



FROM DRUMBEATS TO DJ NIGHTS: CRISIS OF TRIBAL IDENTITY IN THE INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS OF KORAPUT DISTRICT

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Abstract: Indigenous festivals in Koraput district of Odisha have historically functioned as important cultural institutions through which tribal communities express collective identity, preserve traditional knowledge, and strengthen social solidarity. Festivals such as Push Puni, Chaita Paraba, Diali Jatra, and Uwash Khai are deeply embedded in the cultural life of tribal communities including the Paraja, Gadaba, Kondh, Bonda, Didayi, and Bhumia. However, rapid modernization, globalization, technological penetration, and the increasing influence of popular culture have significantly transformed these traditional celebrations. The growing presence of DJ music, Bollywood songs, electronic sound systems, modern fashion, and social media-driven performances has altered the cultural landscape of indigenous festivals. This paper examines how these transformations contribute to a crisis of tribal identity in Koraput district. Drawing upon theories of cultural identity, modernization, and globalization, the study explores the tensions between cultural continuity and cultural change. The paper argues that while adaptation to modern influences is inevitable, the displacement of traditional practices threatens the symbolic foundations of tribal identity and cultural memory.

Index Terms: Tribal Identity, Indigenous Festivals, Koraput, Modernization, Cultural Change, DJ Culture, Globalization, Odisha Tribes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Festivals occupy a central position in the social and cultural life of tribal communities. They are not merely occasions of celebration but function as institutions for preserving collective memory, transmitting traditional knowledge, reinforcing social norms, and strengthening community solidarity. Through songs, dances, rituals, and communal gatherings, indigenous communities reproduce and sustain their cultural identity across generations.

Koraput district, located in the southern region of Odisha, is one of the most significant tribal-dominated regions of India. The district is home to several tribal communities including the Gadaba, Paraja, Kondh, Bonda, Didayi, Bhumia, and Koya. These communities possess rich cultural traditions that are expressed through various festivals celebrated throughout the year. Festivals such as Push Puni, Chaita Paraba, Diali

Jatra, and Uwash Khai are closely connected with agricultural cycles, nature worship, ancestral remembrance, and community relationships.

In recent decades, however, significant transformations have become visible in the cultural practices associated with these festivals. Traditional musical instruments such as Mandal, Dhol, Nishan, and Mahuri are increasingly replaced by DJ sound systems and recorded music. Indigenous dance forms often compete with Bollywood-inspired performances, modern entertainment programs, and social media trends. These changes have generated concerns among community elders and cultural activists regarding the future of tribal cultural identity.

This study investigates the changing nature of indigenous festivals in Koraput district and explores whether these transformations signify a broader crisis of tribal identity.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the traditional significance of indigenous festivals in Koraput district.
2. To identify major cultural transformations occurring in contemporary festival celebrations.
3. To analyze the impact of modernization and globalization on tribal identity.
4. To understand community perceptions regarding changing festival practices.
5. To suggest measures for preserving indigenous cultural heritage.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What role do indigenous festivals play in sustaining tribal identity?
2. How have traditional festival practices changed over time?
3. What factors contribute to these cultural transformations?
4. Do these changes indicate a crisis of tribal identity?
5. How can traditional cultural practices be preserved in the contemporary era?

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between culture and identity has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Stuart Hall (1996) argues that identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed through cultural practices and social interactions. Festivals provide important spaces where such identities are performed and reproduced.

Anthony Giddens (1991) suggests that modernization transforms traditional societies by introducing new institutions, technologies, and cultural forms. These transformations often create tensions between traditional values and modern aspirations.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) emphasizes the role of globalization and media in shaping cultural change. The circulation of cultural products through television, cinema, and digital platforms influences local cultural practices and identities.

Studies on tribal communities in India have highlighted the growing impact of modernization, commercialization, and cultural assimilation. Xaxa (1999) notes that tribal identities increasingly face pressures from market forces, state interventions, and dominant cultural influences.

Despite the availability of literature on tribal culture, limited research specifically examines the impact of DJ culture and modern entertainment on indigenous festivals in Koraput district. This study seeks to fill this gap.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural identity refers to a sense of belonging based on shared traditions, values, beliefs, language, symbols, and historical experiences. Festivals serve as important cultural spaces where identity is expressed and reinforced.

B. Modernization Theory

Modernization theory explains how traditional societies adopt modern technologies, lifestyles, and institutions. While modernization may improve living standards, it can also weaken traditional cultural structures.

