



JugarJatra: A Cultural Significance of Kuchipali, Bargarh District, Odisha

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ABSTRACT: This paper deals with the cultural significance of the JugarJatra of Kuchipali, Bargarh district, Odisha. It is a cultural practice that is observed during Kali puja every year. On this occasion, Jugars are offered to Maa Goddess Kali, made from fried paddy (khai) and jaggery (gud). The JugarJatra is observed in Kuchipali located in Sohela Block of Bargarh district in Odisha. Bargarh district, located in western Odisha, holds immense cultural significance, characterised by its vibrant traditions, folk arts, and festivals. This ritual practice started to avoid animal sacrifices and offered Jugars to Goddess Maa Kali. Generally, the size of this Jugar is not fixed. It is the devotee who decides how long Jugar is prepared and offered. It is basically 6 to 8 feet high, approximately 21 khandidhan (paddy). After the Jugar is prepared, it is beautified with decoration. A devotee belongs to any religion because they maintain brotherhood and peace with all and organised a cultural jatra in grand way in Bargarh, which marked the cultural significance of the district. Devotees believe that when their wishes are fulfilled, they should offer a 'Jugar' to Goddess Kali the following year. People from the village and neighbouring states actively participate in this ritual.

KEYWORDS: *Jugar, Jatra, Khai, Gud, Lia, Dhan, Khandi*

I. INTRODUCTION

The JugarJatra of Kuchipali is one of the famous festivals of Bargarh district and Odisha. The festival is based on brotherhood and the peace of mankind. It was started in the year 1985, and now it is the best and most famous festival of Bargarh district. A large number of Jugars are given to Maa kali by devotees. Animals are generally killed in Shakti upasana, or the festival of Kalipuja, Durgapuja and others. But in this occasion, Jugars are given, which were made from khai (a product of paddy) and gud (a product of sugarcane). Though JugarJatra is a great festival, there is no need for police. All the safety, security, and smooth conduct of the festival is

done by a volunteer group, saptarshiswechhasevisangathan. In this festival, the Muslims also participate. This festival commands the whole world to destroy enmity and make unity. It is also a platform for folk dance groups, which are going extinct. JugarJatra is now not limited to Bargarh only; it has spread to Chhattisgarh and other neighbouring states. Every year, more than 200 Jugars are coming from outside the district. In 2009, the silver jubilee of JugarJatra was observed. And from 2009, a 21 khandiJugar was given, which is the highest.

The JuagraJatra, celebrated in Kuchipali, is a significant regional festival with deep cultural roots in Western Odisha. This jatra, or traditional fair, is primarily a ritualistic event that honours local deities and ancestral spirits, blending elements of folk worship, art, and community gathering. The festival centres on the worship of local deities, often involving elaborate rituals, songs, dances, and sometimes dramatic performances that recount stories from mythology or local folklore. Community members participate actively, with families contributing offerings and engaging in processions and various festivities. JuagraJatra typically reflects the agrarian life of the region, celebrating the changing seasons, harvests, and local nature gods that protect the community. Kuchipali, a village with strong ties to traditional practices and customs, comes alive during JuagraJatra with vibrant decorations and communal gatherings. This celebration strengthens local identity, reinforces communal bonds, and provides an opportunity for families and villagers to come together, honouring both tradition and spirituality.

