



A Case Study on Exclusive Tribal Festivals of Mayurbhanj

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ABSTRACT:

Odisha, popularly known as India's best kept secret state is a festival-filled state. The Odia people celebrate 13 major festivals in a year along with a number of regional festivals having its own belief and procedures. Odisha's biggest district Mayurbhanj, also known as land of art and culture consists of both tribal and non-tribal community and a combination of various vibrant cultures from different communities. The tribal festivals and pujas are very different from the festivals of non-tribal community thus need special attention to bring into lime light. Here we are trying to explain popularly observed pujas and festivals exclusively from the tribal community of Mayurbhanj. These exclusive pujas and festivals are widely celebrated in Mayurbhanj district with various beliefs and from ages by the tribal community people. Here we try to briefly explain the major pujas and festivals celebrated exclusively by tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district.

KEYWORDS: Tribal Festivals, Mayurbhanj, Tribal Puja, Hingula Puja, Tribal Culture

I. INTRODUCTION:

The people of Mayurbhanj live together in a village; cooperate with one another without differences in performing various religious festivals. The unmarried boys and girls are regarded as the assets of the village. The head of the village, known as *Pradhan* or *Sardar*, now also exists as the titular head in some tribal villages. The inter village relationship is maintained through rituals, like *Durga Puja*, *Bandana*, *Pirh Jantal* and *Thakurani Puja*. The people observe their festivals like *Makar*, *Bandna*, *Karam*, *Rath Yatra*, *Shiva Ratri*, and the tribal festivals like *Baha*, *Jamnama*, *Kalametc.* They worship different Gods and Goddess, like *Durga*, *Kali*, *Shiva*, *Hanuman*, *Jagannath*, *Kichakeswari*, *Ambica*, *Tarini* and others. The tribe worships *Singbonga*, *Marangburu*, *Burubonga*, *Desaulibonga*, *Buddhipat*, *Basuki*, *Thakurani*, *Basmata*, *Garamsiri*, *Dharam*, *Kali*, *Laxmi* etc. Now there is also a craze by the tribal youths to incorporate some general *Hindu* ritual

and worships like *Ganesh Puja*, *Sarswati Puja*, *Basanti Puja*, *Durga Puja*, etc in the nearby villages. This is of course a healthy trend among the tribals. It paves the way for cultural assimilation.

Below are some of the exclusive pujas and festivals celebrated by the tribal people of Mayurbhanj district.

Hingula Puja

The Hingula puja is observed at Kaudikhani near Suhagpur village in Badasahi block and belongs to Goddesses Hingula. This Puja is observed either on a Tuesday or Saturday just after the Magha Purnima. The rituals are distinct in a way where devotees put bhog in the havan kund (fire-altar) and do not look at it after the fire is lit. Locals also put pieces of bamboo or paddy straw from roofs of their huts in the havan kund, with the belief that the Goddess will protect their houses from fire and other mishaps.

The visitors included people from Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Keonjhar and Bhadrak districts besides bordering states of West Bengal and Jharkhand. According to the trustee of Hingula Puja committee, Devotees from outside the district and State came to offer bhog to Goddess Hingula. The rituals in the temple are unique. Here, bhog is offered to the deity in the havan kund and not meant to be consumed¹.

Gobardhan Puja

This Puja is observed during Diwali/Dipabali festival and widely observed among the Kudumi and Santal people of Mayurbhanj as both of these community people widely depend on agriculture for their livelihood. As per the name this puja is dedicated to Cow or gomata. It is an agro-based festival for the communities who celebrate it as Gobandana or Gobardhan Puja. This puja is celebrated for three days from the day of Kali Puja, the first day is known as Gotha or Gothani Puja, the second day is Guhala Puja and the last day Budhi Bandana ritual is performed².



Diwali is known as Hati Lekhen Parab in Kurmali language and this means biggest festival like elephants. The villagers start preparations one month before for the festival. Relatives come from other villages for the celebration. On the afternoon of Diwali, people gather their cows at one place in the village and the village head performs a special puja at the spot. The uniqueness of the puja is that they perform all rituals in front of one egg each. Every family present at the spot brings one hen and puja is performed for hens also.

