

Lokaratna

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An e -journal of Folklore Foundation ,
Odisha ,Bhubaneswar



Lokaratna is the e-journal of the Folklore Foundation, Orissa, and Bhubaneswar. The purpose of the journal is to explore the rich cultural tradition of Odisha for a wider readership. Any scholar across the globe interested to contribute on any aspect of folklore is welcome. This volume represent the articles on performing arts, gender , culture and education , religious trends and sacred centres of Odisha.

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Foundation, Odisha, Bhubaneswar**

Lokaratna is the official journal of the Folklore Foundation, located in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. **Lokaratna** is a peer-reviewed academic journal in Oriya and English.

The objectives of the journal are:

To invite writers and scholars to contribute their valuable research papers on any aspect of Odishan Folklore either in English or in Oriya. They should be based on the theory and methodology of folklore research and on empirical studies with substantial field work.

To publish seminal articles written by senior scholars on Odia Folklore, making them available from the original sources.

To present lives of folklorists, outlining their substantial contribution to Folklore

To publish book reviews, field work reports, descriptions of research projects and announcements for seminars and workshops.

To present interviews with eminent folklorists in India and abroad.

Any new idea that would enrich this folklore research journal is welcome.

Content in Oriya and English

Request for online/manuscript submissions should be addressed to Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Editor in Chief, Lokaratna, Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar, and Odisha- 751014 in e-mail:<mkmfolk@gmail.com> or to <pasayatc@gmail.com> or (meher.hk@gmail.com)

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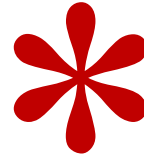
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From the Desk of Editor in Chief

Since last one year I have been extensively travelling across the country and experiencing the diversities of the vast land. We have so many ethnic groups, so many languages and so many religions and customs! We have sufficient ground to establish our self and separate identity in relation to the other, but still we feel one. This has been made possible due to our heritage and tradition that we have inherited from the generations. Being in my own village I am a global person.

Some of us love tradition and some are in transition. Some try to discard the old fashion and try to transform the whole world. Some of us like the tradition and don't accept the transition. But some of us try to synchronise the tradition with the transition and create a blend of the past with the present. But we survive with our respective thoughts, ideas and beliefs.

In 21 st century, a new trend has emerged to voice the marginalized. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2010 advocates for the marginalised and has suggested a lots of activities to be adopted in development sector. People on the other hand are uniting to fight the injustice, though it is fragmented, scattered, but they fight for their human rights. Globalisation has one language, one ambition and one culture. This is to create a space for those who can. It never stands for the cannot. Therefore the people who are in the side of cannot are raising their voices against this ideology. Consider how the developed countries are grappling with the human crisis as well as environmental crisis. They are also entangled with the masters of technology and try to resolve the issues and problems through technologies. Technologies can create a lot of things, but it cannot create a Jesus Christ or a Buddha. When heart become heartless there

never laid the humanity. Human values are degenerated. Still we believe that this degeneration will invite regeneration.

Now the gap of local and global is reducing. A Dongria Kondh young man can fight against the multinationals in London and the most sophisticated scientist is also believe the tribal priest for his perseverance. Now indigenous are also cosmopolitan and now environmental scientists are also eager to adopt the sacred nature. Some where the social knowledge is becoming more stronger than the experts and the nature of achieving the knowledge is becoming more human and experiential than the theoretical.

We as the practitioners of knowledge, who wish to learn from the most nonliterate are ready to understand the alchemy of nature from the age old man and women and want to perpetuate the human knowledge across the globe.

This volume, as usual, coming up with very rich articles related to epics, oral traditions, tribal knowledge, performing arts, traditional drama, oral tradition of death ,ritual- performance and on folk goddesses. This volume contains the articles of some Indian folklorists and Indologists. Very interestingly this volume captures the report of the SHARP International Conference 2010 held in Helsinki University , Finland which can be the best source of understanding the Indian context of Book Culture from the below. Another Report on Common Wealth Game 2010 held in India reported by Rasika Abrol of New Delhi. Tara Duglas, an English tribal art animator from England who propagated tribal art of India in England are two interesting work. This volume also contains the dance tradition of Orissa represented by Odishi dancer Madhulika Mahapatra in Karnataka to search the roots of Odissi dance. Book review section contains the review of one famous book *Popular Culture* written by H John Weaver published by Peter Lang, along with some other books published in Odisha. I am thankful to all the writers who have gladly contributed to this volume. Special thanks to Dr Harekrishna Meher and Dr Chitrasen Pasayat for their editorial assistance.

I am thankful to the Director, National Folklore Support Center, and Chennai for his support to get this volume published in NFSC web site for the wider readership. I am also thankful to Prof. Mark Turin of Cambridge University who has been kinds enough to link the web journal of Folklore Foundation that is released from NFSC, Chennai with the World Oral Literature Project. I hope that this solidarity would safeguard folklore scholarship across the globe.

Mahendra K Mishra

Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POET JAYADEVA'S GĪTA-GOVINDA

Dr. Harekrishna Meher

INTRODUCTION :

Lyric poems play a very significant role for development of language and literature. Whatever may be language; the poetic and musical expression of heartiest feelings reveals the inner sense of life and gladdens the lovers of music, art and literature. Sanskrit literature is prosperous with the tradition of lyric poems. In comparison to prose, Gīti or Song has some distinct attractive and appealing feature that directly touches the core of the heart of connoisseurs. The lyrical flow of Sanskrit composition has its origin from the Vedic literature, especially Sāma-Veda. In Classical Sanskrit Literature, starting from '*Meghadūta kāvya*' of Kālidāsa, the lyric poems enjoy a prominent position in the pen of some eminent poets. Compositions such as '*Moha-Mudgara*' and '*Bhaja-Govindam*' of Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya enhance importance and beauty of Sanskrit lyric tradition with their melodious structure.

To the arena of lyric poetry, Poet Jayadeva of twelfth-century A.D. has unique contribution in his nectar-showering pen. Jayadeva is one among the distinguished poets of Odisha, who has been immortal for his extraordinary and unique Sanskrit work. Born in the village Kenduvilva on the bank of River Prāchī, Jayadeva, a great devotee of Lord Jagannātha and the loving husband of Padmāvatī, composed such a marvellous kāvya that delights the people even in the present age with its literary loveliness and musical splendour.

Gīta-Govinda of Poet Jayadeva is a great creation depicting the eternal love-story of Rādhā and Krishna. Conglomeration of Sāhitya, Saṅgīta and Kalā (literature, music and art) are simultaneously preserved in this kāvya. As enumerated in the scriptures, Saṅgīta consists of Nritya, Gīta and Vādyā (Dance, Song and Musical Sound).

Odissi Dance and Odissi Saṅgīta have intimate and inevitable relationship with Gīta-Govinda kāvya. Regarding own lyric poem, the poet himself writes:

“Yad gāndharva-kalāsu kauśalamanudhyānam cha yad vaishṇavam,

Yachchhriṅgāra-viveka-tattvamapi yat kāvyeshu līlāyitam /

Tat sarvam Jayadeva-panḍita-kaveḥ Kṛṣṇaika-tānātmanah,

Sānandāḥ pariśodhayantu sudhiyah Śrī-Gīta-Govindataḥ // ” (GG. XII / 12).

*[Whatever musical excellence in Gāndharva arts,
Whatever devotional concentration of the Vaishnavites,
Whatever relish of erotic sentiment for the connoisseurs,
Whatever playfully delineated in the literary compositions,
All those things the wise may delightfully purify
learning from the beautiful kāvya Gita-Govinda
written by the Pandit-Poet Jayadeva,
whose mind is ever-engrossed in Krishna alone.]*

****(All English Translations of Sanskrit Verses quoted in this article are by the author Dr. Harekrishna Meher)***

Jayadeva's Gīta-Govinda forms a masterpiece of lyrical composition that has been bestowing literary taste and aesthetic pleasure captivating ears and minds of the Sanskrit-lovers all around the world. Thoughts of the Vaishnavites, excellence of the devotees in musical arts and relish of erotic sentiment for the lovers of literature – all these are found intermingled in this kāvya. In the present article, endeavours have been made to throw lights on some literary aspects of this remarkable work in a critical perspective.

DEPICTION OF NATURE :

Nature is inevitably associated with every part of human life. From the Vedic literature till today's literary compositions, human behaviour is attributed to Nature and Nature's behaviour is attributed to the human beings. Every poet, somehow or other, is inclined to delineate Nature, Prakriti, in own style and presentation. In Jayadeva's work, Nature finds a place of special importance and recognition.

In the very beginning of Gīta-Govinda, Nature is seen vividly delineated. Main theme of this kāvya is the erotic stories of Lord Krishna and Rādhā. Jayadeva likes to indicate the matter at the outset within the description of Nature in the first verse :

“Meghair meduramambaram vana-bhuvah śyāmāstamāla-drumair

Naktam bhīrurayam tvameva tadimam Rādhe ! griham prāpaya /

Ittham Nanda-nideśataśchalitayoh pratyadhva-kuñja-drumam

Rādhā-Mādhavayor jayanti Yamunā-kūle rahah kelayah // ” (GG. I / 1).

[‘The sky is encompassed by clouds.

With the hue of Tamāla trees,

darksome appear the sites of woods.

This dear Kāhnā

feels very timid at night.

*O Rādhā ! You therefore please
accompany him to reach home aright.'*

*Thus by the words of King Nanda,
stepped ahead both Rādhā and Mādhava
towards the tree of bowers on the way.*

*Glory to their plays of love, secret and gay,
on the bank of river Yamunā.]*

Poet Jayadeva announces the word 'Megha' (Cloud) which is a prime feature of Nature and simile of Lord Krishna who is well-known as 'Ghana-Śyāma', darkish as cloud. In the first śloka of the kāvya, it is found that several facets of Nature such as cloud, sky, Tamāla trees, night and Yamunā river have been illustrated. Moreover, all these aspects are blackish by nature and very similar to the dark-bodied Krishna. It may be undoubtedly stated that the poet has consciously used these aspects of Nature to beautifully enhance the literary value as well as the glory of Krishna who is akin to them. Further the depiction of darkness is amalgamated with the projection of pleasurable play of Rādhā and Krishna. Rādhā is internally understood as 'Chit Śakti', the Divine Power of Knowledge and Consciousness in the form of Light that dispels the murky veil of ignorance in the heart of the mundane beings.

Contextual descriptions of cloud, sky, trees such as Tamāla and creepers such as Lavaṅga, gentle zephyr, cuckoos, mango-blossoms, spring season, Moon, darkness, ocean and the like facets of Nature are found in a very impressive manner.

Among various aspects of Nature, Flower is depicted as a prime symbol of beauty and love in literary works of many poets. Jayadeva is not an exception to this matter. In Gīta-Govinda, a beautiful Flowery Figure of Rādhā has been revealed by her lover Krishna in a verse of Canto-X :

“Bandhūka-dyuti-bāndhavo'yamadharah snigdho Madhūkachchhavir

Gaṇḍaś Chaṇḍī ! chakāsti nīla-Nalina-śrī-mochanam lochanam /

Nāsābhyeti Tila-prasūna-padavīm Kundābha-danti Priye !

