

## **FOLKLORE OF ORISSA**

**By JOHN BEAMES, B.C.S., M.R.A.S., & c., BALASORE**

Owing to the isolation in which their country has remained for so many ages, the peasantry of Orissa has retained old world ideas and fancies to a greater extent than any other Aryan people of India. They are shy of imparting these ideas to strangers, and a man might live among them for years without finding out the singular views and original processes of reasoning on which many of their habits are based. This shyness arises, I suppose, from the gradual infiltration of modern ideas. The men are beginning to be ashamed of these antiquated fancies, and though in their hearts believing in them, would rather not talk about them, and would prefer to pass for men of the world, blasé indifferent free-thinkers to whom all ideas of religion are childish inventions fit only to be smiled at. The women, however, are still bigotedly attached to the traditions of the past, and the ruder peasantries are in the same primitive stage of credulity.

I do not propose to classify these strange superstitions, but merely to string them together as I hear them, noting here and there curious parallelisms between them and those of our own English peasantry. Students of comparative mythology may draw their own conclusions, but as I do not feel convinced that every one we read of in ancient history represents the sun, nor that all heathen religions are "myths of the dawn". I do not wish to complicate my simple remarks by plunging into the misty regions of the early Aryans, or those of Baal, Bel, Belus and so forth. Human nonsense, like human sense, is very much the same everywhere, and it is only because in ruling men one must take their nonsense into consideration quite as earnestly as their

sense, that these scraps of folk-lore are worth recording at all.

Witches abound in Orissa and are called danani, ( Sanskr. ) a word in use in all the Aryans languages of India. They have the power of leaving their bodies and going about invisibly, but if you can get a flower of the pan, or betel-leaf, and put it in your right ear, you will be able to see the witches, and talk to them with impunity. The pan, however, never flowers, or rather the witches always cause the flower to be invisible, and so you are not likely to find it. This is like the English peasants belief in the virtues of fern-seed.

Witches congregate under banian or pipal trees (in Oriya the first is bor, ,Skr, – the second oshoth, skr.) which grow on the margin of a tank, and if you sit under such a tree in such a position at either of the dawns, that is in the grey of morning or at evening twilight, you will come to grief, especially if the day be Saturday, when the influence of the planet Saturn prevails, or Tuesday when that of Mars is strong. On those days the witches are most powerful, and you will be struck with sickness, or idiotey, or suffer loss of property.

A favourite pastime of witches is to get inside the body of a person, who then becomes insensible. In this case you must repeat the following very powerful mantró or spell, and then ask the witch her name, which she will be obliged to tell you. You may then go to her house, where you will find her walking about as usual. After a severe beating she will be obliged to leave the body of her victim, who will then recover.

This is the mantró, but care must be taken never to speak it except when a witch has actually taken possession of a person,

because if you repeat the spell to any one, all sorts of terrible things will happen ; for this reason my informant wrote it out for me. It looks quite harmless, not to say meaningless, to the uninitiated eye.

### Mantra

Take a handful of dust, and while reciting the following, drop it softly on the crown of the head of the person afflicted.

Bhaj nam keutoni ta puo nam Mahabira.

Hate gheni kati buli nisa bhagorati.  
Mo jala paila asi jojan ghoti  
Oila gunia basila mari  
Swargoru dui angulo chhari  
Ki chahunlo kumaruni peti  
Lakhye Sib hoile ubha  
Mote chharo nobdowar  
Alo ! danani raktokhai  
Churang Raja mor bhai  
Debi parsuni mor mai  
Swargorn aila dela pai  
Loho loho jihbabhayangkor murti  
To dekhi Hara Parabati  
Jeinki pesibe teinki jibu

Amukai angora bhuto thau, peto thau,  
danani thau, chirkuni thau.

Gharodrushti, bahar drushti, mata  
pitadrushti, hatua batua drushti, ehi angora  
je kiehhi thao chharo ! chharo !  
Na charu boli kahar agya  
Bir Churangor koti agya.

Then blow three times between the  
joined hands into the afflicted person's  
mouth and face.

### Translation

The keut woman's name is Bhaj, her  
son's name is Mahabira,

Holding a dagger in his hand he walks  
at mid-night.

My net when dipped extends eighty  
yojans.

The power of the trident of Mahadev  
rushes into my body.

The exorciser has come, he sits  
crouching

Two fingers breadths from heaven.

What wouldst thou, hag of a potter's  
wife ?

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- Mantras must be written in red ink on the leaves of the bhojpatra.
  - It is not to be expected that anything like connected sense should be made of this rhapsody : the translation is as literal as the corrupted and vulgar nature of the Oriya will permit.

Keutuni a female kent or fisherman's wife. This is the vulgar form of the Sanskrit Kaivartta.

Peto, and fem. Peti, are from Skr. Preta. Nobodwar-the nine doors, are the nine orifices of the body-eyes, ears, mouth & c.

Churang Raja is the celebrated king of Orissa, who founded the Gangabansi dynasti in A.D. 1131. He is supposed to have been the son of the San Ganga or little Ganges i.e. the Godavari river, and was a celebrated magician in his life-time.

Chirkuni is a little witch who lurks under bushes in lonely places, and bewitches the cows as they come home in the evening.

Glance, of course, refers to the evil eye, the look by which the witch has done the mischief.

Siva standing by beholds thee.  
Leave me by the nice doors,  
O blood-sucking witch !  
Churang Raja is my brother,  
Par'suni Debi is my mother ;  
She has come from heaven planting

her foot.

With wagging tongue, of fearful  
shape

Hara and Parbati look at thee,  
Whenever they shall send thee, there  
thou shalt go.

In so-and-so's (naming the person afflicted) body be there bhut, be there pet, be there witch, be there chirkuni ; glance outside, father and mother's glance, glance at market or road ; in his body whatsoever there may be, Leave ! Leave !

I won't leave, it says, whose order is it ?

The myriad orders of Bir Churang.

In building a house you must be careful to begin with the southern wall and build north-wards, and it is very unlucky to add to a house on the south side. If you are obliged to do so you must leave a cubit and a quarter of clear space between the new house and the old.

There is a verse about this,  
Pubo hans, pachim bans

In the transliteration o stands for or short a, as the Oriyas pronounce it. This short a is only sounded as o in unaccented or final syllabus. In all other respects the mantra is transliterated on the usual Jonesian system, but allowance must be made for many vulgarisms which would not be found in classical Oriya. is the anuswara.

Dakhin ehore, uttar bere  
That is –  
East goose, west bamboo,  
South left, north hedge.

Which may be thus interpreted :-- on the east of the house there should be a tank, (hans is a goose, and geese swim in tanks), on the west a grove of bamboos, the south should be left open, and the north enclosed with a hedge. A rationalizing pandit of Balasore thus expunds : There should be a tank on the east side of the house so as to catch the morning sun, and make it comfortable while you sit and scrub your teeth with a stick, and wash yourself, and rinse your rice, and so on. There should be a grove of bamboos on the west to shelter the house from the hot afternoon sun, and the terrible dust-storms which come from that quarter. The south should be open to allow the delicious sea breeze to blow from the south, as it does all the hot weather, and the north should be fenced and planted with trees to keep off the nasty raw north wind which comes in the tains and gives every one fever and rheumatism. This is ingenious prevails in upper India, where there are no tanks, and where the conditions of wind and seasons are very different ; moreover, the rhyme is not in Oriya, but something which looks like bad Hindi of Bihar.

You must take care never to call a man back when he is leaving the house, or the business on which he was going will come to naught. His mother may call him back without harm. If you ask why his mother has this privilege, you are told it is because when Krishna was setting forth to kill Kans, his mother Jasoदा called him back, and gave him some curds, and as he was successful on that occasion, as everybody knows, a mother's recall has been harmless ever since.

You must not leave empty water-jars about in the front of a house, or else any one who sees them when starting on a journey will suffer some accident.

If you knock your head against the lintel of the door when going out, you must sit down for a time before going on. This you might be inclined to do naturally, especially if you got a hard crack.

If you are hit by the *pankha* used to fan the fire, you must spit thrice, because he who is hit by the *pankha* dies within the year, unless he transfers the curse to the earth by spitting three times.

In the same way, if you hit yourself on the foot with the *chanchuni*, a broom made of palm leaves, while you are sweeping the house, you must break off a piece of the leaf, chew, and spit it out.

When a man sneezes, his male friends ought to say "Bhagwan rakhya karuntu," i.e. "May God preserve you !" but women say "Jiu," i.e. "live !" or "achmar ho," a phrase whose meaning is not certain, in consequence of which it is more used than the other.

The ceremonies and precautions necessary to be observed by and towards ladies when in an interesting condition are so numerous and complicated that they must be left for another article. I will merely, in conclusion, observe that rice when growing is also considered as a pregnant woman, and the same ceremonies are observed with regard to it as in the case of human females.

Witches object to be disturbed when in possession of a victim, and are apt to turn on the exerciser and revenge themselves on him. To prevent this it is advisable to repeat the following mantra before uttering that mentioned in the last number :--

Bajra kilani bajra dwar  
 Chau kuli chau dwar  
 Dahane Dahanchandi bame  
 khoetrapal  
 Age Narsingho, pachhe ashto betal  
 Mo ange parila mahamudra  
 bajrakapat  
 Koti aila goti na chharibu !  
 Kahar agya ?  
 Kaunri Kamakhya koti agya.

Thunder-bolt bar, thunder-bolt door

Four sides, four doors.

On the right Dahanchandi, on the left Balram,

In front Narsingh, behind eight demons.

The great seal, the thunder door, has fallen ! on my body,

if a myriad orders of Kaunri Kamakhya.

I do not attempt to make sense of all this rubbish. It is sufficient to observe that there are human beings who believe in its efficacy.

Kaunri Kamakhya, Dahanchandi and some others are deities who specially preside over incantations, and have power over sprites, hobgoblins, demons and witches. The first named is said to reside in Assam.

The following rather diffuse mantra is infallible as a cure for snake bites. It is not quite such nonsense as the others :--

Rajani parbatre Surjyo jyoti,  
 Kamal pushpa toil gole prabhu  
 Dasaratha.  
 Kathau thoile Krushna Kadambari  
 mule,

Sudre sudre pad barhaila Jamunar  
jale.

Jamuna jale thila ati nago maye  
murha,

Bharat janila ; sankat kikat kili ;  
Mailek toil bisho gola dwadasa  
anguli,

Tebe na sulile prabhu chakradhar.  
Debtamane bicharo arambhile  
Kahin achho ho ! Gorur aso ho !  
bolile ;

Ramyek dwipore Gorur charu thila  
Khaibar ahara taku lagila ki pita.  
Tahar charita kohibi jagjita  
Mu tote bolom ho ! khago pakhibar,  
Dhusai pasibu Himagiri parbatar ;  
Parbate thila amruto kundo goti  
Berhi khanda sabal lakhe kandarpo  
jakhar thile.

Alpo kori Gorur dena bistarile  
Dela amruto, uthile prabhu  
bhagwano.

Sadguru panoku sikhya kore ano  
Debi Bisti Maku koti koti namaskaro.

Light of the sun on the mountain at  
night,  
The lord Dasaratha went holding a  
lotus.

Krishna put his sandals at the root of  
the Kadambari tree,  
Slowly slowly he advanced his feet in  
the Jamuna's water.

In the Jamuna's water was a snake  
foolish with illusions,

Bharata informed him ; Sankat-  
kikat-kili ;

He bit holding him the poison went  
twelve fingers deep,

The exorciser swept many  
incantations

Then the Lord chakradhar did not  
move.

The Gods began to consult  
Where art thou, ho ! Gorur come ho !  
they said.

Gorur was feeding in the Ramyak  
Island

His food tasted to him like poison.  
His history, I will tell, conqueror of  
the world !

I tell thee O Lord of birds,  
Rushing enter the Himalaya  
mountain ;

In the mountain there was a pot of  
nectar

With swords and maces ten  
thousand Kandarpas and Yakshas surround  
it

Gorur spread his wings a little  
He gave the nectar, the lord  
Bhagwan arose.

Students bring in thy hand a gift to  
the good guru.

I salute a myriad times Debi Bisti  
Maa.

x

“Sankat, kikat, kili” are nonsense  
words, which though they are just  
translateable are stated to be here used in  
some mystic sense.

Gorur is the Oriya pronunciation of  
Garuda, Debi Bisti is another of the  
goddesses who have power over demons.

The short o is the equivalent of and is  
so pronounced in open unaccented  
syllables, through it sounds a in accented or  
closed ones.

This spell for snakes is firmly  
believed in, while it is being uttered the part  
affected must be lightly rubbed by the hand  
of the exorcist, and this is what is meant by  
the expression “the exorcist swept many  
spells.” The continued belief in the efficacy  
of this spell may be due to the fact that  
several of the Orissa snakes are not deadly,  
though their bite causes pain and swelling.  
This is particularly the case with the grass-  
snakes, as well as with the blue and yellow  
snake found on the sea-shore which is only  
really dangerous when in the water



## **FOLKLORE STUDIES IN ORISSA**

**Shyam Sundar Mohapatra**

Folklore flourished since the dawn of civilization through it waited, for centuries, for the so-called folklorists to appear and treat it as a special branch of learning. It had a rich heritage in India and was used not only in practical life but also in sophisticated works of art and treatises. This position continued till the English came and started collecting and study of folklore materials, which was soon followed up by native scholars. During the British period both English and Indian scholars, taken together, have laid a sound foundation of the study of the subject. In the post-independence period, however, the activities have been intensified with general awareness of its importance and support from the Government. In recent years, the study is becoming more and more sophisticated with introduction of modern equipments and methodologies. The phenomenon is common to all Indian regions though their achievements vary in degree.

### **Pre – Independence Period :**

Like other parts of India, Orissa is rich in folklore. Though none bothered about its collection and study before the English scholars. It is found that folklore has been incorporated in abundance in the epics and kavyas of ancient Oriya literature. The great epic Mahabharat by Sarala Das (15<sup>th</sup> C.) embodies folklore to such an extent that it can, very well, be termed as a folk-epic. It will not be improper if Sarala Das, the author, is accepted as the first Collector of Orissan folklore. Folk-elements found a prominent place in the medieval kavyas as well. Dramatis personae and themes were very frequently drawn from the folk-world. Some kavyas such as Sasisena and Kanchikaveri (18<sup>th</sup> C.) were completely designed after folktales and ballads prevailing then.

During the period of renaissance, on Western impact, too, poets had tendency to make use of folk-elements in their poems and depict rural life. Some poets worth mentioning are Radhanath Ray, Gangadhar Meher and Nandakishore Bal. The novels of Fakirmohan are also replete with folk-elements.

The English scholar and administrator who first took interest in Orissan folklore was John Beams. He was the then Collector of Balasore. The folk-materials which attracted him most were the superstitions and charms prevailing among the peasants. His article 'Folklore of Orissa' appeared in Indian Antiquary in the year 1872. The author, at the outset, records his impressions on the life and behaviour of Orissan peasants. To him, they were full of superstitions and 'shy of imparting these ideas to strangers'. He attributed the reason to the 'isolation' of the land from outside world for a long period.

John Beams was preoccupied with the belief in witchcraft. He devotes a few paragraphs to record the habits and habitation of the so-called witches, the symptoms of the person possessed by them and also the 'mantras' that are uttered to counteract their spell. He also had recorded some traditions and taboo relating to construction of houses, effects of coming across an empty vessel while going out on a suspicious work, touch of a broomstick and so on.

Beams did not attempt at classifying, coordinating or analyzing the folklore that he collected. He made his intention clear in the essay itself that he did not wish 'to complicate his simple remarks' but to 'string them together' as he heard them 'nothing here and there curious parallelism' between them and those of the English peasantry. He wanted to collect folk-materials because it was necessary for his administration. He believed that 'human nonsense, like human sense is very much the same everywhere and it is only because in ruling men one must take their nonsense into consideration quite earnestly as their sense that those scraps of folklore are worth recording at all'.

