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Exploring the essence of tribal worship with special reference to Ghess

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Abstract

Tribal worship also known as indigenous religion or tribal animism encompasses the diverse religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples worldwide. It is often characterized by a strong connection to nature, reverence for ancestors and sprites and the use of rituals and ceremonies to mark important life events and transitions. Each tribal group has its unique customs, rituals, traditions and worship, yet common themes of harmony, gratitude and reverence emerge, showcasing the cultural significance of rituals that often involve the diverse expression of tribal worship, highlighting its role in preserving cultural identity, fostering community bonds and maintaining ecological balance in an ever-changing world. Kuthi Puja is a significant ritual in various tribal cultures, celebrating the connection between the community and nature. This title highlights the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the practice of Ghess Zamindar in what way tribal rituals practice inside the royal building by royal family and focusing on its importance in fostering community bonds.

Keywords: Indigenous, animism, rituals, community, kuthi, royal, fostering, harmony, tribal

Introduction

Tribal worship encompasses a rich tapestry of beliefs, rituals and practices that reflect the deep connections between indigenous communities and their environment. Rooted in ancestral traditions, these sacred practices are often characterized by a profound respect for nature, ancestors and the spiritual world. Each tribal group has its unique customs & rituals. The Binjhal tribe known for their unique culture and traditions and life style. The Binjhal tribe is one of the most important tribe of Western Odisha found in Borasambar, Padampur and Ghess of Bargarh district and they enjoy a true Kashyatriya status in the society. (Panda: 46, 2005) [7]. The nomenclature of the term Binjhal derived from Bindhyabhasani as per their mythological traditions. The goddess Bindhyabhasini is their main deity in the field of religion casting and they believe that they organized from Vindhya hills and later on they installed a place name as Ghess. The main occupation of the Binjhal is cultivation apart from this hunting, cattle herding, and collection of forest products is another important day to day work. The Binjhal mostly celebrate Hindu festival along with their traditions. Mullen Devi, Dula Deota along with the Khambeswari and Dongar debta are their domestic deity and they offer goat and sheep in sacrifice to their deity Mullen Devi. The present articles focus on the rituals ceremony of tribal royal family of Binjhal Zamindar, Ghess, which centralized on Kuthi pooja.

Amount of Light on Ghess

Ghess is a village in Bargarh district of Western Odisha in India. The village Ghess comprises 3342 population according to 2011 census. It is known for its culture and for its role in the Indian rebellion of 1857. It is located 43 km from the district headquarter, Bargarh & 18 km from Sohela. During the zamindari of Madho Singh, Ghess estate comprises 32 Gounti (a village headed by a Gountia) which is known as Khalsa. People from multiple local tribal and other communities like those that Kondh, Binjhal, Gond, Chauhan, Sahara were the key components of that khalsa. The place played a vital role in the revolt of 1857, when the zamindar Ghess, Madho Singh fought against the colonial power along with Veer Surendra Sai. All members of the zamindars including Madho Singh & his four sons Hati Singh, Kunjal Singh, Airi Singh and Bairi Singh sacrifice their lives for the sake of the mother land.

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Kuthi Pooja

Kuthi Ghar the term used for the Pooja Ghar of royal zamindar of Ghess. Kuthi Ghar is the hub of all annual rituals of the royal family. Kuthi Ghar comprises 16 duties, 19 weapons as it is called Pat Khanda, Tangi, Dhanu Sar, Barchha, & other sword which was used for the purpose hunting or fighting with enemies. Apart from the normal days of rituals, Kuthi Ghar became most important during the time of Dussehra. In the premises of Ghess Zamindar the Kuthi pooja begins from the Mula Astami to Dussehra Dasmi for about 16 days. In these 16 days 16 types of tribal deities are worship through various rituals and believe. Kuthi pooja begins from the Khanda Dhua parab.



Fig 1: Kuthi Ghar



Fig 2: Pat Khnada

Khanda Dhua Parba

Khanda Dhua Parba is one of the very important regular annual state festivals observed in the palace. Khand dhua means washing the sword. This ritual is performed during the Karama Month October – November). It is a ritual rearrangement of the soldiers washing their swords and weapons after a battle; it is also associated with a ritual bath of the soldiers themselves to wash off the sins accruing from killing a wrong man, if any, in the battle. Fighting for the honour of ones own motherland is considered to be the most meritorious deed for the fighter. To kill men, even by mistake, is not a sin. But killing one's own fellow men even

by mistake is a sin requiring purification. Functionally, the Khanda Dhua Parba' should be considered as symbolic of the organized strength of the royal lineage or the household which appears to administer a psychological therapy to the people to keep them under control.