Prāyas tvan-mukha-sevayā vijayate viśvam sa Pushpāyudhah // ” (GG. X / 6).

In this verse, Rādhā's limbs have been said to have acquired the loveliness of several flowers. Addressing his beloved with sweet loving words, Krishna states:

[These lips of thine really bear similarity

with the beauty of flower Bandhūka.

O Self-esteemed Lady !

Thy comely cheeks compile the lustres of Madhūka.

Manifesting the beauty

of blue lotuses, thy eyes are very lovely.

The stature of Tila flower, thy nose bears.

Thy teeth, O My Dear !

spread the radiance of Kunda flower.

Serving thy fine face with these five flowers,

the Flower-shafted Love-god Cupid

conquers the entire universe indeed.]

Such expression of floral ornamentation is really remarkable and worth-mentioning. Further, descriptions of Mādhavī creeper, Varuṇa tree, Nāgakeśara flower, Kimśuka (Palāśa) flower, Bakula flower, Vanamālikā, Atimuktaka creeper, Mango tree, Betasa creeper-bower, lotus, Kuravaka flower and the like are contextually observed in this kāvya and these matters reflect an intimate relationship with Nature. Portrayal of Nature with an ecological perspective can also be marked in discussion of several figures of speech, sentiment and literary metres.

ALLITERATION AND ALAÑKĀRAS :

A popular verse found in Classical Sanskrit literature about the significance of some epical qualities runs thus :

“Upamā Kālidāsasya Bhāraverartha-gauravam /

Naishadhe pada-lālityam Māghe santi trayo guṇāḥ //”

In Sanskrit Literature, appreciably special significance is observed in the Simile of Kālidāsa, Gravity of Meaning of Bhāravi and Grace of Diction of Śrīharsha, the author of Naishadha Mahākāvya, and the combination of these three epical attributes is seen in Māgha-kāvya which is known as Śīsupālavadha-kāvya written by Māgha. Such remarks are maintained in case of Mahākāvyas or epic poems. But in case of Gīti-kāvya or Lyric poem, Pada-Lālitya or Grace of Diction reigns supreme in the excellent composition of Jayadeva’s Gīta-Govinda. The poet himself speaks of the special qualities of his own writing in the following lines:

Madhura-komala-kānta-padāvalīm,

Śriṇu tadā Jayadeva-Sarasvatīm //” (GG. I / 3).

Gīta-Govinda kāvya is endowed with sweet, soft and beautiful words. Musical affluence, serenity, rhythmic eloquence, lucidity, emotional touch and sweetness of meaning are the fine features of this lyric poem. Considering all these matters, it may not be inappropriate to proclaim: ***“Govinde Pada-Lālityam.”***

Grace of diction (*Pada-Lālitya*) is mostly found in Alañkāras, the Figures of speech such as Anuprāsa and Yamaka. If a consonant is used repeatedly, it forms Anuprāsa, alliteration (1). If certain letters having consonants and vowels are repeated serially with the same consonants and vowels, Yamaka Alañkāra (2) is maintained there. Viśvanātha Kavirāja in Chapter-X of his ‘Sāhitya-Darpaṇa’ has thrown much light on numerous

Alańkāras along with the related matters. Further, he has quoted a verse (*Unmilan-Madhu-Gandha..* etc.) from Jayadeva’s poem as an appropriate example Vrittianuprāsa, a division of Anuprāsa Alańkāra.

Gīta-Govinda is a treasure-trove of lyrical jewels. In every line of this kāvya, Alliteration with end-rhymes in the songs is exquisite with definite designs. Pada-Lālitya is seen abundantly with melodiously sweet, delicate and beautiful words. Some verses are being presented here as instances. In description of Spring season, very popular lines are:

“Lalita-lavańga-latā-pariśīlana-komala-malaya-samīre /

Madhukara-nikara-karambita-kokila-kūjita-kuńja-kuṭīre //

Viharati Haririha sarasa-vasante /

Nrityati yuvati-janena samam sakhi ! virahi-janasya durante // ” (GG. I / 3/1).

*[Here appears the pleasurable Spring,
wherein the delicate zephyr
of Malaya mountain
gently blows having loving embrace
of the graceful Lavańga creeper
and wherein the cottage of bowers is
filled with the sweet cooing of cuckoos
mingled with the humming of black-bees.
O Dear Friend ! Hari enjoys wandering
and dances with the young maidens
in this season which is unbearably afflicting
to the couple separated from each other.]*

Contextually in other place, depiction of Spring is found in the following verse :

***“Unmīlan-madhu-gandha-lubdha-madhupa-vyādhūta-chūtaṅkura-
krīḍat-kokila-kākalī-kalakalair udgīrṇa-karṇa-jvarāḥ /
Nīyante pathikaih katham kathamapi dhyānāvadhāna-kṣhaṇa-
prāpta-prāṇa-samā-samāgama-rasollāsairamī vāsarāḥ // ”*** (GG. I / 9).

*[During the days of Spring season,
ears of the wayfarers
painfully feel very feverish
by the noisy sound of cooing of cuckoos
sporting in the mango-blossoms
that slowly swing by the black bees
craving for the emerging sweet aroma.
These vernal days are anyhow
passed with difficulties
by the lonely wayfarers
who in cheerful sentiments enjoy union
with their life-like maidens
attained in some moments of concentration !!!
within their mental sphere.]*

In the two verses quoted above, the consonants ‘m’, ‘dh’, ‘k’, ‘r’, ‘l’, ‘n’, ‘th’, ‘p’, ‘s’, ‘m’ etc. have been used repeatedly and as such Alliteration is distinctly seen. Yamaka is also observed with the word ‘kara’ found in the words ‘madhukara’, ‘nikara’ and ‘karambita’. Also with the word ‘samā’ found in the words ‘Prāṇa-samā-samāgama’, Yamaka Alaṅkāra is seen clearly.

In the above-mentioned two verses, the delineation of Spring season is supported with cuckoos, black bees, mango-blossoms, Lavaṅga creepers, gentle zephyr, delicate pleasure-bowers and the like. So with these aspects, a nice portrayal of Nature is conspicuously obtained along with the human feelings and sentiment of ‘Śrīṅgāra’.

Aspects of Nature such as cloud, mountain, Moon and Chakora bird are seen exemplified in a song of Canto-I. Here Upamā, Rūpaka and Anuprāsa Alaṅkāras are clearly noticed in the context of praise and worship of Lord Viṣṇu. Some lines of the lovely song addressed to Hari appear thus :

“Abhinava-Jaladhara-sundara ! Dhrita-Mandara e /

Śrī-mukha-Chandra-Chakora ! Jaya Jaya Deva Hare ! // ” (GG. 1 / 2 / 7).

[O Hari ! Eradicator of all evils !

Handsome like a newly appeared Cloud !

O Holder of Mandara mountain !

O Chakora Bird for the Moon

of Goddess Lakshmī’s face !

Victory to Thy Supreme Self.]

Upamā (3) Alaṅkāra is observed here, because Hari has similarity with comely darkish Cloud (*Jaladhara*) in appearance. Cloud is ‘Upamāna’ and Hari is ‘Upameya’.

Further Rūpaka Alaṅkāra is found here, while Hari is described as a Chakora Bird and Lakshmī's Face as the Moon. In this case of Rūpaka (4), Upamāna is directly placed in Upameya with 'abheda āropa'. Besides, in the wording of this sweet song, repetition of consonants such as 'n', 'd', 'r' and 'ch' etc. manifests the sweet alliterative design that conspicuously confirms Anuprāsa Alaṅkāra. Along with these figures of speech, Hari's hearty love for Lakshmī is indicated in the song. In the line "*Jaya Jaya Deva Hare*" the name of Poet Jayadeva is hidden and it is understood with a pun.

In another context, a fine illustration of Nature is observed. Just after the arrival of night, Moon-rise is so beautifully and attractively presented in graceful words of the poet that the verse remains ever-ringing in the ears. The concerned verse appears thus:

"Atrāntare cha kulaṭā-kula-vartma-pāta-

Sañjāta-pātaka iva sphuṭa-lāñchhana-śrīh /

Vrindāvanāntaramadīpayadamśu-jālair

Dik-sundarī-vadana-chandana-bindurinduh // " (GG. VII / 1).

[By this time,

as a big dot of sandal paste

on the forehead of the Direction-Damsel,

Moon, spreading own rays, illuminated

the inner area of Vrindāvana.

He had borne the beauty of a distinct stain

as if caused by sin due to own appearance

on the path of the adulterous maidens.]

A charming depiction of Moon is found here. Further, the figures of speech, namely Anuprāsa, Yamaka, Utprekshā, Kāvyaśīṅga and Rūpaka are marked beautifully intertwined in the present verse.

In the first and second lines, the consonants ‘t’, ‘r’, ‘p’, ‘s’ have been repeatedly used and so form Anuprāsa. Also the letters ‘ñja’ and ‘ñcha’ having same ‘cha’ varga of alphabet come under the purview of Anuprāsa. In the third line also, consonants ‘v’, ‘n’, ‘d’ are found repeated and thus form Alliteration. In the fourth line, very sweet words are used having the consonants ‘n’, ‘d’ and ‘r’. So a melodious feature of the verse is automatically maintained. In the first line, the word ‘kula’ has been used twice, one cut off from the word ‘kulatā’ and another the total word ‘kula’. Thus this ‘kula’ maintained twice serially having the letters that are consonant ‘k’, vowel ‘u’, consonant ‘l’ and vowel ‘a’ reveals Yamaka Alaṅkāra.

Further the Moon is personified and is depicted as a fellow who has as if acquired sin. So the word ‘iva’ though normally meant for Upamā (*simile*), here speaks of Utprekshā (5) where ‘asambhava-kalpanā’ is maintained. The reason of acquiring sin is that Moon is inimical causing harm or obstacle to the unchaste women, who are inclined to meet their lovers secretly in the deep darkness of night. But Moon with own rays discards the darkness on their path and exposing them, appears as an impediment to their secret visit to the lovers and hence bears a clear stain on his body as a mark of that sin. Here Kāvyaśīṅga Alaṅkāra (6) is observed, since the cause of the intended meaning (sin) has been mentioned.

Besides, Rūpaka Alaṅkāra is clearly found here, because Direction (*Dik*) is depicted as a beautiful dame and Moon is directly delineated to be a big dot of sandal paste (*chandana-bindu*) on her forehead. In both the cases of Direction and Moon, metaphor has been given and not simile. As such all these Alaṅkāras inserted collectively form ‘Saṅkara’ and ‘Samsrīṣṭi’ Alaṅkāra (7), as each of them mingled in the said verse can be traced. Such are some examples. Further several figures of speech can be determined in different contexts. All such applications of epical attributes display the dexterity of the poet in this Gīti-kāvya.

