. Dongria take advantages of favourable climatic condition to grow citrus, mango, banana, pineapple, ginger and turmeric plantations on the hill slopes and hilltops.

Generally, Dongria Kondh houses have low thatched roofs, which are about 2 to 3 feet above the ground. The houses are of rectangular type, which consists of a spacious room and another small room (*Dhapa*) at the back with verandas in front and back. The Dongria are both vegetarian and non vegetarian who generally consume food thrice daily prepared from seasonal cereals, pulses and vegetable available in kitchen garden and shifting lands. They take fish, chicken, buffalo meat, pork and beef and consume *mahua* liquor (*Irpi kalu*) and sago palm juice (*mada kalu*). Liquors are used as a medicine, ritual offerings and to entertain friends and relatives. Liquor is indispensable and it is a part of their life.

Earth goddess (*Darani Penu*), the Supreme deity is accommodated in a thatched shrine (*kuddi*) in the village and close to it, stands a beautifully designed consort (*Jhankad* or *Kotebali Penu*) of Darni Penu.



The girl's dormitory (*Da-Sha-Hada* or *Hada-Sala*) lies close to the hill streams where un-married girls learn about the life ways before entering into family life. This is preparatory home for the unmarried girls. The boys build the structure where as the girls maintain it. They help each other in economic activity, and drink, dance and sing in all religious festivals and social ceremonies performed communally.

Dongria men and women are fashionable in their personal adornments, which makes them attractive and distinctive. Dongria girls make *Kapada Ganda*, beautiful embroidered shawls. It is a fine piece of needlework in which bright coloured threads, like red, yellow and green are used. The younger girls in the dormitory learn needlework and the art of playing *goani*, the traditional musical instrument from the elders.

The Dongria men and women sing songs and dance in all festive and ceremonial occasions. Men play the musical instruments and women locking their hands behind each other dance in a line in front of the male drummers. They wear their colourful costumes during dancing. The young women do not dance in front of their elders. Dongria observe a number of rituals and festivals round the year to appease their deities and spirits and enjoy life. Their festivals are celebrated with pomp and ceremony.

Chait Parab or Chaiti Parab is celebrated in Rayagada district for the entire month (March - April) by the tribal communities including the Dongria Kondhs. Every body enjoys the festival with the warmth but the tribals go gay. This is a post-harvest festival. After harvesting the Dongria like to spend time leisurely with fun and fantasy. The heat rises in the day whereas humidity mounts at night. The entire month is teamed with various other occasions, like *Danda Nacha*, *Jhamu jatra*, *Usha kutir* etc. All these festivals symbolize the festivals of punishment, penance, fertility, hunting and excitement. Chaiti Parab follows the Makara Sankranti festival. Maa Majhi Ghariani festival also a part of Chaiti Parab is observed exclusively among the Kondh in Maa Majhi Ghariani temple. The whole of the month of Chaita is celebrated amidst festivity among the Dongria Kondh. Dancing and merry making is the chief pastime of the Dongria Dhangidis (unmarried girls) and Dhangadas (unmarried boys). The Dongria boys visit village-to-village singing for the girls to choose them as their life partners. The elderly men and youths go out into the forest for community hunting. Non-tribals also participate in the festival and enjoy it.

Maa Majhi Ghariani is a tribal Goddess appeased by each and every Dongria for fulfillment of their long cherished wishes and success in all their endeavours. The origin of the temple abounds in several myths and stories - a blending of fact and fiction. A popular belief about this goddess is that She was a presiding deity of the palace of a tribal king, named Rai Jani who had ruled this area long ago. Traditionally, it is believed that Rai or Jani, a Kondh Chief ruled Rayagada area. The ruler of Nandapur always wanted to conquer Rayagada to expand his kingdom. But the king failed to capture in spite of continuous fight. Subsequently Rai Jani was defeated in the open war. But he continued guerilla warfare to trouble the ruler. As a tribal chief he was well acquainted with the jungle roads. The incessant war caused political and economic hazards for Nandapur Empire and more over the victory had created more problems than benefits. Ultimately the king had to sign an agreement with Rai Jani. As per this agreement the place was named as Rayagada. The name Rayagada is derived from two words, such as Raya+Gada. Raya or Rai is the distorted form of Raja (king) and Gada or Garh-is the fort. Thus Rayagada means "fort of the king".



The goddess Maa Majhi Ghariani was said to be installed in the central part of the palace and worshiped devoutly by the king and the inmates. She is known as the goddess of the centre house - "Majhi" or "Madhya" meaning centre and "ghar" or house or room means occupants and the name of the goddess has become Majhi Ghariani. The Telugu people call her Maa Gouri. There is no second opinion that the temple is an embodiment of tribal culture and mode of worship.

Today the abode of the deity is located at the southeast end of Rayagada town on the bank of river Jhanjabati. Once upon a time it was dense forest the remnant of which is seen now around the temple. The eternal sweet water spring down below the eastern side of the temple called Kiajharana, rushing from the girth of the nearby hills is believed to be the mother's gift to her devotees.

This tribal goddess, Maa Majhi Ghariani has been assimilated into Aryan fold. She is the presiding deity of the entire district and thousands of pilgrims from far off places and neighboring States visit the sacred place for worship. However, some tribal elements continue to exist with the seat of worship. The priest of temple is a non-Brahman. The Paika performs the daily rituals.

Like other *shaktipithas* of the state, animal sacrifice is performed here in a large scale. *Lilika chheli*, a particular type of goat having beard is sacrificed on the Durgastami day in this temple to commemorate the death of the king Rai. It is believed that after the death of Rai Jani as per his desire, his 108 queens had sacrificed their life in the *kunda* known as "Sati kunda" located at the northern side of the temple. It is still believed that the soldiers (Paikas) of the Kondh king continued to live in Biraguda and are still guarding the entrance to the fort, even to day. The ritual of putting stones (*Jarapathar*) near a tree at the northwest side of the temple on one side of the main road - a tribal ritual of offering homage to the goddess is still in vogue. Since then the goddess was installed at the centre of the fort. Hence, at the time of the installation it must have been the centre of the town though, at present, Rayagada town has expanded in a different direction with the temple at one end.

Another story behind the nomenclature of Rayagada is derived from a big fort built in the medieval period. The fort was built by Biswanath Deo (1521-1571), the Raja or king of Nandapur in view of strategic significance of the place. The fort was mainly intended for warding off the Muslim attacks. The remains of high defense walls are to be seen. A black stone slab located within the fort known as "Jani Pathar" is believed to have been used for human sacrifice. The mud fort became very famous when his own son imprisoned king Vikram Deo of Jeypore in 1849 AD. A big cannon recovered from the fort area is now kept in the local police station.

The hearsay about the evolution of this ruined palace temple is quite interesting and popular. During 1930s when the construction of the railway bridge over the deep gorge on river Jhanjabati was in progress, the engineers encountered a lot of problems in spite of perfect planning and meticulous execution. The pillars erected to support the bridge were crumbling mysteriously and the cause remained an enigma. One day the engineer (site-in-charge) had a dream that the impediments were caused by the anger of a goddess abandoned and buried nearby. An oracle advised him to install the idol of the goddess and start worshipping her so that the bridge can be completed without any problem. The idol was traced and installed in a hut and the people engaged in the construction started worshipping it every day. The efficacy of



the prayer to this goddess resulted in the completion of the bridge without any further problems. This bridge and engineering marvel were perhaps due to divine intervention. The visitors to the temple make it a point to enjoy the beauty of this gorge also.

Stone, brick, cement, sand etc. have been used for the construction of the new temple by the Railway Department after acquiring the lands from the Endowment Department, Govt. of Orissa while laying Railway lines to Western Orissa (the materials used for the construction of the old temple in the past is not known or recorded any where). Modern techniques were used for construction of this temple or the *shaktipitha*.

At present, a nine-member Trustee Board constituted by the Endowment Department, Government of Orissa, manages the temple. The members of the Trust Board spare no efforts to provide ample amenities to the pilgrims and manage the temple activities well.

*Chaiti Parab* is the annual festival observed for five days. It starts from 11<sup>th</sup> day of (bright fortnight) *Suklapakhya* and ends on the day following *Poornima* (full moon) of the month of *Chait* in Maa Majhi Ghariani temple. During the festival sword of the deity is taken out in a colourful procession with the drumbeats and full of devotional songs and dances. The head priest carries the sacred sword of the goddess on his head and moves around the town with the procession to ward off the evil spirits from the village and from each and every household. The procession moves house to house, so that the devotees could feel the presence of the deity at their doorsteps.

*Chaiti Parab* is observed with glorification of spring season and a period of plenty after the harvesting. The people believe this as the festival of amusement and fertility. The tribals of Rayagada participate in this festival in this temple with full devotion. Dancing and merry making are the chief pastimes of the tribals (Dongria Kondhs) during this *Parab*. Each day is celebrated with dance, songs, and rhythmic music.

At present it is seen that on every Sundays and Wednesdays the devotees have to stand in long queues for hours together to have a *darshan* of the deity, the Maa Majhi Ghariani. Devotees accept it for the heavenly bliss experienced by them on getting the *darshan*, which is inexpressible. The fulfillment of their wishes prompts them to offer anything to the goddess. There is a belief that offering sacrifices with devotion could bring them prosperity and peace.

During 21st century, the *Chaiti Parab* among the tribals has undergone a lot of change. The practice of group dance by tribal maids and youths are less prevalent. It was called *Dhangada Nachha* i.e. the betrothal dance among tribal young men and women. This has been converted into worship of Gram Devati on each Tuesday of *Chait* month. Previously only the tribals used to celebrate this festival but, at present, the non-tribals are participating more in number. There is no more hunting expeditions since the mountains have become bald and jungles are empty of games and now the conscious tribal girls do not agree to dance in the street. The causes of such change in the exotic *Chaiti Parab* are manifold, such as ecological imbalance, religious conversion and impact of modernization etc.

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\* Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI

\*\* Research Officer, SCSTRTI

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# TRIBAL FESTIVALS OF KORAPUT

Rajendra Padhy \*

Fairs and festivals are integral part of the cultural life of the people of any region. These are mainly associated with the various stages of agricultural operation in different seasons starting from the sowing to the post harvest activities. In Koraput district where cultivation is a primary occupation, the life of the people, both tribal and non-tribal are dependent upon crops and monsoons.

There are ten major tribes like Kandha, Omanatya, Paroja, Bhumia, Bhotra, Gadba, Holva and Durua and castes like Rana, Gouda, Mali, Paika, Sundhi, Dhakada, Damba, Ghasi etc inhabit Koraput district. So, the culture of Koraput region is influenced by each other. Though the region is multi-lingual the people have a common language named 'Desia' for inter-community communications. So Desia dialect is the lingua franca of tribals and non-tribals of Koraput. It is necessary to have the following information regarding the Desia months and the corresponding Oriya and English months:

<u>Desia month</u>	<u>Oriya month</u>	<u>English month</u>
Chait	Chaitra	March- April
Baisak	Baisakha	April-May
Landi	Jesta	May-June
Guricha	Asada	June-July
Bandapana	Srabana	July-August
Osa	Bhadraba	August-September
Dasara	Aswina	September - October
Diali	Kartika	October-November
Pond	Margasira	November-December
Pus	Pausa	December-January
Maga	Magha	January-February
Phagun	Phalgun	February- March

As per 2001 census 49.62 % of total population of Koraput district are S.T, 13.04 % are S.C and 83.19 % are rural population. In this context the Fairs and Festivals observed by the tribals and non-tribals indicate their close socio-cultural interaction.

Fairs and festivals are closely associated with religion. The main purpose seems to be recreational. People tired of hard work and routine life, need occasions for relief and relaxation. The important regional fairs and festivals like Rathajatra, Sivaratri, Dola, Deepabali etc are observed by both tribals and nontribals of Koraput. Chait Parab, Pus Parab, Nuakhia, Diali Parab, Dasara, Amus Parab, Magh Parab etc are mainly tribal festivals but the other neighbouring non tribal communities i.e. Rana, Paika, Dhakada, Damba, Ghasi etc also observe these festivals like their own festivals.

## Bali Jatra:

Bali Jatra is the agricultural festival of Bhumia, Bhotra, Pentia and other tribes of Koraput region. It is observed in every three years. But when crops fail for lack of rains for some years, the people of Koraput conduct Bali Jatra to satisfy 'Bhima Devata' (The God of Rain). Desari and Gurumai - the traditional sacerdotal functionaries, fix the auspicious day and time for holding Bali Jatra. Generally the festival begins from the month of Bhadrab and continues for one month. Another type of Bali Jatra is observed in some places of Koraput district for three months. It begins from month of Magha (Jan-February) and ends in Chaitra / Baisakha (April-May).

On the first day of the festival men and women bring *bali* (sand) from nearby river and place it in the 'Balighar' (a structure). The construction of the structure of bamboo and straws is done amidst beating of drums and other musical instruments. An auspicious pillar (*subha deli*) is also fixed on the ground. Various grains like paddy, *alsi*, blackgram, wheat, *ragi*, oilseed etc are collected in bamboo baskets from houses and buried beneath the heap of sand. Some water is sprinkled on it. Gurumais recite *mantras* and pray hundreds of Gods and Goddesses in every night by playing Dhunkel (a string instrument). Every night Bali Ghuruma (a small drum) and other musical instruments are beaten in Balighar. Gradually the seeds are germinated. If the seeds sprout the Desari predicts about good harvest for the year.