Though Beams laid the foundation of collection and study of Orissan folklore, his contribution is limited only on one article on the subject. However, he inspired some native scholars who developed an interest in the subject. Fakirmohan, the pioneer Oriya novelist, was one of his companions at Balasore. Beams discussed matter relating to folklore with him. Fakirmohan drew inspiration from him and made free use of such materials especially proverbs, in his novels.



Another English administrator who took interest in the subject was T. E. Revenshaw, the then Commissioner of Orissa. Pt. Kapileswar Bidya Bhusan Nanda Sharma collected some sayings and published them in book form in 1876 under his patronage.

In the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> Century – a number of local scholars engaged themselves in collecting folklore materials. The tendency was to collect folk-songs and sayings. While Nilamani Vidyaratna, Seikh Abdul Mazid, Chandrasekhar Bahinipati, and Pt. Raghabananda Nayak collected only those related to agriculture. Shri Apanna Panda published three volumes of sayings in 1905. One of them was 'Dhagamalika Tatwabodhini' with annotations.

It was actually Gopal Chandra Praharaj the compiler of Oriya encyclopedic dictionary and an eminent writer who planned collection and study of Oriya folklore on a large scale. He felt the need of such collection to give a comprehensive shape to his dictionary. He divided his collection of sayings into 5 volumes out of which only 2 were published. He collected folktales too. The volume 'Utkal Kahani' published by him at the close of 19<sup>th</sup> Century is still popular and has won appreciation from all quarters.

Contribution of Praharaj to the field of Orissan folklore is immense. It is for the first time that he opened the eyes of Orissan scholars to the vast store of their folklore. He was also quite aware of the methods of field study. He laid particular emphasis on the points that the language of the folk in songs and tales should strictly be maintained, men and women belonging to a particular locality are the fittest persons to collect folklore from that locality and so on. Thus with Praharaj the folklore-methodology was emphasized, which is the basis of any scientific study.

The eminent Indian folklorist Devendra Satyathi, visited Orissa in 1931. He made an extensive tour in different parts of the State and collected a good deal of materials out of which only a few songs were published in English and Hindi journals like Modern Review, The Asia and Viswamitra. His venture, however, was an inspiration to the Orissan youth. Shri Chakradhar Mahapatra who came under his influence made a laudable collection of folk-songs from the princely States of Orissa. His first collection 'Gaunli Gita Chumbak' (1939) presents samples of Oriya folk-songs along with their Hindi transcriptions and

translations in English. His outstanding collection of folk-songs 'Utkal Gaunli Gita' appeared 20 years later.

So far the emphasis was laid on collection of Oriya folk-songs. But Laxminarayan Sahu, a member of Bharat Sevak Samaj, paid attention to tribal folklore. He collected songs from the Khond, Saura, Gonda, Gadaba, Santal, Paraja, Koya and other ethnic groups and published them under the title 'Gandharbika Satadals' (1937). He published a critical study on their religion, faith, rituals, songs, tales, etc., in "His Tribes of Jeypore" (1942). His work on 'Danda Nata', a dance drama of Orissa (1947), is also of worth mentioning.

### **Post – Independence Period :**

The years following the independence saw the appearance of at least three major scholars in the field of Orissan folklore, namely, Verrier Elwin, Chakradhar Mahapatra and Kunjabihari Das though it had nothing to do with independence. All the three had started their work much earlier. But their major works appeared only in the fifties. Besides, we have a non-folklorist in Pt. Nilakantha Das who had much to do with folklore and perhaps deserves to be mentioned first.

Pt. Nilakantha Das the veteran poet, philosopher and critic has discussed, in depth, the role of folklore in the development of Oriya literature and culture. He has also stressed on the contribution of the tribal inhabitants to the Oriya language and culture in his 'Odia Sahitya Krama Parinam' (1948-53) and in his other works.

The contribution of Verrier Elwin to Orissa, folklore deserves special mention. He spent years among the tribals and brought out a monumental volume entitled Tribal Myths of Orissa (1954). What is striking about his collection is his field method. He almost settled down among the people, lived with them, shared life as an outsider could and did several works together. This means that he did not depend merely on asking questions but knowledge of the people gradually sank in until it was a part of him. In fact, his works were the fruits of participant observation.

The Utkal Gaunli Gita (1959) of Chakradhar Mahapatra, referred to earlier, is not only a magnificent collection of about 800 pages but also is valuable for containing a long introduction bringing out salient features of the materials.

Dr. Kunjabihari Das has made his mark among Indian folklorists both for the corpus of materials he has collected and comparative as well as analytical study of the same. With him the folklore studies in Orissa attained a height which could very well be compared with that in other parts of the country at least in the fifties. He did his Ph. D. degree on Orissan folklore from Viswa-Bharati in 1954. The thesis 'Odia Lokgita O Kahani' was the first thesis on Orissan folklore. It comprises of a general survey of Oriya folk-songs and tales and also critical studies on the special features. 'A Study of Orissan folklore' (1953) written in English made his own laurels from abroad. In the N.B.T.'s folklore publication series he wrote 'Folklore of Orissa' (1979) in coaboration with Professor L. K. Mahapatra. He has several papers in English and Oriya on Orissan folklore to his credit.

Dr. Das has made an enormous collection of folk-songs and tales. Those folk-songs had been published in several volumes under the title "Palli Giti Samachayan" and out of six volumes of folk-sayings under the title "Lok Bani Samachayan" four have been published till now. He has published two volumes of folktales too. The "Lok Galpa Sanchayan" contains over 200 tales classified into 16 types. Such collection was possible on the part of Dr. Das as he was dedicated to his subject, he carried on his work for long three decades and also he used both the open and closed systems of field methods. He made extensive tour in Orissa and also had collected folk literature through Government agencies, especially with the help of school teachers; Through Government circulars. While adopting the open system he had to depend upon many untrained collectors. As he himself admits, there was a lot of unwanted rubbish with genuine folklore pouring on and he had to depend upon his long experience in the subject, to sort them out.

Dr. Das has done the best that was possible on his part in the circumstances prevailing then. Even in his thesis he had devoted a chapter to the 'motifs' of Orissan folktales. This was the prevailing tendency in the study of folklore in his time. He paid visits to the States and had contact with leading folklorists like Stith Thompson and Richard M. Dorson. This made him up-to-date in his field. After Dr. Das, folklore studies in Orissa

came to ebb. The study was not encouraged by the Universities. No scholar appears to have taken up folklore studies for a career. Folklore studies became everybody's business and of none.

Dr. Natabar Samanta Ray, Dr. Krushna Charan Behera, Dr. Gopal Chandra Mishra, Dr. Narendranath Mishra and Dr. Gagendranath Das occasionally wrote on folklore of Orissa.

Dr. Samantaray's 'Odia Palli Sahitya' (1970) is a handy book lucidly written, introducing Oriya folk literature to general readers. Dr. K. C. Behera's 'Mogal Tamsa' (1946) brings to light the history and salient features of a folk drama of the Bhadrak area which was on the wane. The work is useful from the point of view of research on the subject. Dr. C. N. Das's Janasruti : Kanchikaveri (1979) are commendable works, which try to give historical interpretation to myths woven around the temple of Lord Jagannath. Dr. Bhabagrahi Mishra did his Ph. D. thesis on Verrier Elwin from Indiana University under the guidance of the distinguished American folklorist Richard M. Dorson. The work had been published by the Asia publishing House, New York. Besides, he had published several papers on the subject. Some other significant publications of the period are 'Purva Bharatar Lok Myth : Orissa' (1981), the Ph. D. thesis of Dr. Prasanna Kumar Mishra, 'The Osa Brata Katha'(1982) by Aurobinda Pattanaik, 'Odia Lok Natak' (1983) by Hemanta Kumar Das, 'A Study of Oriya Folk-Ballads' (1988) and 'Santal Lok Kahani'(1990) by Dr. Shyam Sundar Mohapatra and 'Lok Sahitya Charcha' (1989) a collection of papers on folklore by Dr. Kailash Pattanaik. Besides, Dr. Prahlad Charan Mohanty's 'Oriya Yatra O Lok Natak' (1984) and Dr. Mahendra Kuma Mishra's 'Lok Sanskrutibit Nilakantha' (1990) and 'Paschima Odisar Adivasi Lok Sanskruti' (1992),kalahandira Lokasamskruti ( 1996) Visioning Folklore ( 2002) and Oral Epics of Kalahandi ( 2008)are worth mentioning.

It is heartening to note that there is a growing interest in the study of folklore in the State. Folklore is being taught as a special paper in M. A. Oriya curriculum. Recently, the subject has been introduced in B. A. Honours level covering a full paper. More and more students are working for their Ph. D. degrees in the subject. There are a number of such theses unpublished. The works centre mostly on different genres of folk literature, comparative studies, folk influences on ancient and modern literatures, tribal literatures

and so on. Modern methodologies and equipments have been resorted to. Materials are being collected through field study. Summarizes of 23 theses in the form of self-contained papers edited by Dr. S. S. Mohapatra and Dr. M. K. Sahoo was published in 1999 under caption 'Lok Sahitya Gabesana' and another such volume is in press.

The Department of Oriya, Viswa Bharati, has been the centre of studying Orissan folklore since Dr. Kunjabihari Das worked here. The tradition has been continued through the works of Dr. Bhabagrahi Mishra, who later joined the Indiana University, Dr. Prasanna Kumar Mishra who joined the Deptt. of Education, Govt. of Orissa, Dr. Shyam Sundar Mohapatra and others. Here Oriya folk literature has been included as compulsory paper in M. A. curriculum, it is taught as a special paper and research works are being conducted leading to Ph. D. degree. Project works on folklore are also being carried out.

Both the Government and scholars in the field of folklore are playing more and more attention to tribal literature and culture of Orissa. The Academy of Tribal Dialect and Culture, Bhubaneswar with Dr. Khageswar Mohapatra as its Director has done commendable work in collection, study and publication of works on tribal folklore. Sitakanta Mohapatra, the noted poet and bureaucrat also has made worthwhile contribution to this field.

Different organizations of folklore-fellows of Orissa are gradually coming forward to serve the cause of folklore. Some of such organizations are the Cultural Forum and the Folklore Academy of Bhubaneswar and the Orissa Lok Sanskruti Parisad of Mayurbhanj. They are rendering yeoman service to folklore in organizing seminars, symposia and publication of books and papers.

Besides the scholars already mentioned, there are quite a number of others engaged in the study of folklore. We have, of course, to be contented, here, only with an enumeration of some of the names. A special mention, however, may be made of Dr. Prasanna Kumar Pradhan, who has done substantial work in the Oriya speaking areas of the adjoining State, Bihar. Among other, noteworthy, are Dr. Kumuda Ranjan Panigrahi, Dr. Adikanda Mahanta, Dr. Dologobinda Bisi, Dr. Niladri Bhusan Harichandan, Braja

Mohan Mohanty, Dhiren Pattanaik, Dr. Kunjaban Prusti, Dr. Mihir Kumar Sahoo, Dr. Anjali Padhi, Hussain Rabi Gandhi and Dr. Nagendranath Mahapatra.

Thus, though folklore research has been invigorating in Orissa, it is quite inadequate in consideration of the vast field and materials. Even some basic needs of folklore research such as publication of a journal, establishment of a folklore museum and an institute of folklore are yet to be achieved. However, there are good signs to affirm that tomorrow will be better.

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## **Multilingual and Multicultural India**

Dr Debiprasanna Pattanayak

In the context of Indian diversity consisting 3000 mother tongues, 4600 castes and communities, 4000 faiths and beliefs, 45000 plant/biological species, 65000 animal varieties, one would expect that the Indian Development Planning would be based on multiplicity of approaches and practices. One would expect that Indian celebrates its diversity, diversity of its languages, cultures, world views and creativity. But unfortunately the reverse is the case.

Indian education is pyramidal in structure. But the large language base at the bottom falls for short of the mother tongues required to be taught. We are paying lip service to education for all and mother tongue as the medium of early education. In practice education for all remains an adjunct of education for some. Mother tongues are pushed out in devices ways and minority English education is promoted. Today 3-4 per cent of English educated rule 96-97 per cent of the population. Unless Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan becomes Sarva Bhasha Abhiyan, education for all remains a dream. Unless we understand that language is bound to be medium.

Multilingual education is a social capital and not a parameter of poverty and discrimination. Three Language Formula is not a substitute for multilingual education. The first language Policy and Programme (1970) categorically monitors that the Three Language Formula is a programme and not a policy. The NCERT Report on Language (1986) points at deficiencies in the formula. And yet the NEP (1986) and its revised version (1992) got stuck in the Three Language Formula. This formula has no reference to mother tongues, to proximate languages, to classical languages, to foreign languages, to minority and minor languages, to dialects and socialisms, and to pidgins and creoles, forfeits all claims to be being a policy.

The formula also forfeits all claims to multilingual education. As speaking many languages does not make one linguistic, teaching three or more languages do not make a curriculum multilingual. Existence of many languages, use of many languages makes a

country multilingual in the popular sense of the term. The world with 6000 languages is multilingual in this sense of the term.

Multilingual education is such a curriculum and such a method, which builds bridges among languages. It is not a one way bridge having one language behind and moving into another, thus promoting virtual monolingualism. This is to create competence in the local, regional, national and international languages through building two way bridges, thus ensuring and promoting sustainable multilingualism.

Multilingual education creates its own identity. This is layered identity. This recognizes diversity and respects difference. This recognizes that languages are not rich-poor, high-low, powerful-powerless and resourceful-resource less. Such thinking offends human rights and militates against education with quality and equity.

Multilingual education is not meant for tribals. It is education for all. Treating tribals as poor-low caste and inferior is imported by the non-tribal teacher to the classroom. To think that they do not have languages and speak only in dialects undermines their self-confidence. If multilingual education is based on the language which the child knows, speak and understands, while moving into reading and writing she comes to know the rule governed character of the language. She comes to understand the difference between the spoken and written styles of a language and also between one language and another. His imagination is stirred, creatively challenged and knowledge is enhanced.

The time to build bridges is determined by the distance and closeness of languages. It takes greater time and preparation to move from Oriya to Tamil or English rather than from Oriya to Bengali or Hindi. Scripts become another problem because of the prevalence of multiple scripts. However, one of the advantages is that all Indian scripts other than Roman, Persian, Arabic and newly invented tribal scripts have emanated from a single source, Brahmi. In the 1970s, I advised the South State that the tribal languages which have no scripts should adopt the state language scripts. Most accepted the suggestion.

Multilingual education involves cooperative learning. Teacher and students work together and seek the cooperation of the community. The teacher learns the languages and cultures from the students and the community, and the students learn subjects from the teacher. The teacher often does not know the number of languages spoken by



students in a classroom. The teachers even do not know the necessity of knowing the students languages. In fact, one teacher argued that if he had to teach Oriya and English, what is the need of knowing the languages of students. Such mind set is one of the reasons of one way communication in the classroom from the teacher to the student.

Time management is a major step towards bridge building. The first step is to build bridge between the Home language (Mother Tongue) and the School language. 80% of the school time should be spent on reading writing the Mother Tongue; 20% for the spoken school language. Thereafter more and more time should be given to reading and writing of the school language. This time is to be so adjusted that by the end of the primary stage (Fifth Standard), the time should be revised, 80% for the school language and 20% for the Mother Tongue. This time is not sacrosanct. This can be adjusted according to the need of the children.