POETIC STYLE AND LITERARY METRES:

Gīta-Govinda comprises twelve Cantos (Sargas), twenty-four Songs and seventy-two Ślokas. All the Sargas are designed with various melodious Rāgas or Tunes such as Mālava, Gurjarī, Vasanta, Rāmakerī, Deśa, Guṇakarī, Gauḍa-Mālava, Karṇāṭaka, Barādī, Deśa-Barādī, Bhairavī, Vibhāsa etc. along with different (*Tāla*) musical modes such as Rūpaka, Yati, Ekatālī, Pratimaṇṭha, Āḍava etc. having Aṣṭapadīs. By the poet, the twelve cantos have been named as ‘*Sāmoda-Dāmodara*’ (Canto-I), ‘*Akleśa-Keśava*’ (Canto-II), ‘*Mugdha-Madhusūdana*’ (Canto-III), ‘*Snigdha-Mādhava*’ (Canto-IV), ‘*Sākāṅksha-Puṇḍarikāksha*’ (Canto-V), ‘*Sotkaṇṭha-Vaikuṇṭha*’ (Canto-VI), ‘*Nāgara-Nārāyaṇa*’ (Canto-VII), ‘*Vilakshya-Lakshmīpati*’ (Canto-VIII), ‘*Mugdha-Mukunda*’ (Canto-IX), ‘*Chatra-Chaturbhujā*’ (Canto-X), ‘*Sānanda-Govinda*’ (Canto-XI) and ‘*Suprīta-Pītāmbara*’ (Canto-XII). Some slight variations of names are seen in different editions of this book. From the name or heading of each canto, one can find the concerned topic along with alliteration bearing sweet, graceful and captivating letters.

‘Vaidarbhī’ Rīti is observed in this sweet lyrical composition of Jayadeva. Having long Samāśas ‘Gaudī’ Rīti is also found intermingled. Profusion of ‘*Prasāda*’ and ‘*Mādhurya*’ Guṇas delights the heart of the readers and listeners (8). Here the style of presentation bears an amicable amalgamation of dramatic dignity and epical approach. The poet has used various Rāgas in ‘mātrā-metre’. In the midst, some traditional metres ‘varṇa-chhandas’ are found inserted. Therefore this Gītikāvya Gīta-Govinda is a wonderful and beautiful blend of both kinds of metres ‘varṇa-chhanda’ and ‘mātrā-chhanda’, also of dramatic and lyrical presentations. The Varṇa-chhandas used in this kāvya are Śardūla-Vikrīḍitam, Vasanta-Tilakā, Druta-Vilambita, Vamsastha, Śikhariṇī, Prithvī, Sragdharā, Upendravajrā, Mālinī, Hariṇī, Pushpitāgrā and Anuṣṭup (9). The poet has used mātrā-chhanda mainly ‘Āryā’ and several lyrical chhandas in his innovation and musical muse. Poring upon the arrangement of Sargas, use of traditional Chhandas, Rasas and depiction of picturesque view of Nature etc., Gīta-Govinda, though a unique Gītikāvya in its genre, can be included in the category of Mahākāvya also.

Western scholars have given different opinions about the design of Gīta-Govinda kāvya. In this regard, A.B. Keith in his book ‘*A History of Sanskrit Literature*’ refers to

some scholars. William Jones calls Gīta-Govinda as a little pastoral drama, Lassen styles it as a lyric drama, Schroeder regards it as a refined Yātrā. Pischel and Levi place it in the category between song and drama. Further Pischel styles it as a melodrama (10).

In Indian tradition, it is marked that Jayadeva has combined both traditional chhandas and lyrical tunes along with a dramatic structure. So amalgamation of these three qualities establishes this kāvya as a wonderful literary creation. As the lyrical melodious tune dominates in this kāvya, modern scholars like Abhiraja Rajendra Mishra (11) endeavour to describe it as the most ancient *rāga-kāvya* from which the tradition of *rāga-kāvya* has emerged. Hence deliberating on various views, it may be opined that Gīta-Govinda is a unique Gīti-kāvya or Rāga-kāvya with its own peerless design.

Sweetness and gravity of meaning are indeed appreciable in a verse, where Rādhā is depicted as an embodiment of Rasas present in the earthly region. Here the divine damsels namely, Madālasā, Indumatī, Manoramā, Rambhā, Kalāvatī and Chitralekhā are mentioned and understood with a double meaning. Ślesha Alaṅkāra (Pun) is found there where certain word expresses more than one meaning (12). The word ‘Prithvī’ means ‘Earth’ and it is also mentioned through Mudrālaṅkāra that indicates ‘Prithvī’ chhanda in the concerned verse which runs as follows :

“Driṣau tava Madālase vadanam Indumatyāspadam,

Gatir jana-Manoramā vidhuta-Rambham ūru-dvayam /

Ratis tava Kalāvatī ruchira-Chitralekhe bhruvā-

Vaho vibudha-yauvatam vahasi tanvi ! Prithvī-gatā // ” (GG. X / 7).

[Languid are thy eyes with intoxication (Madālasā).

Effulgent is thy face with charming moonbeam (Indumatī).

Thy gait gladdens mind of all the beings (Manoramā).

Thy thighs form the tremulous plantain tree (Rambhā).

Embellished with art is thy erotic play (Kalāvatī).

Thy brows have lovely lines of painting (Chitrālekhā).

O Slim-limbed beloved lady !

Ah, present on earth,

You bear the juvenile exuberance of nymphs

who adorn the dominion of gods.]

Contextually this verse is told by Krishna to Rādhā. Here enchanting is the presentation of pun so sweetly and wittfully inserted in the concerned verse composed in ‘Prithvī’ chhanda. This metre consists of four steps having seventeen letters in each with serial arrangements of five *gaṇas* namely, ‘ja’, ‘sa’, ‘ja’, ‘sa’, ‘ya’ along with one letter of short vowel and one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, one in eighth letter and another in last letter of the step (13).

Similarly in another place, an example of Varṇa-chhanda ‘Upendrāvajrā’ appears very charming and appealing in the context of Rādhā’s pangs of separation. A maiden-friend of Rādhā contextually tells Krishna in the concerned verse as follows :

“Smarāturām Daivata-vaidya-hridya !

Tvadaṅga-saṅgāmrita-mātra-sādhyām /

Vimukta-bādhām kurushe na Rādhām

Upendra !_vajrādapi dāruṇo’si // ” (GG. IV / 4).

[Ye noble self like the divine doctor !

All the illness of Cupid-stricken Rādhā

can be cured very well

only by the ambrosia

of your loving embrace.

*If you do not make her
free from this grief so far,
O Dear Upendra !
Really very cruel
more than the thunderbolt you are.]*

This verse is composed in ‘Upendravrājā’ metre which consists of four steps having eleven letters in each with serial arrangements of three *gaṇas* namely, ‘ja’, ‘ta’, ‘ja’ along with two letters of long vowel. It has one pause in the last letter of the step (14). Here the poet mentions the name ‘Upendravrājā’ that with a pun implies the traditional Sanskrit metre, along with the desired theme. Vyatireka Alankāra (15) is found here, because Krishna (*Upameya*) is regarded as a cruel person more than the thunderbolt (*Upamāna*).

Again a chhanda named ‘Pushpitāgrā’ is observed in Mudrālaṅkāra in a verse where Rādhā’s maiden-friend speaks to Krishna :

**“ Kṣaṇamapi virahah purā na sehe
Nayana-nimīlana-khinnayā yayā te /
Śvasitī kathamasau rasāla-śākhām
Chira-viraheṇa vilokya Pushpitāgrām // ”** (GG. IV / 6).

*[O Krishna !
In the days by-gone,
she was unable to endure your separation,
by the grief caused by closing of eyes,
and now how can she tolerate having sighs
the long estrangement,*

looking at the branch of mango tree

having blossoms at the top ?]

The said verse is written in ‘*Pushpitāgrā*’ chhanda which consists of four steps. In first and third steps, it has twelve letters each having serial arrangement of four *gaṇas* namely, ‘na’, ‘na’, ‘ra’ and ‘ya’. In second and fourth steps, it bears thirteen letters each with serial arrangement of four *gaṇas* namely, ‘na’, ‘ja’, ‘ja’, ‘ra’ and one letter having long vowel (16). The poet has directly used the word ‘*Pushpitāgrā*’ (having blossoms at the top) as an adjective of mango-branch, and with a pun, it indicates the concerned Sanskrit metre.

In another place, name of Sanskrit metre ‘*Śārdūla-Vikrīḍitam*’ is seen used with a pun. Contextually Rādhā’s lady-companion intimates Krishna about the bewildered condition of Rādhā. The verse runs thus:

“*Āvāso vipināyate priyasakhī-mālāpi jālāyate,*

Tāpo’pi śvasitena dāva-dahana-jvālā-kalāpāyate /

Sāpi tvad-virahēṇa hanta hariṇī-rūpāyate hā katham,

Kandarpō’pi Yamāyate viracayañchhārdūla-vikrīḍitam // ” (GG. IV / 2).

[O Krishna ! Owing to pangs of separation,

for Rādhā, her home seems to be a forest.

The group of her dear maiden-friends

appears as a trapping net.

With heavy sighs, the heat of separation

turns to be a vast forest-conflagration.

It is a matter of severe woe

*that because of thy separation,
Oh, how she appears as a doe,
and Love-god Cupid for her,
has become Yama, the Lord of Death,
displaying the activities of a fierce tiger.]*

The word ‘Śārdūla-Vikrīḍita’ literally means ‘Playful gait of tiger’, also is a name of Sanskrit metre which comprises four steps bearing nineteen letters in each with serial arrangements of six *gaṇas* namely, ‘ma’, ‘sa’, ‘ja’, ‘sa’, ‘ta’, ‘ta’ along with one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, first in twelfth letter and second in the last letter of each step (17). Composing the verse in this metre, the poet has befittingly utilized both the meanings with a literary pun. Though several verses of this kāvya have been composed in this metre, the poet has distinctly illustrated this name in this context once only.

In another context, bearing the pangs of separation, Rādhā tells before her maiden-friend to make necessary steps for union with her lover Krishna. The verse describes the anxiousness of Rādhā for whom the mango-blossoms and other aspects of Nature are not pleasurable. The concerned verse appears thus:

***“Durāloka-stoka-stavaka-navakāśoka-latikā-
Vikāśah kāsāropavana-pavano’pi vyathayati /
Api bhrāmyad-bhriṅgī-raṇita-ramaṇyā na mukula-
Prasūtiśchūtānām Sakhi ! Śikhariṇīyam sukhayati // ”*** (GG. II / 4).

*[O My Friend ! Here
florescence of new Asoka creeper
bearing few bunches of flowers
is not at all pleasurable to my eyes*

and causes distress immense.

Breeze of pleasure-grove beside pond

gives me pains further.

This budding of mango-blossoms with sharp tips,

though charming with the humming of black-bees

roving over them, does not give me a gleeful sense.]

