



THE TRIBAL CULTURE OF ODISHA AND ITS CELEBRATING FRAGRANCE

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ABSTRACT

There are 62 tribes in Odisha, spread over different parts at different levels of socioeconomic development. In Odisha one can find almost a new dialect, culture, and different people after moving one tribal area to another. Likewise, the tribal populations is also very much varied and diversified. Each of the tribal communities belongs to distinctive communities either migrated from another place or the original inhabitants of the land. The distinctiveness of the tribes lays their rituals, cultures, beliefs and above all the harmony which they survive in unison with nature. There are sixty-two tribes inhabiting Odisha. As per 2011 census they constituted 22.13% of the total population of the state. Their decadal growth has declined since 1981 upto 2001 as 22.43%, 22.21%, and 22.13% in 1981, 1991 and 2001 census respectively. As per the Census 2011, the state of Odisha has the third highest percentage of tribal population in the country which stands at 9590756. The state has the unique distinction of having 62 different tribal communities spread over 30 districts and 314 blocks. They constitute 22.85% of the total population of the state and contribute 9.17% to the total tribal population of the country. The growth and distribution of ST population have got special significance. Linguistically the tribes of Odisha are categorized as: (1) Indo-Aryan speakers, (2) Dravidian speakers, and (3) Austric speakers.

KEYWORDS:- Tribal, Dance, Music, Song, Celebration, Communities .

The Indo-Aryan language family in Odisha, includes Dhelki-Oriya, Matia, Vlaleba, Jharia, Saunti, Laria and Odia (spoken by Bathudi and the acculturated sections of Bhiyan, Juang, Kondha, Savara, Raj Gond etc.). The Sustric language family includes eighteen tribal languages namely, Birija, Parenga, Kisan, Bhumij, Koda, MahiliBhumiji, Mirdha Kharia, Ollar Gadaba, Juang, Bondo, Didayee, Karmali, Kharia Munda, Ho, Mundari and Savara. And within the Drovidian language family there are nine languages in Odisha, namely: Eengo, Gondi, Kisan, Konda, Koya, Parji, Kui, Kuvi and Krurukh or Oraon.

Though the tribes of Odisha belong to three linguistic divisions, yet they have lots of socio-cultural similarities between them. These commonalties signify homogeneity of their cultures and together they characterize the notion or concept of tribalism. Tribal societies share certain common characteristics and by these they are distinguished from complex or advanced societies. In India tribal societies had apparently been outside the main historical current of the development of Indian civilization for centuries. Hence tribal societies manifest such cultural features, which signify a primitive level in socio-cultural parameter.

Tribal culture implies closeness to nature. A tribal regards elements of nature as alive and conscious, revering them as deities to turn to in crisis and to communicate with through rituals and incantations, through song and dance, and through narratives and myths.

Odisha occupies a unique position in the ethnographic map of India for having the largest variety of tribal communities. Although they are found in all the districts of the State, yet more than half of their total strength are found in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Navrangpur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Nauapara, Kandhamal, Boudh, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj.

The tribes of Odisha are at various stages of socio-economic development. At one extreme are the groups, which lead a relatively secluded and archaic mode of life keeping their core culture intact; while at the other extreme there are communities, which are indistinguishable from the general agricultural communities.

Any society-tribal or otherwise, comprise of organized groups of people who have learnt to live and work together interacting in the pursuit of common goals. Each society has its own rules of business and tricks of trade, which helps its people to define their relationship with one another and live work together. Therefore, a society is a going concern and functions and perpetuates itself on the basis of the rules for living together.

The tribal people express their cultural identity and distinctiveness in their social organization, language, rituals and festivals and also in their dress, ornament, art and craft. They have retained their own way of managing internal affairs of the village mainly through two institutions namely, the village council and the youth dormitory. The dormitory is the core of tribal culture and it reinforces the age-old traditions. In Odisha this institution occurs among many tribal communities in some form or other. The Juangs call it Majang and Darbar, the Kondhs call it Dindaghar, the Bhuyans call it Dhangarabasa and among the Bondos it goes by the name Ingersin. Of all the tribes the dormitory system is well organized among the Juang. Conspicuous in the village, the Mandaghar is the largest but. It has wall on three sides and is open in front. The wooden parts and side walls are earned with decorative symbols depicting animals. The boys hang their change, a flat tambourine like drum, which is used at the time of dancing. In front of the Mandaghar is the small open space where dance takes place almost every night after the day's work is over. The dormitory is so to say a school of dancing and expression of the communal art of the people. The elders of the village assemble at the dormitory house every day for every important event in their corporate life. Here they discuss matters concerning the welfare of the village, settle the distribution of swidden and fix date and time for celebration of the village festivals, etc. in these respects the dormitory may be considered as the centre of social, economic and religious life of the village.