On the closing day of the festival, all the young and old men and women take the sand baskets from Balighar to Balipadia (sand ground) in a grand procession. Desari keeps the baskets on heads of Dhangidis (young ladies) and other persons who carry it to Balipadia. A symbolic agricultural work is demonstrated there. Wooden effigies of Bhima (God of rain) and Bhimani are worshipped and their marriage ceremony is also held there. In the night, people from different villages assemble and enjoy Desia Nata, Dhensa Nata etc. A fair is held there in which varieties of goods are brought and sold. In the next day morning, the God Bhima and Goddess Bhimani are buried under the ground and all Bali Goddesses are bidden farewell with all rituals. Fowls, pigeons, eggs, rams and goats are sacrificed. The sand baskets are taken to the river and immersed with beating of musical instruments and dancing. In this festival Dhangadas and Dhangidis make friendship as 'Baliphula' with exchange of germinated plants. The main aim of Bali Jatra is to get good rains in time, plenty of crops and fertility of land.

## Dasara:

Dasara is celebrated in the month of Aswina (September - October). The tribal headman of the village collects money from each house and purchases fowl, coconut, liquor etc for worship of village deity 'Hundi' devi. On the Dasara day the village folk assemble in Hundi. Desari / Pujari worships the *lathis* (symbol of Goddess). He offers sacrifice of fowl and goat to the Hundi Thakurani. Paroja males cook rice and meat and feed their females at first. It is a tradition of tribals to respect to their women. At night, Dasara Jatra is celebrated in Dasara *padia* (Dasara Ground) of the main villages. The *lathis* from different villages are gathered on the ground. The Desari and Pujari worship the *lathis* with offering of bird and animal sacrifices. The tribal folks assemble in Dasara Jatra and enjoy dancing Dhensa. In the night, Desia Nata is performed and various goods are brought and sold in the fair.



The Dasara festival of Jeypore is very famous next to Dasara of Mysore. The festival is observed in honour of Maa Kanka Durga, the family Goddess of Jeypore King. Lathis from different villages are brought in a procession at Bankamatha. The nearby tribal villagers are invited and they come with *lathis*. People enjoy dance, music, *lakha bindha* (arrow shooting), Nata and Ravana podi (firing of the effigy of Ravana) at Dasara Ground. At Shabara Srikhetra of Koraput town the near by villagers gather with their village deity (*lathi*) and participate in *lakha bindha* competition.

Dasara is also observed in different places of Koraput region in Saktipeethas. The whole night is spent amidst rituals, archery competition and dances.

#### Diali Parab:

Diali Parab is celebrated in the month of Kartika (October-November) for worshipping the cattle. On the day of the festival the tribals decorate their cattle with vermillion, turmeric and flowers. They tie thread to each animals and feed them *charu* / *khatudi* (rice cooked with vegetables). The cattle herders perform 'kikiri dance' with beating of musical instruments like Dol, Mahuri, Tidibidi etc at the door of all cattle owners. They collect money, paddy, rice and clothes from the cattle owners. The Bhotra tribe of Koraput observe 'Gardan' in Diali Parab. They offer rice and salt to the cattle and worship cattle and Kasini Devi (the goddess of cattle).

#### Pus Parab:

Pus Parab is another important festival of Koraput district. The festival is celebrated in the month of Pousa (December - January) by Bhumia, Bhotra, Pentia, Durua, and Paroja tribes and also other non-tribals of the region. The festival starts fifteen days before the full moon night of Pousa. The young and old tribal folks roam from village to village dancing and singing *chera - chera* song and collect paddy, rice, and money from the villagers. On the closing day of Pus Parab i.e. *pus pune*, they gather in a feast at Hundi cottage. The Dhangadas (young men) start visiting other villages forming *danda hulia* dance groups. During their night halt in other villages they make friendship with the villagers as Sangata, Meeta, Mapasada etc. They return to their villages after one month and assemble in a feast at Hundi Thakurani's place.

Individual family members worship their household deities and ancestors by offering fowl sacrifice and *charu*. Pus Parab is the festival of dancing, singing and merry making. Paroja tribe observe Pus Parab as Pus Pandu by firing Bhogi. They collect logs from different houses and fire the wood and dance and sing around the fire through out the night. The Koya's observe this festival as Pus Pandum and the Bondas, as Sumegelierak.

#### Chait Parab:

The grand festival of Koraput region is Chait Parab. It is observed by the all tribal communities in the month at Chaitra (March-April) with joy and great enthusiasm. The people of Koraput remain in festive mood for the whole month. Chait Parab begins with dancing, singing and merry making. In the past the festival was being observed for one month. But now it is celebrated for 10 to 15 days. During this time the tribals not do any work. The houses are cleaned and the tribal folks wear new clothes. The auspicious day for starting the Chait Parab is decided by 'Desari'. The village head Nayak collects money from each house engaging his assistant, Chalan and



purchases fowls, ram, goat, coconut etc. from the market for the ritual. On the first day the village folk gather at village deity Hundi. Desari and Pujari start their ritual. They worship Hundi Devi, mother earth and other Gods and Goddesses by offering *puja* (sacrifice of birds and animals). The *lathis* (long bamboo poles) - the symbol of Goddesses are cleaned and worshipped. The paddy seeds already collected from farmers of the village are kept before the Goddess 'Hundi'. After worship of seeds by Desari these are distributed among the farmers of the village. In this festival after worshipping and offering mangoes to the village deity people start eating mangoes. The elder daughter in law of the family cooks *charu* and offers it to the household deity and 'Dumma' (spirit of ancestors) and the whole family eat together. On this day *kandula* (red gram) and *mahula* flower are also newly eaten.

The second phase of Chait Parab is "Bent Parab" (hunting festival). The Desari declares the auspicious moment for the villagers to go for hunting. All the male members getting themselves fully equipped with hunting implements like arrow and bow, axe, spears etc proceed to jungle. They search for a suitable hunt. If they are successful in hunting and return to the village with good hunt, the village women warmly welcome them. Otherwise they are insulted by the village women who throw cow dung water on them singing *tode* songs. The males and females spend the whole night in Dhemesa dance singing Chait Parab songs. The meat of hunted animal is divided among the villagers. Next day Benta Jatra is observed in the main village and people enjoy Desia Nat, Dhemesa dance and Chait Parab Geeta competition throughout the day and night. It is the tradition during Chait Parab that the tribal folks block the roads by logs, ropes and stones (*pejar cheka*) and collect money as a gift from the passengers. Koya, Bonda and other tribes observe Chait Parab, Bija pandu and Giagige in order to get the blessing of the mother earth offering cock, pig, eggs etc.

#### Gotar Parab of Gadba:

The very important and expensive festival of Gadba is 'Gotar Parab'. Gotar is observed for worship of ancestors for prosperity and security of their life. Generally the festival is observed in the month of Magha. The Gadba observe two types of Gotar i.e. at individual and communal levels. Individual Gotar is observed by the agnatic kins of the deceased and communal Gotar, by the whole villagers collectively to appease their ancestors. The festival is observed for the duration of a month. For the departed souls whose death rituals are not performed within 3 to 4 years their kinsmen observe Gotar individually. But communal Gotar is observed for obtaining blessings from ancestors of the village at every 10 to 15 year intervals. On the day of Gotar a long stone slab is erected for each dead person on the roadside of the village. Five buffaloes are sacrificed on *semilimunda* during the ritual conducted by Sipa (village priest). The buffaloes are decorated with new red clothes and anointed with turmeric and vermilion. They perform dance and sing Gotar songs by beating musical instruments like Dhol, Dhap, Mahuri, Khinide etc. during the sacrifice of buffaloes. In that time the Gadba women cry for their deads. They distribute the flesh of buffaloes among them. A grand feast is also arranged and they take *pendum* (rice beer). Dancing and singing continues throughout the day and night.

#### Agri Gangamma Jatra at Nilabadi:

The Goddess Agri Gangamma of Nilabadi village of Narayanpatna Block is very famous among tribals and non-tribals of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. In the month of



Chaitra a weeklong *jatra* is celebrated at Nilabadi village and thousands of people congregate there from Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Those whose desires are fulfilled offer *magura* fish to the Goddess. The similar *jatras* are also held in the places where Agri Gangamma Goddess is worshipped in Koraput district.

#### Conclusion:

The tribes of Koraput still preserve their own festivals to propitiate the deities but they celebrate them with total freedom of feasting, singing, dancing and drinking. They offer prayers to their deities with dance and songs and sacrifice of animals and birds to please the Gods and Goddesses. There are festivals, which are observed by different tribes irrespective of caste and creed. Each tribal group also observes its own peculiar kind of festivals. But the mode of celebration of festival remains same. The tribals being influenced by non-tribals observe Durgapuja, Ganeshpuja, Rakhi Purnima, Sriram Nabami, Dola Jatra, Sivaratri, Gahma purnnima, Holi, Badadina, Maharam etc. festivals in a year. The fairs and festivals are observed by the tribes round the year with hope to obtain an intimate relationship with Gods, Goddesses, ancestral spirits and other supernatural forces that would bring them prosperity and immunity from fatal diseases. Animal and bird sacrifice, songs, dance and community feasts and drinking of liquor form an integral part of the celebrations. During the festive days boys and girls meet freely to choose their life partners. The village folks and folk bards of both sex called "Geeta Kudia" and "Geeta Kudiani" sing songs in competitive mood. The main objective of tribal festivals is promotion of one for all and all for one spirit in the community.

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*Adivasi Gobesana Mancha*  
At/PO : Kundra  
Via : Jeypore-764001  
Dist :Koraput

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# TRIBAL DUSSERA IN KANDHAMAL

Trilochan Sahoo \*

## Abstract:

A gigantic gathering of tribal and non-tribal people in Kandhamal, the hill habitat of the Kandha tribe, celebrate Dussera festival at select places in traditional joviality and universality. In the past the king being the chief patron of the cultic practice rendered patronage to the tribal denizens of his kingdom to observe it for the well being of the people and the kingdom. At the same time, through these ritual means, administration in the past, was being facilitated in the kingdom. The Kandhas of six mutha of Kandhamal play a pivotal role in the celebration of the grand ritual of Durriga puja following the tribal tradition over generations. The mode of worship of Baral Devi, the main deity of the locality, bears a tribal motif witnessing a large scale animal sacrifice blended with semi-Vedic tradition wherein the religious functionaries from six mutha act as the main priest. The historical installation of Durga in iconic form at Balaskumpa and other places of Kandhamal by the king and the fixing of Chhat khamba, resembling the Stambeswari or Khambeswari as insignia of Goddess Durga at different Kandha villages confirm the acceptance of each other's ritual elements. The paper is based on empirical observation of Dussera festival at Balaskumpa, Phulbani Sahi and adjoining Kandha villages in and around Phulbani town during October 2002. This is a tailored transformation of my article entitled "Dussera in Tribal Orissa: State's Representation in Enlivening Local Traditions" which was published in Banaja, 2007, ATDC/now ATLC, Bhubaneswar.

## Tribal Dussera in Orissa:

The tribals, like Bagata, Banjara, Bathudi, Bhotoda, Binjhia, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Gadaba, Hill Kharia, Kawar, Kisan, Kol lohara, Konda Dora, Kandha, Kora, Koya, Mankirdia and Munda communities observe Dussera in their own ways. During the festivals they mostly worship their respective village deities and sacrifice animals and birds to please the supernaturals. Exceptionally, the Banjara tribe only invites the Brahmin priest for conducting the worship during Dussera. The other tribes do the priestly job themselves. The Chuktia Bhunjia of Sonabera Plateau in Nuapada district and the Kandha of Kandhamal district have a tribal tradition of elaborate Dussera Puja, wherein the pure Vedic rites are conspicuous by absence. In the other words the areas where the tribals are found scattered, the caste Hindus organize and observe universal Dussera festival in pure Vedic form and the Hinduised local tribals participate in it with devotion for the Mother Goddess and obligations to their Hindu neighbours. In Jeypore, the city of victory (in Koraput district) and the Kandhamal district- the mountainous habitat of the Kandhas, the tribals observe the Dussera festival in their own distinct tribal religious traditions. There, the rituals significantly symbolize the past politico-religious affinity between the kings and the tribals.



Jeypore town continues to be the center of tribal Dussera in Southern Orissa. The tribal chiefs and the priests belonging to the tribes like, Omanatya, Bhotara, Bhumiya, Bonda, Didayi, Durua, Gadaba, Gond, Kandha, Koya, Paraja, Saora, etc. who inhabit different localities of the erstwhile Jeypore kingdom used to carry scores of holy bamboo clubs, 'Lathis' and materials, like rice, *dal*, ghee, vegetables, honey as a gift to the king and arrive at Jeypore palace within the sound of traditional ceremonial music playing *toories*, *birkahali*, *nagara* and tribal dances to pay obeisance to Goddess Durga on *Astami* day of Dussera and to pay respect and show allegiance to the king. In the past the tribal chiefs and village headmen were being ceremonially honoured by the king during Dussera by way of tying headgears (*saris/pagadis*). After abolition of princely states, remembering the past tradition, now the District Administration as well as the *Puja* Committees play host to tribal priests and chiefs of the region and felicitate them with headgears and costumes. From the palace Goddess Kanank Durga is carried in a grand procession known as *patuara*. The tribal musicians, dancers, tribal chiefs and priests in their traditional attire holding 'Lathis' (bamboo clubs as representatives of village Goddesses) gather on the ground near the Banko Matha. Arrangements are made to keep their holy 'Lathis' at one special pandal till the rituals are complete. The rituals continue the whole night along with the archery competition and tribal dances. It is believed by the tribals that the holy 'Lathis' are the incarnation of the Goddess Durga and worshipping Her brings prosperity round the year. The unique tradition is being continued and a crowd of tribal devotees from different areas of Umerkote, Nabarangpur, Boipariguda, Kotpad, and Lamtaput come to Jeypore and offer special prayer to their sacred *Lathis*. They sacrifice a large number of animals to appease the deity. Of the two famous Dussera feasts in tribal Orissa, one at Kamdhamal and another at Jaypore, the author had the opportunity to participate in the tribal Dussera at Balaskumpa in Kandhamal district during the year 2001, the observations of which are presented below.