In this verse, the word ‘*Śikhariṇī*’ literally means ‘Something (feminine) with sharp tip’. Here it is an adjective of ‘Mukula-Prasūtiḥ’, budding of blossoms. Besides, ‘Sikharini’ is a name of Sanskrit metre that comprises four steps, having seventeen letters in each, with serial arrangements of five *gaṇas* namely, ‘ya’, ‘ma’, ‘na’, ‘sa’ and ‘bha’, along with one short-vowelled letter and one letter of long vowel. It has two pauses, first in sixth letter and second in the last letter of each step (18). The poet has composed the concerned verse in *Śikhariṇī* metre with a pun appropriate to the context. Thus arrangement of Sanskrit words in this verse reveals figures of speech such as Anuprāsa, Yamaka and Ślesha with poetic wit and literary dexterity.

BLEND OF EROS AND DEVOTION :

‘Rasa’ is regarded as the form of Brahman. The Upanishadic statement “*Raso vai sah*” succinctly manifests the Supreme Self as Blissful Relish. In rhetorical works, Rasa has been explained as ‘*Brahmāsvāda-Sahodara*’ by Viśvanātha Kavirāja (19). Life and literature, both are inevitably interrelated with each other. The prime sentiment of life of mundane beings is Eros. Beauty, attraction, union and creation are the series of the artistic world. Rati, erotic pleasure, is the main instinct of all the creatures of the world. Therefore ‘Śrīngāra’ is widely known as ‘Ādi Rasa’, the first sentiment enumerated in literature.

In most of the bodies of Indian temples, erotic designs are generally noticed, even if devotees having a heart filled with devotion to gods and goddesses enter into the sites. Such designs or depictions though externally carry some unpalatable taste in contrast with inner devotional relish, yet they symbolize duality and creation of the world with a

touch of aesthetic sense in the form of Eros. Mahābhārata and other various epical compositions contextually exhibit numerous verses of erotic pleasures. Such delineations may be construed as poetic lapses in one sense, but intrinsically they portray the inevitable experiences of human life filled with feelings and emotions.

Rasa (Sentiment) is the prime phenomenon in drama and kāvya. Bharata-Muni in his *Nāṭya-Śāstra* has defined the relish of Rasa in the Sūtra: ‘**Vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhichārī-samyogād Rasa-nishpattih**’ (20). Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas unitedly manifest the relish of a Rasa. All these can be observed in various contexts of description of Eros and other sentiments. The noted rhetorician Viśvanātha Kavirāja has rightly discussed all these matters in his work. Every Rasa has a ‘Sthāyi-Bhāva’, a permanent feeling or emotion. Vibhāva is of two kinds, Ālambana and Uddīpana. Both Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas combinedly reveal the previously generated Sthāyi-Bhāva. In every Rasa, Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas remain separately and these two are external cause of relish of Rasa, while Sthāyi-Bhāva is the main internal cause. Manifestation of Sthāyi-Bhāva is regarded as Rasa. Anubhāva is the factor that makes a person externally experience the internally aroused Sthāyi-Bhāva. Vyabhichārī-Bhāva, also known as ‘Sañchārī-Bhāva’, helps to nourish the Sthāyi-Bhāva already boosted up and makes it suitable for relish. Sañchārī-Bhāvas are of thirty-three kinds, namely Nirveda, Āvega, Dainya, Śrama, Mada, Jadatā, Ugratā, Moha, Vivodha, Swapna, Apasmāra, Garva, Maraṇa, Alasatā, Amarsha, Nidrā, Avahitthā, Autsukya, Unmāda, Śāṅkā, Smriti, Mati, Vyādhi, Santrāsa, Lajjā, Harsha, Asūyā, Vishāda, Dhriti, Chapalatā, Glāni, Chintā and Vitarka. (21)

For example, Rati (Love) is ‘Sthāyi-Bhāva’ of Eros. If a feeling of love (*rati*) arises in the minds of a man and a woman by seeing each other, both the persons are Ālambana Vibhāva, as they are resort or shelter (Ālambana) of love. Both are the causes of emergence of love. The factors that boost up or expand Rati are ‘Uddīpana Vibhāva’ such as moonlight, pleasure-garden, lonely place, sandal, fragrance of flowers, cooing of cuckoo, humming of black-bees, attractive scenery and so on. Both Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas combinedly reveal the previously aroused Rati. Sthāyi-Bhāva such as Rati, already aroused in the hearts of the lover and the beloved through Ālambana and Uddīpana Vibhāvas, comes out or becomes manifested by Anubhāva which is the effect of Sthāyi-Bhāva. Through acting in speech or limbs, Anubhāva makes a person externally experience the internal manifestation of Sthāyi-Bhāva. Every Rasa has separate Anubhāvas. For instance, Anubhāvas of Rati, in case of union, comprise physical expressions such as sweet smile, amorous glances, kisses, moving of brows, maddening gestures etc. along with oral expressions such as speaking sweet words and the like.

Lajjā, Harsha and Asūyā etc. are Sañchāri-Bhāvas in this regard. Passing through all these Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas, Sthāyi-Bhāva Rati turns into ‘Śrīngāra’ Rasa.

‘Śrīngāra’, Eros is the prevailing sentiment of Gīta-Govinda kāvya. Both ‘Vipralambha’ (Love-in-Separation) and ‘Sambhoga’ (Love-in-Union) Śrīngāra have been elaborated in the entire lyrical composition. Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhichārī Bhāvas are observed in different contexts of erotic descriptions. According to Viśvanātha Kavirāja, without feeling of separation, happiness or excellence of pleasurable union cannot be experienced. He opines : **“Na vinā vipralambhena sambhogah pushṭim aśnute”** (22). During love, if there is no separation, love-in-union does not acquire proper nourishment. Hence for excellence and strong effect in Sambhoga, Vipralambha has been elucidated as an essential phenomenon in human life.

In the context of sending message by the banished Yaksha separated from his beloved wife, Poet Kālidāsa in his famous gītikāvya Meghadūta says :

“Snehānāhuh kimapi virahe dhvamsinaste tvabhogād /

Ishte vastunyupachita-rasāh prema-rāśībhavanti // ” (23).

[Some opine that anyhow

during the gap of separation,

affections slowly deteriorate.

But the real thing is that

due to lack of enjoyment,

relish of affections becomes enhanced,

and the affections turn into accumulated love

immensely enjoyable at the time of union.]

In the pen of Jayadeva, Rādhā is contextually described as a ‘Virahiṇī Nāyikā’ and finally she enjoys union with her eternal lover Krishna. Here Krishna is presented as ‘Dhīrodātta Nāyaka’. He enjoys pleasure with several Gopī damsels. Rādhā is ‘Parakīyā Nāyikā’. She has been contextually described as Virahotkaṇṭhitā, Khaṇḍitā, Kalahāntarītā, Abhisārikā, Vāsaka-Sajjā and Svādhīna-Bharttrikā Nāyikā. In the sensuous scenario of love, Rādhā is a lovely murmuring effulgent fountain and Krishna is the vast ocean of love. Both the lives attain supreme bliss in union only. Viśvanātha Kavirāja in Chapter-III of his ‘Sāhitya-Darpaṇa’ has elaborately discussed about several divisions and qualities of Nāyaka and Nāyikā (24).

Rādhā in an inner sense is deemed as Individual Self (Jīvātmā) and Krishna as the Supreme Self (Paramātmā). The external design of eroticism gives an internal meaning of philosophical phenomenon. Rādhā is considered as ‘Prakriti’ (Primordial Matter), while Krishna is regarded as ‘Purusha’ (Supreme Being). Union of Jīvātmā with Paramātmā, or of Prakriti with Purusha is understood here.

Poet Jayadeva clearly indicates the main theme of amorous pleasures of Śrī (Rādhā) and Vāsudeva (Krishna) in the verse :

“Śrī-Vāsudeva-rati-keli-kathā-sametam

Etam karoti Jayadeva-kaviḥ prabandham // ” (GG. I / 2).

[Poet Jayadeva is composing

this literary work with the stories

of erotic dalliances

done by Rādhā and Krishna.]

In Sanskrit literature, ‘prabandha’ is a general term for kāvya or gīta or literary composition. Gīta-Govinda is not simply the descriptive work of erotic pleasure of

Rādhā-Krishna. Here in inner perspective, humanistic, philosophical and spiritual or theistic trends of life are also observed.

Traditionally several verses of Gīta-Govinda are melodiously sung in the temple of Lord Jagannātha. In almost all the cantos of Gīta-Govinda, for Lord Krishna, the poet has befittingly used the word “Mādhava” which means Lakshmī’s husband. (‘Mā’ means ‘Goddess Lakshmī’ and ‘Dhava’ means ‘Husband’). Further, the poet has portrayed Krishna as the source of all the ten incarnations of God in some other context :

***“Vedānuddharate jaganti vahate bhūgolamudvibhrate,
Daityam dārayate Balim chhalayate kshatra-kshayam kurvate /
Paulastyam jayate halam kalayate kārūṇyamātanvate,
Mlechchhān mūrchchhayate daśākṛiti-kṛite Kṛishṇāya tubhyam namah // ”*** (GG. I / 5).

*[My salutations to Thyself, Krishna, the Supreme Lord,
having ten types of bodily form as incarnations;
The Lord, who protected Vedas, the Divine Wisdom,
in the incarnation of Fish;
Who bore all the worlds in the incarnation of Turtle;
Who lifted up the circle of earth in the incarnation of Boar;
Who tore up the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu
in the incarnation of Man-Lion;
Who deceived King Bali in the incarnation of Dwarf;
Who destroyed the Kshatriyas
in the incarnation of Paraśurāma;
Who conquered Rāvaṇa in the incarnation of Rāma;
Who held plough in the incarnation of Balarāma;*

*Who spread compassion in the incarnation of Buddha;
and Who makes the Mlechchhas faint in the incarnation of Kalki.]*

In this context, it may be remembered that Sage Vyāsa, the author of Bhāgavata-Mahāpurāṇa, describes Krishna as the Almighty Supreme Being (*Krishṇastu Bhagavān Svayam*). Poet Jayadeva most probably follows the sense of Bhāgavata in eulogizing the greatness of the Supreme God.

In another place of Gīta-Govinda, Krishna playing in spring and embraced by beautiful Gopī damsels has been delineated as the Embodiment of ‘Śrīngāra’ Rasa. The verse is :

***“Svachchhandam vraja-sundarībhirabhitah pratyāṅgamāliṅgitah,
Śrīngārah Sakhi ! mūrttimāniva madhau mugdho Harih krīdati // ”*** (GG. I / 11).

*[In every limbs, in front, freely embraced
by the beautiful maidens of Gopapura,
O Dear Friend !
during the sweet season of spring
plays sportively, the enchanted Hari,
Himself as if embodiment of Eros.]*

So Bhakti (Devotion) and Rati (Erotic Pleasure), both are beautifully blended in the inner sense of spiritual and philosophical speculations in this gīti-kāvya. Regarding own composition, the poet himself has rightly said :

“Yadi Hari-smaraṇe sarasam mano,

Yadi vilāsa-kalāsu kutūhalaṃ /
Madhura-komala-kānta-padāvalīm,
Śṛiṇu tadā Jayadeva-Sarasvatīm //” (GG. I / 3).