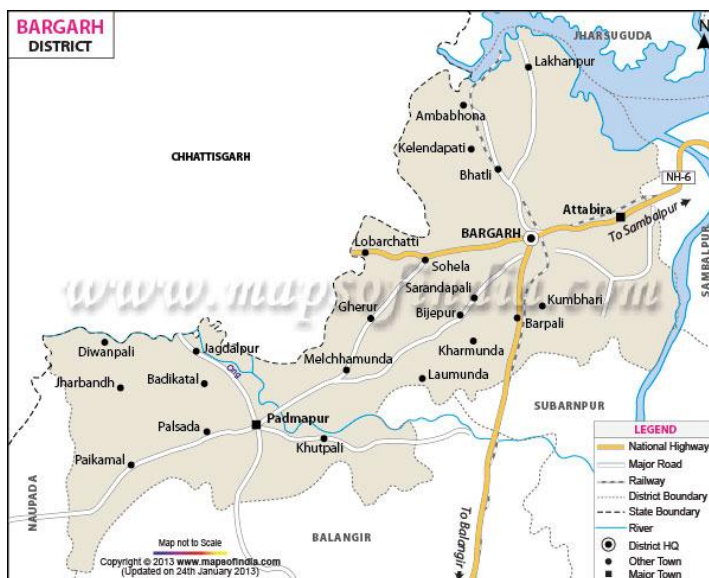
BARGARH

Bargarh is a municipality in Bargarh district in the state of Odisha, India. It is the administrative headquarters of Bargarh District. Popularly known for rice cultivation (parboiled rice), therefore called "BhataHandi" of Odisha State. Bargarh district, located in western Odisha, holds immense cultural



significance, characterised by its vibrant traditions, folk arts, and festivals. Bargarh is also known for its rich folk traditions, including Sambalpuri dance and music, which are integral to the cultural identity of western Odisha. The headquarters of Bargarh district lies on the NH 6, Kolkata to Mumbai, hence well connected to the rest of the country with a well-constructed road. The Railway Station (Code BRGA) is served by DBK Railway running from Jharsuguda to Titilagarh. The station is just 4 km off the main town. The nearest airports are at Raipur (220 km) and Bhubaneswar (350 km). The best period of the year

to visit this place is between October and March. During this period, the DhanuYatra Festival (reportedly the world's largest open-air theatre) is observed here. There are a number of good hotels beside a government circuit house and guest houses in the district to provide accommodation to tourists and VIP visitors. The nearby tourist spots are well connected to the district headquarters with decent communication facilities. The tribal communities contribute to the cultural landscape with their customs, rituals, and vibrant festivals, such as Nuakhai, which celebrates the new rice harvest.



KUCHIPALI

According to Census 2011 information, the location code or village code of Kuchipali village is 380154. Kuchipali village is located in Melchhamundatahsil of Bargarh district in Odisha, India. It is situated 30 km away from sub-district headquarter Melchhamunda and 45 km away from district headquarter Bargarh. As per 2009, Kuchipali village is also a gram panchayat. The total geographical area of the village is 578 hectares. Kuchipali has a total population of 2,511 people. There are about 633 houses in Kuchipali village. But now a days the village population is more than 5000. Padmapur is the nearest town to Kuchipali, which is approximately 30 km away. Nearby villages of Kuchipali are Chuhanpali, Bandhapali, Ghess, Badamal, Katapali, Dongarkermeli, Sanimal, Kuamania, Sidhra, Kalangapali, and Nuapali.

Kuchipali is a village located in Sohela Block of Bargarh district in Odisha. Located in the rural region of Bargarh district of Odisha, it is one of the 128 villages of Sohela Block of Bargarh

district. The latitude 21.1663013 and longitude 83.2684252 are the geocoordinates of the Kuchipali. Bhubaneswar is the state capital for Kuchipali village. It is located around 285.4 kilometres away from Kuchipali. The other nearest state capital from Kuchipali is Bhopal and its distance is 266.7 KM. The other surrounding state capitals are Ranchi 323.3 KM., Patna 530.4 KM., Kolkata 548.1 KM. The native language of Kuchipali is Oriya and most of the village people speak Oriya. Kuchipali people use the Oriya language for communication. Kuchipali village is located in the UTC 5.30 time zone and it follows Indian standard time (IST). Kuchipali sunrise time varies -4 minutes from IST. The vehicle driving side in Kuchipali is left; all vehicles should take the left side during driving. Kuchipali people are using its national currency, which is the Indian rupee, and its international currency code is INR. Kuchipali phones and mobiles can be accessed by adding the Indian country dialling code +91 from abroad. Kuchipali people are following the dd/mm/yyyy date format in day-to-day life.