#### Tribal Dussera at Balaskumpa:

Balaskumpa village is a famous place of historical, religious and tourist interest in the district of Kandhamal. It is 15 km away from the Phulbani town, the Kandhamal district headquarters. Dussera festival at Balaskumpa is famous for all the people of Kandhamal. The Kandhas as well as other caste Hindus are worshipping Goddess Durga in the name of *Maa Baral Devi* here since time immemorial. Her old name was *Bada Raul*. In course of time the name was changed to *Baral Devi*. The etymological meaning of *Barali* is *Bara* (boon) and *Ali* (to beg). If any devotee asks the Mother to fulfill his/her desire, She grants the boon and therefore She is known as *Baral Devi*. She is the presiding deity of Kandhamal. The village Balaskumpa has no Kandha population but it has great historic and religious significance for the Kandha tribe as a whole.

Balaskumpa is situated at the holy confluence called Duimuhani of Sanjur and a small stream, which later form the river Pila-Salunki. There lies the abode of deity, *Baral Devi* and *Khambeswari*. The King of Boudh had a *garh* (fort) palace at Balaskumpa that is close to the bank of the confluence. Adjoining to the collapsed palace there is an open-air shrine of *Khambeswari* and *Maheswari* beneath a big banyan tree and a *jari* tree. Both the deities have been installed in shape of stone poles and worshiped on the eve of *Dussera*.



Legend says; long ago the territory of Kandhamal was under the king of Boudh. Then Boudh was the neighbouring kingdom of Khemundi, which included Saranggarh, Nuagaon, Balliguda and Mahasingh, and the latter was the capital of Khemundi state. *Bada Rauli Devi* was the presiding deity of Mahasingh. Both the kings fought each other for twelve years. The king of Boudh prayed *Bada Rauli Devi*, appeased Her and due to Her grace won the battle. The Kandha soldiers participated in the battle. In the aftermath of the victory of Mahasingh Garh of Khemundi, the Boudh king-Gandhamardan accompanied by his Kandha soldiers returned bringing the deity, *Bada Rauli Devi* with him. In course of his return journey the king and the Kandha soldiers made night halts at Balaskumpa, Purunakataka and at last, reached at Bandhagah. In all these places of their night halts, the deity was installed and worshipped by the King and the Kandhas.

The king of Boudh finally installed *Bada Rauli Devi* who was later known as *Baral Devi* at Balaskumpa after his victory of Khemundi because he found the place auspicious for the purpose. He made this decision after witnessing a queer incident at that place during his return journey. He noticed that a weak animal like hare chased a strong animal - a wild dog and drove it out from the place. Since then at Balaskumpa the deity was named as *Baral Devi* and is being worshipped by the Kandhas of Kandhamal. The Kandhas of six *mutha* had built *Gudighara* (the shrine of *Baral Devi*) at Balaskumpa village and had taken the management of the shrine and the worship of *Devi* since the time of Boudh King. Besides, the king had also installed his presiding deity *Stambeswari* in that place who was also called *Khambeswari* later.

*Baral Devi* temple is surrounded by shrines of *Khambeswari* in the west, *Bauri* in the east, *Pitabali* and *Naraghanta* in the north and *Sarupenu (Nagalkuda)* in the south. The *Baral Devi* temple premises is a complex of shrines like open air shrine of *Khambeswari* and *Laxmi* in the front of the main temple and Shiva temple to its side. Besides, recently the construction of a new *Laxmi - Narayan* temple has been done after obtaining the consent of the Kandhas. As a matter of routine annual Dussera is observed on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Oriya month of Aswin. (September/October) at Balaskumpa in the premises of *Baral Devi* temple. Observance of Dussera by the Kandhas centers round both the deities, *Baral Devi* and *Khambeswari*.

The specialty of Dussera *puja* at Balaskumpa is that goddess *Stambheswari*, in the form of a wooden pillar, is worshipped along with *Baral Devi* as Durga in the same temple premises as well as at the *Khambheswari* and *Maheswari* shrines located near the configuration of the Pilasalunki river. They might have been worshipped separately for a long time but from a certain period onwards they are united and worshipped together. It is likely, though not certain, that this act of bringing these deities together has been worked out by some king due to politico-religious reasons (Tripathi: 1978:195). Since the time of Boudh king, the Kandhas of six *muthas* had been thatching the *Barala Devi* shrine (*Gudighar*), worshiping the deity and managing the rituals. About 25 years ago a new pucca temple replaced the old structure by public contribution and especially by the concerted efforts of the Kandhas of six *muthas*.

At present there are the images of *Khambeswari* and *Maheswari* in the form of a small stone pole fixed to the ground in the arena. The *Khambeswari*'s open shrine is outside the *Baral Devi* temple premises at Balaskumpa whereas in the temple premises beneath the platform of the temple front stands a wooden pillar of about one meter



high presiding over the giant posts meant for the buffalo sacrifices. The wooden pole retains its aboriginal character but the small stone poles represent the Aryanised form. In front of the *Pitabali* shrines at the nearby villages namely, Kaladi, Adapaju and Ghodapathar, the presence of *Khambeswari* resemble the form of *Khambeswari* in the *Baral Devi* temple complex. At all the places Goddess, *Khambeswari* has been kept in open space inside the stonewall boundary. The same is the pattern of the shrines of Kandha deities like *Pitabali*, *Basengi*, *Lachhama*, *Baral Devi*, *Turkipenu*, *Sarupenu* etc.

The image of *Baral Devi* seems to be a simple stone having a shape of disk like head and anthropomorphized by slightly carved nose, mouth, three eyes and a protruding tongue made of golden metal. Her face is painted red with a thick layer of vermilion paste. She is adorned with silk saree and flower garlands and ornaments. Her body and limbs are not seen. Her image gives the impression of Hindu goddess Durga. The temple structure resembles a Hindu temple in southern Orissa. The inner sidewalls of the temple have been painted with icons of Hindu gods and goddesses, like Nabagraha, Durga, Shiva, Krushna, Brahma, Bishnu, Shiva etc.

There is a tradition that during Dussera, i.e, on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of Oriya month of Aswina every year, and in every Tuesday the goddess *Baral Devi* along with *Khambeswari* is worshipped by the Kandhas of six *muthas*. The idol of *Baral Devi*, installed at Phulbanisahi and Ghodapathar village is also worshipped by the Kandhas on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> day respectively.

As the tradition goes, *prashad* and articles of worship for *Baral Devi* come from different parts of Kandhamal during Dussera festival. Resin from Gochhapada and Baidnapada areas, earthen pots from Phulbani, milk, ghee, rice and bucks from Baitha and other areas come for the worship of *Baral Devi*. It is believed that if any devotee offers sacrifices and desires something, *Maa Baral Devi* grants the boon. So devotees from different parts of Kandhamal and even beyond the area offer sacrifice of bucks on Tuesday and on the eve of Dussera. Here people do not believe that animal sacrifice before *Baral Devi* is a superstition. *Devi* hears the prayer of the devotees and grants boon for safety from danger, cure from sickness and the like. Wine and animal sacrifices are two important items of *puja*. The other articles are rice, puffed paddy smeared with molasses, incense sticks, flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, milk, resin, fruits like coconuts, oranges, apples, *bel* leaves etc. The non-tribal priest (*Dehuri*) of the deity is from the Sudha caste who is assisted by a *Dahuka* from Keuta caste. Here *puja* is performed according to the tribal custom.

As observed, the *Baral Devi* was not worshipped alone; her worship was immediately followed by the worship of deities like *Khambeswari*, *Laxmi* etc. Before the worship of *Baral Devi* the Kandha priest invoked the deities (*abahana*) of the surrounding areas. In the Bara, the day preceding the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Dussera, the Sudha Dehuri worshiped the swords inside the *Kamnakudi* and in the next day the swords were brought into the *Baral Devi* temple for the worship. The swords and pickaxe which were usually kept at the residence of the Sudha Dehuri and Dahuka were invited and brought on the priest's head to the temple in a procession of Sudha Dehuri, Dahuka, Kandha chiefs of six *muthas* and other people including the Kandhas and non-tribals. The *sankirtan mandali*, Pana drummers and other people played musical instruments like conch, *murdanga*, *jhanja*, *turi* and sang devotional songs amidst the Hindu holy chorus like *haribol* from malefolk and *hulahuli* from female folk. The oilman carried



oil lamp (kept burning uninterruptedly) ahead the *prashad* and battle-axe carriers. The cowherds played their club tricks. After the procession reached the temple the worship started in presence of the image of *Baral Devi* inside the temple. The deities were washed with water and milk (*snana*), clothed in new saree (*vastra*) and then adorned with vermilion paste (*sindura*), flowers (*puspa*), incense (*dhupa*), lamp (*deepa*), food (*naivedya/prashad*) etc. At last the *Dehuri* bowed before the deity (*vandana*) and uttered verses (*mantra*) to appease her. Other devotees, the *Kandha*, *Sudha*, *Bahera* etc. followed *Dehuri* to communicate the blessings of the deity. A giant lamp fortified with *karpura* was brought out of the *sanctum sanctorum* and its flame was offered to other devotees. The *Panas* played drums throughout the worship of the deities.

In both the *pujas* the *Kandhas* from six *muthas* were given priority to conduct the 1<sup>st</sup> *vandapana* of the deities. After that the animal sacrifice started on the ground in front of the temple. Like *vandapana* all the *Kandhas* of six *muthas* performed the first animal sacrifice. It is a custom since king's time. As many as 19 goats were first scarified and the blood offered to the deity. Two *Dahuaks* sacrificed the animals using battle-axes. After each sacrifice the head and blood of the animal collected in big copper disk and leaf cup were brought to the *sanctum sanctorum* of *Baral Devi* and the beheaded bodies of all the sacrificed animals brought to the arena of *Khambeswari*. A *Dahuka* cut out the liver of each scarified animal put it in a cup and offered the same to the deity. In the past the kings were offering buffaloes for sacrifice before the deity. This practice has been stopped since 1999 and the *Kandhas* have accepted it. There was no sacrifice of buffaloes during *Dussera* in the year 2002 at *Balaskumpa*. The sacrifice offered to *Baral Devi* differs from the Vedic form of sacrifice. But there were animal sacrifices before the deity on the day after the worship on 9<sup>th</sup> day, which was not a Tuesday. This explains that regularity in the performance of ritual is much less important to *Kandha* religion than to Hinduism which was seen in the scarifies offered at times of need and at intervals near the symbol of deities.

Day after the ritual of sacrifices the sacrificed meat (*bhoga*) was distributed among the *Kandhas* of all the *muthas* in *Kandhmal*. Even the *bhoga* is now being distributed to different Government offices. People from all walks of life; Govt. service holders, businessmen, contractors etc. had contributed for the construction of *Baral Devi* temple at *Balaskumpa*. Besides, construction of *Laxminaryan* temple inside the temple premises of goddess *Baral Devi* has been completed with the financial contributions of the devotees, mainly the *Hindus* caste people. This shows that the elements of Hinduization and kingly elements have been incorporated into the aboriginal religious cult of *Kandhas*.

According to the custom, the *Kandhas* people of the six *muthas* offer *Bhetis* (presentations) to their *Mutha Sardar* as a token of respect during *Dussera*. It is the duty of the *Mutha Sardar* that he should collect *dakhina* (money to be spent for worship of *Baral Devi*) from all the *Kandha* families and send the same to *Dalabehera*. Besides *Dehuri*, some other servitors who belong to *Sudha* caste are also appointed at the shrine, viz, *Bisoi* to cook the offerings, *Naik* to watch the shrine and *Dalabeheras* to summon the *Kandha Sardars*. The *Kandhas* are looked upon as the owner of the *Baral Devi Temple*. Thus the first offerings to the goddess are made by the *Kandha Sardars* of six *muthas*.



### Tribal Dussera in Kandha villages:

Thakurani *puja* at the Kandha countryside refers to worship of *Baral Devi* during the months of Magha (January-Feb) and Aswina (Sept.-Oct.) The object of the worship is to protect the human and domestic cattle population from the attack of wild animals and epidemics. The villagers sit together and decide the time for a two-day ritual of goddess *Baral Devi*. Day preceding the day of sacrifice is called *bara* and on that day *Chhatakamba* (wooden pillar), the symbol of goddess Baral, is fixed on the sacrifice ground. There the Dehuri performs worship with the *bel* leaves, smears turmeric and sprinkles *aru* rice. The villagers offer milk to the pillar goddess. The Panos, beat drums during the performance. Next day, *Bhoga*, fried rice smeared with molasses (*muan*) are offered to the deity and water is poured on the base of the pillar goddess. The ritual ends with sacrifice of two he goats and/or buffaloes. The *Dakua* executes the sacrifices. Here the *Chhatkamba* resembles the *Stambheswari* or *Khambheswari* and regarded as the *Chalanti Devi* (the movable deity)

### Renaissance of Religion of Kandha Tribe and Caste Hindus:

There is a saying in Oriya, '*Rajanugata Dharma*' which means the citizen/subjects follow the king's religion. In the past the kings and *zamindars* ruled the territory of Kandhamal. Then the religious faiths and mode of worship had influenced to a great extent the people of Kandhamal in general and the numerically dominant Kandhas in particular. During the king's sway the Kandhas had compromised their religion with induction of ingredient of Hindu religion. With much reverence to their own religion they continued to assimilate the Hindu religious faiths. Therefore, now the religious tradition of the Kandhamal seems to be a renaissance of primitive, ancient, and modern religious beliefs.