Instructional material is the next important factor in bridge building. Instructional material of two or more languages should be so selected that they should make the languages reflect the socio-cultural reality and build a culture area. This cannot be done by accepting a foreign model mindlessly. In a reading programme in Hindi for classes-I & II in an apex institution in Delhi, I was told that they have accepted the Cambridge series as the model. Nobody had an answer as to why they chose it as a model. There is also no answer as to why a subject is taught. In a school Dharawi School in Bombay and a tribal school in Orissa the teachers were teaching lessons on Birthday. There was a difference of nearly 30 years. In the Dharawi school, the teacher asked those who celebrate their birthdays and those who attend the celebration of birthday of their friends to raise their hand. Not a single hand was raised. In Orissa school the teacher read a line from the Textbook, which in translation is, Anuradha gave a gift to her friend on her birthday. One student asked, what is a birthday? What is a gift? Why did the child give something to the friend on that day? This shows that on the imposition of middle class values there is no change in the mindset of teachers, textbook writers and curriculum makers.

Grammar is another important factor in cooperative multilingual learning. Psychological research in dominant monolingual western countries says that a child has acquired the grammar of his mother tongue by the age of four. But in a multilingual country, where a child has more than one mother tongue, by the age of four the child

has acquired three fourths plus of grammar of one of the grammar of one mother tongue and partial grammars of the rest. If a language has two genders, another three, another five and another language have no grammatical gender. This could be a source of fun and delight and the children can discover this by working together. If a language has seven cases and another two, if a language has three tenses and another two, the children and the teacher together work out playfully these differences and learn to respect one another. They learn that each language has a different grammar. They also learn that there is no language without a grammar.

The relationship between the language and mathematics is yet to be properly understood in many parts of the world. Even in India, which has a glorious tradition of mathematical research and which has contributed the concept of zero to the world? The gap between the two is visible. Different languages gave different counting systems, expressions of shapes and sizes, measures and notations. Different cultures have different expressions for long and short, tall and dwarf, far and near, height and depth. All these may be seen comparatively and used in the teaching of mathematics.

Research has established that those who are good at language are good at mathematics; those who are poor at language are poor at mathematics. Natural languages are ambiguous. Words and sentences occur with multiple meanings. Unless they are disambiguated it is difficult to teach mathematics. A fifth standard teacher where asked given thirteen red and blue balls how he would teach the concept of set, burst into laughter. He said separate the reds from the blues, you have your sets. When he was told that if all the thirteen are partially red and partially blue. There is only one set. If all the thirteen some are red, some are blue and some are partially red and partially blue, then there are three sets. There is no wonder that as early as 1961 the American Mathematical society incorporated Linguistics.

Teaching research and evaluation go hand in hand. In multilingual education research is essential as there is no model to copy form. If there is no teaching because there is no teacher (in Orissa, out of 1,30,000 sanctioned elementary teacher posts, 75,000 are vacant, because the teachers have to teach multiple classes and multiple subjects), because the teachers do not know the subjects they teach, then quality education and education is bound to remain a day dream.

When we speak of multilingual education two things stand out, cooperative learning in the classroom and community participation in school activities. In the classroom, teacher and student work together and home children and parents work together. They learn from each other. The community members can teach songs, tell stories, and talk about their values and cultures. In the process, a network of relations is developed which binds the school and the community, school drop out and school failure becomes the concern of the community and is reduced. Community knowledge supplements school knowledge.

1. One example of teacher student working together and bridge building is cooperative reading. The first step of the four step reading is the teacher reading a piece loudly to the class. The second step is the teacher and the students reading the some piece loudly together. The third step is silent reading by the students. The fourth step is evaluation of silent reading in order to ascertain the level of understanding as well as speed of reading. The community participation is reading Ramayan and Mahabharata to the children is another achievement.

Another example of teachers and students working together and learning from one another is language. Let us assume that the teacher does not know the languages the children speak. Many students do not know the teachers language. Taking objects in the environment or body parts, the teacher elicits the words in the languages in the classroom. They are written in the blackboard. This is the beginning of a multilingual dictionary jointly prepared by the teacher and the students.

An interesting aspect of cooperative learning is the discovery of different counting systems. The units of counting are different in different cultures. Some count by units of four, some by five, some by ten, some by twelve and some by units of twenty. Each has its riddles, songs and games. The discovery of these units and linking them with counting from one to hundred rather than imposing one to hundred could be a delightful experience.

The four factors of multilingual education are Time Management, Grammar Management, Instructional Material Management and Research Management, Allotting time for bridge building and for kills in two languages in such a manner that 80 per cent of school time is devoted for Reading and Writing of the Mother Tongue and 20 per cent

is for speaking and understanding of the school language. The Time is so adjusted that by the end of the primary standard, the allotment is reversed, 80 per cent of the school time is devoted to the speaking, reading and writing of the school language, 20 per cent of the time is for the Mother Tongue. The child is ready to study through the medium of the school language from the post primary stage. It must, however, be understood that there is nothing sacrosanct regarding the allocation of quantum of time. This can be changed according to need.

Grammar is the thread which binds language sounds with meaning. Grammar is the rule which governs grammar. These rules are different for different languages. These differences need to be discovered. Grammatical rules follow usage and not the reverse. In Sanskrit there is a saying, 'the grammarians follow usage. These differences are so pleated that transition from one language to another becomes smooth.

Instructional materials bring cultures together or fear them apart. The scheduled tribe population of Orissa is 24 per cent of the population of the State. Yet there is very little textual material which introduces the tribal and their cultures to the non-tribal. The upper middle class culture is the model for all instructional materials.

Multilingual education is restoration of human rights. It is an acknowledgment of the snatching of language rights of children, minority and minor language speakers, pidgin and creates speakers, dialect and sociolect speakers. It is recognition of the fact that the physically and mentally deficient are derived language rights. Since multilingual education is built upon mother tongue foundation, this is also restoration of value education. Multilingual education is not tribal education, nor is it education for linguistic minorities. Multilingual Education is education for all.

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Baramunda Housing Board

Bubaneswar, Orissa ,India

**ORAL NARRATIVE AND HINDU METHOD OF  
ASSIMILATION:  
A CASE OF MARJARAKESARI IN NARSINGHNATH**

Chitrasen Pasayat

Narsinghnath has constantly drawn the attention and consideration of scholars belonging to diverse disciplines such as sociology, history, archaeology, art, and culture for a very long time. The ground is that it continues to offer novel information partly because various pieces of facts exposed in this field compel us to rethink and reorganise and partly because the ever-growing intricacy in the political landscape of west Orissa which encourage additional examination to reconfigure certain images and symbols for the purpose of socio-historical reconstruction and rebuilding of this place. The present paper is an endeavour to understand and appreciate the mode and probable reasons of assimilation of a local deity called Narsinghnath (Little Tradition) in the wider Hindu society and culture (Great Tradition) in the modern west Orissa i.e. erstwhile Chauhan Rajya (state or kingdom).

In the present context, we have relied largely on the material and substance from the oral tradition accessible in the local areas, which sustains this process of assimilation. Generally, historians have shown slight regard for the oral tradition and in only some places, they treat the claims of the oral evidence rather cavalierly. Nevertheless, it is recommended here that oral narratives like myth and legend are manufactured and attached to the Narsinghnath Tirtha (pilgrimage) to establish and to validate the faith of the numerically dominant aborigines with the Hindu epic tradition and thereby the larger Hindu religious tradition (Great Tradition). Accordingly, aesthetic consideration plays relatively an insignificant role in the present study.

The area of our study is Narsinghnath Tirtha. The shrine of Narsinghnath is bounded by rich jungles and is situated about 32 kms. south-west of Padampur town. It is quaintly situated at the foot of a hill of similar name Narsinghnath, which is an essential part of the Gandhagiri or Gandhamardan hill range. This hill range rises from 2000 to 3000 feet in height and reaches its highest point 3234 feet in the peak of Narsinghnath hill. This Tirtha is in the former Borasambar zamindari under the previous Patna Rajya i.e. Patnagarh. Afterward, it became a part of erstwhile Sambalpur Rajya.

One branch of the Gandhamardan hill range runs along the southern frontier of the ex-Borasambar zamindari and separates Bargarh district from the district of Bolangir. Narsinghnath temple is positioned on the northern side of the Gandhamardan hill range inside Bargarh district. On its southern slope almost at the foot of the hill is Harisankar / Hari-Sankar, another place of pilgrimage. A difficult path links Harisankar and Narsinghnath across thickly forested mountainous tract. Perennial brooks ooze out on both sides of this hill range. From the northern crest of this range springs a famous stream called Papa-Harni Nala, sequentially called Kapil-Dhar, Bhim-Dhar, and Chal-Dhar and descends to the foot of the hill where Narsinghnath Pitha is situated. On the southern slope, a similar stream named Papa-Nasini (the destroyer of sin) issues from the crest from the range and descends to the foot of the hill where Hari-

Sankar Pitha is located. Another range branches off to the west of Narsinghnath running first north-south and then north-east near Jagdalpur in the state of Chhattisgarh where it is broken by the river Ang / Ong. Another range runs eastward to Tal and then to the northeast forming the boundary between the Bargarh district of Orissa and the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh (Senapati and Sahu, 1971, 1968:5,483-84; Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:9). In view of this, it may be understood that Borasambar zamindari was advantageously situated from political, military otherwise security point of view.

It would not be out of context to point out here that Gandhagiri is very popular in the literature of history, mythology, culture and various Puranas of Hindu Great Tradition. The Gandhamardan of the Ramayana may as well be identified with this range of hills (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:5; Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:9). The tradition ascribes the construction of Narsinghnath temple on Gandhagiri to Vaijala Dev-I (1410-1430 A.D.). An inscription of 1413 A.D. found in this temple attests it. Vaijala Dev-I is the fourth Chauhan ruler of Patnagarh and is supposed to be the builder of Narsinghnath temple whereas his queen Durlabha Devi is said to have built the Hari-Sankar temple. The former is dedicated to Lord Visnu (Hari) while the latter is dedicated to Lord Siva (Hara). Nevertheless, according to the oral narrative prevalent in the local area, Raja Ramai Dev (1360-1385 A.D.), the founder of the Chauhan dynasty / kingdom in Patnagarh is said to have built these temples.

The oral narrative regarding construction of the Narsinghnath temple is as follows. The worship of Marjara-kesari by the common people at Narsinghnath is said to have been initiated by a tribal couple. According to the oral narrative, a tribal woman named Yamuna and her husband used to go to the jungle to collect fruits, leaves, firewoods etc. for their living. One fine morning, while digging a place in search of Kanda (roots), Yamuna and her husband observed blood spurted out from that place. An unexpected fear gripped on them. They stood there frightened and shaking. For a moment, they were speechless due to fear. When they overcame from fear, they realized that there might be some supernatural power in that place. Subsequently, they narrated their experiences before Raja Ramai Dev. Consequently, the icon of Marjara-kesari was discovered from that location and a temple was built for his worship. A wound mark found on the head of the image is supposed to have been caused by digging (2).

Our subsequent analysis, however, unfolds the reality that the Narsinghnath site is an ancient one. The survival of Gandhagiri as a religious site dates back at least to the early Christian era. We have numerous evidences to establish that Buddhism was widespread in West Orissa from the 2nd century BC to the 6th century AD. Nagarjuna, the great expounder of the Madhyamika Philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism flourished some time during the period in Daksina Kosala, which was then under the Satavahana king Gautamiputra Satakarni. It is known from the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims Hieun Tsang and Itsing that king Satakarni (106-130 A.D.) built a magnificent Vihara for his philosopher friend Nagarjuna at Po lo mo lo ki li (Parimalagiri) which has been identified with modern Gandhagiri (Sahu, 1958:100-101; Senapati and Kuanr, 1980:43; Senapati and Sahu, 1968:5). It means that Gautamiputra Satakarni is

said to have patronized Nagarjuna and constructed a brilliant vihara for him on the Parimalagiri.

In this context, mention may be made of some Buddhist relics discovered in Ganiapali. Remarkably, Ganiapali is situated near the convergence of the Ang and the Magar rivers near Melchhamunda Police Station under Padampur Sub-Division in the district of Bargarh. Most likely, the Ang valley is archaeologically exceptionally rich and Ganiapali occupies a significant place. There appears to be ruins of an ancient Stupa in Ganiapali, which is identified with ancient Muchalinda, a centre of Buddhist learning (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:49,531). Two Buddha's images have been discovered in Ganiapali. The local people worship one such image with the hooded serpent as a deity (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:524).

From the Buddhist text Vinayapitaka, it is recognized that the serpent king Muchalinda protected Lord Buddha by raising its hood over his head forming an umbrella during the second week following his enlightenment while Buddha was troubled by rain and storm. Such an image of Lord Buddha seated on the coils of the serpent king Muchalinda, which shaped a hooded canopy over the head of Lord Buddha, has been discovered in Ganiapali. The local people worship this image as Naga-Muni (the serpent sage).

The above-mentioned Muchalinda image of Ganiapali was located for the first time by the celebrated art historian Charles Fabri in 1961 during his exploration. Fabri has correctly remarked that Muchalinda Buddha images are very rarely found in India. He has dated this image to the 5th to 6th century A.D. The name of the village Melchhamunda might have been a local twist of Muchalinda (Fabri, 1974:31-36; Panda, 2004:27). When precisely this place was abandoned is difficult to substantiate due to paucity of facts. However, systematic exploration and excavation in this area will positively throw new light on the history and culture of this area.

On a stone-slab is carved a Yoni-Patta having an eight-angled design and a pair of footprints. It is found close to the Pancha-Pandava-Ghat in Narsinghnath. It is said that such footprints are found to be carved on stone slabs at Ghudar and Ranipur-Jharial in the district of Bolangir and at Samaleswari temple and nearby Rampad in Sambalpur.

It is widely believed that worship of footprints of Siddhacharyas was very familiar to the Tantrik School (Panda, 1996:37; 2003:62). The footprint emblem noticed in the site of Ranipur-Jharial may corroborate this. It is believed to be the reminiscent of early Buddhist worship of anoconic diction (Patel, 2004:42). So, in the present state of our knowledge and information, this much can be remarked here that the Narsinghnath area bears the testimony of Buddhist site of pilgrimage, worship and learning with international reputation in between second and eighth century A.D. In view of this, it may be suggested that in ancient and medieval period, religion and learning were very intimately intermingled and each Tirtha or holy place was also a centre of learning and culture.

From the accounts of the eminent art historian Donaldson (1985:200-201), it is known that the temple site of Narsinghnath is an ancient one and the survival of four pillars within the Jagamohana suggests that there was in the beginning a pillared Mandapa erected here. Stylistically, these four existing

pillars appear to date from the ninth century and are probably the earliest extant examples in Orissa of this transplanted style. This original structure has undergone many changes, however, with two ornate doorframes being added in the eleventh century.

Panda (2003:61-72) has studied the sculptures and identified with the Panduvamsi Raja Harshagupta and his Rani Vasata Devi on one of the previously mentioned four pillars. The sculpture depicts the picture of Rani Vasata Devi attending to her husband Raja Harshagupta in his deathbed in deep mourning. Conspicuously, Rani Vasata Devi is also believed to have built the original Narsinghnath temple for Lord Visnu. This attests the fact that the site of Narsinghnath bears the testimony of a place of Hindu worship and pilgrimage since at least the eighth century A.D.

In this context, mention may be made of one five feet high four-headed standing figure of Narasingha in Samabhanga posture found in a small temple of the Narsinghnath temple complex. Very unusually, the Sthanaka Yoga Narasingha image standing in Samabhanga posture is seen wearing shoes up to knee-level or high boot of the Iranian type, as seen in the legs of the Surya image of Konark, assigned to the thirteenth century A.D. (Panda, 1992:210;Panda, 2004:46-47).

It might be possible that the temple site of Narsinghnath was in the beginning a Buddhist one and the temple built over it by Rani Vasata Devi in eighth or ninth century A.D. was in a decaying state. This was repaired and renovated in eleventh century A.D. and was consequently repaired or renovated again by the first Chauhan Raja Ramai Dev in fourteenth century A.D. In the same way, it was in complete ruins in the fifteenth century and the fourth Chauhan Raja Vijjala Dev-I built a new temple on this site for the present Lord Narasingha Visnu.