C. Cultural Globalization

Globalization facilitates the movement of ideas, symbols, and cultural products across geographical boundaries. Through media and digital technologies, local communities increasingly interact with global cultural influences.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research design.

Sources of Data

Primary Sources

- Participant observation during indigenous festivals.
- Interviews with tribal elders and community leaders.
- Discussions with youth participants.
- Interaction with cultural activists.

Secondary Sources

- Books and journal articles.
- Government reports.
- Tribal Research and Training Institute publications.
- Cultural documentation and archival materials.

Study Area

The study focuses on selected tribal villages of Koraput district where indigenous festivals continue to be celebrated.

VII. TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS AND TRIBAL IDENTITY

Indigenous festivals in Koraput have historically functioned as important mechanisms of cultural transmission.

Push Puni

Push Puni celebrates the harvest season and symbolizes gratitude toward nature and ancestral spirits.

Chaita Paraba

Chaita Paraba is associated with seasonal renewal and community celebrations involving traditional songs and dances.

Diali Jatra

The festival reinforces collective identity through ritual performances and communal participation.

Uwash Khai

This festival reflects the intimate relationship between tribal communities and agricultural cycles.

Through these festivals, younger generations traditionally learned cultural values, oral histories, and social responsibilities.

VIII. EMERGING CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Several significant changes have emerged in recent years.

A. Rise of DJ Culture

DJ systems have become a dominant feature of many tribal festivals. Electronic music often replaces traditional musical instruments.

B. Bollywoodization of Festivals

Film songs and modern dance performances increasingly occupy spaces once reserved for indigenous cultural expressions.

C. Influence of Social Media

Digital platforms expose young tribal populations to global cultural trends and entertainment patterns.

D. Commercialization

Many festivals have become increasingly commercialized through sponsorships, competitions, and market-oriented activities.

E. Changing Youth Aspirations

Modern cultural practices are often perceived by youth as symbols of modernity, prestige, and social mobility.

IX. CRISIS OF TRIBAL IDENTITY

The crisis of tribal identity is reflected in several ways.

Decline of Traditional Music

The reduced use of indigenous instruments weakens cultural continuity.

Loss of Indigenous Knowledge

Traditional songs often contain ecological knowledge, historical narratives, and cultural values that risk disappearing.

Intergenerational Divide

Older generations express concern regarding declining youth participation in traditional cultural practices.

Cultural Homogenization

The adoption of global cultural forms contributes to the weakening of local cultural distinctiveness.

X. DISCUSSION

The transformation of indigenous festivals should not be understood solely as cultural decline. Tribal communities actively negotiate between tradition and modernity. Many villages continue to combine traditional rituals with modern entertainment. Such hybrid cultural forms demonstrate the adaptive capacity of tribal societies.

However, when modern cultural elements dominate festival spaces, indigenous traditions risk becoming symbolic rather than lived practices. The challenge therefore lies in balancing cultural adaptation with cultural preservation.

XI. FINDINGS

1. Indigenous festivals remain important markers of tribal identity.
2. DJ culture has significantly transformed traditional celebrations.
3. Youth participation in indigenous performances is declining in some villages.
4. Elders perceive current changes as a threat to cultural continuity.
5. Social media plays a major role in shaping cultural preferences.
6. Hybrid forms of celebration are emerging.
7. The identity crisis manifests through the gradual erosion of traditional cultural symbols.

XII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Establish community-based cultural preservation committees.
2. Promote traditional music and dance workshops.
3. Integrate indigenous cultural education into school curricula.
4. Provide governmental support for tribal cultural programs.
5. Develop digital archives of traditional songs and rituals.
6. Encourage youth participation through cultural competitions.
7. Regulate excessive commercialization of festivals.
8. Promote responsible cultural tourism.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The transformation of indigenous festivals in Koraput district reflects broader processes of modernization, globalization, and cultural change. The shift from traditional drumbeats to DJ nights symbolizes an ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity. While adaptation is inevitable, the growing marginalization of indigenous cultural practices raises concerns regarding the future of tribal identity. Preserving tribal culture does not require rejecting modernity; rather, it requires creating spaces where traditional knowledge, music, dance, and rituals can coexist with contemporary forms of expression. The future of tribal identity in Koraput depends on maintaining this delicate balance between cultural continuity and cultural transformation.

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