"The Aryan invaders who had settled amidst the tribes in course of time adopted and worshipped these goddesses in order to enjoy the confidence and seek the co-operation of the latter in their settlements. So much so gradually these goddess were Aryanised and Hinduised being transformed from a formidable nomadic or tribal cult into *sakti* cult and worshipped both by the Aryan and the non-Aryan sections of the society" Stambeswari was originally a tribal deity. In the Kandhamal region the Hindu Kings adopted Stambeswari as the presiding deity for protection, safety and expansion of their kingdoms. They had done so on religio-political ground. The Kings of Bhanj dynasty in Khinjali Mandal (including Kandhamal) during 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century were the devotees of Stambeswari (Rath: 1918: 133-136). The historical records refer to Kandhas worshipping Stambeswari. In the western Orissa there is worship of wooden pillar goddess (Stambeswari). The Kandhas of Kalahandi, Sonapur and Boudh worshiped Stambha and Stambheswari (Sadananda: 1989:96).

The Aryan ruling dynasty started this process of transformation by establishing kingdom of their own over the tribals of Kandhamal. Further from the military point of view the services of the brave tribals were essential for the defence of the kingdom. Thus the Aryan kings always sought the support and loyalty of the Kandhas and kept them in good humor by a gradual process of inclusion of the Kandhas into the Hindu religious fold by adoption and absorption of some elements of Kandha religion. For example, they Aryanised and patronized the tribal goddesses as their family or tutelary deity which enabled them to sustain and stabilize their political power and its legitimization in the Kandhamal. In course of time, under the royal patronage,

Stambeswari, the deity of Kandhas has been revered as the deity of Hindus. Being unanthropomatric, the wooden pillar goddess is the revelation of power and owes its name from Sanskrit as 'Stambheswari' or 'Khambeswari.' Stambheswari is being worshipped in the tradition of *sakti* tantric cult. Thus Stambheswari is the ancient *sakta* cult deity of Orissa (Sahoo, 1977: 347).

#### Conclusion:

In the course of history the Kandha kingdom was lost and the reign of king in Kandhamal superseded. But till today there, the *Rajanugata Dharma* stands intact and very much in practice. The observation of Dussera at Balaskumpa is an exemplary event. The Hindus consider every confluence of the rivers and streams as a holy place. Selection of the seat of *Baral Devi* shrine by the king at the bank of the confluence at Balaskumpa and the installation of the deity there and Her identification as Durga carry the great tradition of *Sakti* Cult. The practice of *Shakti* Cult has been a significant aspect of religious beliefs of the people of Kandhamal, the tribals and the non-tribals alike. In addition to their own religious practices, the Kandha of Kandhamal have a strong devotional attachment to *Maa Baral Devi*. Generations together, the renaissance of religion of Kandha tribe and caste Hindus has been a solace for the peaceful life and living of the tribal and non-tribal in Kandhamal. May Maa Baral Devi's blessings help sustain the peaceful life for all in Kandhamal.

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\* (Research Officer, SCSTRTI, CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar.)

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# PANORAMA OF SANTAL FESTIVALS: THE PIOUS BEAUTY AND PRECIOUS SANCTITY

Ramesh Mohanty \*

'Dancing and singing' is the soul of tribal life while the 'Festivals', the heart of their group. Dancing together with singing exhibits the beauty of their life but the festivals reflect the dignity and purity of their society. They sing and dance for pleasure while they observe festivals not merely for leisure but for the treasure of peace, love, health, wealth happiness and prosperity. Festivals add colours to their life and living.

Santals are the scion of great Kherwal tribe. They observe thirteen festivals in twelve months in a sequence scheduled around the year. The portrait of all the festival cannot be presented in small article of a few thousand words. Only an honest attempt has been made here to briefly sketch the festivals in the sequence they are observed.

## 1. EROK SIM:

The first agricultural festival Erok sim is observed just before sowing paddy seeds in the fields around the month of May-June. Each householder subscribes fowls which are sacrificed by the village priest at the sacred grove called *jaherthan* in honour of Maran Buru, Jaher era, Monrenko, Pargana, Gosaneera and Manjhi Haram. One bird is offered to each of the deities. The boundary deity is offered a black fowl. Worship and prayer is done for good harvest. A feast is arranged and all Santal men eat together at *jaherthan*. However the meat of the fowls offered to Jaher era and Monrenko can be eaten by the village priest (Naeke) alone. Then all the villagers join together in singing and dancing to conclude the Erok sim or sowing festival.

## 2. HARIAR SIMKO:

When rains come and the paddy plants grow and gradually turn green, the festival is observed in the same fashion as Erok sim.

## 3. IRI GUNDLI NANWANI:

(The millet festival) Offering of millet crops to the Santal deities is observed during the month of August. The village priest (Naeke) after purificatory abulation goes to the field of a *raiyat* (tenant) and harvests the ripened crop. Then he goes to the *jaherthan* and cleans it with the cowdung and offers the crop to Jaher era, Monrenko, Moran hor, Gasane era and Pargana for prevention of ailments like stomach trouble or headache after first eating of the crop. The priest comes back to village and offers the new crop to the shrine in the headman's house. He takes the rest of the crops to his home. Then the individual Santal families cook and eat the new crop. This festival is also called Muchri, which is observed with great pleasure, sincerity, love and dedication.

## 4. GAMHA PURNIMA:

On the full moon of Shravan i.e., Iri Gundli Nanwani the Santals feed their cows with salt, *mohua* flowers, rice, the corrosive *bhela* fruit and a grass called *mutha*. The

horns of cattle are copiously rubbed with oil. Men and women dance around a Karam branch, planted at the *akhara* (the dancing ground.) This is a special Karam dance after which the Karam branch is immersed in water. All wear new clothes, indulge in feasts and drinks not forgetting to feed Brahmins and Vaishnabas.

#### 5. KARAM POROB:

This is an extra festival in which the *pooja* of the Karam Bonga is performed around the month of September-October. The male members of the village go after the nightfall, cut a branch of Karam tree and fix it in *kulhi* (village lane). The young men and women dance around the Karam branch till morning. The dance is called 'Runj' i.e., performance of heroic dance. After the dance the branch is immersed in water (tank or spring). No sacrifices are offered but a libation of liquor is poured out to the manes of the village chief and to Maran Buru. This festival is observed for amusement and welfare of the villagers.

#### 6. JANTHAR:

The villagers subscribe towards a hog or a ram or a he-goat, which is sacrificed before the *paranathan* by a special priest called Kudam Neake. The priest himself collects all the articles for worship. Only the male members of the tribe are allowed to eat the meat of the sacrificed animal. During this festival the first crop of low land paddy is offered to the deities. So the other name of the festival is Baihar Horo Nanwani. Some also name it as Maamane, a festival of reaping of wetland paddy. Where no such crop is harvested, no function takes place.

The festival is observed for two days. First day is the day of purification. In the morning the unmarried boys repair and clean the small hut of Jaher era at the sacred grove after fasting for a day. Towards evening the villagers assemble at the house of the Naeke and old men and women invoke the tribal gods with prayers. A dance is arranged at the Sacred Grove to invoke and please the deities. Sometimes five men representing the number of gods rub a plantain with sun-dried rice. They sit on a mat and rub sun-dried rice, given by the priest, in a winnowing fan. Gradually, they get into trance (*jhupur*) give reply to various questions asked by the villagers pertaining to harvest, diseases, calamities etc. and their solutions.

On the second day (Gardi) morning the Godet collects rice and chicken from all houses of the village. A dance is organized at Jaherthan with women singing and dancing and men accompanying all the way with cymbal and kettledrum. The Naeke walks in the front with items procured by him on the previous day together with a pot of rice beer. A bachelor with an earthen pitcher follows the priest. The priest reaps some paddy from a field and offers it with prayer at Jaherthan. Fowls are sacrificed to the five Gods, and the boundary deities propitiated at a separate place with offering of rice beer. When the rituals are over, women return home, while men prepare the dinner, which they eat in the afternoon. The priest himself cooks near the shrine of Jahar Era, offers the meat to five deities of the grove and eats the food himself. During this time the whole village vibrates with music and folk song of the women who have already retuned earlier from *jaher era*. In the evening the men return home dancing and singing with the priest at the head.

#### 7. SOHRAE:

Sohrae is the festival of Winter Harvest - the biggest event of the Santal festival calendar. It is also known as Bundhna, in common parlance. This picturesque



festival has no specified date. It is held on suitable dates for each village with the stipulation that the festival must conclude before the last day of Pousa (mid-January) in Santal Paraganas. In Mayurbhanj the festival is celebrated for 2-3 days while in Santal Parganas the festival continues for a week.

The festival starts with an initial purification ceremony (*un*) when the Santals clean themselves with a ceremonial ablation. House and courtyards also are scrupulously made free dirt. Thereafter the Santals take a meal and gather at *jaherthan*.

The cowboys of the tribe make their cows walk on a particular spot on which eggs have been placed. The boy whose cow breaks the egg or smell it is called lucky boy. The feet of the successful cow are then ceremonially washed. Then worship of cows (*Gohal Puja*) is performed. The young men of the tribe keep vigil and go from place to place to awaken the cows playing with the pipes and kettle drums, beginning with head man's house. On the other hand the maidens deck their hair with flowers and entwine their arms with their sisters. Thus they march to the headman's house where with fresh paddy, grass and lamps they sing special songs around the cattle and then visit all the cowsheds of the village. Cattle are anointed with oil and dubbed with vermilion and a share of rice-bean given to each. On that night the *kulhi* (village lane) resound with various other songs sung by women.

An interesting feature of this day is the fixing of posts all over the village up to the headman's house in the morning. After midday meal the cows and buffaloes are tied to their posts. The feet of these animals are washed and their horns decorated with garlands. The young men of the village then come in a body and poking the animals and dancing around them. After the "War-Dance" all the villagers assemble at the Headman's house and engage in a picturesque competition by playing with bamboo-staff and shields.

Next follows *Hako Katkom* meaning the day of catching fish and crabs. It is the religious duty of all Santals to go out for hunting on this day and if they cannot find anything else, they must at least catch fish or crabs. On another special day called *Jale*, the members of the tribe visit from house to house and exchange greetings.

The whole week of festivities come to end with *Bejha* (to shoot at a target)- a day of sports. The tribe becomes animated and before the congregation of villagers sports like *lathi* play, target shooting with bows and arrows etc take place. Successful players are cheered and carried to the headman's house on the shoulders of their friends.

*Sohrae* is not merely a festival of Winter Harvest, it is an invaluable unique occasion of family reunion, social reunion and more ideally old lovers reunion. All married daughters young and old return to the parents. During this visit, rice beer is brewed, household chores are forgotten and the code of sexual conduct is deliberately relaxed. At *Sohrae* even the old men, young men and women are allowed to meet their old lovers. Even though her husband is present, a woman is not deterred from seeking out her old friend.

#### 8. MOKAR:

*Mokar Parob* is celebrated by Santals on the first day *Magh* coinciding with *Makar Sankranti* of the Hindus. But this festival is also called a *Sankranti Puja* and performed pompously in which *chire* (flattered rice) and molasses are offered to the



dead ancestors. The first day is called "Banundi". On this day Santals catch fish and crab and eat. Eating fish and crab on this day is believed to be giving a long lease of life. Tasteful cakes of meat, sun-dried rice-flour are prepared in all households. After bath Santals eat it with *treache*, *til* (sesame) and *chira* (flattened rice). They also drink of rice beer.

Towards afternoon archery competition to shoot a target placed on a banana tree is held. The successful one is cheered and carried to the Headman's house in a procession. There they are entertained with rice beer and fried rice. He who maintains a uniform record for three consecutive years is awarded special prize by the Headman. During the award, melodious and spirited folk songs with dances make the evening unique.

The festival concludes with straw made puppet monkeys made to dance from house to house. Subscriptions are raised to arrange a community feast while the countryside vibrates with music and laughter.

#### 9. MAGH SIM:

Santal year ends with the month of Magh. Appropriate ceremonials are performed with cutting of wild thatching grass. Servants are paid their wages and fresh contracts entered into. All village officials resign; *rayats* notify throwing up of lands who are re-appointed amidst drinks of rice beer. Thus Magh Sim is festival of renewal observed at Jaherthan with optimism and expectations for the oncoming year. No specific day is assigned for this celebration. A suitable day is decided upon and the year ending is observed.

#### 10. BAHA PARAB:

With the onset of spring the *sal* and other flowers blossom and the forest turns into a colourful heaven. At this time Santals celebrate Baha Parab or Flower Festival with joy. Amongst all festivals Soharae and Baha are celebrated with great enthusiasm.

The festival begins with a day of purification called *um* when the young men of the village go to the Jaherthan and build two huts -one reserved for Gosane Era and the other shared by Jaher Era, the presiding deity of the grove, Monerenko (The Fives) and Maran Buru, the chief presiding deity. The priest purifies the shrine with cow dung. All the young men of the village then bathe and purify themselves.