Kuchipali domain name extension (cTLD) is in. The nearest railway station to Kuchipali is Barpali, which is located in and around 34.0 kilometres away. Kuchipali's nearest airport is Nuagaon Airport, situated at 74.9 KM distance. The other nearest district headquarters is Bargarh, situated at

55.0 KM distance from Kuchipali. Despite the discrimination between the fairs and festivals of Kuchipali, the extensive field study in the proposed research work has thrown new dimension into the darkest aspects of the socio-cultural as well as in the religious life of the people of Kuchipali.



HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ORIGIN OF JUGAR JATRA

JugarJatra as a theatrical tradition dates back centuries in Odisha, with its roots deeply embedded in rural life. In Bargarh, Jatra is often performed during religious festivals, fairs, and community celebrations, providing not only entertainment but also a medium for social and cultural expression. JugarJatra is based on religious belief in the creed. In all the civilisations in the world, religion is the base of festivals. Scholars and researchers have one of the opinions that Indians have been celebrating Jatra since the Vedic ages. The Rig Vedic deities were taken in mass procession. The Sanskrit playwright Bababhuti has used the word Jatra in the mouth of his narratives in the plays UttaraRamacharitas and MahavirCharitas in the 7th century. Everywhere in the name of worship of God, sacrificing of animals, and many more superstitions are built in the minds of the people. Besides, there is an extraordinary festival celebrated in Kuchipali, a village situated 22 km away from Sohela Block, which is situated in the Bargarh district. We see a great deal of brotherhood and social integration among the people who belong to different religions, rtika on the following

of Deepawali everywhere in Kuchipali. To different religion which makes the festivals more meaningful and more auspicious. In the bright fortnight of Kartika on the following of Deepawali everywhere in Kuchipali. The Hindus, Muslims, Vaisyas, Sudras all are assembles together for preparing the Jugar and the work of the puja.

On the day of Kali puja, the Jugar is placed on a wooden palanquin, and the palanquin is taken by two devotees around the village. The devotee's wishes are fulfilled within a year, and offered a Jugar to the Mother Kali as Bali. This Jugar is abounding 10 to 15 feet in height. The Jugar consists mainly of Lia and Guda. Offering Jugar to Ma Kali is one of the new steps towards humanity instead of sacrificing of animals. The first Jugar is given by the late Sri BatsaSa in 1985, and till from his family, a Jugar is offered to Ma Kali every year, and this Jugar is the main Jugar. So, it is offered to Ma Kali at first. The interesting fact is that the first ManasikJugar is offered in 1997 by a village devotee, namely Sri SukadevMeher and his late wife Smt. Shanti Meher. They are Manasik to Ma Kali for a Son and Ma Kali fulfilled their prayer. The



different persons at different times adorned the chair of the presidency. Like Dillip Kumar Sahu, Sobha Chandra Sahu, Rasid Khan, Prabitra Behera, Upendra Padhan etc. Every year a "Karta" has been elected for the Jatra who performs over all the deities, beginning from "Alati" to the last day of the puja as well as the immersion.

In the beginning years, 30 to 50 numbers of Jugars are offered by the devotees to Maa Kali. But after knowing the glory and fame of the goddess from 1997 onwards, hundreds of Jugar are offered to the goddess and also from nearby villages. An important feature of this festival is that the Muslims are attached to each and every work of this Kali puja Jugar Jatra. The notable persons like Rasid Khan, Muhammad Rafik, Dillip Kumar Sahu, Sobha Chandra Padhan, Chhatrapati Behera, Gobinda Meher, Upendra Padhan, Subash Chandra Sa etc. have their valuable contribution in this puja. Amazingly, Rasid Khan, a Muslim devotee, served as the president of this puja for more than 10 years. He says, "We are Muslims, but we are Indians. My Hindu friends hold Puja thali in Muslim marriages and engaged themselves in our fairs and festivals, so we also must join hearty in such worship and festivals."