[If your mind is fraught with sentiment
in remembering Lord Hari,
if you have any curiosity
in the arts of joyful dalliance,
then listen to Jayadeva’s writing literary,
that contains the words sweet, delicate and lovely.]

Thus a marvellous and sweet admixture of both Devotion-to-God and Relish of Erotic pleasure is maintained in the melodious work of Jayadeva.

CONCLUSION :

Open description of erotic activities is generally not appreciated by the readers. In epical tradition as it is observed, great poet like Vyāsa in Mahābhārata (25) has distinctly inserted the erotic depiction into the pathetic context in such a manner that one can really experience the significance of both the sentiments simultaneously without any hesitation. Poets like Kālidāsa, Śrīharsha, Bilhaṇa, Bhartṛhari and Amaru have unhesitatingly described some open portrayals of erotic sentiments contextually. But the case of gīti-kāvya Gita-Govinda is quite different. It is purely an erotic love-poetry. Poet Jayadeva has clearly mentioned the purpose of his book, that is the “*Rati-keli-kathā*” of Rādhā and Krishna. So there is nothing to criticize against the elaboration of nude erotic pleasure poetized by the devotee Jayadeva.

Human life attains success with four achievements (*purushārtha*) that are Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha. Love emerges from pleasure and a pure Sāttvika thinking emanates from love. Pure thinking paves the way for attainment of God. Complete submission of Self in the Supreme Being is the salvation. Rādhā has accomplished Kāma, the mundane enjoyment. Both Rādhā and Krishna have unveiled the passionate feelings of their hearts in the context of love elaborated in Gīta-Govinda. Relish of Rasa is regarded as equal to Brahmānanda. In this connection, the poetic delicacy of Jayadeva is remarkable indeed. His lovely words expressing sentiments of love are sweeter than all other sweet things such as madhuka-liquor, sugar, grape, nectar, milk, ripe mango and the lovely lips of beloved maiden also. Really significant is the following verse in praise of his composition:

***“Sādhvī Mādhvika ! chintā na bhavati bhavatah Śarkare ! karkarāsi,
Drākshe ! drakshyanti ke tvām Amrita ! mritamasi Kshīra ! nīram rasaste /
Mākanda ! kranda Kāntādhara ! dharaṇi-talam gachchha yachchhanti yāvad,
Bhāvam śrīṅgāra-sārasvatamiha Jayadevasya vishvag vachāmsi //”*** (GG. XII / 13).

[O Liquor of Madhuka !

No noble thought arises for you.

O Sugar ! You're very unsavoury really.

O Grape ! Who will behold you ?

O Nectar ! You're gone dead.

O Milk ! Your essence is mere water.

You weep, O Ripe Mango !

O Lips of Beloved Lady !

Down to the nether region you go,

as long as the sweet words of Jayadeva

in this world on all sides offer

emotional feelings of erotic expression.]

From the above discussions, it may be ascertained that Gīta-Govinda of Poet Jayadeva forms a glorious, magnificent and unparalleled literary asset of overflowing love in the sphere of Sanskrit literature. For its own epical, lyrical and aesthetic attributes as well as universal appeal, with heartiest endearments it will remain ever-remembered as a sweetest, excellent and eternal composition for all the lovers of literature all over the world. Popularity of this kāvya has been enhanced through several translations of writers from different countries even in the present day of modernity.

*

FOOT-NOTES :

- (1) '*Anuprāsah śabda-sāmyam vaishamye 'pi svarasya yat*'
(Sāhitya-Darpaṇa, 10/3).
- (2) '*Satyarthe prithagarthāyāh svara-vyañjana-samhateh /*
Krameṇa tenaivāvrittir Yamakam vinigadyate //' (SD, 10/8).
- (3) '*Sāmyam vāchyaṃ avairdharṃyāṃ vākyaiḥ Upamā dvayoh*' (SD, 10/14).
- (4) '*Rūpakam rūpitāropo vishaye nirapahnave*' (SD, 10/28).
- (5) '*Bhavaṭ sambhāvanotprekshā prakritasya parātmanā*' (SD, 10/40).
- (6) '*Hetor vākya-padārthatve Kāvyaḥ nigadyate*' (SD, 10/63).
- (7) '*Yadyeta evāṅkarāḥ paraspara-vimīśritāḥ /*
Tadā prithagalaṅkārau Samsrīṣṭiḥ Saṅkarastathā //' (SD. 10/97-98).
- (8) For Guṇa and Rīti, See '*Sāhitya-Darpaṇa*' (Chapter VIII & IX).
- (9) For details of Chhandas, See '*Chhandomañjarī*'.
- (10) *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Keith), page-191.

(11) 'Concept of Giti and Mātrigītikāñjali-Kāvya'

(Article by Prof. Rajendra Mishra). Web Ref:

(<http://hkmeher.blogspot.com/2008/05/concept-of-gti-and-mtrigtikjali-kvya.html>)

(12) 'Ślishṭaiḥ padair anekārthābhīdhāne Ślesha ishyate' (SD, 10/11).

(13) 'Jasau jasa-yaḥ vasu-graha-yatiścha Prithvī guruh' (ChhandaMañjarī).

(14) 'Upendravarjā jatajāstato gau.' (VṛittaRatnakara);

'Upendravarjā prathame laghau sā.' (ChhandaM).

(15) 'Ādhikyam upameyasyopamānān nyūnatāthavā, Vyatirekah.' (SD, 10/52).

(16) 'Ayuḥi nayuga-rephato ya-kāro,

Yuḥi cha najau jaragāścha Pushpitāgrā'. (ChhandaM).

(17) 'Sūryāśvair masajas-tatāḥ saguravah śārdūla-vikrīḍitam.' (ChhandaM).

(18) 'Rasai rudraiśchinnā yamanasabhalā gah Śikhariṇī.' (ChhandaM).

(19) SāhityaDarpaṇa (Chapter, 3/2).

(20) Nāṭya-Śāstra (ChapterVI)

(21) Sāhitya-Darpaṇa (3/ 140-141)

(22) Sāhitya-Darpaṇa (Chapter 3/213, Vṛitti)

(23) Meghadūta (UttaraMegha), Verse- 118.

(24) Sāhitya-Darpaṇa: Nāyaka (Chap. 3/30 -38) and Nāyikā (3/56 -126).

(25) 'Ayam sa rasanotkarshī pīna-stana-vimardanah /

Nabhyuru-jaghana-sparśī nīvī-visramsanaḥ karah //'

(Mahābhārata, Strī-Parva, 24/19).

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Ramleela of Mithila: A Forgotten Tradition of Folk Theatre

Dr. Kailash Kumar Mishra¹

Introduction

The two great epics: *Ramayana*² and *Mahabharata*³ from time immemorial have been influencing the every sphere of life and culture of India. Both the epics are considered to be the Pancham(fifth) Veda along with Dhanurveda and Ayurveda. These two epics are also considered to be the first written or well documented *itihasas* or histories with full of genealogical records and incidents and accidents in life of different characters. Most of the episodes of these two epics are directly connected with the historical characters. In various phases of devotional development in Hinduism the poets and writers made their attempts to write the essence of *Ramayana* of Valmiki⁴ in the language of common men and women of the specific geographical pockets. Such experiments of the regional scholars and saints made the texts of the *Ramayana* very popular in India and Indian Sub-continent. Tulsidas for example wrote *Ramcharitmanasa*⁵ in Awadhi or old Hindi. Kamban⁶ wrote *Kambaramayana*⁷ in Tamil, In Kerala Patala wrote

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² The *Ramayana* is an ancient Sanskrit epic considered one of the major texts of the Hindu religion. It is believed to have been written between 500 and 100 BCE, and is attributed to a revered Hindu sage, Valmiki. The *Ramayana* is the story of Prince Rama, whose wife, Seeta, is kidnapped by a ten-headed evil king, Ravana.

³ The *Mahabharata* is an epic poem of the Indian sub-continent, which is one of the most important texts of the Hindus. It dates back as far as the 8th century BCE, with later portions being added up to the 4th century BCE. The name itself means roughly, *Tale of the Bharata Dynasty*, and it is a mythological history of ancient India. It is more than 1.8 million words long, spread over 74,000 distinct verses, making it one of the longest poems in the world. The *Mahabharata* covers a great deal of material, ranging from simple histories to entire philosophies on living. The *Mahabharata* begins with a claim of completeness, stating: "What is found here may be found elsewhere. What is not found here will not be found elsewhere."

⁴ Maharshi Valmiki was a Hindu sage-scholar who lived around the beginning of the first millennium B.C. He is referred to as the 'adikavi', the original creator of the Hindu. He is the original writer of the *Ramayana*.

⁵ *Ramcharitmanasa* was completed in 1584 AD.

⁶ Kamban was born in the 9th century in Therazhundur, a village in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. Kamban's knowledge and involvement in poetic endeavors was such that that he is rightly called as 'kavi chakravarthy'.

Ramayanam and Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan in the 16th century wrote *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu* in Malayalam; In Andhra Pradesh, the Telugu Ramayana is known as *Sri Ranganatha Ramayana* and was adapted by Buddha Reddy; Eknath wrote the Marathi Bhavartha Ramayana in the 16th century; Krittivas Ojha composed the Bengali *Ramayana* in 15th century; Madhava Kandali wrote *Kotha Ramayana* in Assamese in 15th century; in Orissa, Oriya *Balaramadasa Ramayana* was adapted by Balarama Das in the 16th century, and in Punjabi language, Guru Gobind Singh wrote the *Ramavatara* in 17th century. Mithila has always been known for its scholarship and unparalleled dominance in *Dhramshashtra* and *tantra* was also not lagging behind in this area. Four Maithili scholars composed Maithili *Ramayana* in different phases of history: Kavivar Chanda Jha⁸ (1831-1907) composed *Mithilabhasa Ramayan*, Lal Das composed *Rameshwarcharit Ramayana*, Acharya Ramlochan Sharan (1890-1971) composed *Maithili Ramcharit Manas*, and last but not the least Viswanatha Jha “Bishpayi” wrote *Ram Suyash Sagar* in early 1980s. The influence of various forms of Ramayana and their episodes mainly the episodes of Seeta encourages the women and the common folk who were not much educated either in Sanskrit in the beginning or Modern subjects including English in the later phase of modern history of Mithila to create songs, small poetic dramas and complete folk theatrical performance on Ramayana. Women confined themselves in songs and ritual incantations but the common folk of Mithila went ahead and started performing the complete episodes of Ramayana in the form of Ramleela. The Ramleela tradition of Mithila has several unique identities. Unfortunately, because of the Ramayana serial this tradition is almost vanished from this land. The artists have either joined other petty jobs or many of them have been living the retired life. Some of the well-known Ramleela artists are died also. In this

⁷ In *Kambaramayana* there are totally 10418 verses in six kandas (chapters) ie Balakanda, Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda, Kishkindhakanda, Sundarakanda and Yuddhakanda. As in Valmiki Ramayana there is no Uttarakanda in Kamba Ramayana. Each chapter contains many subchapters.