The Naeke (priest) cleans a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pickaxe, a broomstick and a hunting horn. He daubs them with oil and *mithi*. In the evening the Godet, the assistant of village headman presents the priest with three fowls. Three young men now proceed towards the house of the priest, shaking their heads in a trance and impersonating Jaher Era, Maran Buru and Gosane Era respectively. Jaher Era enters the priest's hut, puts on the bracelet and putting the basket on his head, takes up the broomstick. Monerenko takes the bow and arrow, while Maran Buru holds the pickaxe. The actor deities rush to the sacred grove. There, the Jaher Era sweeps the shrine while the two others supervise. At night they return to the priest's house and the priest with piteous lamentations takes back the insignias the deities wore. They sit on mats, are given a handful of rice each as propitiation and questioned about auguries. This is followed by a general incantation of the gods.



Now the priest washes their feet starting with Jaher Era. Then the deities do so themselves mutually, and the headman, the drummer and the singer, all participate in the ceremony. The priest then makes Jaher Era, Maran Buru and Monerenko sit on the mats and they are entertained with a meal of rice and drinks of rice beer along with others present there. But the singer is allowed a large share of the dinner and not allowed to return home. Group dance with special Baha songs follows.

Early morning on the second day the priest's wife grinds flour. The headman's assistant goes round the village gathering rice, salt and turmeric. All of them move to the sacred grove singing all the way. Here the actors of deities of the previous day again play their roles. They wear traditional insignia and run into the jungle followed by other youngmen. There, Monerenko shoots at the sprouting *sal* flowers with an arrow. Maran Buru climbs the tree and cuts the branches with flowers while Jaher Era plucks them in his basket. They return to sacred grove gathering *mohua* flowers on the way. Priest receives them and they are enshrined in their respective huts. Fowls are scarified with special incantation in honour of Baha amidst songs and rejoicing. The priest offers the branches of *sal* and *mohua* flowers. After mutual feet washing the actor deities come back to their real self and all return to the village singing and dancing. Through these peculiar songs an invitation is given to all the boys and girls of the village to accept the special gift of a *sal* flower from the priest and to salute him in return. At night the priest stays at the sacred grove with his wife, and eats a special dish of spotted fowl cooked by him.

The third day is the priest's home coming, celebrated amidst general feasting and merry-making. Some people go to *jaherthan* beat the kettledrum and blow horns indicating that the priest is returning home. They tell each other "Let us go and welcome the priest" and march to the grove. The *sal* flower, the winnowing fan, pot of water and the jar of holy water are brought back to the village. The village maidens by this time keep ready the ceremonial water jug, seats of wood and oil in a wooden box of small size. The priest's feet are washed by the maidens of the first house. They are offered *sal* flowers in return. The maidens salute the priest as he sprinkles water on them. This is done in all houses till they reach the priest's house where water is poured on his roofs and a liberal offer of rice beer is made to all present there.

Then the water-festival follows and water is sprinkled on all men. Santals think that the younger brother's wife and his wife's elder sister deserve a great respect and so it is not proper to sprinkle water on them. The festivities conclude with songs and dances in which the whole village joins the merry-maker's procession starting from the priest's house and ending with the house of the headman.

The festival is observed with slight variations from place to place but the essence is all the same.

#### 11. JOM SIM:

This is not a regular festival. In a family the festival is observed once in five years. There is no specific date but only after harvest when the Santal's home is full of grains he performs this festival on a suitable date. The festival is the occasion to remember and celebrate the purity of his clan blood. Santal is always conscious not to enter into a marriage with his family, lineage or clan members. So they marry with members of different clan (*gotra*). The traditional rituals are performed and the

villagers along with the kith and kin are entertained with feast in which any irregularities and violations committed is reminded and rectified.

This is an expensive affair for a family as all the expenses are borne by the family celebrating it. For this reason this festival is gradually vanishing but it has a great social importance.

## 12. PATA PARAB:

This unique festival is observed on the first day of Baisakha.

The customary practices, in connection with Pata, vary in different areas. Some Santals show the sign of spirit-possession (Jhuper) with the arrival of the time of festival. They go here and there with Khepa searching for the touchstone. They dive in a pond, ransack the forest, search the hill and at last coming upon a stone, shout 'we have found'. And the admiring audience sees that they have unearthed a stone, which they all claim as the symbol of Mahadeo. These people called Bhoktas, then run to the conveners of Hindu festivals Corok and if listened to they are permitted to join with the devotees and take part in the ceremonials.

There are others who arrange their own festivals. Such people go begging from house to house for three preceding days and with the proceeds they buy milk. Then on the eve of Pata they assemble in a field where the devotees erect a hut-temple with the subscriptions collected from the tribe and offer milk, rice and ghee to the deity Mahadeo. A goat is scarified in the field in a place away from the improvised temple. The ceremonials conclude with special songs and dances in which Santals take part with a great deal of gusto.

In other places the festival is observed at the place of village deity. The devotees observe five days of purity and in the name of the deity with a pot on head walk on burning charcoal and thorns. On the last day Uda Parob is celebrated. In an open space near the village deity a pole is fixed. On the pole a *charkhi* is placed and a staff attached to *charkhi* is tied with a rope. Below the *charkhi* the devotee pull the rope as the *charkhi* goes round. The ceremony concludes amidst songs and dance.

## 13. DASAE FESTIVAL:

This festival coincides with Dasahara festival. But the Santals celebrate this occasion not only with the worship of their deities but also with singing, dancing, merry making, feasting and drinking.

The socio-religious significance and beauty of Santal festivals cannot be described in words. For example Sohrae is not merely a festival of winter harvest or renewal of social goodwill but also an athletic event. Baha is not merely a greeting to the flowers of spring, it entwines with marriage and fertility. Happiness and prosperity is the cherished substance of human life and the Santals enjoy life in their festivals. Festivals are only manifestation of pious beauty and precious sanctity of Santal's paradise on earth.

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\*Branch Manager, Bank of India, Bancho branch, Keonjhar



## MAGE POROB (MAGE FESTIVAL)

B. K. Naik \*

Kol, Kolha, Ho, Munda, are four tribes who reside in the Districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Jajpur, Sundergarh (Bonai Area), Sambalpur, Dhenkanal etc of Orissa State. These four tribes though named differently, are basically, one and the same tribe.

All these tribes are generally known as "Kolha" in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balasore. In Keonjhar and Jajpur districts they are popularly known as "Munda" Tribe. But in their land records they are recorded as "Kolha". They are also called "Munda" because the rich, wealthy and respectful person in their society or the head of the village is known as "Munda". The other name "Ho" means Man. Their language is also called Ho. In this article the word "Ho" shall denote Kol, Ho, Kolha and Munda tribe.

The Ho are agricultural people. They depend on agriculture for food. Their main crop is paddy. All their seasonal festivals are connected to agricultural cycle. They observe festivals relating to sowing, eating of new crop, harvesting of paddy etc. The seed sowing festivals is known as "Herob Porob", the festival for first eating of new crop is known as "Jom Nama Porob" and the harvesting festival is called "Mage Porob".

The using of new *sal* leaves, eating of *Mahua* (*Madkam*) flowers, Mango fruit and worshipping the deities in *Jayer* or *Desauli* (sacred grove) by offering *Sal* flowers, *Mohua* flower or *Mango* and other flowers and fruits is known as "Baa Porob". In the month of (*Heroh Chanduh*) June-July "Herob Porob, August-September, "Jom Nama Porob", January-February (*Mage Chanduh*) "Mage Porob" and February -March (*Baa-Chanduh*) Baa Porob" etc are celebrated with much pomp and ceremony. In all these festivals, village deities (*Desauli Bonga*, *Jayer buri* etc) are offered blood of animals (goats and chicken) in the sacred grove. The ancestors who reside in the sacred kitchen also are venerated. In these occasions the Ho people enjoy their lives by taking meat and rice, drinking rice beer (*Diyang-ili*) and dancing and singing.

Among the festivals celebrated by them from the time immemorial, "Mage Porob" is the biggest and grandest. They observe this festival with much pomp and grandeur. With the end of the festival New Year begins. The Mage festival is celebrated when the harvesting of paddy is over and all people have sufficient food materials in their granaries to prepare food and *ili* (rice beer). They share the festivals with their neighbours and invite sisters, maternal aunts, maternal uncles and other relatives to participate in the Porob. They come in large number to enjoy the festivities with various gifts such as a pot of *Diyang* (rice beer). In this festival the rice beer with eating of rice and meat are plentifully consumed and all people irrespective of age, sex and status, wear new clothes and gifted with new cloths to their servants.

The Ho people of all villages do not observe this festival in a particular day. The auspicious day to celebrate the festival is decided by the village people before *Mage Chanduh* (*Mage Month*). Generally every year after 15<sup>th</sup> of January, the celebration of Mage Festival starts. The pleasant sound of musical instruments such as *Dama* (*Nagera*) *Dumang* (*Madal*), *Rutu* (*Flute*) and *Banam* (*Fiddle*) is heard throughout the Ho country. Songs recited during this festive occasion are given below.

(1)  
*Jargi japud chabayana*  
*Kucha dom dom chabayana*  
*Chuila reya diurim Magem bongaya*  
*Chetaneko Magekena*  
*Latereko Magekena*  
*Chuila reya diuri Magem Bongaya*

(1)  
Incessant rain has stopped  
Biting cold is also over  
When are you village Priest?  
You do Mage Puja  
People of upper country and  
People of lower country have already  
celebrated Mage festivals.

(2)  
*Mage Chanduh beta tana*  
*Mage Porob tebah tana*  
*Soben Haga Misi Kuiko Dili Kulakom*  
*Mage chanduh beta yana*  
*Mage Porob tebah yana*  
*Soben Haga Misi Kuiko hujuh Seterlen*  
*Diyang-Rasi nukeyete*  
*Jilu Mandi Jomkeyete*  
*Soben haga Misi Kuiko*  
*Raa nasa inung tan.*

(2)  
Mage month is coming  
Mage Porob is arriving at  
Send invitation to all your brothers and sisters  
Mage month has come  
Mage Porob has arrived  
All brothers and sisters are enjoying themselves  
Drinking Diyang and Rasi (Rice Beer)  
Partaking of rice and meat  
All brothers and sisters are enjoying themselves  
By dancing and singing.

(3)  
*Buru bitar Mage do*  
*Patah bitar Mage do*  
*Dili Kulanj Ben-go barenj*  
*Kaji Kulanj Ben*  
*Kaben Dili Kulanj Redo*  
*Kaben Kaji Kalanji redo*  
*Data bati buru renj*  
*Bati Gojena*

(3)  
For Mage Festival of Dance forest  
Brother!  
Please send some body to invite me.  
Please send message to me through a messenger  
If you do not send any invitation to me  
If you do not send message to me  
I will end my life by throwing myself in the sliding hill

N.B. :- Married sisters and married paternal aunts expect to receive invitation from their parents house in Mage festival.

(4)  
*Buru bitar Mage Do*  
*Beda bitar Mage do*  
*Chikatere danra chum nayum leda*  
*Banam Koyon tenj nayum leda*  
*Rutu Cheyon Cheyon tenj*  
*Nayume leda*

(4)  
How did you back crow come to know about the  
Mage festival of dense forest  
I heard the Koyon Koyon musical sound of fiddle.  
I heard the Chevon Chevon musical sound of Flute

Young men and women of the neighbouring villages, without any invitation come to celebrate Mage Festival, and participate in dancing and singing and merrymaking. They blow flutes and play fiddle in the tunes of Mage songs with joy. The whole atmosphere becomes musical.

The coming of invited guests is described in the following song.



*Oken hatureko Magen tana  
Birja bjr jilu sako do rumul tana  
Okon hatureko Baa Porob tana  
Dunra dup nuli bada sodan tana  
Mage porob tana chiko Baa porob tana  
Kupul chetan kupul nako hujuh tana  
Badimata lena chire loa mata lena  
Chenre chentan chenre nako nanragun tana*

**English translation:-**

In which village people are celebrating Mage Festival?  
That the conch made of horn of wild beast is resounding loudly.  
In which village people are celebrating Baa Festival?  
That smell of incense is felt.  
Are they celebrating Mage Festival  
Or are they celebrating Baa festival  
That one after one guests are coming.  
Is that fruit of banyan tree is ripe ?  
Or is that fruit of fig tree is ripe?  
Those flocks of birds are coming down.

**Why and how Mage Festival is celebrated or how it is initiated ?**

There are several stories concerning the beginning of this festival. One of the stories is like this :-

Long long ago Ho people were inhabiting in a certain place. With passage of time their number multiplied. It caused hardship to them. They found it difficult to find places to stay and the cultivated land was fragmented, hence there was no sufficient food grain produced. Hence they moved out in search of land. When they found a fertile land for cultivation they decided to stay there. But whether this particular place is safe to stay?

To know this fact they tied two chickens, one red cock, another hen with mixed colour of yellow and brown, which has not yet hatched eggs. In the selected place after promising to perform sacrifice of these creatures in the event of the place is fit for living, they went back keeping a pot of paddy there. In the next morning they came back to this place to verify whether any harm was inflicted on the chicken, whether the pot of paddy is still in tact or the quantity of paddy has increased or decreased? In case nothing has happened to the chickens and the paddy is intact or increased, then the place is considered to be auspicious for living. They cleared the jungle and settled down there. In case the chickens are harmed and the pot of paddy is decreased, then they leave the place and search for another place.

In the place, thus selected, they settled down and after completion of one year they sacrificed these two chicken in honour of God (Bonga) who guards and protects or looks after the people of a village i.e. Hatu Goram - Desauli. After settling down in the selected place for a year, when there was sufficient rain for cultivation, they had good harvest, they lived without any hardship, sacrificed these chickens and enjoyed the occasion by dancing and singing, taking of rice and meat and drinking *ili* (handia) with great joy. The celebration was repeated next year also. Later a black hen was

sacrificed for Bagiya Bonga the jungle deity. This activity was repeated year after year and continuing in all Ho villages till now. In every Ho villages there is the seat of Goddess Desauli and the sacred grove Jayer and also the village priest - Diuri.