The main aim of these rituals is prayer for the safety of these domestic animals. As cows and bullocks help in farming. Kudumi community and Santhala tribe people think of them as their family members. After puja, all cows and bullocks are allowed to walk together. The bullock, which will touch the egg first, the owner of that bullock used to be called the luckiest man of that year³.

In the evening, the villagers with the village head used to go to that luckiest man's house with a procession. He also treats them as guests and gives treats of chicken and mutton. The specialty of this Gotha Puja is Prasad of sweet cake with mutton.

Gahma Purnima/ Go Purnima/ Rakhi Purnima

Gahma Purnima or GoPurnima is the name for the full moon day that falls in the month of Shravana (August). Even plants and animals that are helpful to humans are revered in the Hindu tradition. Cows are revered as mothers. Therefore, Gahma Purnima is an agriculturalist festival where cattle are worshipped. The most crucial animals for an Indian farmer are bullocks. Farmers revere bullocks after using them to plough a field. The agricultural God Baladeva is revered beside the livestock. The holy texts attest to Balarama's invention of the plough and his demonstration of all agricultural techniques to the populace. Bullock is therefore His mode of transportation and the plough is His tool. He has also been accepted as a Vishnu manifestation. This holiday is also referred to as Baladeva Puja or Baladeva Jayanti in various regions due to the reference in the Holy Scriptures⁴.

The cattle shed is cleaned, carefully coated with cow dung and red mud, and drawings of bullocks, bullock carts, ploughs, and other farming equipment are made on the walls on this day. Bullocks are bathed, and then adorned with flowers and sandal paste. Their horns are oiled. Brahmins are not required for the worship ceremonies, which are performed in the cattle, shed it. In addition to feeding the bullock's rice cakes and pulses, a fresh piece of fabric is laid on their backs. The bullocks are brought to a field in the

late afternoon where all the farmers congregate. This part of the festival is referred to as Gahma dian and involves forcing each bullock to jump across a monument known as Gahma bedi. This event is claimed to be comparable to one that Baladeva Himself organized when He first used bullocks to clear the field for farming⁵

Although this festival is mostly for farmers, there are also religious and social ceremonies. Rakhi Purnima or Rakshya Purnima is some alternate names for the festival. According to religious texts, Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, gave Lord Krishna the duty of ensuring the safety of her sons on this day because the Kauravas intended to kill them. Rakshya Purnima, also known as the full moon day of protection, is the name of the festival that continues beyond that day. On this day, Brahmins from Odisha visit each home and bind holy threads on the wrists of the residents while pleading with the gods to spare their lives.

Baha Parab

Baha parab or Baa parab is mainly celebrated during the spring season. This is the main spring festival of Ho, Santhal and other tribes in Mayurbhanj. Baha or Baa means flower. At Baha parab or Baa parab men, women and children are attired in traditional clothes, offering flowers to God MarangBuru and Jaher Ayo. During this festival the madal tamak (drums) are beaten and tribal women and men dance is the important form of celebration⁶.

During the festival, the naikey or deurey (the priest) performs a ritual. A kula with flowers and leaves of the sal tree is offered to a Jaherthan (the altar) and devotees pray to "Jaher Ara", the god. After performing the rituals, the naikey along with others goes from door to door with the kula to bless everyone. People in the household, in particular young girls or women, offer food to the naikey. Naikey's feet are washed with water as he is welcomed by a family. After performing the rituals, the second part of the programme starts with dances, songs and archery practice⁷.

This festival or Parab is celebrated over a period of 4 days and following is the brief description of the celebration on a daily basis.