⁸ Chanda Jha was from the Pindaruch village of present Darbhanga District. Although a court-poet of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga, he showed exceptional creativeness and initiative in the literary field and was somewhat influenced by the western trends in literature. He acted as the main resource person and guide for Grierson in his exploration of the dimensions of Maithili culture including Maithili language. He did the poetic translation of Vidyapati's Purush Pariksha in Maithili which is treated as a milestone in Maithili literature. Chanda Jha's other works include Giti-Sudha, Maheshbani sangrah, Chandra Padavali, Lakshmisvar-Vilas, and Ahilya-Charita.

article I have made an attempt to talk very briefly about the history, uniqueness, style, relationship between the audience and performers, the role of Vyasa and the management of show and last but not the least the measures by which this very rare intangible heritage of Mithila can be once again revived in a changing scenario and fresh atmosphere while retaining its flavor of originality.

The Land: Mithila

Far away from Indian big cities and the modern world lies a beautiful region once known as Mithila. It was one of the first kingdoms to be established in eastern India. The region is a vast plain stretching north towards Nepal, south towards the Ganges and west towards Bengal. The present districts of Champaran, Saharsa, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Supaul, Samastipur etc., and parts of Munger, Begusarai, Bhagalpur and Purnea of Bihar cover Mithila. It is completely flat and free from rock or stone. Its soil is the alluvial slit deposited by the river Ganges, rich, smooth clay dotted with thousands of pools replenished by the monsoon, the only reservoirs until the next monsoon. If the monsoon is late or scanty, the harvest is in jeopardy. But if the rain god is kind, the whole plain bursts into green from October to February, dotted with man-made ponds where beasts and peasants bath beneath ancient *vatvrikshas*. In this mythical region, Rama, the handsome prince of Ayodhya and incarnation of the Vishnu, married princess Seeta, born of a furrow her father King Janaka had tilled. Mithila is that sacred land where the founders of Buddhism and Jainism; the scholars of all six orthodox branches of Sanskrit learning such as Yajnavalkya, Bridha Vachaspati, Ayachi Mishra, Shankar Mishra, Gautama, Kapil, Sachal Mishra, Kumaril Bhatt and Mandan Mishra were born. Vidyapati, a Vaisnav poet of 14th century was born in Mithila who immortalized a new form of love songs explaining the relationship between Radha and Krishna in the region through his *padavalis* and therefore the people rightly remember him as the reincarnation of Jaideva (*abhinavajaideva*). Karnpure, a classical Sanskrit poet of Bengal, in his famous devotional epic, the *Parijataharanamahakavya* gives an interesting account

confirming the scholarship of the people of Mithila. Krishna tells his beloved Satyabhama, while flying over this land on way to Dwarka from Amravati, “O lotus-eyed one behold! Yonder this is Mithila, the birthplace of Seeta. Here in every house Saraswati dances with pride on the tip of the tongue of the learned (Mishra, Kailash Kumar 2000)”. Mithila is a wonderful land where art and scholarship, *laukika* and Vedic traditions flourished together in complete harmony between the two. There was no binary opposition.

Ramleela of Mithila

Mithila Ramleela like other parts of India and Indian Sub-continent is organized in a makeshift open-air theater at night by the trained artists, all males. No female is playing the role of any character in traditional Mithila Ramleela. Ramleela, meaning “folk theatrical performances of Rama’s life”, is a performance of the great Indian epic Ramayana in the form of a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. As a composite cultural and life way ritual, Ramleela, dedicated to the life and deeds of Lord Rama, has served the purpose of devotional worship, sacrificial offering, eulogy, meditative experience and immersive communion. Ramleela of Mithila is based on multiple stories and folklore. Here focus is always given on the exploitation and pains of Seeta, who is according to the Ramayana was the daughter of Janaka, the King of Mithila. You can easily observe the common saying among the elderly women about Seeta: *Ram biyahne kun phal bhela/seta janm akarath gela* (What benefit did Seeta get being the consort of Rama! Her birth as woman became a curse!). There are number of rituals and other songs that depict the helplessness of Seeta, her sacrifice for Rama and Rama’s cruel and careless attitude for Seeta. In one song it is depicted that in the jungle at the hut of sage Valmiki, Seeta gives birth to two sons of Rama: Lov and Kusha. She requests a barber to intimate this news in Ayodhya, mainly to Kaushilya, Kaikeyee and Sumitra, but she warns him to take all care to ensure that Rama in no way should be informed about this. She develops friendship with the wild animals, birds and other creatures of jungle and shares her pains and hardships with them. Even Toady when some lady is

frustrated with the attitude of her husband or any male in the family she becomes furious and out of great emotional loss she cries: *phatoo he dharti* – My dear Mother Earth, this is enough! Now may I request you to crack in equal halves where I can jump in and end my life!!! Such examples are numerous but I will not go deeper details of Maithili songs and rituals as I am concentrating myself on Ramleela alone.

All characters of Ramleela in Mithila are played by the male actors alone. They perform the role of female characters such as Seeta, Kausalya, Sumitra, Kaikeyee, Sunayna, Mandodari, Arundhati and others and try their level best to create the real effects. However, they fail to create the real effects in depicting the female characters in most of the situations. The Ramleela Mandli consists of all actors, assistants, cooks and helpers. Majority of the roles are played by the Brahmins and some characters are performed by the other castes also. The episode, dialogues, narratives, musical recitation, scenes and stage management everything is done under the strict guidance of the Vysa. Vysa, as is clear from its nomenclature is the most knowledgeable person. He knows how to play harmonium and sing melodious songs. He props the artists and supports them when they are delivering the dialogues on the stage. The Vysa works hard and reads all the major texts about the Ramyana. He holds his grip on the folklore and folk rituals to depict the local effects in the performance. He always behaves as an internal innovator and keeps on innovating the dialog delivery, couplets and other verses. He converts the entire episodes in his own language and develops unique style of saying the message. He uses the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Avadhi along with Hindi in his poetic creation and according to the place and language of the people he keeps on changing the situation. In a war scene between Lakshmana and Ravana I have observed unique dialogue deliveries between the two characters in a typical modern Hindi language all in poetic diction. Some examples are given below:

Ravana says to Lakshmana: Bak bak bak bak mat karo bakri ki tarah/ Ara lekar chhed doonga lakdi ki tatrah.

Outraged with this Lakshmana responded: Itne din tak tum soye the gadde aur galeechon pe/ Aaj mai tujhe sulaa doongaa mitti aur dhelon pe.

In one episode, Bharat comes to meet Ram and Lakshman in the jungle and requests them to come back to Ayodhya. Lakshman expresses his anger to Kaikeyee and says: Kaanta tha so nikal gaya ghrito ka diya jala lena/ Kah dena mata kaikei se bharat se raaj chala lena⁹.

When the demon king Ravana kidnaps Seeta and he is forcefully taking her to Lanka with him, the helpless Seeta sings a very pathetic song and remembers Rama, her consort. She feels that she has been facing such difficult situation because she has not served her parents and in-laws as a devout daughter and daughter-in-law:

Ha raghunandan/ dusta nikandan/ mohe khabaria to lahak ho Rama/ Mata-pita ke sebo ne keliyai/ sasusaur ke sevo ne keliyai/tai bheliyai ban ke koyaliyaa ho Rama/¹⁰

In one more songs while going to Lanka with Ravana Seeta explains the story she was trapped:

Siya sudhi sunahu ho raghurai/ bipra rupa dhari ravan bani aayel/ bhiksha lae gohrai/ Siya sudhi sunahu ho raghurai/ Bhiksha lene niklali Janki/ rath par liyo chdhai/ Siya sudhi sunhu ho Ragurai...¹¹

After hearing this helpless song of Seeta Jatayu comes at her rescue and the Vyasa sings from the distance: Itna bachan sunat giddha khagpati/ rath ko liyo

⁹ The only obstacle was in your life is out of Ayodhya now/ Go and lit the lamp of purified butter/ Go and tell Mother Keikeeyee to rule Ayodhya with Bharat as its King!

¹⁰ Dear beloved Rama, the bright star of the Raghu dynasty/ You are the one who kills the enemies and wicked/ O dear Rama, please save me/ I failed to serve my parents and also in-laws/ Probably this has caused me this problem and today I am crying in the wild jungle as a helpless cuckoo.

¹¹ O dear bright star of Raghu dynasty, please listen to the problem of Seeta/ The demon King Ravan came to me in a disguised form of a beggar/ He was begging from the entrance/ I became kind to him and came out with alms/ As soon as Janaki came out, he forcefully put her in his chariot/ O dear bright star of Raghu dynasty, please listen to the problem of Seeta!

rokai/ charan chonch se maha yudhha kinho/pankh gayo jhahrai/ Siya sudhi
sunahu ho Raghurai/¹²

All such depiction in the local language creates a massive audience support for the theatrical performance. The audience gets totally involved into the play and enjoys every moment of it in complete devotion and involvement. Such is the power of this kind of innovation.

Usually the entire episodes of Ramyana are performed in 20-40 days depending upon the paying capacity and interest of the villagers of a particular village. There is an interesting way of getting each day's food and other expenditures from the villagers. At the peak of the drama the main character appears before the audience keeping a garland of flower in his hand. Now he request the audience assembled to see the performance to hold the garland for the next day. The person who holds the garland takes the responsibility of paying the entire costs of the team including food, stage, honorarium of the artists etc. for the next 24 hours. Once it is done the artist announces the name of that person loudly with great joy and passion. Everybody present for the performance gives him the standing ovation. The same practice is repeated every day.

In order to please the youth the Ramleela artists perform some dramas and plays after the gap of 7-8 days and generate support from the spectators of all sections of the society. This initiative helps them to earn extra income and exhibit the hidden creative genius.

The involvement of the spectators in all process of creativity is observed in every sphere of the performance of Ramleela. I remember one incidence. In my village, some 30 years ago a Ramleela Troupe came to stage the Ramleela for 40 days. A day before the staging of *Lanka dahan*¹³ episode the Vysa requested the spectators to bring fruits, flowers, sweets, etc. for decorating Ashok Vatika and

¹² The king of birds: vulture - Jatayu heard the helpless crying of Seeta/ He immediately stopped the chariot of Ravana/ He fought with Ravana with his beak and wings and ultimately burnt his wings / O dear bright star of Raghu dynasty, please listen to the problem of Seeta!

¹³ Burning of Lanka by Hanumana- the monkey god.

surroundings and for the consumption of Hanumana. The spectators followed the instructions with devotion and brought fresh fruits, sweets, etc., as *prasada* and handed over to the artists.

The Ramleela artists use to travel to Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, parts of Bengal and Orissa and also in Nepal for theatrical performance of Ramleela. In the Bhojpuri speaking regions the Maithils were known as performers of Ramleela. All of a sudden, immediately after the release and telecasting of Ramayana serial this tradition failed to sustain. This way a powerful genre of Maithili folklore died forever. And surprisingly no cultural institution and individual came forward to protect this art form with the help of the common people and Government's intervention.