### Why is this festival called Mage Porob ?

In old days, when the sacrifice was to take place in the Jayer, the chickens were not eating the heaps of rice grain (*punjitad chauli*). The Diuri and his assistants Tingujuriko were worried why the Desauli - Hatu goram is displeased? They prayed but chicken did not eat rice grain. If chickens do not eat it, it is not a good omen. So, other people present there started shouting in Mage Kaji i.e., obscene language. Thereafter the chickens ate the rice. The people thought that the Desauli god is happy only when Mage Kaji (obscene language) is spoken. Hence the practice of speaking of obscene language has started. As both male and female utter Mage Kaji during this festival, probably because of that the festival is named as "Mage Porob".

### The Worship of Mage Porob : - Mage Porob Seba -Sara(da)

With the beginning of Mage Chanduh (Mage month) after the harvesting of paddy is completed, people start discussion regarding celebrating Mage Porob. First activity is "Anader". On this day, the date for celebration of Mage Porob is fixed. On the appointed date, the first occasion is "ote ili", the next days is "Loyo-Gurih", the next day is "Marang Porob", the next day is "Basi" and the next day is "Har Mageya". On the "Har-Mageya" day all worship relating to Mage Porob is completed.

### ANADER : -Bringing in:

The Anader Bonga is the sacrifice held on the occasion of purifying the Desauli (sacred grove) about two weeks prior to the Mage Festival (Porob). Usually a she goat and a chicken are offered. The colour of goat is redish brown and colour of cock is red. The two assistant priests -Jomsinkinj also sacrifice chickens.

The villagers collect money to purchase a goat and a chicken. All householders contribute in cash and kind. Rice collected from all households is deposited at the house of Diuri. The rice is fermented to prepare rice beer. The wife of village priest prepares *diyng* - the rice beer out of *adowachauli* (rice husked without first boiled) remaining in fasting and after taking bath. On the day of Anader, the Diuri along with his assistants Jomsinkinj and Tingu Judiko go to Jayer (Desauli- sacred grove) with puja items i.e. goat, chicken and *adowachauli*, *holong*, *katu lundih*, one new *chelang* etc. The Diuri does not eat rice on that day and even some Diuris do not drink *diyng*.

In the Jayer the Diuri while sacrificing the animal and bird utter -

"Desauli-Hatru Goram", *tisinjdo nehdo Mayomte-Kirumtele jatemetan parchimetana, Hatu - tala hatu bitar Bamehon, Bostom- Honko boloyana, sinh- yanam, sowaneyanam, bisihyan- bitaleyanteyahdom, nehdole Jateuray, Parchi,-Uray tana, meram owantele, meram hantele, meralaih hasu, mera boh hasu, mera kula, mera binjna, hatu disum, didum buri, meram atare meram akrinjey, rogomari, hoeja bosonto meram adere, meram sonjhey, dahko-gamako, hoyoko meram kuti, meram lankai*".

"Hey! Desuli, village God, see today with blood of goat we are purifying you after defilement. Brahmans and Bostoms entered into the village, you are defiled, became unclean, now you are being re-purified, please do not get angry with us, do not be displeased, may we suffer no stomach ache or head-ache, may we not be



attacked by a tiger nor a snake. May our village experience no fire, you do not sell of our village, may no small pox, cholera enter into our village, may rain do not edge our village, may sufficient rain is poured in" The meaning of this Ho *shloka* is to purify the village by animal blood and pray to village god for protection of people, protection of crops. Then the traditional offering is given to Desauli, and the meat is distributed among them. After the feast is over the Diuri declares the date for Mage Porob.

The main activities of Anader are (1) Purifying the Desauli village and Hatu goram (2) Deciding the dates for Mage Festivals. One important thing noticeable is that Ho people considered Brahmans and Bostoms inferior to them in social ranking. Hence these activities are to purify village and village God for Mage festival.

#### OTE ILI:

Ote ili is a sacrificial action held two days before the Mage festival. Rice beer (*ili*) is poured into vessels so as to overflow into the earth (Ote). Some call it 'Tumutu'.

On this day the courtyard of houses are cleaned by spreading the cow dung with water by women folks. For the Diuri it is a fasting day. People of the village assemble at the courtyard of Diuri with *diyung-ili*. Diuri pours collected rice beer into vessel to overflow into the earth and utters the following words "*Ape hamhoko-dumhoko Desauli Bonga Kajiyaipe numu baipe; Ape chetan hatu, latar hatu kakako Apuko, tatako nanako nen musinj nen musinj reh Sebameya sadayaibe, dutamaibe Karjiyaipe*". "You ancestors inform (tell) Desauli God, you, uncles, fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers of upper and lower parts of village, on this day we will worship you, adore you, serve you, tell him further to invite his daughters, sisters, all relative to participate in the Mage Porob to take food and to drink rice" which we will serve in plenty.

After *ote-ili* is poured and the prayer is made, next function is to pour the *rasi*. *Rasi* is the liquid from the fermentation on top of a rice beer brew. The *rasi* is poured into earth (*ote*), the pouring of *ili* or *rasi* is done so that coming year adequate amount of rain (*dah-gama*) will pour in to ensure good crops. At the time of pouring in of *rasi* the Hatu Diuri (village priest) utters the following words "*Tisinj do desauli, hatu goram, ote ili, bir ilinj dule tana, nen Musinj sebameya Sada meya, nehdonj Dili-amtan, bokam-tan, hon era, misi era, genhonhatarhon, haga hon, Kutum honko, dili-Ujuh, Jom-me, bokan Ujuh Jom-me, en musinj mage porobenj, seabamtana-sadamtana, nehdonj emamtana, chedamtana, dili-amtana, baka-am-tananj.*"

"To day Desauli, *hatugoram* (village god), I am pouring in *ote-uili, birili*, on this day I will offer - *puja* in your name, this I am extending invitation to you, please invite your daughters, sisters, your nieces, nephews, your near relatives in the marriage, to participate in the festival (*puja*) I will be offering *puja* to you on the occasion of Mage festival". He also names other minor gods and goddess like Sira-hon, Sira gokoe and request them to inform to the "Desauli". Then names of the other gods and goddesses -Ote Sorsotoko, Sirsatsotoko, Ote guni, Bir guni, Hons, etc also are uttered by him to tell them the fixed date of Mage feast to "Desauli". After the pouring of *rasi* to "Desauli" is over all people present, those who brought *ili, rasi*, those who have come there to witness, this function, his assistants like Jom-simko etc drink the *diyung* and *rasi*. By this time the evening sets in, the drum beaters start

beating *dumang* and *dama* and people start dancing on the place where *diyang* and *rasi* are poured.

The invitation ceremony is *ote ili*. The *gowari* (beseeches) are offered by *diuri* to *Desuali* for inviting him to participate in Mage festival. In one of the prayers he asks the ancestor spirits to inform the village God and on the other prayer, the invitation is directly extended to *Desauli*. He further prays other minor gods to give the message of Mage Feast to *Desauli*.

#### TUMUTU:

After drinking *ote ili* in the courtyard of *Diuri's* house, the old and young come out uttering the Mage *Kaji* (obsence language) and go around the entire village. Whenever they come across a wooden plank, they carry that with them. After collecting wood they gather at a place where in the previous years the wood was set fire. They set fire to wood in the name of *Desauli*. After that the people leave the place. The fire burns through out the night. This activity is called *Tumutu*.

From this day Mage *Porob* begins. Ancestors are worshiped in every house. *Madal* and *Nagera* are beaten. People sing songs and dance throughout the night.

#### LOYO GURH :

This day is also called *Gurih Porob* of Mage feast. This day the floor or courtyard are cleaned with cow dung. This is the previous day of *Marang Porob*. The women folk remain very busy in this day. After cleaning the floor or courtyard by noon they clean cloths and take bath. During day no *puja* is offered but in the night after the night meal is cooked the same along with *diyang* are offered to *Hamhoko-Dum hook* (ancestors) by the head of the family in the *Ading* (kitchen). The specially fermented *ili* for *puja* is not shared with others. Only family members drink this. For others separate *handia* (rice-beer) is fermented. In the evening the *Dama - Dumang* are beaten. Male and female dance and sing songs.

#### MARANG POROB:

On *Marang Porob* old and young wash their cloths in the morning and take bath. The walls of the houses are painted with white or red colours by young women. After doing that they go to take bath. *Diuri*, by mid-day, collects all *puja* articles. To help the *Diuri*, his assistants arrive at his house in the morning. They fence off a small area by small bushes in the courtyard. This fenced area is known as *churui* in *Ho* language.

Male folks in the morning trim their hair and shave their beards. The young men repair their flutes (*Rutuko*), fiddles (*Banams*) and the old men talk about the worship and repair the *Dumang* (*Madal*) and *Dama* (*Drum*). As the women remain busy in household chores they do not get time to prepare rice beer (*handia*). By midday only they drink *diyang* and some of them drink *rasi* in the morning hours.

By mid-day the assistants of *Diuri - Jomsimkinj*, *Orang-sakowakinj* and two *Tingu Judikinj*, assemble at his house to help him in arranging *puja* articles. For these people this is a fasting day. Of course they are permitted to drink *rasi*. They clean the *churui* by cow dung and prepare *holon* (flour).



By midday people with beating of Madal, Nagera come to Diuri's house. When people from hamlets arrive there, they proceed to the particular pond to take bath where every year the ceremonial bath is taken by the village priest. The lead is taken by Diuri, then Jomsimkinj, followed by Kolom lahih and Tingujudi kinj and at the last Orong Sakjowakinj. Except the cloths on the waist, upper parts of the body remain naked. They do not use any soap, they do not rub their bodies while taking this ceremonial bath. They immerse in the water and come out. Women folk do not participate in this bath. The Diuri takes bath two times. When the Diuri is returning from bath his wife meets him halfway, along with Tingu judi kinj and two helpers (Dengakinj). The wife of Deuri and her party cross the Diuri and his group on right side. One of the Orang Sakowa follows the wife of the Diuri upto the pond blowing the Sakowa. The wife of Deuri comes back to the house along with the other women of the village. All others come back to the Diuri's house and then they do not go to their respective houses.

After taking the first bath all arrange the *puja* articles. They prepare *taben* (flat rice), *chauliata* (fried husked rice grains), *adowachauli* (rice husked without being first boiled). They crack upon *chatah ramba* (black gram) *tilminj* (sasamim indicum- the seed which yield oil), *lamah* (the seed of rung creeper). After arranging the *puja* articles, they keep them in separate *kokomba* (leaf bag-funnel) and put them into *gantah* (four cornered basket). They again go to the pond for second bath. The beaters of Dama (Nagera) and Dumang (Madal) follow Diuri by beating these instruments. By the time the Diuri returns after taking second bath, his wife along with Tingujudiko with beating of Dama, Dumang goes to take bath. On the mid-way when they meet each other one of the Orong Sakowa (one who blows a horn) returns back to the pond with the wife of Diuri. The people of one hamlet accompany the Diuri and the people of another hamlet accompany his wife. After taking second bath they send Kolomlahih (a person assigned to go before the Diuri to the place where a sacrifice is to be performed) in order to level the place, clean it with cowdung where *punji* (heaps of rice grains) will be put and over which sacrifice will be performed. Mage sacrifice is done near the Desauli (sacred grove). After that he returns to the house of Diuri. On his arrival the Diuri comes out to go to the place to offer sacrifice.

Now the wife of Diuri takes the lead, she is followed by her two assistants (Tingujudi kinj). In a short distance she is followed by the Diuri along with his assistants. The Diuri carries, the *dala gantah* (four concerned basket) with *puja* articles under his arm. After him there remain two assistants-Jomsikinj; they carry the chickens tied on their legs, hanging on a stick one of the chicken is red cock (*arah sandi*) and the other is *suka* (mixture of yellow and brown) *kaluti* a hen which has not yet hatched eggs) i.e. yellow brown virgin hen, and one black chicken. This black chicken is small one. The two blowers of horn (Orong Sakowakinj) remain in the last. They blow the horn while following the Diuri's party. They follow by the beaters of Nagera (Dema) and Dumang (Madal). All assemble at the place of sacrifice.

#### MAGE BONGA REYAH PAITI - PANAITI (The works related to Mage Sacrifice)

On arrival at the place of sacrifice, the Diuri keeps the four concerned baskets down there. The Jomsimkinj also keep the Chickens down there. Orong Sakowakinj stands in a line with the Diuri along with the Tingujudikinj. The women folk remain standing in that line on the *konjepa* (left hand side). All others stand on the left hand side of the Diuri. Jom Simkinj remains near the Diuri on standing. The Diuri puts moistened *holong* (flour) on his



both ears, shoulders (*taran*), arms (*supu*), thighs (*bulu*) and anklets (*andukata*). He then prepares seven *kokowas* (compartments) by using dry *holong* for the *punji* (heaps of rice) at the place of sacrifice. In all seven *okowas* he keeps small amount of *taben*, *chauli ata*, *adowa chauli*, *tilminj*, *lamah*, *ramba*. After that one Jomsim washing the legs and feather of the red cock and hand over it to the Diuri. The Diuri sacrifices the red cock. The *chokah* of *lamah jang* (the covering of *lamah* seed), tied down compactly are placed in the front. In case the covering of *lamah jang* are not tightly tied down, then that year the tigers, leopards, panthers get very angry and roar around. At the time of pronouncing the sacrificial formula over the red cock the Diuri does *gowari* (beseeches) like this "Ochai Desauli Tisinj do, Seban-tananj, sadam tananj, Hisi Randi Honko, Do'nsi PorjaHonko, lekakom-gandakom, chetan Hatu, Latar-Hatu. Nel-urum, Atenurumkome; AdinjNida-TalaNida Sen Tan- Tundang Tan-re, Buru Badchom, Saan-Sakam talitan Banjitanre MeraKula, Mera Binja, Meradiri, Mera Sampura, Hatudisum, Di-Dumburi. Tala Toro-MariRogo- Jugiya meram Bolo-lchi, Meram-Son- lichiya, Hoyoko-Gamako, Hudinj Patukom, Marang Patukom, Gotil tanakir, Dahge Doromente, Denj Buru, Daponjoren tege, Hudinj Hutumentege, Merang Hutumentage Damanam, Dumang-nam, Imung-ujuhKecher-Uhuheme".