On the first day of the celebration, the Ho gather Sarjom sakam (Sal leaf), Sarjom ba, Tila ba, and Icha ba from their local jungle, whereas on the second day, the Dehuri worship the Dessauli, Gram siri, and Singh Bongas and offer sims and boda/merom (non - sterilized he-goat) as sacrifices to them. He gives little ba to the locals and



provides some to the Bongas. The Ho worshipped their invited Bongas on the last day, but on the third day they worship their ancestors at their aading. Aside from dancing and singing, other important aspects of this festival include eating and drinking illi. Every Ho, regardless of age or gender, adores this celebration. In order to encourage good flowering, it is a customary blossom ceremony where nature is revered at the village level.

Mage Parab

The Ho tribe's biggest festival, Mage Parab is observed during the Mage (January–February) month, whenever the granaries are stocked with paddy. During this event, the Ho worships the Singhbonga, Dessauli, and a few other less significant Bongos for the benefit of the locals. This event is observed on various dates by various villagers, although at one location it is observed for six days. The village Dehuri sets the date for this festival with the assistance of other village headmen and later it is declared in different public places and weekly market centers. To invite their relatives, they occasionally send special emissaries to various communities. They always consider the dates of a similar event in the communities of their relatives and neighbours while choosing the date. They constantly work to make it possible for residents of their nearby villages and kin to attend their village festivals and the reverse. The Ho dress in illi or diang, sing Mage melodies, and dance at this occasion. From the Marring Pare Day on, boys and girls sang songs with a heavy dose of sex themes (Das Gupta 1978:80). The kids of both genders travel from to village and take part in their Mage festival, which also gives them the chance to get to know one another and ultimately aids in the process of helping them choose their life partner. Despite this popular misconception, the festival is often regarded as being enjoyable and facilitating the choice of a life partner.

Hero Parab

This festival is mainly celebrated among the Ho tribes of Mayurbhanj. It is mostly concerned with agricultural operations that are honoured for three days during in the hero chandu/ashar (June–July) in appreciation of abundant rains and bountiful harvests. The locals clean their homes and courtyards the first day of the celebration and gather *Sarjom sakam* from the woods. Dehuri idolises *Dessauli Bonga* on the second day in their courtyard, paddy field, *Kolom*, or threshing site. He sacrifices a sim *ora boda* or *merom* and gives her rice and *bel sakam* (wood apple leaves). Then, the

other villagers adopt the Dehuri mode of devotion, and even those without land ownership adore the Bonga in a similar way. The evening before the festival's recreational portion begins; they present the prepared food and illi to their ancestors, the *Bongas*, at their aading. The villagers follow Dehuri's lead in seed sowing on the soil on the final day as they worship their bongas⁸.

According to myth, this celebration is begun in the memory of Lita, the legendary hero. The legend of the Hos is: Lita is the youngest son of Surmi who was killed by the mythical wild animal called *Bandu*. Lita prayed the deity named *Jaera*. Pleased with the sincere prayer the deity gave blessings to Lita so that he can recover the dead body of his father from the claws of the ferocious animal. Lita showing exceptional bravery and determination recovered the body of his father from the wild animal. Therefore, Lita is regarded as an ideal son⁹.

Bahtauli Parab

This celebration is associated with the events that take place and during *Bahare Chandu* or *Sarvana*, according to Bahtauli (July-August). Dehuri honours the Dessauli Bonga at Jahera during this festival because he keeps their paddy fields free of insects and other pests while also producing abundant crops. This festival doesn't have a set date. The Dessauli Bonga is worshipped by the Dehuri in *Jahera* prior to the celebration, and a date is set that is agreed upon by all of the villagers. The Ho community sacrifices a sim and offers a *tiril sakam* (Kendu leaf) on the festival day at Jahera. Each family plant a branch of the *tiril* tree in its own crop fields the day before¹⁰.

Jamnawa Parab

It's a harvest festival and the indigenous community presents their Bongas with freshly grown paddy during this celebration. Even though they collected their new rice much earlier, on this day they enjoy it first. This festival is comparable to the Oriyas' *Nua Khai* or *Nua Khia parab*, which is observed every year in the months of *Aswina* (September–October). It also doesn't have a set date, like a number of other festivals. The Dehuri, the Munda, and other village headmen set the date based on their schedules. Even when they celebrate on different days inside the same community, it is occasionally obvious. The Dehuri worships the Dessauli Bonga together with a few other Bongas on the designated day and offers sim as a sacrifice for them. Other local headmen may occasionally participate in this worship as well. At their aading,



the locals worship their ancestors Bongas and present them with illi and flattened rice made from fresh paddy crops. Eating, drinking, dancing, and singing all take places throughout the festival's remaining hours, which last until late night¹¹.