Senapati and Sahu (1968:50) writes that possibly from the time of Raja Vijjala Dev-I and his Rani Durlabha Devi, the peaks containing the temples of Narasingha and Hari-Hara were correspondingly recognized as Narsinghnath and Harisankar. In view of this, Gandhagiri may be believed to be a foremost religious centre of Buddhism with international status between the second and eighth century A.D. For that reason, probably it was assimilated into Hindu fold i.e. Hinduism first through the stream of Tantrik Saivism and finally through the stream of Vaisnavism which will be dealt subsequently in our analysis (3).

It may be understood that Gandhagiri has been the seat of Buddhist activities since the early part of the Christian era and Buddhism continues to become the dominant form of religion in this region at least till the eighth century A.D. There was an ancient Vihara and it had the international reputation of being a Buddhist Pitha. Significantly, when Buddhism as a religious-cultural force began to decline in many parts of India, Gandhagiri still played a significant role and contributed to this faith in its new form i.e. Tantrik Buddhism. In all probability, Narsinghnath Pitha was once upon a time popularly known as the land of Tantrik Buddhism. Similarly, Lord Marjarakesari enshrined in the Narsinghnath temple may be identified with a Buddhist Tantrik deity who may have been worshipped by the aborigines since time immemorial. In other words, Buddhism had stronghold over this area and its people.



Buddhism had to experience a great set-back owing to the rise of Saivism and Vaisnavism in this region. It was possible but not probable earlier than ninth century. It seems probable that Vaisnavism has misplaced its identity and tried to compromise with Saivism during the reign of Somavamsis. Post-eighth century probably gave a Saivite twist to the Tantrik Buddhism in Narsinghnath site. The increasing popularity of Saivism after ninth century is apparent from the occurrence of Saiva images and Hari-Hara Pangat in the Narsinghnath Pitha. Most likely, during this period Tantrik Buddhism mingled with Saivism. Nevertheless, it is not possible to pronounce precisely when the Buddhist ideology or faith has come to an end allowing Saivism a space to prosper and dominate in Narsinghnath Pitha. However, Saivism left its imprints on this site, which is also substantiated by the rock-cut sculptures found in Narsinghnath.

In the Pancha-Pandava-Ghat, there are rock-cut sculptures among which a big rock-cut profiled figure of standing bull Nandi is hewn with one bell hanging from its neck and Lord Siva sitting on its back. A male is positioned nearby with both his hands folded in obeisance. This rock-cut sculpture can be dated back to the 12th-13th century A.D. (Panda, 2004:81). In other words, this rock-cut sculpture represents the popularization of Saivism in this Pitha or site during this period. Under the patronage of Somavamsi rulers, Saiva ascetics might have influenced the common people a lot that facilitated in the spread and popularization of Saivism in the Gandhagiri area. The following oral narrative connected with this Pitha attests this reality. There is a pool called Haran-Papa in the bed of stream close to the Narsinghnath temple. The natural springs, which come down the Narsinghnath hills, create a pool of water at the foot of the hill close to Narsinghnath temple. The pool is called Haran-papa, the water of which is competent to wash away all sins.

As per the existing narrative, Lord Siva after killing the Go-Daitya (cow-demon) could not liberate himself from his sin anywhere in the world. Lord Brahma informed Lord Siva about the manifestation of Ganga Devi in the shape of a stream in Gandhagiri and recommended him to take a holy dip in its water. Consequently, Lord Siva arrived here and took a dip in the holy water. Amazingly, Lord Siva got himself released of the stigma at this Tirtha (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:14). Particularly, matching story is found related with the river Baitarani in other parts of Orissa. All the same, this narrative intends to communicate some information about specific event; provided that it can be correctly dated and appropriately interpreted as potential source of certain kinds of historical information. But dating and interpretation present a lot of difficulties. Nevertheless, the above narrative does suggest us to consider that Saivism was once popular and enjoyed predominance in this place.

There is an oral narrative concerning the formation of Chauhan Rajya in Patnagarh in the medieval period. By the time the Sultan of Delhi conquered Rajputana, a Rani of one of the Rajput houses fled away to save her honour and dignity after her husband was assassinated in the battle. This Rani is recognized as Ashavati and her husband is identified as Hammir Dev who lived near Mainpur in north India and was killed by the Sultan of Delhi. Subsequently, Asavati reached Borasambar, a small Binjhal Rajya. Borasambar was numerically dominated by the aborigines like the Binjhals and was a seat of tribal power. The

Binjhal tribal chief of Borasambar took pity on the mother and gave her shelter, where she gave birth to a son named Ramai Dev who afterward became the originator of Chauhan dynasty in Patna.

Reportedly, Binjhals are Dravidian in origin. They worship swords, spears and arrows. They worship mother-Goddess specifically Lakheswari (the Goddess of Archery) and Dangar-Devta (the mountain deity). Possibly, the Binjhals are a hunting and martial tribe. They particularly worship Bindhyabasini who is their principal deity and Narsinghnath. They do not employ Brahmins in any ritual observance. They have their Binjhal priests for this purpose. Moreover, Bairagis or Vaisnavas are taken as Mantra-Guru. Almost every Binjhal takes Karna-Mantra that is, Mantras whispered in the ear (Karna). It may be understood that Binjhals seek to assert their interest and identities against Brahmins or power and authority of the Brahmins in the Hindu society. This reminds us one of the protests of Buddhism in opposition to caste prejudices or Brahminism. In addition, they worship deities of the Hindu pantheon along with their own deities, which may be accredited to the process of Hinduisation or Sanskritisation taken place afterward (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:103; Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:121; Senapati and Kuanr, 1980:93-94).

According to the oral narrative, once upon a time Patna was a dependency of Borasambar. There was no chief and the council of eight Malliks (Asta-Malliks) ruled over Patna. It was a reign full of mishap and disturbances. What's more, it was a seat of Tantrism and cruelest form of blood sacrifice i.e. human sacrifice was prevalent before its reigning goddess Pataneswari. Everyday a man was sacrificed to the deity. But it was practically difficult on the part of the Asta-Malliks to arrange a man daily for the deity. Consequently, a well thought out practice was made with the hidden intent of human sacrifice at the religious Pitha of Pataneswari.

As per the practice, these eight Malliks were electing a chief each day from the common mass and taking him to the temple of Pataneswari so that he could seek her blessings before ascending the throne. In fact, they had clear objective of letting the man to be the sacrificial article of the deity. They asked the so called newly elected or selected leader to pay obeisance to the deity. No sooner had he prostrated himself then he was beheaded by these Malliks and sacrificed before the deity. After that, the Asta-malliks pretended that the deity considered him unfit to sit on the throne and for that reason devoured him. As a result of this practice, day by day a man was elected chief and subsequently sacrificed pitilessly.

This narrative intends to transmit certain historical information in a distorted and hazy form that Patna (Patnagarh) was a seat of Tantrism where human sacrifice was once established. In this context, it may be said that there is satisfactory sign to demonstrate and consider that Patna was a seat of Tantrism that led to the institution of a Tantrik Pitha (site) at Patna. It may be noted here that still a few years ago Patna was widely known as Kuanri-Patna or Kaunri-Patna which means the seat of maidens who lived in this township for some period of time and accomplished esoteric rites.

Most probably, these Tantrik maidens were non-Brahmins by caste or they were popularly acknowledged by their assumed non-Brahmin names like Gangi-

Gauduni, Sua-Teluni, Jnanadei-Maluni, Nitei-Dhobani, Luhukuti-Luhurani, Sukuti-Chamaruni and Patrapindhi-Saharuni. This suggests us to believe that they were very admired and worshipped mostly amongst non-Brahmin and tribal sections of the west Orissan society. There are popular tales and traditions in west Orissa depicting the occult practices and Tantrik activities of these seven maidens, at times branded as Sat-Bahen (seven sisters). They appear to be the supporters and followers of Lakshminkara who has propounded the Sahajayana Buddhism in west Orissa in the ninth century A.D.

Apparently, Vaijala Dev-II (1520-1540 A.D.) of Chauhan dynasty was also a worshipper of Hari-Hara and his Guru was well versed in Logic and Tantra. As late as the sixteenth century, Patna Rajya was known as Kaunri-Patna after the name of the headquarters town of that name as known from the Nirguna Mahatmya of the poet Chaitanya Das (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:50-51,489; Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:49,531; Panda, 1992).

The oral narrative further reveals that there was a Brahmin in Patna. On one occasion, on his visit to Borasambar he learnt that the Binjhal chief of Borasambar had given shelter to a Chauhan princess and her son. On his request, the Borasambar chief allowed him to take the mother Asavati and her son Ramai Dev to Patnagarh and to keep in his house. After sometime, the Brahmin was elected by the Asta-Malliks to be the chief of Patna. Being afraid of the inevitable consequence of death he sent Ramai Dev to represent him for this purpose.

When the Asta-Malliks asked Ramai Dev to prostrate himself before the deity, he asked them to demonstrate how to do it. When the Asta-Malliks were prostrating themselves, Ramai Dev killed all of them with the sword kept besides the deity and came out of the temple alone and alive. As it became clear from this that the deity approved Ramai Dev, the people hailed him, as their ruler and thus, he became the first Chauhan Raja of Patna. The Binjhal chief of Borasambar, the overlord of Patna endorsed his claim to the principality, came to Patna and put the Ticca of a Raja on his forehead. Thus, in Patna / Patnagarh, the Binjhals occupied a honoured and privileged position or status in the sense that it was the custom until very recently for the Binjhal chief and each of his descendants to exercise the same right, also placing a Pagri or Pat of silk on the head of the Raja of Patnagarh at the time of accession (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:516-517).

Deo (2003:97) strongly claims that there is no historical support for Chauhan immigration to Kosala region i.e. modern west Orissa. It is more probable that one of the local tribal chiefs emerged powerful enough to assert his independence and seeking the Brahmin's help and advice, claimed Chauhan rank and status. It may be understood in this specific circumstance why the Binjhals have such an exaggerated sense of their weight and importance in relation to the Patna Rajya. The way in which Ramai Dev has asserted his position and influence within the power structure suggests us to consider that Binjhals have extended all support to Ramai Dev. In other words, the termination of rule of Asta-Malliks was accompanied by the Binjhals who have played significant role in the emergence and expansion of the Chauhan Rajya in Patnagarh. This is why they have enjoyed much reputation and standing.

The most salient point about the contributions made by various groups is that tribal people or aboriginal groups have been a key factor in the development

and progress of societies, in breaking up ethnic boundaries and other cultural limits and identities towards the emergence of Patna state or nation as we understand it today. Ramai Dev eventually succeeded in capturing power from Asta-Malliks and became the exclusive ruler of Patna. In this heroic myth, the man of action Ramai Dev and a Brahmin script the extinction of system of Asta-Malliks. This reflects the familiar competition and jealousy among Asta-Malliks who represents various interest groups about their status and position within the then existing political structure.

In this context, Deo (2003:97) writes that there was a type of oligarchy or Government by a group of eight powerful persons recognized as Asta-Malliks, and one of these eight chiefs emerged as the Garhpati of Patnagarh. Ramai Dev distorted the egalitarian system of rule (Asta-Sodara rule) and acknowledged the other seven as Garhpatis or Malliks of diverse areas, who enjoyed superior status in their respective areas. It is understood from the narrative that Ramai Dev was himself endowed with some extra-ordinary qualities and commensurate good will. But he could hardly have destroyed the Asta-Malliks or the system of oligarchy in Patnagarh without the support and guidance of the Brahmin, which marks the commencement of a process of Hinduisation or Brahminisation or Aryanisation. Thus, their union brings the heroic destiny of Ramai Dev to a fitting close to sanskritisation and also formation of a new hierarchical political structure.

Deo (2003:97) has rightly mentioned that in these circumstances, it is not difficult to believe in the emergence of a Brahmin-Kshatriya ruling coalition in Patnagarh. In order to sustain a separate and independent Chauhan kingdom, most probably, the Chauhan rulers had to depend upon the Bhogas and Bhagas. They had to persuade the local tribal people to become settled agriculturists so that production would increase; because tribal economy based on hunting and shifting cultivation cannot sustain a Rajya as analysed in a different place by Deo (2003:96). In order to legitimize their rank and status as Rajas and to their share of the produce i.e. Bhaga, the Chauhan rulers granted lands to Brahmins and temples which contributed to the changing the agrarian situation, configuration of hierarchical social order and Brahminisation or Sanskritisation or Hinduisation of society in this area. In course of development, the successive Chauhan rulers of Patnagarh extended their influence over the neighboring territories including Sambalpur and the adjoining States.

In this context, it would not be out of place to mention here that the aboriginal inhabitants of the Gandhagiri area of Borasambar give special regards to Narsinghnath Tirtha. For instance, if the dead body is burnt by the Binjhals, then the ashes and bones are by and large taken to Panch-Pandava-Ghat in the stream near the Narsinghnath temple, where they immersed the ashes. It is believed that the deceased would attain heaven in so doing (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:122-123). In addition, many other people of the neighbouring areas also immerse the ashes of their forefathers in this pool called Harana-papa with the same belief (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:14).

As discussed previously, the-then existing religious site at Narsinghnath received royal sponsorship by the first Chauhan ruler Ramai Dev of Patnagarh some time in the fourteenth century. It was perhaps in a decaying condition when

the fourth Chauhan Raja Vaijala Dev, son of Vatsaraja Dev came into power. He extended stately patronage and rebuilt or renovated this religious shrine, which was then emerging as a Vaisnava Pitha. He arranged and granted revenue of the village Luhasingha or present Loisinga for the worship of Lord Narasingha and maintenance of this temple (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:534-535).

Vaijala Dev was succeeded by Bhojaraja Dev (1430-1455 A.D.) who is said to have built a fort on the Gandhamardan hills near Narsinghnath temple. This fortification was recognized after him as Bhojarah. Bhupal Dev (1480-1500A.D.) of this dynasty is identified to have improved the construction of Bhojarah close to which he established a township and encouraged people to inhabit there by providing lands free of rent (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:51).

It is understood from Deo's (2003) examination that in the new hierarchical political structure at some stage in the Chauhan rule, the tribal chief of Borasambar was recognised as a zamindar under the Patna Raja. Borasambar zamindar enjoyed greater status in his area. This recognition resulted in a hierarchical arrangement. The tribal chief was permitted to run his Borasambar zamindari and was most probably required to pay a periodical tribute, Bheti and also to assist the Patna Raja or overlord in an emergency. He used to keep the income from a part of a territory for his own maintenance. Likewise, there were several villages within the zamindari and most of the village headmen were most likely tribals. Village headman was also recognized as hereditary chief of the village called Gahatia or Gaotia or Gantia or Gartia. The village headman was also required to supply military aid during an emergency to Borasambar zamindar / zamidar as well as Patna Raja. For that, the Gaotia enjoyed the land attached to his village or a cluster of villages under his jurisdiction or authority. The revenue from this provided for his maintenance and that of his soldiers.

In the process of formation of a larger Hindu kingdom and society, the autochthonous groups and their religious Pitha like Narsinghnath (Little Tradition) were wrapped up in the wider Hindu society and culture (Great Tradition). In other words, these autochthonous groups and their religious-cultural tradition (Little Tradition) played significant role in the process of state formation in the regional level i.e. in the erstwhile Patnagarh or Patna Rajya during the medieval period. In turn, these little religious traditions have received royal aid and patronage for its popularity, prosperity and growth.

The Papa-Harni-Nala is a tributary of the river Ang. Its water accumulates at five different places into five pools known as Kund. These Kunds popularly recognized as Sita-Kund, Pancha-Pandava-Kund and Gan-Kund in the bed of the Papa-Harni-Nala are considered efficacious in washing away sins. In fact, Papa-Harni-Nala is formed by the natural springs at Narsinghnath. The water-falls are popularly identified as Kapil-dhar, Bhim-dhar, Gada-dhar, Gupta-dhar and Chal-dhar, which are regarded as very sacred and sacrosanct.

