

TRIBAL TOURISM IN ODISHA AND TRIBAL FESTIVITIES OF SANTAL – A STUDY

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To study about the tribal inhabitants and tribal festivities, Odisha provides enough opportunity to the scholars to highlight on different areas such as customs and tradition, myths, prayers, pantheism, food habits, economy, social pattern and religious beliefs and practices.

The region of Odisha had not only flourished and prospered in art and architecture which reflects on the world famous stone monuments like the Sun temple, the Konark (the Black pagoda), the Sree Jagannatha temple (the White Pagoda), the Lingaraj temple, the Mukteswar temple built in the past but also takes a lead role in matters of tribal insignia since the early times. The principal tribal cultural heritage has been associated with Sree Jagannatha Tradition. In this regard the *Patal Khanda* of *Skanda Puran* gives a very clear picture on Sree Jagannatha tradition is the tribal origin and it is the beginning of the tribal tourism in Odisha through Jatri Business as the tourist product. Even today Odisha is one of the largest concentrations of tribes and indigenous people in India, by constituting more than 22% percent of its total population. They dwell mostly in the Eastern Ghats and the districts like Sambalpur, Baragarah, Boudh, Keonjhar, Mayurabhanja, Koraput, Malkanigiri, Jaepore, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Phulbani, Navarangapur, Rayagarada, Nuapada, Ganjam, Dhenkanal and Cuttack. Economically they are poor no doubt but socially they are hospitable, docile, honest and far away from mechanism and materialism. The prime objective of this research paper is to locate the festivities of the tribes as the matter of tribal insignia. Secondly, it highlights the distinct features of the festivals observed by the tribes. The third area is to discuss the changing pattern of the festivals in contact with science and technology. Fourth area of the study is to focus on the challenges and opportunities of the festivities of the Santal dealing with the economic possibilities.

Sources play an important role to reconstruct history of a State, nation, culture and the community. In this regard both primary and secondary sources including the field study. As far as the primary sources are concerned *Patal Khanda* of *Skandapurana*, the district Gazetteers, *Eekamrapuran*, *Prachi Mahatmya*, *Matsya Puran*, *Kalika Puran* and the British Records are taken into account.

To study the tribal tourism and its cultural heritage it is essential to know the report of the statistics of the Department of Tribal Welfare Government of India. As per the statistics, there are 427 types of scheduled tribes existing with different socio- economic and cultural spectrum. As a tribal patch, the State like Odisha possesses 62 tribes according to the 1991 census which include Bagata, Baiga, Banjara, Bathudi, Santhal, Munda, Kandha, Ho, Paraja, Juanga, Oran, Saura, Bhuiana, Bhumija, Bhuinja, dharua, Gadaba, Binjal, Bhinjia, Jatpu, Khariar, Kharwar,

Kisan , Koi, Koli, Korua, Kolia Lodha, Mundari, Bonda, Dharua, Kolha, and Koya etc. speaking nineteen different languages. However, some anthropologists of Odisha have argued that in Odisha the prevalence of 62 tribes is not in existence and it numbers to only 12, as only they have been considered as the primitive group. Generally the tribes are still primarily a group of people who depends on nature and the basic eco-system. They are concentrated in the hilly tracts situated amidst the scenic beauty out of modernism and the process of globalization. The tribal peoples’ folk dance and festivity is formed by India’s aboriginal population known as *Adivasi* (Majumdar 1937, 48). They have a culture that is very distinct and typical in nature and vary from tribe to tribe and region to region. The festivals are performed by them with dances and rhythm consisting of clapping of hands, beating up of drums and along with the playing of different musical tools and techniques.

In Odisha, the Santal population is 894,764 according to the 2011 census. The following table shows the population of the Santal tribe in the different States of India which would be a backdrop to the promotion of tribal tourism in India in general and Odisha in particular.

TABLE -I

Serial No.	Name of the State	Population
1	Jharkhand	2752723
2	West Bengal	2512331
3	Odisha	894764
4	Bihar	406076
5	Assam	213139

Source: Department of Tribal Welfare, Government of India

The Santal tribe is one of the populous tribal communities of Odisha, who can be mainly found in the districts like Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar Balesore and Cuttack. There are some regions in Cuttack like Dalaka, Jaipore, Bada, Debabhumi, Kenarsingi, Jhajibandha, Panchagochhia, Olaba, Talapunji, where the tribals groups found in plenty. They are mainly from Kandha, Santala, Kolha and Sabara regions, who have not migrated from other regions but considered as the original inhabitants of these regions (Jena 2005, 4-6). One of the typical characteristics of these tribes of Narasinghpur is that goddess Maa the priest by name Jaipore in they worship Pragala and also *Dehuri* (Jena 2005, 4-6).