The amazing conglomeration of traditions, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the rituals and festivals of the tribes, has descended from antiquity and has been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every facet of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religious beliefs and ritual practices. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure.

The tribes believe that their life and work are controlled by supernatural beings whose abode is around them in hills, forest, rivers and houses. It is very difficult to standardize the Gods and spirits as their composition continually changes when old ones are forgotten with the introduction of new ones. Their Gods differ from one another in composition, function, character and nature. Some are benevolent; some are neutral and some are malevolent. The malevolent spirits and Gods are feared more than their benevolent counterparts as they can bring misery.

Manipulation of environment being the main concern of the tribal, all the ritual acts are directed towards stimulating natural processes. Illness or misfortune is attributed to displeasure and malicious act of the Gods or ancestors. The sacrifice of different kinds of livestock accompanied by all the rites and ceremonials of fetishism is considered appropriate appeasement. Moreover, their extremely superstitious nature prohibits the undertaking of any enterprise unless the Gods are first appeased and the omens, after being carefully considered, are adjudged to be propitious.

Among the tribes there are religious functionaries who cater to their spiritual needs for example, the hierarchy of priests among the Saoras may be divided into three categories. The Buyya is a priest who presides at agricultural festivals and offers sacrifices that especially characterize these occasions. The Kudan is a shaman who combines the functions of priest, prophet and medicine-man. The sacerdotal head among the Juang is called Nagam or Buita, Pujari or Sisa among the Bondos and Jani among the Kondhs. The post of these officials are mostly ascribed but not achieved.

The ceremonies and festivals of the tribes can be classified into two groups, that is, those that relate to the individual families and those that relate to the village as a whole. The ceremonies and rites relating to birth of child, marriage, death are observed family-wise whereas those relating to various agricultural cycle, eating of new fruits, hunting, etc. are observed by the village community.

Some of the important festivals observed by the tribal communities of Odisha include Guar ceremony of the Saora, Gotar of the Gadaba, push Punej of the Juang, Kedu of the Kondh, Karam festival of the Oraon, Chait Parab of the Bondo and Magha Parab of the Santal. With the advent of time, traces of borrowing from Hindu Pantheon and religious ceremonies are noticed among the tribes of Odisha. they have started worshipping Siva, Parbati and Lord Jagannath. Hindu festivals like Raja, Lamxipuja, Dasahara and Gamha are also becoming popular among them day by day.

The tribes of Odisha, despite their poverty and their preoccupation with the continual battle for survival, have retained the rich and varied heritage of colorful dance and music forming integral part of their festivals and rituals. Among them, the dance and music is developed and maintained by themselves in a tradition without aid and intervention of any professional dancer or teacher. It is mainly through the songs and dances the tribes seek to satisfy their inner urge for revealing their soul. The performance of these only give expression to their inner feelings, their joys and sorrows, their natural affections and passion and their appreciation of beauty in nature and in man.

Although the pattern of dance and music prevalent among them vary from tribe to tribe yet there are certain features common to all. Tribal dances have some accompaniments by means of which the rhythm is maintained. This consists of clapping of hands or beating of drums or an orchestra of different instruments. Every dance is accompanied by song, which is sung by the performers. Men and women, young and old dance and invariably sing but the accompanying orchestra or music is usually provided by the male members. Tribal dance is characterized not only by its originality and spontaneity but also for its wide range of movements. Many parts of the body such as head, back, arms, feet, finger, etc. are brought into play. Some of the tribal groups put on colorful dancing costume during their performance. Like dance, the songs sung by different tribal groups differ from one tribe to the other. Among the tribes everyone is a musician and poet. When happily inspired, they can coin a song then and there and sing it. Like any others, when they see things of beauty and meet pleasantly, they exhibit this pleasure and happiness by composing songs.

One finds in these songs humors, jokes, romance, satires, criticisms, acquisitions and anger. Though there is no modernity and fineness, their ideas being natural, the compositions are good, inspiring and melodious. On the occasion of performing Pujas and observance of festivals the songs sung are different. Such songs are adopted from the past so many years. These songs describe the history of gods, the process of creation and some epic stories.

The joy of free life finds expression in tribal art and craft. It is through this endeavor their cultural self-image and aesthetic sensibilities are visualized. The artistic skill of the tribal people is not only manifested in their dance and music but also in their dress and ornaments, wall paintings, woodcarvings and decorations, etc. The beautiful wall paintings and floral designs of the Santals and the ikons of the Saoras which depict geometric designs and stylistic figures of plants and animals are the best example of tribal art. The multicolored designs and relief figures of animals and human beings which decorate the

walls of Mandaghar in Juang society are indeed works of very high order. Similar wall paintings and decorations as observed among the Mundari group of tribals are also very attractive.

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