The ceremony is performed on the day immediately preceding Durga Puja. The Bijhal priest (Jhankar) & the Brahmana priest worship the deities of the royal household with much pomp and ceremony. (Panda: 52, 2005) [7]. The people living in the nearby places attend this festival. The state functions and the social functions of the royal family are performed in the palace. This also is used as an occasion to expose the pomp and luxury of the palace together with its physical amenities not normally available to the ordinary people. Such a thing perhaps enhances their prestige and circle of their reference (Pillai 1976:8) the agnostic kin of the zamindar are accommodated inside the palace. On the day of the festival (Aswin Sukla Navami) the Zamindar or one of his agnatic brothers observes fast to act the main worshipper. He is referred to as the Karta of the Puja. The worship starts from the morning and ends in the evening. The Jhankar starts the puja chanting the 'mantras' followed by the Brahman priest. At the end jhankar offers flowers and a goat to the deities. In the meantime, the guest and the members of the royal family make offerings as per their vows.

After the puja inside the palace is over, the 'karta' holds the royal sword and comes out of the enclosure of the deity, 'Patameswari'. The Brahman and the Jhankar distribute the remaining weapons among the members of the royal family and the Gauntias close to the Zamindar. The other participants are given red flags. All then march with the zamindar in front, followed by his kinsmen, the Gauntias and the flag carriers. The procession starts from the palace, on reaching the stream, flowing on the eastern side of the town a goat is sacrificed by the Jhankar while the Brahman chants slokas. The blood of the sacrificed goat is smeared on the weapons. The participants and the weapons carriers take bath., like Brahmana, the Jhankar sprinkles the sacred water over the members of the royal family and the agnatic kinsmen. After this rite all get back to the palace and the participants are personally treated to sweets by the zamindars. People then talk of the glory of their zamindar.

(Sixteen Swords)

1. Pat Khnada, 2. Samalai, 3. Arun, 4. Varun, 5. Garam Pati, 6. Mahalachhma, 7. Thakur, 8. Chaprasi Budha, 9. Mahabali, 10. Andhari Pat, 11. Vaat Parsi, 12. Luha Khaden, 13. Pitru Pita, 14. Dakshin Kali, 15. Bali Pita, 16. Karamsani.

Rituals of Chha Kor Chaurasi - Chhtar Bauns

The rituals of Chho kor Chaurasi begin from the tithi of Mula Astami, the relatives of the Zamindars will perform the rituals with the advice of Jhankar the main priest. They will travel from the zamindar home to upto Bhojpur Garh by walking without any sandal and the distance from the zamindar home to Bhojpur Garh is Chha Kor Chaurasi that is in measurement in k.m 120 K.m 84 meter. One of the hill of Nrusingha Nath known as Sisel Pahad in Bhojpur Garh there are several bamboo bushes which is used by the zamindar of Patnagarh, Borasambar and Ghess during the dussehra. As per the tradition the deputy priest jhankar will select the bamboo plat which is straight & different from

other bamboo plant. In the premises of selected bamboo plant one Buka (male goat) will sacrifice as it is called Dhawja baran that is symbol of royalism. They will bring the selected bamboo stick which used for the purpose of the Dhawja in front of the.



Fig 3: Chhtar Bamboo

Bail Baran

Boil baran is a tradition that is practice after the rituals of Chha kor chaurasi & khanda dhua parab. The baurua of the village of the Binjhal community will act a boil to perform the physical activities before the deities inside the kuthi ghar. This rituals practice to full fill the dreams of the people of the region having manasik (self desire) for their happiest life or to achieve some goal in their life. The barua will act in the name of different deities & blessed the people.

The Near Extinction of Shola Kuthi, Shola Bharni & Maleshree

The tradition of Durga Puja celebrated in Western Odisha is somewhat unique compared to other Durga Pujas. In Gness, Bargarh district of Western Odisha, along with the worship of Mother Durga, the 'Bhai Juintia' festival is observed on Durga Ashtami. Sisters keep a fast for Mother Durga and observe the vow for their brother's long life. Along with Durga Puja, Shola Kuthi Puja and the Dalkhai festival are also celebrated. Shola Kuthi worship is a very ancient form of worship in the region, filled with awe and devotion, and was its own distinct tradition. But now, this form of worship is becoming obsolete and is rarely seen anymore. In Shola Kuthi worship, sixteen houses are made, and a deity (god or goddess) is placed in each for individual worship. A Shola Kuthi is drawn in the form of a line diagram, and the sixteen points are worshipped. Along with this, worship was performed in the Puja Kothi (worship house) by playing the