The Santals the occasion of the principle to release escape from grief festival time. be called both sex religious practices.



Together celebration of the Santal Tribal Dance

adopt dance on festivals as a their joy and to and pain in every Generally it can stimulation and Mostly the tribe

performs different dances on the occasions like birthday, recovery from the diseases at the time of puberty, circumcision, marriage, death, and even at the time of harvest. This might be due to this tribes' solidarity, social movement and the social management. They have always found enough time to celebrate their festivals as a product of tourism and observe it together at one place in the middle of the village and not separately at their homes. There are some important Santal festivals elucidated which caters the tourists of international, national regional and intra-regional.

One of the major festival of the Santal is Makar, which is being observed till date on the 14th day of the month of January. This Santal festival is the first one to celebrate as far as the calendar year is concerned. On this occasion they prepare rice cake along with other traditional foods due to the impact of modernisation.

Both the men and women of the Santal community commonly take Handia (rice beer drink) and dance together called Lagneinez by citing songs that denotes meaning like *you are eating and dancing very speedily at evening to go for dance*.



*Rachan Joga Andur Mandur
Batin Gassao Andur Mandur
Pachhe Dhank Gayee Kaddehe Ekkad
Naya SinddengKagseye Neend (Samal, 2006, 36-52)*

In an unpublished report, G.K. Pattanaik recorded that the festivals like soil worship known as *Eroism* are observed in the month of May before *Rajasankranti* when they sow the seeds in the fields. This festival is known to the Hindu community as *Akshyatrutiya*. This makes it clear that not only the Hindus but also the Santals begin to sow the seeds (paddy) on the soil before the commencement of monsoon.



Santal Women worshipping to goddess *Dharanipenu*

On this occasion each Santal family presents a cock or a hen for the worship of soil to satisfy mother goddess *Dharanipenu*. In this festival, the priest *Majhibudha* or *Majhihadum* recites the prayer –

Oh mother we are going to sow the seeds during this month, give us a good harvest, good health, good rain and the safety of their domestic animals from the dangers of the leopard and diseases (Mohanty 1978, 60).

After the prayer they usually cook rice and meat in mass and dine together. The activities like singing, dancing and amusement goes on till over the next morning. The festival *Eroism* invites the tourists in a large number from the nook and corner of not only Odisha, but from throughout the country and the world.

The third major festival known as the plant worship i.e., Harialism (Kamena, 2010) takes place after several days of the sowing of seeds. In the tribal tradition particularly the Santal community this festival is considered as the thanks giving ceremony to God for the success of sowing. On this occasion, the Santals extend their gratefulness to God, *Marang Muru*. The distinct sign of this festival is that the Santals never go to their fields again until the festival ends and women are strictly not allowed to take part in it. So it is called a festival of only the men folk. The cattle worship known as Sahari (Hemalatha, 2012) constitute the next important festive of the Santal. In this festival, women go round the cattle sheds and worship the cows and also the bullocks by applying turmeric and placing flowers on those animals' foreheads. Also they feed them. This festival that is mostly restricted to the women folk, continues from the dawn to the dusk. On this occasion the Santals prepare the traditional cakes made of rice paste and sweet called *manda*. The houses of the Santals are well decorated during the festival time with the drawings of both the flora and the fauna on the wall. These drawings draw the tourists attention on one hand besides spreading the message of environment protection and the promotion of eco-tourism.

The Spring festival is the most glamorous festival among the Santal tribe and is called as the *Salaipuja* (Mohapatra 1990, 189). With the advent of the spring, new leaves and flowers appear on the tree and the Santals enjoy ensuing this by consuming their traditional drink called *Handia* (Mohapatra 1990, 189) till the end of the Spring festival. The preparation of *Handia* is very naturally and traditionally done by them. By keeping the rice water for several days they add the dry rice and prepare *Handia*. It is otherwise known as *Illi*, and *Sarab*. This festival continues for three days at a stretch and each day is a unique one. Thus, all these festivals are performed by the Santals with the underlying intent of religion in character, a number of festivals are observed by the other tribal groups. One is the worship of *Karama Devata* or goddess Karam Sani Devi (Mohapatra 1990, 189) and is a ceremonial ritual. It is the most