Reasons for the disappearing of the Ramleela Tradition in Mithila

As has already been stated above, the telecasting of the Ramayana serial and availability of the CD and VCD etc., in the open markets are the main reasons of the dying of this art form. The second most important reason is the lack of sponsorship from the maharaja of Mithila. The kings of Mithila always neglected this art and the artists. The girls were never encouraged to play the role of female characters in the Ramleela performances. The actors of Ramleela always treated very low and they were never respected in the society. They hardly managed to perform the play with proper dresses and costly attributes including the decoration of stage, lighting arrangements, ornaments etc. This art form was not linked with the great cultural tradition of Mithila. No serious research work was done to preserve and protect this art form. Mithila always lacked the scholar and supporter like Sivaram Karant to highlight the glory and power of Mithila Ramleela. Lack of financial support, and over indulgence of the Bramhins and Karna Kyastha did not allow the performers to use much innovations in terms of stage management, costumes, and even the delivery of dialogues. The lower castes of Mithila did not attach itself in true spirit and commitment with this tradition. The so called modern and educated class kept itself away and always treated this art form as

below their dignity to join. No attempt was made to include Mithila Ramleela as curricular or even the extracurricular activity in school or college syllabus. The artists were neglected and many of them compelled to join factory and other petty jobs to sustain their families. Some of them died also.

Measures to Revive the Tradition

There is an urgent need to revive the tradition of Mithila Ramleela Mandali in changing perspective. This according to me is possible if the following measures are considered seriously by the Government and also by the people of Mithila:

- Mithila Ramleela should be revived in the new form. The girls should be allowed and encouraged to learn it as performing art and represent Mithila through this creativity. A social movement may be created to see that the concept of Ramleela is spread like the concept of Mithila painting which got recognition world over in a few years.
- The government with the help of art institutions, anthropologists, performers, etc. should make serious attempt to identify the master artists, Vyasa etc. of Ramleela to appoint them as the teacher performers and young children and students from all over Mithila should be encouraged to join the course of learning the art of Ramleela from them.
- All the universities of Mithila and some other Universities of Bihar and also other parts of India may be instructed to start Mithila Ramleela as curricular and evaluative subject under the performative arts.
- Art Institutions and clubs such as Sangeet Natak Academy, Ministry of Culture, Spic Macy ICCR, CCRT, schools etc. should arrange the performance of Mithila Ramleela in various places and platforms.
- The well-known and creative performs of Ramleela tradition should be honored with Padmshree, Padmavibhushan, and other awards. Such awards will encourage the other people to join this art form with interest and commitment.
- All communities and castes of Mithila should be encouraged and sensitized to feel proud about this tradition and get them involved in multiple ways.

Narratives of Regional Identity:

Revisiting Modern Oriya Theatre from 1880-1980

Sharmila Chhotaray¹

In this paper I intend to outline a brief history of Oriya theatre that in the larger context of the socio-cultural changes in Orissa. I shall suggest that this theatre was deeply influenced by social, political, economic and cultural forces such as the colonial system and search for Oriya identity that was operating in what was regarded then as the Oriya speaking regions. For my purpose I have divided Oriya theatre into three periods. They are: 1877-1939, 1939-1960, and 1960-1980. I shall offer a rationale for making these divisions. The issues that I wish to develop here are Oriya Nationalism/regional identity, second, the Jagannath Cult and its religious and social dimensions, third the emergence of new theatre in Orissa as a result of the Western experimentations in the drama. Finally, I shall assess the position of contemporary Oriya theatre vis a vis other art forms like Jatra.

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

¹ Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies, 22, Sector-32, Institutional Area, Gurgaon. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Seminar on Post Independence Indian Theatre, Calicut, Nov 9-10, 2004.

Orissa on the Eastern part of India experienced multiple cultural encounters for about five hundred years. It needs to be mentioned here that Orissa was subjected to many foreign invasions such as the Mughals, Afghans, and Marathas before the arrival of British in 1803. From 16th to 18th century, it was the Islamic empire in which the theatrical activities were marginalized eventually from public life and royal courts and temples of Hindu kings. The Afghans occupied the northern portion of present Orissa and ruled for more than one hundred seventy years i.e., from 1468 to 1578 and this empire succeeded by Moguls who remained from 1578 to 1751. During this period the social and economic changes occurred substantially.

The British ruled for a few years in early 19th century and the Bengali administrative class followed them and settled in the coastal plains of northern Orissa. 1866 marks the outbreak of the Great famine and the consolidation of the British rule. By the end of this century the imperial tradition through Bengalis had already entered into the roots of the Oriya culture “which attempted to subvert the traditions of Orissa with techniques of spreading cultural imperialism that seemed to have been adopted from the Europeans”(Panigrahi;1996: 20). During British Raj, the Madras presidency ruled over Southern Orissa and Western Orissa in turn was controlled by the Central Presidency. It needs to be mentioned that southern Orissa had come under the sway of Telugu a dominant language in the region. Similarly, Western Orissa was closed to Singhbhum and Bihar and was subjected to a dominant Hindi language and literature. Thus, the regional culture in different parts of the state witnessed various cultural responses to the colonial rule.

As Minoti Chatterjee (2004) argues in a separate context, cultural imperialism was a process of permeation and pervasion of one culture by the thought, habit and purpose of another. It involved convincing the people of the superiority of the culture of the rulers and inferiority of their own. In Orissa too, we find similar movement of cultural resistance not to the British imperialism but to the cultural domination of the ruling ideologies of Bengalis through its theatrical productions. It results in its Oriya identity formation through its engagement in revival of historical stories and narratives.

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ORIYA THEATRE FROM 1877-1960

The first period 1877-1939 witnessed a wave of religious or mythological dramas. Oriya nationalism arose as a result of the impact of British colonialism and the Bengali Zamindari system. The cultural map was deeply imbued with the religious cults, but gradually it got replaced with an awareness of the glorious past and the changing social scenarios in the province. Most of the plays were translation of Bengali plays during this phase of Oriya drama. Translating the Bengali dramas into Oriya, theatre moved away and ‘becomes a significant projection of a regional cultural identity.’ While early 19th and 20th century had witnessed a number of Bengali plays, Orissa experienced its own first Oriya drama only in 1880. It is a matter of controversy² whether Jagmohan Lala’s *Babaji*, (The Hermit) and Raghunnath Parichha’s *Gopinath Ballav* were the first Oriya plays that followed the Western style. The same argument also has been developed in the case of *Gopinath Ballav*. However, Ramshankar Ray’s *Kanchi Kaveri*, is generally recognized as the first modern Oriya theatre, staged in Cuttack in the year 1880. During the same period there was a parallel development of the Sanskrit pattern of Dramaturgy in Southern Orissa. The king of princely states like Chikiti, Parala and Tarala (now Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh). Govinda Soordeo of Paralakhemundi performed not only Sanskrit dramas but also sometimes presented Fakir Mohan’s play like *Patent Medicine* and *Lachhma*, staged in Cuttack and Chikiti. The first two decades of this century witnessed great advancements in theatrical productions. The role of magnetic theater in Cuttack modernizing the theatrical productions³ was significant. Aswini kumar Ghosh⁴, one of the

² *Babaji* contained colonial prose dialogues and presented social satire that narrated the life of a corrupted Babaji of the colonial days. It criticized the English-speaking *Babus* (respected gentlemen) who spread alcoholism in society. Ramesh Panigrahi says that the stage was an avenue for social correction of the ‘follies’ that percolated... to *Babaji* of Orissa as a parameter of modernity and as an attempt at the redefinition of the dramatic form. However, it is still a controversy among the theatre historians whether this play should be called a pure theater or not, as it contained songs and rhetorical language and was described mostly as a refined version of Jatra.

³ The second decade of this century also had two other permanent stages, namely, *Basanti* (1910) and *Usha* (1913). Prior to that i.e., from late 19th to first decade of 20th century, there were absolutely no permanent theatre houses existed, though feudal Rajas and Zamindars established theatres for performances on the festive occasions.

pioneers of Oriya drama in the second decade of 20th century wrote his first play *Bhisma* (1915) in blank verse.

It is not true that no theatrical tradition existed in the state prior to colonial rules. In fact it was the age of indigenous performances of Leela, Suanga, and Jatra that were confined to rural Orissa. The proscenium stage surpassed the indigenous theatre like Jatra and could reach both rural and urban masses. Jatra was confined to the rural areas as an occasional performative tradition. Both modern and traditional theaters coexisted while fulfilling the entertainment needs of a diverse audience. Similarly, the Jatra also saw a tremendous growth in Orissa parallel to the court theater in Southern Orissa and commercial theaters in Cuttack and Balasore.

The next period **1939-1960** is a period that reflects the changes taking place in Orissa thanks to the national freedom struggle; the plays during this period depict issues dealing with themes like social reforms and female education. During this period, rejecting the indigenous tradition, playwrights and the proprietors of the theatre brought in the ‘Actor-Managerial’ tradition. After 1939, Oriya drama moved toward a highly commercial market. Kalicharan Pattanayak switched over from *Rasa* and *Lila*, the traditional lyrical dramas to social plays like *Girls’ School* performed on Proscenium stage in his *Orissa Theatres* in 1939. *Orissa Theatres* developed a well-decorated performance space with the incorporation of modern dramatic techniques. Kalicharan was one of the first playwrights to make use of language appropriate to characters. He was a rare instance of a playwright who also was simultaneously an organizer, musician, director, actor and playwright. According to Hemant Das, one of the most notable transformations from

⁴Ghosh was associated with the first Oriya mobile theater of Balanga namely *Radha Krishna Theatre* (near Puri) till 1933. The theatrical creations were appreciated as it had a wide range of themes to deal. The first mobile theater Radhakrishna theatres started touring over the length and breadth of the state with translations of Bengali plays.

Jatra to the theater form that took place in Orissa is seen in the story of *Annapurna Rangamanch*. Due to reasons of convenience, it was decided to split the group into two parts in Puri and Cuttack named as *Annapurna 'A'* and *Annapurna 'B'* group respectively. Until 1960s, it continued with great success and toured extensively throughout the year. In sixties, a paradox was seen in Oriya Theater by the playwright Gopal Chhotray who provided the new orientation to the poetic plays of the popular Jatra playwrights⁵. However, these revived myth-based and tradition-bound plays till the end of sixties could only attract its maximum popularity at the mass level.

The third phase is the **post 1960S** of Oriya theatre: The new drama movement. The gradual decline of *Annapurna* theatre paved way to the new drama⁶ era of Manoranjan Das followed by Bijay Mishra, Biswajit Das, Byomakesh Tripathy, Jadunath Das Mohapatra, Basant Mohapatra, Ratnakar Chaini and Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi. Theatre during this period modern experiment such as these inspired by Brecht, Freud and Sartre. However, the experimental and epic theaters were not found in favor (Tripathy, 1995:52).