Kakamontanri (or) Kalam Parab

It is a similar agricultural celebration that is observed in the *Kalam chandu* (December–January) of every year, just before the paddy is threshed. There is worship offered to *Dessauli Bonga*, *Singhbonga*, and *Marangbonga* during this family-oriented celebration. For the purpose of purifying paddy straw, the tribal people worshipped the afore mentioned Bongas during this occasion in their threshing grounds. The tribal people gather at their place of threshing during this worship and set out all of their agricultural tools, such as the *Siu* (plough), *Moi* (long wooden field levelling implement), *sickle*, etc. They then spray water that has been mixed with turmeric on these tools as well as the paddy with the aid of *tulsi* (basil) *sakam* and mango small branches for purification. Finally, they provide their Bongas three red Sims, one white Sim, and a black Sim.

Rajasala (or) Raja Parab

Raja Parba also known as Mithuna Sankranti is a three-day-long festival of womanhood celebrated in Odisha, India. The second day of the festival signifies the beginning of the solar month of Mithuna, from which the season of rains starts.

It is believed that the mother Goddess Earth or the divine wife of Lord Vishnu undergoes menstruation during the first three days. The fourth day is called Vasumati Snana, or the ceremonial bath of Bhudevi. The term Raja came from the Sanskrit word 'Rajas' which means menstruation and when a woman menstruates, she is called 'Rajaswala' or a menstruating woman, and in medieval times the festival became more popular as an agricultural holiday marking the worship of Bhudevi, who is the wife of lord Jagannath. A silver idol of Bhudevi is still to be found in the Puri Temple beside Lord Jagannath.

It falls in mid June, the first day is called *Pahili Raja*, second day is *Mithuna Sankranti*, and third day is *Bhudaaha* or Basi Raja. The final fourth day is called *Basumati snana*, in which the ladies bath the grinding stone as a symbol of *Bhumi* with turmeric paste and adore it with flower, sindoor etc. All type of seasonal fruits is offered to mother Bhumi. The day before the first day is called *Sajabaja* or preparatory day during which

the house, kitchen including grinding stones is cleaned; spices are ground for three days. During these three days women and girls take rest from work and wear new Saree, Alata, and ornaments¹².

The tribal people celebrate it at the family level for two days. During these two days, neither a sacrifice nor an act of worship is conducted at this event. It is a time for rest, and all agricultural activity is officially forbidden during this holiday season. The main components of this festival include group dancing, singing, and taking of illi.

II. CONCLUSION:

The festivals act as a source of enjoyment, making memories with our near and dear loved ones. It helps to spread happiness. We get to know the different festivals of different genres of people. It helps us to connect with different cultures of people in society. Festivals frequently serve to achieve certain communal goals, particularly when it comes to remembering or giving thanks to the gods and goddesses and saints; they're called patronal festivals. They might also offer entertainment, which was crucial for small communities before bulk amusement became popular. Festivals that highlight cultural or ethnic subjects also aim to educate residents about their customs; the participation of elders sharing their stories and experiences is a way to foster family cohesion. Attendants of festivals are often motivated by a desire for escapism, socialization and camaraderie; the practice has been seen as a means of creating geographical connection, belonging and adaptability.

With the modernization and globalization the tribal festivals are also seems affected but they never forget to keep the essence of the festivals. To contribute in each festivals with their all and socialize with people can be widely seen in tribal communities of Mayurbhanj. The celebration may be evolved a lot with respect to the music, dance, food, attires etc. but the purpose of celebration is still the same. These festivals should be highlighted as much as possible in order to showcase their vibrant culture.

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