popular festival among the tribes like Bhyuan, Kolha, Ho, Gond, Bagthi, Kandha Oraon etc. The functional style of this worship varies in degree according to the tribal setup in Odisha. The Kolha in the tribal regions like Dalaka, Kenarsingh, Olab, Talapunji in Narasingh Badamba region are excellent in exhibiting the religious aesthetic sense of fine arts by making their house decorated. The most interesting feature of this festival is that, the young girls and boys who are in the attire of multi colored costumes take up gorgeous make up by typical tribal ornaments, lead ornaments, peacock's train etc. The Kolhas celebrate another festival known as *Rajasala* (Tribal and Harijan Welfare Department 1990, 170) which resembles their Hindu identity. In the month of mid June they celebrate it by wearing the new clothes and ornaments. This is practiced as a group dance by holding the hands as per the musical rhyme. They used to drink traditional *Handia* called Illi (Tribal and Harijan Welfare Department 1990, 170) throughout the day by making a grand feast. Besides they also worship the mother goddess in the form of soil and offer flowers cakes and hens or cocks.

They are used to resort to *Kalipuja* as the symbol of Sakti worship. From different source materials like *Ekamra Puran* (Biswanath Mahapatra 1993, 15) *Ekamra Puran*, Chapter IV), *Skanda Puran* (Vinaya 2019, 45-50), *Prachi Mahatmya* (Prachi Mahatmya), *Viraja Mahatmya* (Dhal 1924, 71), it can be evident that all the Sakti centres in Odisha are of tribal origin. The tribals in Odisha worshipped Sakti in different forms and the priests generally belonged to the tribal origin. In this regard the oldest form of sakti worship in Odisha known as Stambheswari or Khambeswari should be mentioned here. Khambeswari or Stambheswari is worshiped in a form of a log of tree. The Kolhas offer animal sacrifice in mass for her satisfaction. They accept goddess Stambheswari as the presiding deity as a representation of both malevolent and benevolent. The priest recites the mantras at the time of sacrifice of hen, goat and cock. The villagers who include the young and old men and women take part in the group dance. This festival has some similarities with that of Santhal's *Harialism*. The domestic animals like the cows and bullocks are worshiped. This festival is known as *Holi* and is celebrated in the month of Falguna (April). Some scholars like Khageswar Mahapatra has been corroborated Bahapuja with nature worship. On the basis of it, the concept of *Vanamahostava* has been derived. They used to throw *gulal* (colour) at each other and greet one another by offering flowers. One of the religious festivals of the Kolhas and Mundas is *Pirh Puja* (Dhal 1924, 71). It is the festival in order to please the hill deities to protect their crops from wild animals. Even today not only the tribal communities but also the upper strata of the society worshipping hill deities by practice *Giri Gobardhan puja*. They also observe *Machuri* (Dhal 1924, 71) festival in the month of *Shravan* (July-August) which marked the first eating of cucumber. Now a days, the tribal communities of Cuttack are observing the festivals like *Gampha Purnima* and *Manabasa* too as per the Hindu Tradition.

To enter the tourism industry with the intent of creating business, the Santal community needs to celebrate more festivals with innovations as tourist products that will attract visitors and provide the access so that they can be visited again and again as propagators and experience the products. As fairs and festivals are non polluting to the growth of the industry relating to tourism, it helps in generating the economy of the State in general and the local region in particular. Here, the responsibility of the government is to promote the entrepreneurs and the tour operators to market the Santal festivals with the responsibility of the local stake holders. As far as challenges concerned the Santal tribe even today are backward and more traditional due to

their language like Santali. The means of road and transportation even today is not connected to the Santal patches in Odisha. Illiteracy is another challenge posed to the popularizing of the Santals festivities.

Hence, it can be concluded that the tribal festivities in the Cuttack district of Odisha are the first hand information that can be contributed by any scholar to reconstruct the regional history. It is essentially a group art form which is characterized by its originality and spontaneity. Festivals form a part of daily life of the tribals' which reflects their life style, mannerism, attire, custom and tradition as well as religious beliefs. However, this rich heritage should not completely vanish due to the rapid changes that are taking place in the society with the process of globalization. As such, the time has come again to preserve the culture of the Santal as the tourist product and hence this study.

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