The Kapil-dhar, Bhim-dhar and Gada-dhar put up with the sacred recollection of Kapila Rishi and Bhima, the second Pandava respectively. There is an oral narrative that while wandering in the jungles during their Banabasa (exile) Pandava brothers with wife Draupadi arrived at Gandhagiri. They built a hut and lived there. On one occasion, Bhima wanted to have his bath. But for a pleasant bath the available water was insufficient. Consequently, he struck his

Gada (club) on the mountain Gandhagiri and out of the blue another Ganga emerged. Goddess Ganga Devi named these two falls as Bhim-dhar and Gada-dhar after Bhima.

Narsinghnath is also fabled and well-known for different valiant and supernatural deeds of Bhim such as killing a demon, falling in love with local girls, constructing a stone house called Bhim-Madua, playing with Bati (stone balls). A cave in this mountain is popularly branded as Panchu-Pandav-Khol wherein Nakula, the fourth Pandava carved the figures of five brothers on the wall with his Kunta (weapon). A mango tree called Sati-Amba is supposed to bear mangoes all through the year. It is coupled with a beautiful fable that the five Pandava brothers including Draupadi disclosed their undisclosed reality and the ripen mangoes sprouted up through which they all appeased a guest sent by Duryodhana to destroy the virtue of Yudhisthira.

Gandhagiri is also fabled to be the place where Ramachandra, Laksmana and Sita in Satya Yuga have spent some time during their Banabasa. Sita-Kunda of this religious site is fabled to be the spot where Sita took her bath and washed her soiled clothes. Ramachandra blamed her because she polluted the stream. Further, a narrative runs that the mountain Gandhagiri was a part of or adjacent to mountain Vindhyanchala. Hanumana carried Gandhagiri to Lanka in order to save the life of Laksmana and while returning he left the mountain here. There is no denying the fact that the Gandhagiri is a treasure of medicinal plants and the State Government has established an Ayurvedic college and research centre in this place.

All the same, the oral narratives discussed above are the restricted or localized versions of the Hindu religious scriptures like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana connected with this sacred centre Narsinghnath. Moreover, as discussed somewhere else, many people of neighbouring areas of Orissa and Chhattisgarh immerse the ashes of their fore-fathers in this Tirtha believing that they would attain heaven thereby. This equates the Narsinghnath Tirtha with the Triveni at Prayag (Allahabad) and Biraja Pitha at Jajpur in Orissa. This indicates the extent of reverence shown to this Tirtha, which occupies a pivotal position in the religious life of the common people of this area or sacred zone. The pilgrims who use to visit this Tirtha take holy bath in this water. In other words, religious beliefs of Hindu Great Tradition have been localized here.

The above discussion informs that the Narsinghnath Tirtha has shown lenience to foremost religious faiths specifically Buddhism, Tantrism, Saivism and Vaisnavism. Though the Tirtha is famous as Narsinghnath, the principal image in the Garbhagriha of the temple is called Marjarakesari who is assumed to be a form of Lord Visnu with the head of a cat and body of a lion. It would not be out of place to mention here that Nrusingha / Narsingha (Nara+Singha) is one of the Avataras (incarnations) of Lord Visnu, which is extensively narrated in various Hindu Puranas. If we delve for information into the Nrusimha Mahatmya, we locate that the source of Marjarakesari as an Avatara of Lord Visnu has been set forth only in the Nrusimha Mahatmya, an Oriya creation of Chauhan reign. Most probably, by this time Vaisnavism became the leading form of religion in this site and Buddhism and Saivism receded to the background.

According to the oral narrative, once upon a time a certain Rishi was performing Tapasya (religious austerity or penance) on the bank of the river Godavari in the Ramayana or Satya-Yuga. He had an attractive daughter named Malati. During this period, Ravana was the king of Lanka. On one occasion, Malati happened to be out when Ravana came to visit that place and saw her. He was smitten with the charm of Malati and could not resist his sexual urge. He ravished her and she became unconscious. Subsequently, Ravana threw Malati into the river Godavari. She was in danger of losing her life. However, Godavari protected her as if a mother naturally feels protective towards her child and brought her back safely to the bank.

When Malati regained her consciousness, she was dumbfounded finding herself in a strange place. She did not find her father and started weeping helplessly. At that time, Musika (mouse), the Vahana (vehicle) of Lord Ganapati heard the moans of offended Malati. He came up to her and asked what she was moaning about. Malati narrated her misfortune. Musika consoled her with the thought that it might have been worse. He promised to help her also. Consequently, face of Malati radiated with joy and hope. She was now at the mercy of Musika. But the irony of her fate or circumstance was that Malati was deceived into believing that Musika would help her. Finally, Musika also enjoyed her. As a consequence, from Ravana and Musika was born of her a male child called Musika-datta.

When the child grew up, he became a threat to his own mother. He devoured his mother mercilessly. After that, he performed Tapasya rigorously and pleased Lord Siva. The deity conferred on him Bara (boon) that he would have cause for fear from none but Narasingha of the Satya-Yuga. This narrative informs us the occurrence of Saivism in this site. In other words, this indicates that the prevailing society believed in or required the synthesis between Saivism and Vaisnavism in this area. However, Musika-datta became most powerful and a source of trouble and discontentment to the deities of Swarga (heaven). The helpless deities surrendered to Ramachandra and threw themselves on his mercy.

Assuming the appearance of Lord Narasingha, Ramachandra came to annihilate Musika-datta who fled in fear of his life. Narasingha also followed him. Musika-datta arrived at Gandhagiri in fear and trembling. He approached the Gandhagiri to give him protection. When the refuge was granted, Musika-datta assumed the form of Musika (mouse) and entered the mountain Gandhagiri. So, Lord Narasingha also assumed the form of a Marjara (cat) and pursued him. But Gandhagiri and other deities interceded and requested Lord Visnu to establish himself there in that feline form i.e. Marjara-Kesari so that he could devour Musika-datta when he came out. This narrative also informs us the existence of Ganapati cult in this site. Ganapati-Ghat and rock-cut sculpture available in Narsinghnath site establish this fact.

A significant feature of this Tirtha is Hari-Hara-Pangat, which undoubtedly confirms that Vaisnavism and Saivism headed towards a synthesis in this site. In reality, however, it was a synthesis between Buddhism, Vaisnavism (Hari) and Saivism (Hara) in the Narasingha Pitha. Both the low caste as well as high caste people sit on the floor together and eat Anna Prasad cooked in the house of this popular deity. Hari-Hara-Pangat stands for the casteless, classless

and secular aspect of this Tirtha. People never dare to abstain from Hari-Hara-Pangat or Hari-Hara-Bhoga on caste point of view. They acknowledge Prasad without hesitation. In other words, while taking or sharing of cooked food among various castes and communities is stringently forbidden under traditional Hindu caste system, eating of Bhoga at Hari-Hara-Pangat is not at all forbidden.

The eradication of caste rules in regard to the Hari-Hara-Bhoga i.e. the sacred food cooked in the temple reminds us one of the important protests of Buddhism against caste prejudices. Also, the typical catlike form of the deity with the head of a cat and body of a lion is a terrific idol, which recommends some influence of or connection with Tantra. It is a fact that this place was some time a seat of Tantrik Buddhism. Scholars strongly advocate that the Gandhagiri or Gandhamardana hill has to be explored for ancient Buddhist relics. This has led the world by founding Vajrayana Buddhism in the eighth century A.D. In view of the above, nonappearance of caste restriction in Hari-Hara-Pangat and the typical feline form of Marjara-Kesari may be attributed to the Buddhist Tantrik tradition, which some time ago flourished here.

Moreover, this also equates with the Mahaprasad Sevana at Ananda Bazar of the Lord Jagannath Temple, Puri, which for some scholars represents the coalition of Brahmin and Buddhist doctrines. It is believed that originally the image of Lord Jagannath was the image of Lord Buddha containing his relics and Buddhist mode of worship are traced in the rituals of Lord Jagannath (O'Malley, 1908:90).

It may be understood here that Narsinghanath Pitha powerfully emerged as a Vaisnava Pitha during Chauhan rule. Vaisnavism triumphed over Buddhism as well as Saivism in this Pitha and Buddhism absolutely lost its identity. As it has been said earlier, from about fourteenth century Borasambar area came under the Chauhan reign of Patnagarh. The finish of the Buddhist and Saiva faiths in Narsinghnath site may tentatively be traced to this period.

It may be suggested to consider that the aboriginal people who were the original worshippers of this deity earlier richly inhabited this region. The catlike form of deity was probably a non-Hindu deity, which does not match with any of the form of Devi or Devata icon of the Hindu iconography. Further, the image does not resemble any other deity found in Orissa. The antiquity of Marjara-Kesari cannot be pushed back to the Vedic period. During the Vedic period, the four Vedas do not refer to the worship of Marjara-Kesari. What's more, Marjara-Kesari does not find a place in the congregation of Vedic deities.

Most probably, Marjara-Kesari was initiated into the Brahminical pantheon in Narsinghnath Tirtha at a later period during the Chauhan rule. The non-Hindu image of Marjara-Kesari is probably a Buddhist one, worshipped in the beginning by the ancient tribal people of this area. The original name of this deity was obscured by the Sanskritik / Hindu name of Marjara-Kesari conferred on him. This name was befitting to the image of the deity with the head of a cat and body of a lion. It was easier to recognize Marjara-Kesari with the Hindu deity Nara-Singha with the head of a lion and body of a male human being. This was established by manufacturing a narrative of Malati and Musika-datta involving Ravana, Musika, the vehicle of Lord Ganesa and Ramachandra. Subsequently, this story was accepted far and wide by both the Hindus and non-Hindus of this



area. In addition, the myth helped to incorporate the deity as a form of incarnation of Lord Visnu into the Hindu fold.

In all probability, this process of Sanskritisation or Hinduisation of the aboriginal deity took place in the medieval period during the State formation in Patnagarh. It was essentially required to integrate the indigenous communities into one fold under the umbrella of Hinduism in the process of the building of a unified Patna Rajya. So, Marjara-Kesari was accepted and exalted as Lord Visnu in order to appease the local subjects so that the ruling class could consolidate their power over the natives and exercise their authority over this area.

In this context, it would not be out of place to mention here that the Binjhals are a primitive race, which appears to have been among the earliest inhabitants of this area. The entire area was a part of the Borasambar zamindari belonging to the Binjhal family. As discussed elsewhere, they were a hunting and martial tribe. But they were converted into settled agriculturists during the Chauhan reigns. Even today, majority of them are cultivators and rests are farm servants or field labourers. Those who are settled in the plains have taken to improved methods of rice cultivation (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:103). From the military point of view i.e. security of the State and political point of view, the Binjhals / Bhinjawal zamindar of Borasambar held an important position. His lands were situated alone on the north side of the Gandhagiri, which form part of the northern frontier of Patna, and accordingly he could hold the approaches through these hills to Patna for or against any hostile force (5).

The zamindar of Borasambar enjoyed the most privileged position like right of affixing the Ticca to the Rajas of Patnagarh on their accession. Conspicuously, the more advanced Binjhals boast of an alliance with Rajputs and call themselves Barihas, which is a title originally borne by small hill chiefs. But the common Binjhals do not claim such Rajput / Kshatriya status and descent. Nonetheless, it may be noted here that the management of the Narasinghanath temple has been directly or indirectly controlled by the Padampur / Borasambar zamindar family since time immemorial.

#### **NOTES**

1. According to the oral narrative, formerly Borasambar consisted of eight villages, which went by the name of Atgaon (Ath+Gaon), which literary means eight villages. One of the zamindar of Atgaon having saved the life of a Sambar deer by killing a Bora or boar constrictor which had attacked it, the name of the zamindari was changed to Borasambar (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:67).
2. According to an analogous oral narrative regarding construction of the Hari-Sankar temple, it is said that on one occasion an old man belonging to Kandha tribe, while digging out Kanda (roots) in that spot, came across a stone and spring oozing out underneath the stone. That night he saw in dream Lord Siva's presence at the place where he found the stone. The Kandha narrated his experience before Raja Ramai Dev, the-then ruler of Patnagarh, who himself had a similar dream. Thereafter, a temple was built there to enshrine Lord Siva (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:50,484).

3. Perhaps, large-scale mining operation by BALCO during the second half of the twentieth century has resulted in destruction of the pristine ancient culture and heritage of this place.
4. Likewise, the prominence accorded another aboriginal community called the Kandha in the consolidation and expansion of Kalahandi Rajya through military conquest. As per the tradition prevalent in Kalahandi Raj-family, the Kandhas had assured protection and help to Ramachandra Dev, seventh ruler (1173-1201 A.D.) in his State affairs. A Kandha called Pat-Majhi crowned Ramachandra Dev as Raja of Kalahandi at Jugsaipatna. This custom is still in vogue from that time and all Kalahandi Rajas are crowned at Jugsaipatna by the Pat-Majhi (Senapati and Kuanr, 1980:53).
5. It would appear that during the first inroads of the Mahrattas, the zamindar of Borasambar was successful in guarding these approaches. For this service, Borasambar zamindar was granted an extension of property on the Patna side (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:67).

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# **CELEBRATION OF DEATH AMONG THE GADABAS OF ORISSA**

*Suresh Chandra Pradhan*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is no more universal than death. Every individual and society to Van Gennep it follows the passage ceremonies. These rites of passage include some kind of disconnection with an initial status and role, a liminal and in between period and the incorporation into the new status and role. Death ceremonies are considered as the most prominent for the deceased which must be removed from the world of living to the symbolic world of dead. A funeral ceremony is personal in its focus and societal in its consequences. Death ceremonies often entail the central motifs of a culture; their performance usually helps to bolster the solidarity of the social group.

The aim of this article is to give a description about the death ritual both primary as well as secondary to highlight the belief pattern, magico religious practices to control the supernatural power. The present inquiry is an anthropological attempt to examine the enormous socio-cultural implication through participation of all types of kin categories secondly it attempts to explain how their society integrated through this ritual.

## **Material and Methods:**

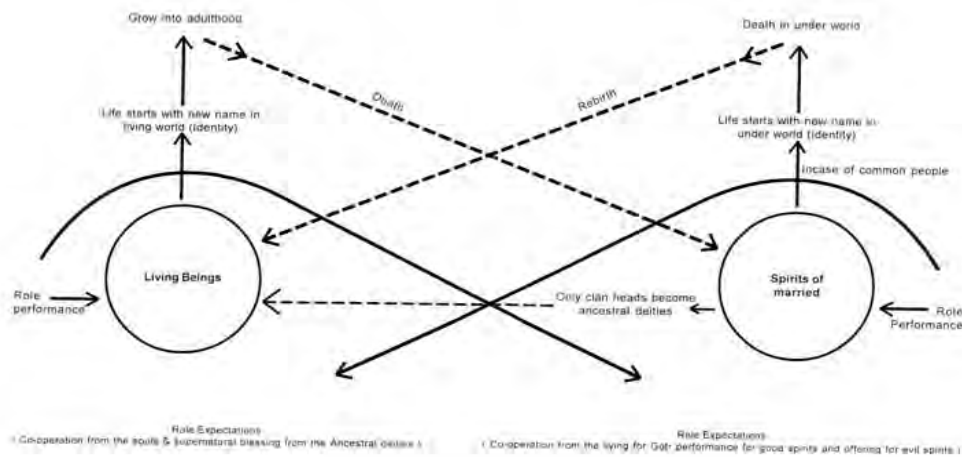
We had fortunate to observe ix Gotar ceremonies as well as eight death rituals among the Bada Gadaba and Ollar Gadabas of Lamtaput block under Koraput district. The methods adopted during data collection are both structured and non-structured with different people. Besides this, different techniques are followed i.e. Case Study, Genealogy etc. Both participant and non participant types of observation method are adopted.