Shola Bharani instrument. The Shola Bharani instrument was the classical instrument for gentle music. The Maleshree song, along with the Shola Bharani instrument, used to create a solemn atmosphere. This was the original essence of Dasara celebration in the villages. Shola Kuthi Puja was prevalent in this region of Western Odisha long before the tradition of Medha (Mandap) Puja became popular. In Bargarh district, almost every village had such a Puja Kothi, and the young women of the village used to observe the Durga Brata after this Shola Kuthi Puja. But now, this worship has changed, and only the idol of Durga is worshipped. In some other areas, in the Puja Kothis, only unmarried young women used to perform the Lanmar(excited) dance to the tune of the Dhunikel instrument. Especially, women from affluent families used to set up a Dhunikel Kothi at home to worship the goddess, and there, worship of Mother Durga was performed along with the playing of the Dhunikel instrument. A small bow was used on a pot covered with a cloth to create poetry along with song presentation. There was a rule that only women should play this instrument. But now, the Dhunikel is also no longer heard during Dasara.

Just as Shola Kuthi worship is the unique traditional worship of Western Odisha, similarly, the Dhanu is also an original musical instrument of Western Odisha. The Dalkhai festival, which originated from the Sharadiya Durga Puja, was a major folk festival. It has now expanded and is limited only to Dalkhai dance and songs. In the local language, Durga was worshipped as the Dalkhai deity. There was a high demand for the Shola Bharani instrument in Western Odisha, especially in Bargarh, Dharapali, and Sonapur. But now, the Shola Kuthi worship, the unique method of worship, is hardly seen during Dasara. Similarly, no one has promoted the original form of Dalkhai, nor have such instrumentalists come up. The distinct identity that the Sharadiya Durga Puja had in Bargarh district and the fundamental traditions it had are now almost extinct.

Thousands of artists in the district are lying idle. One organization after another is being formed for the artists. But the originality that belonged to the soil of Bargarh is on the verge of disappearing. However, the art of playing the appropriate Shola Bharani instrument or singing Maleshree is hardly known to anyone anymore. Everyone is lost in the illusion of modern instruments. Various artists are established in Bargarh district. But no steps are being taken on how to protect the original music and songs of this land and how to nurture them. Navratri Puja has begun. The worship of the Mother has started in the temples, but the deep, solemn sound of the Dhanu is no longer heard. The Shola Kuthi tradition is being cut short. Artist sometimes draws the Shola Kuthi somewhere, and worship happens. But in most courtyards, Durga's picture is drawn on the wall, and Puja and Brata are performed. The rituals of Sulha Pooja begin inside the premises of Kuthi Ghar by the main priest known as Jhankar. On the onset of Dussehra tihar both inside & outside of Kuthi Ghar will be clean by using cow dung. After that Jhankar will decorate the Kuthi Ghar with worship materials such as sindur, lal chit, ghee, Kure patar, 16 jugar, 16 jagar, 16 coconut, 16 Buka (male goat) new baharni to invite the 16 deities as the following:

Animal Sacrifice – A symbol of Royalty

Animal sacrifice has been a part of tribal culture throughout history. It is often performed as religious rituals, a social

custom or a means of appeasing spirits or duties. In some cases, it is also seen as a way to ensure good fortune, fertility or protraction from harm. So, in Binjhal rituals the practice of animal sacrifice so vital as it is precise on the eve of dussehra tihar on the following ways: -Buffalo sacrifice which is known as Podha Bali it sacrifice after each an 3 years in front of the deities Das Mati, after that a Buka will sacrifice before the deity Pat Maisari, Gaden Devi and in Maa Samalai.



Fig 4: Animal Sacrifice



Fig 5: Gaden Devi



Fig 6: Bhairu Budha

Research Methodology

For the present work data has been collected from both primary sources is more than the secondary sources. Primary data are collected through field visit; observation, interview and questionnaire where as published literature in the form of books and journals' article represent the secondary sources.

Challenges Ahead

Challenges facing tribal religions: Tribal religions are often under threat from modernization, colonization and religious conversion. Many tribal communities are losing their traditional knowledge and practices as they became more integrated into the mainstream society. Efforts are being made to preserve and promote tribal religions through initiatives such as documenting traditional knowledge, establishing cultural centers, and promoting interfaith dialogue. Tribal worship also known as indigenous religion or tribal animism encompasses the diverse religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples worldwide. It is often characterized by a strong connection to spirits and the use of rituals and ceremonies to mark important life events and transitions.

Conclusion

In case of cultural aspects of Tribals zamindar of Ghess of Western Odisha abundant in the celebration of festivals. Being God-fearing people they worship numerous deities for their well being. The festivals are celebrated with much excitement and happiness and the traditional rituals are closely followed in order to please the Gods and deities. The different customs and life are what make the tribal culture of Binjhal truly distinctive and fascinating.

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