SCLUPTURE OF MAA KALI

A devotee of Kuchipali village, namely Gobinda Meher, built the idol of Maa Kali. He first collects the soil from the seven different places (ponds and cremation ground) along with the six people in the day of Kumara Purnima midnight. All devotees are necked during the soil collected. Jugar Jatra of Kuchipali is a world famous religious, social, and cultural event of village Kuchipali of district Bargarh, Odisha (India). Here the concept of a non-violent way of appeasing Goddess Ma Kali by offering grand Jugars made of fried rice and molasses has gained popularity. More than 500 such grand jugars having a height of 10 ft to 15 ft are offered during the Kali puja Jugar Jatra on the day next to Deepavali festival. A grand cultural procession of folklore troupes from Bargarh district participates in the grand religious-cultural procession. Here both Hindus as well as Muslims of Bargarh district as well as from neighbouring Chhattisgarh State participate in the organisation of the Jugar Jatra festival. Moreover, people from lower castes also participate in the fair. The tradition of guest reception by the villagers of Kuchipali has earned name and fame. This Jugar Jatra started by the villagers of Kuchipali in the year 1985 has gathered huge popularity and has emerged as a social-cultural-religious movement. Lakhs of

people from all over India, mainly from Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bangalore, Raipur, and Andhra Pradesh, assemble during the Jugar Jatra. It has dragged the attention of the poets, writers, journalists, cultural researchers, and sociologists from all over India. Padmashree Lokkabitratna Sri Haldhar Nag has written a nice poem in Sambalpur-Kosli language titled 'Se Gaan Kuchipali'. In this poem, he has provided the history, traditions, and uniqueness of the Jugar Jatra of Kuchipali in sweet words and rhythmic verses. This poem was first published in the Jugar Silver Jubilee Souvenir of the Jugar Jatra Kali Puja Kuchipali Committee, edited by Satya Prakash Sahu in the year 2009. The Jugar Jatra of Kuchipali is proud to have Sri Haldhar Nag as the guest to inaugurate the Sambalpur-Kosli wall magazine Chhaenraa in the year 2014, published by Chhaenraa Kutum Kuchipali. On this occasion, Sri Haldhar Nag presented the poem in front of Ma Kali Mandap of Jugar Jatra, Kuchipali.

AIMS

1. **Cultural Preservation:** To preserve and celebrate the cultural heritage of Kuchipali and the surrounding communities through the observance of the Juagra Jatra.
2. **Community Unity:** To bring together people from different parts of the region, fostering social harmony and a sense of belonging.
3. **Spiritual Reverence:** To honour the local deities and uphold traditional rituals, promoting spiritual beliefs and practices among participants.
4. **Cultural Awareness:** To increase awareness of Kuchipali's unique cultural traditions among younger generations and visitors.
5. **Prevents animal sacrifices:** to help avoid animal sacrifices, a message is spread that animals are important for us.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Ritual Observance:** To conduct the traditional rituals, prayers, and performances associated with Juagra Jatra as per established customs.
2. **Folk Performances:** To organise folk performances, music, and dance as a means of celebrating and passing down cultural heritage.
3. **Involve local artisans:** To engage local artisans and craftspeople, promoting indigenous crafts and providing them with a platform for economic support.
4. **Documentation and Promotion:** To document the festival's activities and traditions for cultural preservation and promote it through media for wider recognition.



5. **Youth Engagement:** To involve local youth in organising and participating in the festival, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JUGAR JATRA

The JugarJatra of Kuchipali is rich in cultural exhibitions of the folk dance and folk music of Western Odisha. KalangiNaach and the Krushna Guru folk dances are two such elite folk dances of Bargarh District. Cultural research persons from all over India gather here to have the knowledge and pleasure of the folk dances of Bargarh District. The Dandaa folk dance troupe of village Telmahul, Sohella Block, district Bargarh performed at the Cultural Procession of JugarJatra of Kuchipali in 2017. Dandaa folk dance, or loknaach, is an ancient dance tradition of Western Odisha. People of this region were enjoying the agro-based cultural life. The plants not only provided the food for the people but also influenced their cultural life. The main and unique prop or musical instrument in this folk dance is Dandaa, or the stout stem of a plant. Dandaa is made from the Veru plant. It is very thick, and the diameter of the Dandaa or the dried wooden sticks is about 7 to 8 centimeters. The veru plant is very strong, and when dried, it produces a unique sound. Other musical instruments are Mandal, Chaap, or Ghungur, Jhaanj, and the dance-controlling whistle. Dandaaloknaach is performed during the leisure time of the people, especially after the crop harvesting. The agricultural land labourers and workers, after being freed from the chorus of agriculture, step out of their homes to perform the Dandaanaach on the streets of their villages and other nearby villages. Normally the week preceding the crop harvesting festival, Puspuni witnesses the Dandaanaach performance.