The Gadabas are one of the most colourful and primitive tribes of Orissa. They are one of the early settlers of this country and trace their origin from the time of Ramayana. They are mainly seen in adjoining mountainous tracts of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. They are mainly concentrated in the district of Koraput, on its central plateau stretched over from the border of Madhya Pradesh to the borders of Andhra Pradesh. Though they are often said to be a single tribe, but actually the name covers several tribes in Koraput district and its eastern slopes in Orissa. But broadly the term Gadaba refers to Bodo and Ollar Gadaba. Some scholars mention about Parenga Gadaba. According to their language Boda Gadabas belong to Mundari speaking group whereas Ollar Gadabas speak a Dravidian language. Among the three groups Bodo Gadaba enjoys the superior status than the other two.

A Gadaba village is socially inter connected with a series of village through various ties. The chief of these ties are Chorubhai and Panjiabhai. Chorubhai relationship based on interlinking one group (totemic group / title group) with another group and one village with another. The presence of Chorubhai is necessary in all rituals. He cooks the Chorubhata (sacred rice) in every life cycle ritual. Panjiabhai relationship is integrated at inter-clan, intra-tribal and inter village level. Panjiabhai perform specific role on the occasion of the Gotar ceremony. Besides these two another three types of relationship are Mahaprasad, Maitar and Babu relationship.

The Gadaba life and culture may be divided broadly into a production cycle and life cycle. This article comes under the later one. In Gadaba Society though life begins with one's birth and its connected rituals, very peculiarly it does not end with ones death and cremation. Very interestingly, physical phenomena are added to the social factors. Ten days after the cremation there is an important ceremony called Dasa and several years after that perhaps after a generation or more the cycle ends with Gotar (Izickowitz, 1951:129). Ram Das (1931) has noted that every Gadaba performs it within three to four years called Gotar. Haimendorf (1943:152,158) has termed it as the Great Memorial Feast. The community called this as Gotar or Gatamela.

### GADABA WORLD VIEW OF LIFE & DEATH



In Gadaba society soon after the death of a person the corpse is carried by a bamboo bier called Mada Dandia. Generally, they cremate the corpse and in case of unnatural death burial takes place. In the cremation ground (Raisang), chorubhai cook the chorubhata (sacred rice) in a new earthen pot called patali and after the fire setting he broke the patali with an axe called Duma Tangia. Then all the mourner group returns from that place and take bath and no feast is arranged on this day. After three days they observe the Tigab ceremony called as 'Pita'. This day fish and rice is cooked by choru bhai in the name of the deceased. The entire relative with the chorubhai, maternal uncle and panjiabhai go to the burial ground and offer different types of cooked food with rice and fish curry which is specially cooked by chorubhai. After they return from the cremation ground, all take bath and participate in a feast which is arranged by the deceased family.

On the tenth day or on an auspicious day, they observe the second Tigab ceremony called Dasa. This day chorubhai and maternal uncle cook separate rice and chicken for the deceased. Sluitering of a cow is a must on this day. This cow is brought by the maternal uncle known as 'muali'. They offer the blood and liver of the cow at the cremation ground in the name of the deceased with the believe that this cow will remain as the property of the deceased in the underworld (Bhitarpur). After all return from the cremation ground all take bath and enjoys the feast which is arranged by the host family.

There is a strong belief among the tribe that unless the Gotar ceremony is solemnized the spirit of the dead (Duma) wanders about restlessly and may cause trouble. This may be reflected in the death of domestic animals and relatives, in poor or no harvest etc. This ceremony is a very expensive one. Therefore, the largest part of Gadaba savings go in the performance of the Gotar feast and for that one must save all through his life in order to arrange such a feast. They celebrate the ceremony on the community basis as it requires much manpower and time.

This ceremony does not end within a day or two; it takes more than a month. In every stage there are some rituals indicating definite belief and practices.

Though the actual Gotar ceremony falls in the month of Magh (January to February) but before that in the month of Diali (October to November) all the Gotar doers invite the Gotaria Disari (who perform the Gotar ritual); and on an auspicious day Gotaria Disari performs the “ Duma Puja” or “ Banabhara Puja” at the cremation ground by slaughtering a pig and two he-goats in the name of the Gogoi (the master of the sprit). He offers rice, rice bear (Pendum) in the name of the deceased whom Gotar is planning to be celebrated Gotaria Disari gives life to the spirits (Dumas) by enchanting mantras and keep away the evil spirit from the village. This day Gotaria Disari fixes the auspicious days for the further activities.

Purchase of buffaloes takes place twenty days before the Gotar ceremony. On an auspicious day, Gotaria Disari gives a stick, a rope and one rupee coin to the chief Gotar doer whose relatives died earlier among the other Gotar performing spirits. The buffalo tied in the name of the deceased having leadership quality called as “ Kuti poda’ or ‘Kuti bangtel’.

It always stands for a male spirit. After purchasing the Kuti buffalo the other buffaloes are purchased by the Gotar doer in the name of their respective deceased spirits with keeping in mind the age, sex and colour of the buffalo. Then after consulting the Gotaria Disari they are engaged in other activities like wood collection (Daru mara), leaf collection, husking of paddy, ragi etc. (Gadamara) with proper rites and ritual according to the instruction of Disari. In every activity some feasts are arranged by the Gotar doers by slaughtering goats, cows etc. relatives and kin members including Chorubhai and Panjiabhai take part in these activities.

Three days before the ceremony with the help of the villagers a stone and simili branch (*Salmalix malabarica*) are placed at the nggom munda or the family’s own stone place which is situated in front of the house. Disari ties the Kuti buffalo in the similimuna by offering hen, rice, pendum etc. Then he pushes the Duma or spirit of the deceased inside the buffaloes and give chicken, mixed with rice to the Kuti buffalo. This is performed at the night time. After this rite is over all other buffaloes are also treated like this. This day is known as “Subhdia”. At this night the buffaloes remain at the nggom munda, while the Gotar families and other inhabitants sing and dance throughout the night. In the morning, Gotaria Disari bathe the Kuti buffalo with the help of turmeric paste and warm water at the nggom munda and he first feeds the chorubhata (sacred rice) which is cooked by

the Chorubhai. This day is called Choru eating day (Chorukhua). After Kuti buffalo eats the chorubhata all other buffaloes are fed by the Chorubhai, family member and relatives. A large number of friends and relatives gather on this day at the nggom munda or families own stone place. They erect two stones; one in horizontal (sansarabiren) and another in vertical position behind it (sibiren) in front of the similibranch in the name of the deceased in whose honour the feast is celebrated. Then, rice beer is served after one chicken egg is sacrificed on the stone by the Disari. Another pair of stones and the simili branch are also erected at the Gotar langbo (which is situated at the outskirts of the village) and near the cremation ground in the similar manner. Then, all perform their dance in front of the nggom munda. Host families throw different types of coloured water like black, red, yellow etc. and even mud and dust to their Panjiabhai. Then all are highly treated with a great meal and drink at the night. On this day, Dhensa dance is also performed by both males Chorubhai, matter normally done in the presence of elderly persons and the village head Naik. But 'Kuti buffalo' is kept specially for the Chorubhai.

Next day of the jagarna is known as the Jur day (tearing into pieces day) of this day is called as Gotar day. Before sunrise at about 4 a.m. Disari worships the Rau Debta (Sun god) by sacrificing a she-buffalo. Sisabhai (Pujari) slaughters the buffalo in the outskirts of the village near the Gotar langbo with facing the east in the name of the Sun god (Rau Debta) for the welfare of the village. All the people make a fight to collect the tongue because they believe that it is used for medicine. One can do many things in morning, the buffaloes are bathed with hot water, turmeric paste and castor oil and they are decorated according to the age, sex, choice of the respective deceased person. They are mainly decorated with mirrors, combs which are placed on their horns. A piece of cloth made out of kerang(bark of a tree) or sometimes lungi vessels once used by the 34 dead person tied round the neck and wrapped round the stomach of the animal. In order to satisfy the spirit believed to be hidden in the animal they clean with cow dung the middle portion of the path through which the dead person was carried to cremation ground and there they offer different types of cooked food liquor. They believe that the spirit through the animal will receive food given in its honour. After that the music of drums and shawms (oboes) and the noise of loud wailing they are led at the front of a procession of the relatives out to Gotar langbo. At the same offered as a sacrifice. The buffaloes containing the spirits of the deceased are carried away from the



village and thus first phase of the rites is completed; that is the spirits of the deceased have been removed from the actual village boundary.

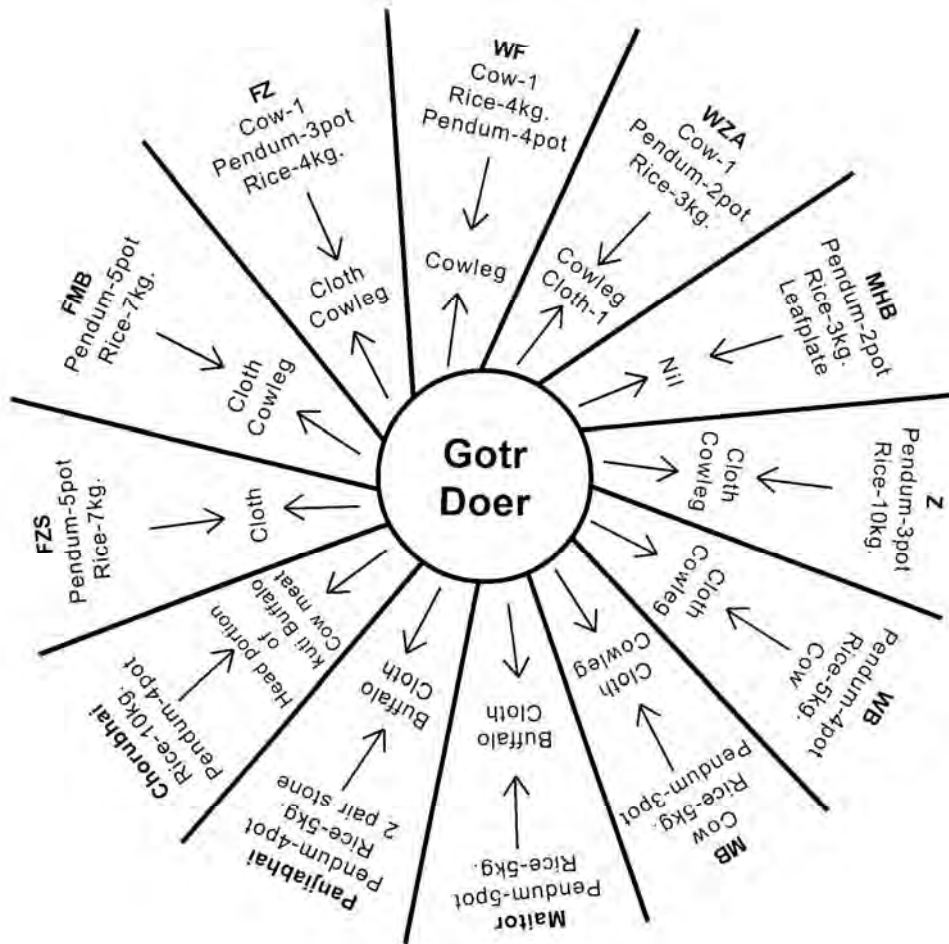
At the Gotar which is situated at the outskirts of the village tremendous crowds gather. Panjiabhai groups tie each buffalo in the similibranches and dance backside of the buffaloes with gotar songs. At this time different friends, relatives come with a buffalo as a presentation. This buffalo is called as purani. It is the tradition in their society that after this purani received by the Gotar doer is slaughtered and the flesh is distributed equally among the donors Panjiabhai and receivers Panjiabhai. But sometimes one party creates tension and quarrel takes place between the two parties which ultimately takes the shape of fierce fight.

Then at about two o'clock the people return to the Gotar longbow where the original containing the spirit of the deceased are standing. After the ritual performed by the Disari to the Kuti buffalo, Panjiabhai drives the buffaloes swiftly in the direction of their villages as fast as the buffaloes could go excepting the Kuti buffalo which is lastly stroke by the Sisabhai to the left side of the belly.

The assembled people then rush towards the Kuti buffalo and as soon as gushes from the first wounds all men present irrespective of clan and phratry throw themselves on the buffaloes, slit upon the bellies and tear out the entrails from the living animals. Chorubhai takes the backside and Panjiabhai takes the front side of the remaining part of the Kuti buffalo. This is the last scene of the Gotar ceremony. The day following the Gotar is known as Kutum bageguige (relatives go away) or kadamaraday. Each Gotar doer arrange a special feast by slaughtering cow, goat, sheep etc. for the relatives who donated cow, goat etc. at the time of Gotar ceremony and also to people of his own village in recognition of services rendered during the ceremony. New clothes are also presented by the Gotar doers to the maitar, mafsad, Chorubhai etc. The whole atmosphere is filled with merry making, jokes and humour.

The exchange of gifts in Gotar ceremony plays an important role in Gadaba society. They never go to their relatives house with empty hand. They give with the hope of getting back the same on any occasion later on. The diagram given here shows the nature of exchange of respective taken place at the time of Gotar ceremony (Fig.1).

# GIFT AND EXCHANGE AMONG THE KINS MEN IN GOTR CEREMONY



Panjabhai plays a vital role and takes the lion's share in the ceremony. The gaining of prestige is also considered through this gift of exchange. They have the strong belief that until and unless this ceremony is completed the spirit or Duma cannot get salvation and never enters to the underworld (Bhitarpur) and in taking rebirth. In every ceremony there is often an intensifying element, and this finds expression in certain aesthetic actions such as relation and artistic exchange among the people.

This ceremony comes after a long time even after a generation or more. As it has been indicated, a Gotar implies tremendous economic effort for a family and their relatives and a really impressive accumulation of wealth. It requires more money and manpower, they sell their land, ornaments and do extra work to save money for the purpose. Thus, it is seen that the ceremony of Gotar enhances group relations and it creates a favorable atmosphere for integrated and co-ordinated community life as a whole.

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## **Contemporary Folklore: From Academic Domain to Public Sphere**

Mahendra Kumar Mishra

“In 1989, we conducted a seminar on folklore in a Gond village. Eighty Gond traditional leaders attended the meeting. Government sanctioned three thousand rupees to our organisation to conduct the seminar. But while attending the seminar, eighty Gond leaders contributed their share in form of rice, money and labour. Their contention was that the meeting is on us and for us. So we can't sit without contribution.

In the seminar ten scholars, who had studied the papers on Gond folklore and had the discussion with the audience had the scope to rethink about their authenticity of studying of Gond folklore. The senior Gond leaders experienced with their ethnic knowledge explained the purpose and meaning of folklore items interpreted by the scholars. It was found that the scholars were more fascinated with their preconceived ideas of viewing folklore from their scholastic point of view. On the other hand the Gond traditional leaders were more deep in spelling out their cultural aspects which was more revealing for the scholars who studied on them. This led them to rethink and redefine the and knowledge system.

The scholars were from the discipline of literature, sociology, economics and history. They collected the stories, songs, and proverbs. They also studied Gond social system, religion and performance. Their collection and interpretation of data were mainly based on the theories and concepts they had acquired from their discipline. But the Gond leaders were not so. They were rich in their traditional knowledge.

When they interpreted the items, the Gond leaders did not accept the findings and while the discourse was going on, the scholars felt that they are still to learn from the Gond culture.

Interestingly, this was a major breakthrough in the mindset of the scholars who were limited in their understanding of Gond culture.

In stead it was found that many items of folklore the Gonds use have different meaning and purpose than the scholastic purpose.