"Hey! Desauli today I am serving you, worshipping you, adoring you, count the twenty widows, thirty subjects of upper hamlets, lower hamlets, please recognize them, while they roam in the dark-midnight, when they go to jungle to collect leaves, firewood, cut *sabai* grass, etc may they suffer no harm from a tiger, a snake, a stone may not suddenly come upon them, please do not allow entry of diseases -small pox, cholera etc into our village, please bring sufficient rain to our village from all available sources."

After uttering these words the Diuri brings the mouth of the red cock towards the *punji*. After the victim has eaten from *punji* he raises the cock over his head and he tells the Desauli's Sira Honko (Assistant spirits to Desauli) "Ocho Ape, Desauli tahre Sira hontanape, Siraundi sira bokotanape, hageya-tenko, boyan tenko, Sirmaren charen, Anriren, Dodaren, gongaren, Nairen, bandaren, Pukuriren, Sinjrem-Gadirenko, Hohrchitanrenko, choungam chetanrenko, Tisinjdo Neh-da, Magere Seba-Pura-Sada-Puraytana, Hisi Randi Honko, Don-si Porja Honko Bir Hora Tandang Horako Sen-tan, Tundanj tanre kita-badchom, Talitan, Banjitanre, Merako Laih Hasuh, Merako Boh Hosuh, Merape Kutikowa, Merape lankai kowa, Merape hende pawan sikowa, Marape Pundi PowanSikowa, Tisinjdole seba pura, Sadapurapetana".

"Hey! You the spirits under the blessings of Dasauli, you the sons, brothers (younger), the relatives of Sira spirits, you fly in the sky, the spirits of embankments, spirits of narrow valley, spirit of a ditch, spirit of a vine, spirit of a pond, spirit of a tank, spirit in a stream running through ravine, spirit of the stumps of a tree partly submerged in water, spirit of a branch of a tree, to-day, you see, we are serving you on the occasion of Mage Feast. When the women both rich and poor old and young go to jungle for collecting jungle grass, please do not inflict the illness of headache, stomach-ache to them, May you not sideline them, may you send no fog upon them, today we are serving you, adoring you, worshipping you". After that the Diuri brings the mouth of the cock to the *punji*. If the red cock eats the *punji* rice, then it is considered that the Desauli god is happy. In case the cock does not eat the rice, then it is considered there is some guilt in the house of the Diuri or there is some guilt on the part of the Diuri. The assembled people (both male and female) start uttering the Mage Kaji (obscene language). The Diuri brings the mouth of the red cock to *punji*



*chauli* seven times at seven *punjis* and in the names the Sira honko also. After completing this process he slits the throat of the cock and he drips the blood on the *punjis* and throws the chicken to his front. After this his assistants Thingu judiko leave him alone. Then the Diuri sacrifices the *suka kaluti* for the "Jayer Buri". At that time no female folks stay there. If they do not leave the place the "Jayer Buri" feels unhappy. The hen also does not eat the rice of *punjis*. Jomsimim after washing the hen, handover the same to the Diuri. He prays to "Jayer Buri" *Deyale, Aben Jaye buri, Tisindo, Nehote-ilibir-ili rele Dili Angra Bakan Angarha medeteyah do, Nehdole Seba-Pura Sadapura-metana; ehetan-hatu, latar-hatu Parjahhonpaiki honko Lekakom, gandakom, Horokom Jangikom, Toro-Mari, Rogo-Jugiya Emtan chedtanko ote juguni birjuguniko meram Bolo-Ichiya, Meram Son-Ichiya, Kutite Machite har-nir gumnirKome, rung-darom, Soboh darom kome, Nehda Tisinjdo mage porob rele Seba-pura sarha pura metana, Genhon, Hatar hon, Misi Era, Hon-ga, chuwa putakolo, renhtan, RamsantanteJomeme, nuime, Hoyoko gamako, Kirinj ujuh, Keja Ujuh-ime, hindung ujuh, Kecher ujuh-ime*".

"Hey! Jaye Burhi, (Goddess of sacred Grove or wife of Desauli), you know that, we invited you on Ote-ili-Bir-ili day to come, today we are serving you, adoring you, worshipping you. Please count the people who depend on you, your subjects, grant them protection against wild animals, malicious spirits. Please do not allow the Ote-juguni, Bir-Juguni, who inflicts small pox, epidemics to enter into our village. Please drive them away from the village boundary, confront them on the boundary by stabbing them. You see to day we are serving you, adoring you, worshipping you on the occasion of Mage Feast, you take the offering with your nieces nephews, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, children with joy. Bring sufficient rain (water and wind)".

Then a small black chicken is sacrificed. Jomsim hands over the chicken after washing it. Before sacrificing the chicken the Diuri tells the ancestors. "*Ocho, Abu Ham Hoko, chetan Hatu, Latar Hatu, Haamko, Duumko, Tisinjdo Mage Porobere Desauli bu, sebakih, sadah kjya, Jagaraipe, boka-aipe, Tisinjdo, Hisi Randi, Donsi Porojate Mage Poroble seabeked sada keda, Merajanum Mera choga, Mera kula, Mera binja, toro Mari, Rogo-Jugiya, Adertan-sontan Ote juguni, Bir- Juguni, Sihn Meram Sihn Takurko Meram Bolo- Ichiya, Meram Sohnichiyatko; Siyuh Urih, siyuh kedak Bugiyakan- NapayaKanohka, AdinjNida, Tala Nida, Bir-Pata, Bir- Tasad Jomtan Atinj tanre Mera Kula, Mera Binjya, Hoyoko Gamako Kutite- Machite Kirinj-ujuh; keja-ujuh-ime-mennte kaji-aipe, jagar-aipe, numu-baipi, Haam, Hoko*".

"Hey! You ancestors of upper hamlets, lower hamlets, today, we worshiped Desauli on Mage Festival. Tell him; inform him that we all villagers (including widows and poor people) celebrated Mage festival. May our legs must not to be pierced by thorn or by protruding wood. May we not be attacked by a tiger, a snake. May you do not allow evil spirits Ote- Juguni, Bir-Juguni, Sihn Takurko who inflict the diseases of small pox, cholera, epidemics to enter into our village. Our plough bullock, buffalos, please be kept healthy and well. In the mid night when they are eating wild leave and are grazing wild grass, may they not to be attacked by a tiger, a snake. May rain take place, may rain be bought and brought from far off places in a phased manner. Please tell and inform this to Desauli God, Haam-Hoko- Ancestors".

After this he also utters the names of Bir ren Bagiyako (shade of a person killed by tiger- i.e. the Bagia spirits). They are believed to control the jungle tigers and



some times set them on people, also make noises to scare people in the jungle. "Ape Bir Bagiya Beda Bir Bagiya Honko, sinjkula, kinder kula honko, tisinjdo Mage poroble Manatinjkeda, siyah urih, siyub kedah, Adinj Nida tala nida sentan-tundang-tanre Merako laih Hasuh Boh Merape hende powansikowa, Merape Pundi powan sinkowa, merako kulaoh, merako Binjoh, Merako jaamumoh, Merako Chogaoh".

"You! Bir Bagiya, Beda Bagiya, Sinjkula kinder kula honko (the spirits found in the jungle and often trouble the hunters), to day we celebrated Mage feast when our plough cattle - buffaloes, bullocks enter into jungle during mid-night (dark night) may they suffer no harm from a tiger, a snake, may you send no fog upon them- to be overtaken by fog so that they should not go astray, they should come back to house, without being lost in not finding the path to return. May they not be attacked by a tiger or a snake, may their legs not to be pierced by a protruding piece of wood or by thorn". He utters these words and takes the names of all Bagiya bongas then throw away the chicken on his front side, without killing it by cutting this throat. The people standing along with the Diuri, uttering obscene language, stone the black chicken. All throw stones simultaneously standing on their feet, without seating on the ground. When the chicken is stoned to death, one of the Orong-sakowa goes and calls upon the name of Bagiya Bonga, claim that he has killed the bird and collect it. This is the way small black chicken is sacrificed.

During the sacrifice the young, old, male, female dance in joy in tune with the resounding sound of Dama and Dumang. After the sacrifice is over, the Jomsimkinj carry the sacrificed chickens. Diuri takes the lead keeping the four-cornered basket under his arm. Orong sakowakinj (two persons who blow horns for the Mage sacrifice) follow the Diuri blowing the Sakowa (horn). The drumbeaters and dancers follow Diuri and his party while beating drums and dancing. All them come to Diuri's house. Then the dancers and drumbeaters after dancing for sometimes inside the *churui*, leave the place and go to their respective hamlets. They dance through out the night in the Akada (dancing ground) till the sunrise in the next morning.

After cooking the meat of arahsandi and *sukakaluti*, the same is relished by Diuri and Jomsikinj etc. The meat of black (*hendesim*) chicken is taken by Orong Sakowa Kinj. The Diuri prepares *imsalam*- liver by wrapping up by a leaf and baking them in the fire. After the liver is prepared for eating, he offers *puja* to Ancestor Spirits in the *churui* and utters "Chetan Hatu, Latar Hatu Ha-amko, Dumko Tisinjdo Mage porobre nehdole Emametana Chedapeana, Midtahre Dubakan jarubakante ichah-bichahtan hapatinj Pe, renh-ransate Jom nuipe, Hisirandi Don'si Porja Honko Jomtan Nutan, susuntan, Durang tan- re Merako Laih Hasuh, Merako Boh Hasuh Ka, Bugiya Kan Napaya Kanoh Ka".

"The ancestor spirits of upper hamlets and lower hamlets, today, on Mage Porob day, you take note that we are giving you an offering, assembling and sitting together, dividing the offering, giving a share to everyone, eat and drink collectively and rejoice. All sections of people including widows and poor are eating and drinking while dancing and singing. May they suffer no stomach-ache nor headache. May they remain in good health".

After the offering of *imsalamko* to Ha-am-Hoko Du-Um Hoko, the Diuri and Jomsnimnj eat the baked meat and drink rice beer (*diyang*). Rice beer prepared especially for sacrificial purpose known as *mati kandaili* is strained using a strainer



(*chala*) either by Tingu Jumdikinj or Orong sakowa and are served to Jomsim Kinj, Orong sakowakinj, Tingujudikinj (all assistants of Diuri). It is not given to others. After rice is cooked in side the *churui*, the Diuri offer these to the ancestor spirits. In the night they sleep there and guard the left over food for the night. Jamsikinj and Orong sakowakinj do not go to their houses and all sleep there till morning. In the evening all household offer rice, curry and rice beer to the ancestors in the *adding* (inner part of kitchen). After offering the food items to ancestors all people eat and drink.

#### BASI MUSINJ:

The day after the main day of festival, Basimusing, in the court of the Diuri, and his assistants have some works to do. Left over meat is cooked. Cooked food and rice are offered to spirits in side the *churui*. After this the *churui* is dismantled by the Diuri and his assistants. By midday male, female of the village come to the house of Diuri dancing and singing and beating the Dama and Dumang. Both male and female dance in the countryard the Diuri's house while the *churui* is being dismantled. This dance is known as "Churui Susun-Rau" i.e. a term used for the custom of dancing upon the dismantled *churui* which has been setup in the courtyard of the house of the Diuri for Mage Porob, which is broken down the following day (Basi Musing) on which occasion the villagers come with drums and dance. After that these assembled people go back to their respective hamlets along with the drums. Sometimes they are served *ili* by the members of family of the Diuri. The females also return to their hamlets dancing together along with the drumbeaters. After the dismantling of *churui*, the work of the Diuri is over. After this the Jomsim, Orong sakowa and Tingujudiscan go back to their houses. Then the Diuri accompanied by Orong sakowa, go to different houses and they are served *diyang*. They relish with immense joy. After the sunset all stay in their houses. The works of Jomsimkinj and Orong sakowakinj are over. On this day they enjoy the evening with their invited guests- the married sisters and their sons and daughters etc. In the evening the ancestors are venerated in the *ading* (inner room of house where cooking is done).

On the Marang Porob Musing the non-vegetarian food is taken by the priest and his assistants. Others do not eat non-vegetarian meal on this day. On Basi-Musing the non vegetarian meal is cooked in all houses.