The cultural significance of JuagraJatra in Kuchipali is deeply rooted in the community's heritage and spirituality. This vibrant festival, observed by the locals, reflects a profound respect for the region's deities and cultural traditions. Here's an exploration of its key cultural aspects:

1. RELIGIOUS REVERENCE AND LOCAL DIETY WORSHIP

- JuagraJatra is primarily a religious festival dedicated to local deities, and the rituals involved reflect a long-standing devotion that strengthens the community's spiritual fabric. The festival provides a chance for the villagers to show gratitude to the deities for blessings, protection, and prosperity throughout the year.
- Devotional offerings, prayers, and rituals form a significant part of the celebration,

highlighting the deep spiritual connections that bind the community and affirming their cultural identity.

2. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY UNITY

- The festival serves as a social gathering point, uniting people from various villages around Kuchipali. It fosters a spirit of togetherness and allows for the renewal of social bonds among community members, relatives, and neighbours.
- Shared participation in rituals, feasts, and celebrations strengthens the community's solidarity, helping to bridge gaps among different age groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

3. PRESENTATION OF FOLKLORE AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

- JuagraJatra provides a platform for showcasing folk music, dance, and storytelling, which are crucial for preserving the oral and performing arts heritage of the region. Traditional art forms, often passed down through generations, find renewed expression during the festival, keeping the cultural legacy alive.
- Performances of folk songs and dances unique to Kuchipali also serve to educate younger generations about the values and customs of their ancestors.

4. ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REVITALISATION

- For artisans, craftsmen, and local vendors, the festival is an opportunity to showcase and sell their creations, supporting the regional economy and promoting traditional crafts.
- Cultural tourism during the festival can bring a modest boost to the economy, inviting outsiders to appreciate and support the local culture and crafts.

5. TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE HERITAGE TO YOUTH

- By involving younger members of the community in the organisation and celebration of JuagraJatra, the festival plays a critical role in passing down traditional knowledge, customs, and skills. This helps maintain cultural continuity, ensuring that the festival's practices, meanings, and values are preserved for future generations.

6. PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

The JugarJatra is an important means of preserving and promoting ancient rituals and customs of Odisha, particularly those associated with Lord Jagannath. The practices followed during the Jatra—ranging from the chariot procession to the distribution of prasad—are steeped in centuries-old traditions. By observing these rituals, the



community helps preserve cultural practices that have been handed down through generations.

7. SYMBOLIC OF RITUAL LIFE AND VALUES

The Jatra reflects the rural way of life in Odisha, with simple yet deeply rooted values like hospitality, charity, and devotion being central to the celebrations. Unlike grand urban festivals, the JugarJatra maintains its authenticity in a rural setting, where local customs, folk traditions, and a collective spirit prevail. This gives the Jatra a unique cultural flavour that distinguishes it from other festivals in the state.

Despite the discrimination between the fairs and festivals of Kuchipali, the extensive field study in the proposed research work has thrown new dimension in the darkest aspects of the socio-cultural as well as in the religious life of the people of Kuchipali. The JugarJatra of Kuchipali is one of the most important festivals that is celebrated in Bargarh District as well as some parts of the Odisha. The people of Kuchipali Village celebrated the festivals in respect of irrespective of caste, creed, colour, wealth, etc. The JugarJatra of Kuchipali is against the caste system and animal scarification. There are two places that are learnt from the JugarJatra of Kuchipali, and from that day they observed the JugarJatra so that places like Patrapali, which is situated in Jharsuguda district, and Bheden block of Bargarh district.

(Fig.1 Highest Jugar)



(Fig.2 Jugar)



(Fig. 3 Decoration)



(Fig. 4 Ready for Procession)





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