Parghania Lambodar Majhi, the Gond singers expressed that their patron or clan masters do even not know their esoteric knowledge. So the scholars meeting will also not serve the purpose of getting all esoteric knowledge. Another threat to the Gond genealogists that if their knowledge is transferred to the scholars who will respect them as the borrower of esoteric Gond knowledge.”

(Seminar on tribal culture, 1989,ASGP)

Folklore is defined as the body of knowledge, mode of thought and kind of art (Amos: 1975:5). Its existence is validated in its social context. It is termed as verbal art or expression. Collective representation, collective creation and sharing in a group of people with common interest and common identity signify the importance of folklore.

In the history of folklore study, there have been a lot of efforts to establish folklore as an independent discipline. Of course folklore study was initiated and shaped through scholars of many disciplines like history, anthropology, linguistics, literature etc. Since last thirty years, folklore in India has attracted many a scholars to define folklore as they see and observe.

The distance between the definition “lore of the folk” to public space and civil society is a long way to define folklore. It has stretched out from folklore to folk life ranging from academic domain to public sphere.

Folklore in academic domain:

Folklore, during these days, is appeared with many a new theoretical models. Universities/ Institutions are promoting folklore as a discipline. America , who was the pioneer of folklore is also rethinking whether the department of folklore is justifieid or it should be redefined as folklife.They also have their objective of establishing folklore as a curriculum followed by teaching, research and publication. But this effort is one-dimensional.

The folk themselves do not study folklore. The people who need folklore as an object of their study have institutionalised folklore as a subject. This has created a demarcation of folk and non-folk. The non-folk have many interest and objectives to study it.

- The reasons may be to understand the culture of the people to bring cultural harmony.
- It may be also possible to compare one culture with the other, or to understand the social dynamics and role of folklore in retaining the social rules, customs and tradition.
- Some study folklore to create a national identity and utilise them for political gain
- Some to revise their social protest against the ruling class,
- Some to rule them
- Or some to promote them in their development.

When an object of folklore is studied it is studied with many a dimensions. Understanding the use of an item of folklore by the group or a community with definite purpose and meaning in their socio-cultural context is the basic interest of a folklorist. But besides it, the current theories and methods fascinate the scholars to see folklore from theoretical point of view. We know that no theory or method is complete to understand the completeness of folklore. We understand that unless the folklore is in the society, there cold be no scope for folklore study.

Instead the scholar's option and purpose of adopting certain theory or method to use the data for some experiment lead to some theoretical limitations. The gap is two fold.

One is the gap of folk and non-folk. In verbal art the gap is very low and has direct communication. But in static art, there is a gap between the creator and the consumer.

Another gap is the folklore data and the understanding of the data by the folklorist. The language and its meaning in a given context are more meaningful in understanding the data and if the folklorist is unknown of their language and culture, folklore may lose meaning while interpreting the data. The scholar perceives the data from his own point of view. The training and orientation of the scholar regulate the study.

Educated scholars armed with current theories and methods of folklore research are fascinated to put their analytical model taking the item of folklore. According to Amos, "ethnic genres are cultural modes of communication and analytical categories are model for the organisation of texts" (Amos; 1980:38) ;this dichotomy is predominant, due to the gap of the folk and folklorist.

In Indian context, scholars like us are very much tempted to write paper on folklore using the models like structural analysis, performance context, discourse of oral and written, deconstruction, and post modernism. The scope and limitations of using the theories are always a debatable and one dimensional in terms of analysing the data. Use of an item of folklore by the community is different from the using of a scholar, in two different things.

### **Learning from the folk:**

In addition to using the theories, it may be more authentic to learn from the performers/ respondent why and how they use folklore in a particular society. Role of folklorist is also not a one-way communication that the respondent will narrate and the scholar will record it. In stead the folklorist should learn to analyse the data from the respondent's interpretation since they have created it and used it with purpose and meaning.



It means the interpretation of folklore by the folk and his objective of using as an item of folklore in the community or the group is more important for a scholar. In this interpretation, the folk and the folklorists should share the knowledge. Even the perception of the folklorist in understanding the data from his theoretical point of view also should be open to the respondent, so that the creator of folklore can get a new meaning of folklore and connect his knowledge with the wider world.

Unfortunately in rural Indian and tribal India, some item of folklore is no more available. Educated and semi-literate people consider folklore as the forgotten matter of their past generation. This is due to their no involvement with the rural and tribal world. On the other hand, there are many other factors which leave no room for folklore to survive in a new social or religious context. For instance in Orissa, 70% Saora people have converted and their folklore is no more available with the younger generations. The old Saora people recollect the memory when asked by somebody that is interested in folklore.

Unfortunately, the academic domain of folklore is yet to share their valuable findings with the people who created it. Now there is a trend to give back the knowledge of the people, which have been collected, of course with a new meaning, that is to interpret with the creator of folklore.

### **Non-author folk and author folklorist:**

Then comes the question of authorship. In fact the folk is non-author and the folklorist is interpreter of the item to take the local knowledge to a wider scholarship. This combines the local with global and the role of a folklorist is more important to offer the unheard voices of the unknown or undiscovered many.

Folklore as the intellectual property created by the folk has non-authorship when the folklorists own it. How much we really understand the totality of folklore in comparison to the creators of folklore? When we collect folklore, edit it, and publish it the authorship of the folk is neglected, and the folklorist becomes important. Again the

publisher becomes another authority by writing on the body of the book that no part of this book is photocopied or translated etc.

Folklore in universities and colleges has become a discipline since last 30 years and has witnessed considerable changes. People writing modern poetry or modern literary criticism is now taking much interest in post modernism or deconstruction theories. It is not understood why at all we would immediately adopt a new model from the western world to understand our own culture. It appears to us that scholars are more conscious about looking the subject through the theory lens, and not the information that is available around them. Another ethical issue is that, intellectuals in urban areas have adopted western world as their ideal model, ignoring the Indian socio-cultural system. I have come across many folklorists of India who are either structuralists, or functionalists. But have little to talk about the cultural diversities of Indian and to rethink how folklore plays its role in perpetuating the values and ideas in the society.

The shift of folklore from oral to written and from performance to the textualisation, somewhere, loses its originality. It also loses its context. Folklore data, like the birds and animals in the zoo, becomes the object of study in the library than to share in the community in which it is originated. Therefore the division of folk and nonfolk and folklorist needs redefinition.

The best of folklore is to understand the best within the people. African people say, when an old man in our village is passed away, a rich library is lost in our village. How much have we been able to enrich ourselves with the people's knowledge?

Another area of ethics in academic domain is that, we, as the academicians, isolated from the folk themselves, and creates a world of hierarchy in the study of folklore, in which either it is confined to some folklorists where the folk have nothing to do with it. They are always unidentified.

## **Folklore in public sphere**

First of all folklore is a social and cultural necessity used by the people, then it became a subject of study in the institutions and universities. Folklore is dynamic, both verbal and static. The social group and the performers/ interest groups reshape the static and performing arts according to the needs of the people.

### **From tradition to modernity:**

For instance, the rural girls of Western Orissa used to play and sing Dalkhai (leaf eater dance) associated with rituals. It was a sacred dance during Aswina (October). But now a days, the dance, music and song form is adopted by the educated women and this has become a popular medium of self-exposure to the wider world. Unfortunately, the creator of Dalkhai dance staying in the villages have deprived of this opportunity.

Ghumra a war dance of Goddess Durga is now performed to invite the Ministers and VIPs. The changing role of performing arts, and static arts have no doubt popularised the folklore irrespective of rural and urban.

### **Love for traditional art and its consumerism:**

The Saora wall painting “Id -tal “ is widespread in many parts of the State, and its marketability has amazingly attracted the textiles and the businessmen to prepare sharees and T-shirts adopting the Saora “Id tal” motifs.

This aspect has created a consumerism and the Ur art form is moulded. No matter how a folklorist is worried about its ‘Ur’form either to retain its originality in documentation, but in public sphere, folk art , craft and folk textile has become more demanding.

Therefore while redefining the folklore from public sphere, it is necessary to understand the manifold aspects of collective creativity, both ideological and material,

and to know why and how the art forms are transformed from one model to the other and to understand the changing shape of the art.

### **Scope for Public sphere acceptance:**

In social sphere, folklore as the vehicle of protest, identity, group solidarity, and as the agent of other development schemes like environmental education, primary education, rural handicrafts, textile, recipe, eco-tourism, sustainable development of natural and cultural resources invites the academicians to rethink and redefine folklore from a wider dimension.

### **Ethnography of the Artists:**

The folklorists are of opinion to safeguard the folk arts by making it useful producing in form of household materials both for aesthetics and durable. Further the ethnography of the folk artists, their sustenance in life and creativity are also some of the concern of folklore research. So it is a shift from the folk art and craft to the ethnography of artists and their involvement in perpetuating the art creatively. This again affirms the creator's identity, recognition, and intellectual property rights. This questions the traditional definition of folk arts and craft and to redefine it.

### **Ethnic Folklore as the vehicle of politics:**

Use of folklore in respective castes is another areas of concern in Indian situation. Each and every caste / tribe have their own caste genealogies or origin myth/ legend/ heroic epics. People maintain their ethnic identity through using creation myth and caste genealogies. This leads to caste unity and the knowledge of the past helps the present. Caste group uses the caste glory for their political gain. Culture unites the caste group in recapturing the political power and caste hierarchy. The caste symbol is the culture hero of the past. In present context, modern political leaders also play a prominent role in unifying the caste identity through which they achieve political power. The Yadav Samaj in Bihar and Orissa, Gond mahasabha in Chhatisgarh and kalahandi, Kondh Samaj in Kondhmal in Orissa, Munda and Santali samaj in Jharkhand have tried to revitalise their group identity through caste myths. They also revise their religious

belief. The rituals and festivals play a political role than cultural at times. Kaivarta Geeta - of the fisher folk written by poet Achyutananda Das in 16<sup>th</sup> century regained its relevance since last 30 years. When some castes in British India were demanding their caste hierarchy, demanded to redefine their caste hierarchy in the fold of scheduled caste or scheduled tribe referring their caste myths and narratives.

Varna and Jati form the foundation of ethnic folklore. Family and clan, kinship and society are regulated through Jati system. Each Jati try to identify oneself with some Aryan God, sage, or kings belong to solar and lunar dynasty.

Each caste tries to establish their ancient origin from remote past. Indian village is designed with the distribution of space associated with caste settlement. Diversities of Kulachar- clan based customs, and then lokachar- the customs obeyed by the group of people with co-existence in the village or locality signifies the cultural pluralism and commonality. The existence of friend caste and enemy caste is also another aspect of caste folklore.

Maintaining ones own racial purity, living in togetherness, sharing common beliefs and culture by many castes, diversities of customs, practices, beliefs and practices are some of the unique aspects in defining the nature of folklore. To understand the independent development of folklore in each caste and tribe in Indian social context, we have to see the four pillar of culture that is: Kulachara, lokachara, Deshachara and Sistachara, representing the cultural foundation of Indian society.

### **Folklore in changing context: Globalization verses Local Culture**

When UN and WIPO advocates for intellectual property rights and to safeguard folklore considering it as the intangible heritage, World Bank advocates for cultural and sustainable development, and propagate the marketing of cultural artefacts available in the society so that the real creators of the folk art can get better market price for his production.

Thus when the academicians see folklore as the foundation of cultural expression of human creativity, world bank see folklore and material culture from business point of view and it neglects the aesthetic value of the art form. When local culture and traditional knowledge is in terrible threat of vanishing from the society, consumerism of art and craft creating a market for the society isolate the heritage of the art from the cultural context and makes a market of cultural materials. This dichotomy of culture with socio- cultural roots in one hand and de-linking the cultural entity for market economy raises many questions.

Lets consider the following:

Kikri - Fiddle is considered as the abode of supreme Gond God Budha Deo. Whether production of 1000 fiddles is necessary by killing 1000 iguana and covering the iguana skin over the fiddle for cultural marketing in stead of some money is justified in terms of violating the animal rights or value the heritage of fiddle associated with the caste genealogies of the Gonds.

Similarly many art forms are de-linked from the heritage.

### **Future Shock:**

Globalisation and mono-cultural invasion from far west has grabbed the local culture and language, and wish to create a melting pot in the developing countries. But the economists like Joseph Stiglitz noble prize winner in economics in 2000, question this. He considers that, *Globalisation has undermined traditional rural society*” which is a *“threat to cultural identity and values.”* The price replaced the values, and market replaced the community. *It is not only in developing countries, but also even in Europe the democracy is undermined and cultures eroded.*

### **Relevance of written literature:**

Ancient written literature is loosing ground from the modern societies. Except the sacred texts, the kavya, Shastras, and many more scriptures have no relevance in

present time. Disciplines like language and literature is lacking student enrolment in Universities.

Local language and culture is at the crossroad for the wave of free market and a neo- consumerism has taken place where the human values, culture, heritage is challenged. The humanities study in the Universities is gradually losing its utility in the modern academic and social context, and lots of management schools are sprouted in the universities. A class distinction is visible in the Universities where this feeling is crop up. The shift is a challenge to the present day academicians. Is it true that regional language and literature has no relevance among the forthcoming generations?

But with the changing time, the possibility of safeguarding the folklore has become more methodical, wider, and more demanding. The post-modern (?) era is fascinated with the tribal art, indigenous culture and taking interest in the interest of creator. The gap of folk, non-folk is reducing through sharing of folklore item in aesthetics and consumerism in the public sphere. Similarly the folklorist, reconsider scholarship and authorship from ethical point of view.

To us Indian culture lies in its mainstream traditional society, and unfortunately the modern/ western culture is dominant over both urban and rural societies of India. Cultural invasion and cultural consumerism is a concept to see culture as an object for sale and purchase putting price of it, than value it. The present challenge is to maintain a harmony between the academic domain and public sphere for the survival of cultural studies.

### **Relations of folk with the folklorists need revision:**

Our relation ship with the folk as a folklorist is very limited. Instead of what our Gurus offer us to become a scholar is the vision and insight to delve in to the subject. But as told earlier, who is enriched with traditional knowledge and for what purpose?

When a Guru is enriched with many a weapons of theories and methods with a scholastic purpose to operate and concretise folklore data in to a knowledge base,

institutionalising the discipline in universities and institutions, the creator and consumers of folklore sense folklore differently, may be more intensively. *Folklore is a necessity of life, consciously or unconsciously engrained in the experience, rules, and practices in the community with a definite purpose and meaning. The gap of these understanding determines the gap of a folklorist with the folk.*

### **Question of Ethics:**

^The relation of a folk with the folklorist is not permanent. A folklorist is not invited by the folk for his scholarship. The limited relation of folklorist with the folk cannot help him to understand them. How to reduce the gap and disparity is a major question to day which need to be answered by the folklorists.

In Modern context it is the individual and the group, which creates folklore and influence the mass. The forms of folklore are represented with many purposes carrying many meaning than its earlier one.

Folklore in India as an object of collective creation, with its constant transformation and its use in the society has given a new challenge and new opportunity to the folklorists to rethink and redefine folklore where the bridge of folk and nonfolk need to be bridged for a stronger foundation in the socio-cultural development.

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# **THE TALKING STREET**

An anthropological display of status symbolism

**Bijay Kumar Nath,**

At the very dawn of religion, God was a woman.

(Merlin Stone in his book 'When God was a woman.)

Always there are intellectual strifes on the conceptual clarity of the women status. Experts blame the traditional socio-cultural practices and deep-rooted social values and religious references in our traditional society lowering their position where as some of them support feminist movement to raise the issues as a modern therapy treatment in this regard. This paper explains how ecology and architecture take important role in the formation of certain ideology making the women positions demean. The author has marked that woman among the Dongria Knodha, a tribal community scattered in the Niyamgiri hill, Koraput district, Orissa are not allowed to go beyond the ecological and architectural jurisdiction because the precepts that come from the sacred precinct are the pragmatic approach for the benefit of the society.