#### HAR MAGE(YA) :

The second day after the main day (Marang Porob) of the Mage Feast, the Mageya spirits are driven out of the village. This a day is also called Mage Moroeh. Mageya spirits are found in the jungle and often trouble some hunters. There are also many servant spirits. If these spirits who were invited to the village to get veneration by Diuri during Mage Festival remain in the village, it is believed they cause sickness to human beings and to domesticated animals. These are malicious spirits. As soon as the festival is over they are driven out of the village. At the dawn from every house a person comes out along with either one stick (*dandah*) or one broken tin container, or one torn winnowing baskets. Beating these they beat the houses shouting the words. "Haeh, haeh" ( a noise made to drive away evil spirits). This way Badams are driven away. Badams are dwarf like malign spirits (considered to be servant spirits to the Jugni spirits) (Juguni - a bonga who inflects epidemics and serious illness). After driving out activities are completed, these *dandah* (stick), *chachah hatah* (broken winnowing basket) etc are kept in a oblique way (*ganditah*) in a place outside the

village. Keeping these articles to *gandiesed* (to block a road by putting across for the malign spirits) they go to village to search for a *hende sim* (black chicken). They find it out from any body's house. After collecting the black chicken they collect *lamah* (the fruit of the *rung* creeper), *trilminj*, (sesamum indicum), *rambah* (green gram) and come to the place where they had kept the *dandah* in *gandiesed* way (blocking the road way). They collect these articles and drive out the *bagiya* spirits (the spirits are believed to control the jungle) to the place where every year they are driven to. They keep the *dandahko* (sticks) there in a row in an oblique way. They do not go beyond that place. They do not step over. They remain in this side. They sprinkle the ashes upto the *dandah* etc and keep quiet. One of them offers *puja*. After they keep the brought articles, they fry *rambah*, *tilminj* and *chauli* (husked rice) in a *kechoh* (a piece of broken *chatu* and earthen pot). After the frying is over one who knows how to worship offer these items. He utters "Bir Bagiya, Bir Mageya Ko, Seba-Odong. Sado-odong ked peyale. Har- eadh, Gum-edah-Peyale Ju burukote senoh ura chakur- uranpe; Apan-simana, Apan dapai jagate senoh-pe; siyuh urih, kedako, kirinj Urih kirinj meromko Bugiya kanohka, Bir daru Bir Patah ko Jomtan-nutanre, honortan chakurtanre sangartan Nitir tanre Merako Powasiyoh, Merako Pundi powasiyohkamenteh Bongaya".

"You the hill spirits of people killed by tiger, you the servant of mountain jungle spirits - more important spirit of the hunt, we have ceremoniously dismissed you, we are driving you away from our village, we are driving you away by winnowing, you go back to roam around mountain, hill, jungle, you return back to your places within limit of your dwellings. Our plough cattle, let them remain healthy, when they enter into jungle for grazing grass and for eating leaves, may you send no fog upon them or they not be over taken by mist or fog. (meaning, they are not lost in the jungle)". After uttering the above words and offering the black chicken to Bagiya- Mageya spirits, the worshipper throws the living black chicken to the front side. Others present throw stones on the black chicken. Then some one goes to the stoned chicken and collects it and then it is sacrificed. The persons standing there, utter obscene languages (Mage Kaji). Two persons carry the dead bird with the help of branch of *Ichah* tree. People come to the house of *Diuri*. The *Diuri* throws some seeds of *tilminj* and *adowa chauli* on it. These people go to their hamlets and keep the bird in a place where every year the sacrificed black chicken is kept. This chicken is not cooked in any house. This bird is kept in a tree and after the rice is fried, the chicken is baked in a leaf pocket.

With the end of Harmageya activities, the Mage Porob comes to an end. Before the sun is set all invited guests are given farewell. The village looks empty.

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**\*Senior Manager, Bank of India, Keonjhar Zone.**



## SHORAE FESTIVAL

Gangadhar Hansda \*

The Santals are one of the ethnic groups assumed to be the earliest inhabitants of India. They are a agrarian community who depend mainly on cultivation. They have allied some beliefs and rituals from the time immemorial with their agrarian profession. They have been performing these in every agricultural year, because in these occasions the Santa plunges into their primitive pastoral life to worship their deities (*bongas*), to sing the advent of the agricultural season, to make joy over a bumper crop. The sequence in which the Santals cultivate paddy, their main means of living, to sow it, transplant it, handle it and store it and the way in which they surround it with religion and magical beliefs are obvious signs of their closeness with cultivation. Their tradition reveals that the world atmosphere and entire life cycle is synchronized by *bongas*- the super natural beings. Crops can yield safely with the grace of *bongas* only. So far as the *bongas* are appeased a variety of menace may not come. The Santals know that timely propitiation of their *bongas* means good harvest and prosperity. Their material life is to be guarded by performing various ceremonies and rituals in honour of their *bongas*. They perform a series of seasonal rites and festivals to mark different stages of their cultivation. Basing on the agriculture, they institute inaugural rites and concluding rites before and after their agricultural activities followed by family feast and group dance. In every occasion, the village priest appeals to *bongas* on behalf of the village community and village headman, Manjhi, arranges it. It is very important to note that for Santal there is no individual worship, and it is always communal. For them the lowest entity cannot be less than a family or a sub clan. Thus Santal festivals are group events in nature and a good deal of gathering can always be found in almost all such occasions.

Among various festivals of Santals, Sohrae can be said as the principal annual event. On this day they express gratitude to *bongas* for raining timely and for giving fair weather for having a bumper crop. As they use the service of oxen and buffaloes in their agricultural operations, they never forget to honour them in Sohrae festival. Likewise, all the implements that are used in agriculture are washed properly; rice powder and vermilion are applied on those on this day. The Santals nowadays are mostly coinciding this festival with Kalipuja or Deepawali, but infact, the time for this festival is Pus (December-January). By this time they complete entire work of reaping, threshing and storing grains. Sohrae is a five days long festival. The first day is called Gothilok, the second day is called Dakahilok, third day is called Khuntauhilok, fourth day is called Jajlehilok and the fifth day is called Haku Kakomhilog. In some places it goes upto sixth day and conclude with Sakrat at the end.

This picturesque festival had no specific date earlier. The villagers in the Kulhi Durup or village meeting decided it. But now with the introduction of Santal Calendar, it is being fixed by some organizations like Adivasi Socio Educational and Cultural Association, mostly in the month of November-December. The village council finally decides the arrangements for the festival. They prepare rough estimate of expenditure

for offerings and the contribution per family is fixed accordingly. The Godet or Jogmanjhi has the duty to go from house and collect sacrificial offerings.

On *umhilog*, the first day or preparatory day of the Sohrae, all the villagers assemble in the house of village priest, Naeke. The Naeke places all the ingredients such as cow-dung, sundried rice, rice powder, vermillion, *mithi* (one kind of spice) etc. in a winnowing fan. He carries it in his left hand whereas in his right hand he carries a *lota* (metal pot) full of water and proceeds to the *got*, a temporary resting place of cattle at outskirts of village. Other villagers follow him with fowls, cooking utensils and pot of rice beer. There in the *got* the village priest cleans a spot with cow dung and water. He prepares a *khand* (an altar) with rice flour, sundried rice and *mithi*. Thereafter in the name of Jaher Era, Moneko, Marangburu, Majhi Haram and Goram, he applies five marks of *sindur* in front of the altar. He then sprinkles some water on the fowls and eggs and marks them with *sindur*. Meanwhile, *hakhen* is uttered with the villagers to bless the festival and to keep them free from harm. After that, Naeke cuts off the fowls head with *kapi* (one type of axe), let the blood drop on egg and rice heap and the heads are placed on *khand*. Thereafter, the naeka offers rice beer in leaf cup over the *khand* and the leftover are drunk as *prasad* by all villagers present.

Then all scarificed fowls are cleaned for cooking. After chopping those, their heads are separately cooked by rolling them on flour and baking them on the fire in a skin of leaves. Each one who has observed fasting for the occasion shares it. The Jogmajhi or Gadet with other villagers then prepares *jilsole* (rice cooked with meat) and distribute among all present by afternoon. After the eating is over, villagers began to beat Madal, play Tripo (flute) and sing songs.

Next, the village youths drive their cattle towards the *khand*. Their target is the animals to treads on and breaks the egg or smells it. The cow that touches the egg first is regarded as the luckiest. Her feet are ceremonially washed and after anointing her horns with oil they smeared it with *sindur*. The owner of the cow is also believed to be of good fortune and is carried over shoulders. Creation of man as per Santal myth has started from the egg of huge goose. Perhaps such an egg is allowed to be broken as a sacred symbol. Everyone then visits village Naeke and Headman's house, where they are given rice beer to drink. Later on, in the evening women and girls taking sundried rice, *dhubi* grass and *diya* visit cowshed and perform *chumauna*. They sing-

*"Ne sugi am sugi te Sae Sugi  
Ne Rangia am Rangiate sae Rangia  
Amem hewe leko haralekodo  
Injag orak injag gora perej kok chorang kog.*

The meaning of this song is "Sugil you have brought fortune to the home and the calves are your blessing to me only. Rangia because you are here, my home is flourishing with wealth and cattle."

During night, male members have to keep vigil and awaken the cows beginning from one end of the village to another. The purpose of this act is to get blessings and to celebrate Sohrae festival with their cattle.



Next day, sacrifices are offered to their *Ora bongas* (tutelary god). Close relatives are invited on this occasion and they pass the entire day by eating singing and dancing. During morning and evening hours, they perform *chumauna* of their cattle. *Danta* is a popular Sohrae dance that is performed in village yards. Women perform *racha al* (one type of *jhoti* drawn with the help of rice powder and ladies finger or Asan paste) in the evening to welcome their cattle. It is painted like an incoming way. On both sides of the painted way bundle of grasses, decorated by flowers are kept.

Married sisters are definitely invited on this occasion. But the concern between brothers and the sisters very often changes after marriage. The brother may be affectionately calling his sister but his wife may not be accepting them with that enthusiasm. The invited sister sensing that feeling sings-

*Dadaday menado Demay- Delamay Dedulubpe  
Hilido y mendo nuydo nukudo chili huyug tam.*

There are also instances where many guests have been invited. But the sacrificial meat may not be sufficient for them. In such a situation they sing -

*Sim koma chinyab chinyab Pela koma sagal sagal  
Dakayanj uyuyani hatinj dore ohonj ha, tinj ke*

This means the sacrifices are small in size whereas guests are plenty in number. I am ready to cook rice and prepare meat, but will not distribute it.

Then comes the third day. This is called *khuntau hilog*. Village young men put up poles in front of every house. In the afternoon buffalo bulls or oxen are tied to it. House owner puts *chirchaudal* or an ornamental mimic on top. Youths began to bait the animal by drumming *tumdag*, *tamak*, begin poking and dance around them all while trying to climb the pole and take the gift. Such war dance continues for several hours and concludes with the endearing of last gift of the village.

The fourth day is called *jajlehilog*. The Jogmanjhi with the help of youngsters, who had put up the poles now take out them. The house owner offers them rice beer. In the evening boys and girls are assembled in village *akhada*. They move from one end of the village to another for collecting rice and vegetables. They even collect vegetables from garden, which under no circumstances is to be disallowed. Santal people feel happy in contributing maximum in this grand feast. They collect rice and vegetables and cook the dinner. Dancing, singing and merrymaking exclusively enjoy the night.

On the last day Santals go for *Hakukatkam* (fish and crab catching). As per their belief catching fish and crab on this day will prolong their life span. Where *Sakrat* is celebrated on the sixth day, a variety of flour cakes are prepared to eat and distribute among close relatives. Next day the Manjhi declares the end of Sohrae.

In some places this festival is celebrated for three days only and the *Sakrat* is separately observed with *Mokar Sankrati*. Anyway this is the longest festival of Santals. A girl expresses her anxiety for this event before her elder sisters-

*Da,ina Da,ina marang da,l Da,ina Da,ina tala dai  
Ha,ti lekan parab da,ina parom chalag kan  
Dana da,ina ja,ni-jote denna da,ina pander paina  
Ha,ti lekan parab de,ibo tal ruware.*

Oh sisters, the elephant like festival is passing on. Bring oh sister there lies the rope and *pander paina*, tie it so that it will stay behind with us.

Boys are also equally passionate with the approach of the Sohrae because, they get liberty for many things. During arousing of cattle at night they sing crude songs forgetting as if nobody is present in the village except them. They also urge upon Jogmajhi to let them be in motion like bulls. In case village headman feels that others are also present in the village then, they should hide from their view -

*Kolakodo bayar araglem ho Jogmanjhi  
Kuli koko karhar kakome.*

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\* *Madhuban, Baripada*



## CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Address
Chitrasen Pasayat	Development Officer, Western Orissa, Development Council, Rajiv Bhawan, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar
Ramesh Mohanty	Branch Manager, Bank of India, Bancho branch, Keonjhar
Rajendra Padhy	Adivasi Gobesana Mancha, At/PO- Kundra, Via :Jeypore-764001, Dist :Koraput
Binod Kumar Naik	Sr. Manager, Bank of India, Keonjhar Branch
Gangadhar Hansda	Sohrae Festival
J.P.Rout	Former Deputy Director, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar
K.Mohapatra	Former Director, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) & Former Director, Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, Orissa Bhubaneswar
Kalpana Patnaik	Research Officer, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar
K. J. N.Gowtham Shankar	IDEA, Flat 4C, Maharaja Towers, R.K. Mission Road, Visakhapatnam - 530 003, Mobile: 09849342469
Trilochan Sahoo	Research Officer, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar
Harihar Das	Elwin Gabesana Parisad, Bhubaneswar
L. Bhol	Elwin Gabesana Parisad, Bhubaneswar
A.K. Gomango	Research Officer, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar
Sarat Ch. Mohanty	Research Officer, SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar
A.C. Sahoo	Officer on Special Duty (Tribal Museum), SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

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