It is an academic and anthropological interest to display the status symbolism that found among the Kondh Society. In fact, status is very contagious phenomenon. Because the value of a status is so communicable ; in time almost every aspects of a social system can become part of its status structure. According to the assumption T. Veblen (1899-1953), placement of an object or subject act as a symbol of powerless and worth and subject to comparison and that is the matter of self-respect to display one's status to others.

From the above explanation, it can be stated that in case of human being, in a particular structure or arrangement his / her physical placement and limitation displays the social position. The ecological consideration and religious reference behind the

domestic architecture restrict women with number of code and conduct inside and outside of the Kondh settlement.

During the summer of 1990, the author himself spent few days in a Dongaria Kondh village named Khajuri which is situated at a distance of six kms. up hills in the south-east of Chatikana village, the HQs of Dogria Kondh Development Agency. Amidst the green vegetation with the fruit bearing trees of mango, jackfruit, tamarind, banana and pineapple, the village gives scenic beauty with a feeling of clarity and coolness of the atmosphere.

In accordance with the general rule of Kondh, the villages are situated in the E-W direction with houses sitting in the north-south direction. The two rows of houses are flanked by a wide street of about 50 ft. in width.

The Sadar of the Kondh settlement is located almost in the middle of the street. Close to it, on its eastern side Kateibali, the village deity (male) is placed. The Yatrakudi, a shrine in which the village deity is lodged situated at the outshot in the western side of the village.

There is a spin touched dormitories located at the back of the southern side row of the Kondh houses.

### **Myth :**

The myth related to choose the direction of the settlement site and rituals associated with domestic architecture comes from the Kondh world view. According to them, there were seven children of Sun. Once Rati (Darkness), the female Goddess kidnapped some of the children of the Bela (Sun, the male deity). Later on Bela was informed about the happening and confirmed that the real culprit is Rati. So he promised to take revenge doing the similar thing. When Rati got informed about the planning, she did not come out during the presence of Bela. Since that day, Bela is constantly searching for his children.

The Kondh worshipped one great God 'Sun' and his seven children. This implies their knowledge and understanding toward cosmic order. According to them, Sun is the principal source of light and power. It provides light to the Earth and all the living beings. From the structural analysis, it is clearly found that since the day of missing the sons, Sun is searching for Rati (Darkness) in his 'n' number of eyes (sun rays). Rati has promised not to come out during the presence of the Sun. Therefore, Sun is running after Rati. This is the occurrence of day and night. Kondha do not know where Sun goes but soon after his departure, Rati (the female deity) appears. Out of fear to Sun, she does not come.

This myth is related to the direction of the settlement and placement of Kateibali and Dhartipenu who is lodged inside the KUDI (sadar). The movement of sun from east to west, is considered as a process of search of his children. The Dhartipenu, the mother goddess is installed inside with her children and Kateibali the male deity which is installed at immediate and close to Sadar at the east of it gives safeguard to them.

Therefore, east and west have been closed and in the direction of north and south there are two doors because the eyes of the sun cannot see.

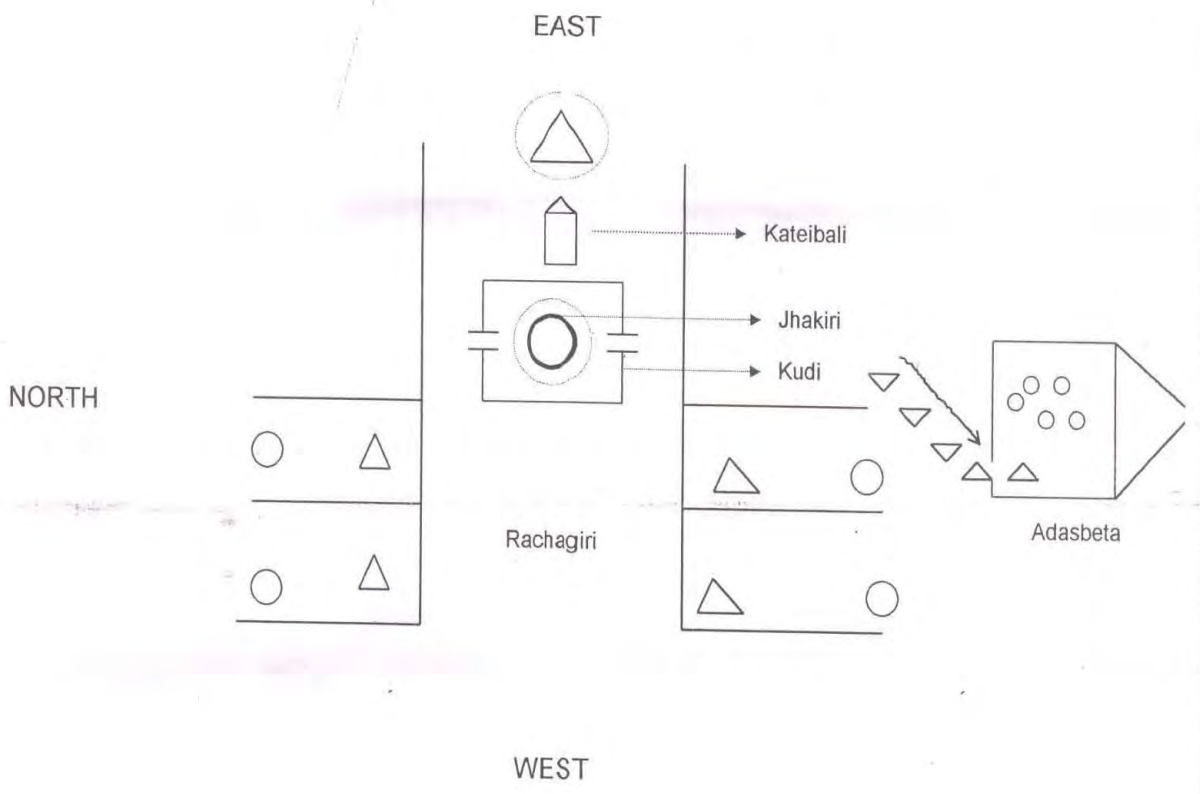
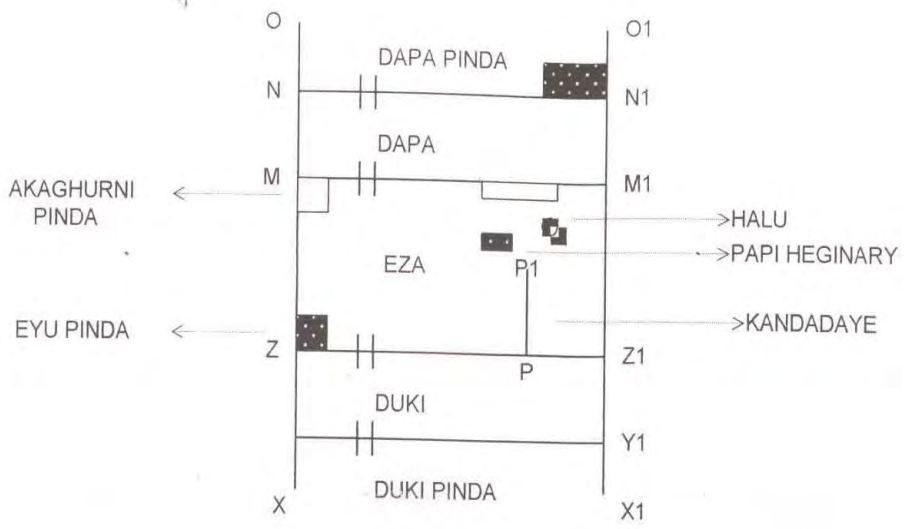
As sun rises from east (people consider that sun starts his journey from east and ends at west), the ray of sun (people believe that sun has 'n' number of eyes) may see the children of Dhartipenu and once he sees, he must kidnap. Therefore, they have kept the mother deity and her children inside the Sadar Ghar.

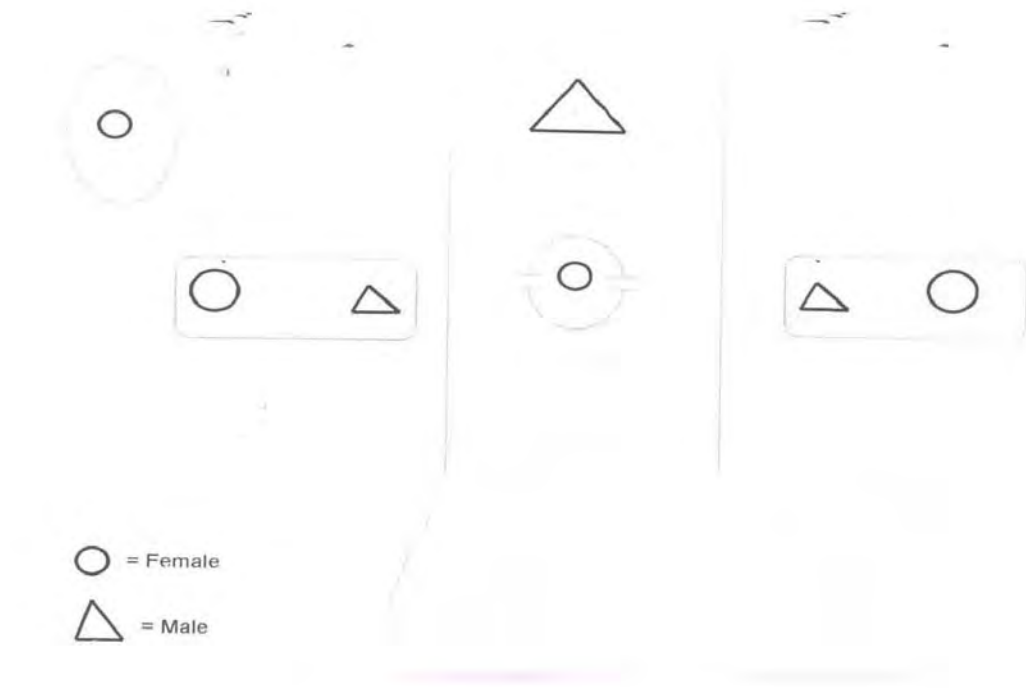
For mariha girl child was preferred because they believe that women is, from religious point of view sacred, her breast is considered as symbol of justice and women are allowed to perform religious, rites and rituals enjoying high religious value. It has been marked that women breasts have engraved in wooden bar used in the Sadar Ghar. Even boys during their leisure use to engrave breast like structure in the trees and they use to play holding both the breasts.

In the backside of either of the southern or northern row, dormitory is located. The dormitory is a recreational centre for Kondh maids. Unmarried boys usually visit at night but boys are not allowed to have this practice in the village in which they belong to.

**Critical Reflection :-**

- The main street of the Kondh village obeys East-West direction.
- The doors of the houses are made in North and South direction.
- The doors of the Kudi (Sadar Ghar) remains in S – N direction.
- Kateibali is lodged in Eastern side of Sadar Ghar.
- Adasbeta (Dormitory) is situated at the back side of the house.





The architectural restrictions for women and installation of female and male deities not only reflects the position of women behind men, but to a great extent, women as treated as weak for which she needs safeguard from her half. In case of the placement of Jakiri and Kateibali, the myth highlights that how Kateibali the male deity provides safeguard to Jakiri and her children. Similarly, women who are commonly restricted from main street that implies a male dominated decision making progress during important events of Kondh Society.

Broom, Danka and water pot are restricted utensils for women during delivery and for the next 21 days and similar proscription is made to girls in their puberty and

for women during pollution period. This symbolizes wide range of restriction that broom touches every corners of the house and remaining away from danka declares that women are debarred from cooking. They are also not allowed to fetch water because nobody receives water from them.

From the description of the house, women are the subject to live in the Dapa and Dapa Pinda. In the North-Eastern corner, the shadow part is the house for pigs. The people believe that if a pig enters into the DUKI and EZA, something wrong may happen. They, therefore, perform a ritual to make the house scared.

Among the Dongaria Kondha, women wielded the main sources of wealth; they are the producers of food. Economically, therefore, man is dependant upon women. As a result, boys in the society are being taxed more in getting marriage. Bride price is demanded. From religious point of view, they worship mother earth. Female deity stands for better harvesting. While Meriha (human sacrifice) was practiced, a female was selected according to the tradition.

From the above analysis, it is found that in one a woman is euated with darkness, placed like an animal kept inside the house and Adasbeta is made behind the backside, on the name of sacred girl child was subject to be sacrificed and main street is restricted, in total symbolize the status of the women of Dongaria Kondha.

Some Kondh words with translation:

Rachagiri-mainstreet

Adasbeta- girls dormitory

Kudi- the structure where (jakiri) female deity with children installed

Kateisali- Male deity that provides safeguard to jakiri and her children

Akaagurnipnda-Place for water pot meant for pig

EzA-Bedroom with kitchen

HALU- Traditional furnace

PAPI HEGINARY- A traditional ladder

Kanda daye- household deity

EYU PINDA- placement for drinking water for animal

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### **News from the state :**

The All India Tribal Writers conference was held in Bhubaneswar during 17-20 June 2008 organized by the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA) New Delhi in collaboration with SC/ST Research Training Institute of Orissa, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, and Tribal Writers Forum, New Delhi.

Dr Kalyan Kumar Chakravorty, the member Secretary of IGNCA, Dr Mouly Kaushal of Janapada Sampada unit, IGNCA, Dr Ramdayal Munda, Ex Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University, Dr Rajesh Sachdeva and Dr Kikeri Narayan of CIIL and Ramanika Gupta, Coordinator of All Indian Tribal Writers Forum were the key persons in the conference.

Sixty tribal writers from forty languages attended this conference. Tribal writers from north east, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa, West Bengal and north east were present while there was little representation from south Indian tribal writers.

The tribal writers from the communities present were

AAo, Bodo, Bonda Bhunjia, Ho, Jenukuruba, Kamar, Karbbi, Mirashi, Kokborok, Kudukh, Khasi, Mao, Mundari, Marlatti, Mijo, Santali, Saura etc.

The inauguration function was held on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2008. His Highness Governor of Orissa Sri Muralidhar Chandra Kant Bhandare inaugurated the function. Dr Debi Prasanna Pattanayak, Ex Director of CIIL, Mysore and presently Senior Consultant of IGNCA conducted the meeting in which Dr KK Chakravorty, Dr AB Ota, Mrs Ramanika Gupta, Dr Ram Dayal Munda delivered their thoughts in the inauguration meeting. Honble Governor expressed his happiness on organizing such a writers conference where the tribal writers had raised their voices through their poetry and discourse.



In the inaugural session a book entitled “ Oral Epics of Kalahandi “ written by Dr Mahendra K Mishra was inaugurated by the Honble Governor of Orissa. After that The Koya dance from Malkangiri was exhibited in front of the Governor and he enjoyed the dance and discussed with them beyond his programme scheduled.



From 18-20 June the conference was held in the conference hall of SC/ST Research Institute, Bhubaneswar. Every day about 20 writers recited their poems and stories and it was discussed. The language of expression was tribal with translation in English and Hindi for bridging the language gap of the writers.

There was an exhibition of tribal musical instruments of Orissa.

Sri Giridhara Gomanga, Ex Chief Minister of Orissa and present Member of Parliament made a lively performance through his organisation "Hidden Talent" - a team of tribal musicians.

The four day conference was a major breakthrough in the history of tribal writers of India, that for the first time the tribal writers spell out their voices irrespective of their different languages and cultures. But they felt the commonality in their thought. The most important aspect of the conference was that they not only spelled out their voices, but they also created a solidarity group within themselves which was the objective of the conference. They knew each other through their voices. The conference was a success for its naturalness of the expression where nature and human, language and expression, music and song were combined together. The diversities of language and culture gave a flavour of "many in one" and "one in many" of Indian culture.

Report

Mahendra Kumar Mishra