Kings, members of royalty and zamindars, largely patronized Oriya theatre financially. However, in most instances playwright-directors-producers themselves made the actual effort. The financial support during the commercial ventures were offered by the business class i.e., Marwaris and Mahantas of Mathas. After sixties till present time it is through personal donations and occasional Government support Oriya theatre is patronized. Now one needs to go beyond the empirical facts and should examine as to how theatres work

⁵ Similar developments can be seen in Jatra, the open-air theatre. It was also at its peak during this time with the making of *Gitinatyas* by Baishnab Pani and Balakrishna Mohanty that were very popular in the rural Orissa. Jatra also took elements from the modern theatre and was called 'theatrical Jatra'. However, The *Gitinatyas* and *Gitavinayas* of Pani, Mohanty and other jatrakaras were almost disappeared in last part of the 1950s. Chhotaray revived them with 'lyrical poetry and lucid prose dialogues imbued with deep pathos and genial humour' and introduced them in radio and television.

⁶ Till 1950s Oriya drama was a matter of construction of a non-controversial plot, peopled by flat characters and full of insipid sequences.

in history vis-à-vis in society and culture. Thus, it may be useful at this stage to review briefly the major narratives that depicted in the Oriya theatre.

NARRATIVES OF ORIYA NATIONALISM /REGIONAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF KANCHIKAVERI, CUTTACK BIJAY AND KALAPAHADA

The century- long administration by both British and Bengali officers had indirectly given way to the formation of Oriya nationalism and the growth of the Oriya cultural identity and consciousness. Around the late 19th century Oriya language was facing its identity crisis in the colonial context. Almost all the plays were either in English, in Bengali, in Parsi or in Marathi. Sachidananda Mohanty (1991:121) notes that language politics in Eastern India in the late 19th century was a significant driving force for the emergence of regional consciousness in Orissa and the use of language for acquisition of secular power gained a particular urgency during the colonial period in many parts of British India, though there were bound to be specific regional manifestations. For instance it was said by Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya a Bengali inspectors of schools that '*Oriya is not a separate language*'. Significantly, these factors led to the save Oriya movement⁷ in North-Eastern Orissa that thanks to the British and Bengali colonial impact. The mid 19th century was the period of Oriya Renaissance when through the emergence and development of Oriya literature Orissa got its new separate identity. Oriya theatre basically developed in the northern part of Orissa rather than the Western and Southern. These developments had their counterparts in the field of theater and other performing arts.

During this period, the playwrights were creating the paradox of hybrid Sanskrit revivalism and Westernization in the play. Further it is important to mention that there was a parallel growth of a theater of reaction in both the state namely Bengal and Orissa, that differed in the sense of its power structure. While colonial Bengal in mid 19th century began to have its political theatre through IPTA against the British rule, colonial Orissa began with a creation of *Puranic* tales which was probably a strategy to assert the native tradition against the onslaught of the indirect colonial cultural invasion. Unlike Bengali and Tamil theater Oriya counterpart did not become a rallying point for people's resistance soon as it was felt in Bengal against British rule. It rather focused on the

⁷ A number of champions of Oriya language such as Radhanatha Ray, Fakir Mohan Senapati and Madhusudan Das led this movement. They pioneered the modern literature through poems and stories confronting the political and cultural instabilities.

regional Oriya identity while responding to the new English education introduced by missionaries.

Thus, it is worth examining here whether the first Oriya play *Kanchi Kaveri*⁸ was a reaction to its regional consciousness concerning the construction of the Oriya linguistic identity. The play is considered as the first Oriya nationalist drama inspired by the growth of Bengali literature and culture, Ramshankar Ray developed his passion for Oriya literature through plays. In *Kanchi Kaveri* the love and devotion for Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the state has been presented. As Bishnu Mohapatra⁹ rightly says :

Kanchi Kaveri, in its new incarnation, is about victory and order, a victory of Purussottam (Jagannath is also known as Purussottam) Dev symbolically representing the Oriya people and a cohesive polity: the body of king, like a leviathan, containing within it teeming millions. There is also a victory of an Oriya cultural tradition.

Although the story has been narrated differently throughout 19th and the 20th century, invariably it has revisited the understanding of the historical regional consciousness of the king and his patriotism and its devotion to Lord Jagannath. Many strands feed into the cultural identity of Orissa. The cult of Jagannath is an important strand, but it has to be admitted that the Oriya theatre covers a larger gamut of Oriya experience. Many of Ashwini Kumar Ghosh plays adopted the stories related to Jagannath's *Mahima* taken from *Dardhayta Bhakti* a book of poetic stories that deals with the life of the devotees of Lord Jagannath. For example, in the popular play *Salabega*, the son of a Muslim administrator named *Lalbeg* kidnapped a Brahmin widow from *Danda Mukundapur*, a village near *Puri*, and *Salabega* was born from her. Later he became a great devotee of the

⁸ A narrative poem originally has been written on the 15th century Suryavamsi King Purussottam Dev by a poet Purussottam Das in sixteenth century in several literary forms from long poems to plays. The play is based on a fascinating Oriya historical legend where the Gajapati king of Orissa engages in a battle with the king of Kanchi and won over the hand of princess Padmavati. The "annual" task that the king of Puri ritually performed during the car festival was a subject of 'insult' that the king of Kanchi alleged to have made. The battle was waged in order to revenge this injury.

⁹ Mohapatra explores the ability of the text to generate meanings about the world, simultaneously, at ethical, political cultural and economic levels. For detail see his article "The Kanchi Kaveri Legend and the Construction of Oriya Identity" in *Studies in History*, 12, 2, pp.204-221, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Lord. Similarly, we see in Bhakta Dasia Bauri and Shriya Chandaluni life sketch of untouchable devotees. It has to be stated that this Jagannath cult of Orissa is not sectarian with upper caste hegemony. It is syncretic in approach and has a Daravidian substratum.

Ram Shankar Ray's play written in blank verse was a combination of Sanskrit dramaturgy that adopted Western representation being performed before the educated elite.

During the era of historical/national wave, Bhikari Charan Pattnayak, a follower of Brahmo cult wrote plays concerned with ideals of a national culture against the demerits of Western culture. In his *Cuttack Bijay*, he described the constant barbaric invasions by Marathas, Moghuls and British of the historical place, the then capital of Orissa that is Cuttack. Similarly, the prominent dramatist Aswini Kumar Ghosh of this period made a tremendous contribution to the development of modern Oriya stage. Ghosh's popular play *kalapahada* deals with the history of Orissa. Kalapahada, a converted Muslim devastated all the Hindu religious institutions in Orissa.

'MODERNISM' IN ORIYA THEATRE: THE IMPACT OF WESTERN EXPERIMENTATION

In the post-independence period Oriya theatre saw a shift in themes and ideas of presentation. Here comes the *Naba Natya Andolan*: the new drama revolution in Orissa when Manoranjan Das disassociated from the commercial theatre ventures in 1960s. Tripathy describes that Manoranjan in protesting against the prevalent practices (of conventional theatrical practices) and norms shouldered the responsibility of compelling people to visit the theater before they retired for the day. Manoranjan's *Bana Hansee*¹⁰

¹⁰ The play presented the time-flux hypothesis, the stream –of – consciousness technique in delineating past memories by the use of psychological, not chronological time, the concept of eternity and the characters taking part

(Wild Duck) pioneered the new drama movement that heralded a new era and opened up a whole new vista of new ideas. Das followed European dramatists like Ibsen, O’Neil, and Eliot’s symbolic expressionism but Freud’s psychoanalysis was the crucial aspect of his play. If Manoranjan showed psychological time¹⁴ by mingling the past, the present and the future, Bijoy Mishra in his *Shaba Bhaka Mane* (The pall-bearers) spoke of the real, actual time and in his play the time of action corresponded to performance. Mishra’s play has been called the first absurd Oriya play. Similarly, Biswajit Das depicts contemporary society and the living reality in his plays like *Mrugaya*, (the royal Hunt). In this play he has showed how darkness is the essence of the life and the gap between what we want and what we get increases. He has also contributed lighting techniques to the Oriya stage, which was underdeveloped for long. To break this absurdist tradition or combining other traditions into this new dramatic revolution, Ramesh Panigrahi and Ratnakar Chaini contributed new kinds of plays. Chaini made an appropriate use of myth to contemporize the theatre experience. Both of them have been highly influenced by Shakespeare, Shepherd etc and tried to reflect it in their play a psychoanalytical exploration of marital crisis. The next generation of this new drama could only be amateurish. Many of them changed their career from theatre to television and cinema. The Oriya drama in 1980s that with these dramatists¹² came with a bleak future and only survived in major places of the state having a limited number of middle class audiences.

CONCLUSION

in a present to which they do not belong (because they are dead) as if in a ritual of ‘taking of roles’ stand testimony to Manoranjan Das’s indebtedness, where life is the wild duck trying to fly away into oblivion from the cycles of human existence.

¹² Das’s play could only reach out to the urban educated elite of Cuttack and other coastal plains. This probably led him to make an unconscious effort to get back to this initial Oriya dramatic contribution in the 50s and 60s. His plays after 1976 imbued with the revival of contemporize traditional theater through the folk plays.

However, all is not bleak with regard to the contemporary theater in Orissa. Alongside this there is also a challenge posed by cable television, and commercial Hindi cinema. Despite this however many forms of theatre¹³ are still active and are carrying out experimentation in new approaches and techniques. An important aspect of the theatre in modern Orissa is that it has not been able to influence or attract the masses. The English educated professionals tried to showcase their plays for the higher order of society and marginalized the lower sections. For instance, the common 'Oriya mind' was not prepared to accept the 'absurd' plays for long. The modern drama could not keep pace with what the playwrights presented, rather it has given way to the highly commercialized theatre called Jatra¹⁴ in the province. The survival of drama today only depends on the yearly drama competitions and festivals held by the amateur theatre groups since 1980s.

When we review the emergence of the history and development of the Oriya theater tradition, we find that it is a complex and many-sided story. It has been intimately connected with developments in Orissa's social and political history. For instance, it has been suggested that due to late arrival of the British in Orissa, theatrical developments in particular, were relatively slow to come by. We may see here a contrast with the situation in neighboring Bengal. However; the story also reveals serious limitations and at times outright failures. Such instances however need to be located against the backdrop of a changing social milieu in Orissa. Here we need to examine several factors such as a question of cultural continuity and discontinuity, institutional patronage and the changing nature of viewership, financial support and the problematic role of the elite with regard to dissemination of art forms. In this sense Oriya Theater shares many parallels and

¹³ The street theater represented by the Natya Chetana of Subodh Patnayak is a case in point. Annually, practitioners, artistes, researchers and theater enthusiasts gather at Natyagram in Khurda for practice and peoples theatre festivals.

¹⁴ B.B.Kar in Tradition of Theatre-Yatra (p.263) in *Traditions of Folk Theatres*, Eds (2000) describes that post-independence Orissa saw a popularity of modern theatre to oppose Yatra for its refined and sophisticated representations of themes, soon Yatra adopted the modern technical know-how, for example in Yatra the theatre stage began to be used to make performance more appealing and attractive.

differences with the theatre situations similar to the overall decline of this art form at the national level.

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Indigeneity and Wisdom:

Folktales of Raj Bora Sambar of West Odisha

Dr Anand Mahanand

Introduction

There was a goatherd tribal old man called Raja. He would graze his goats during the day and bring them home in the evening. Then he would absorb himself in playing his *mandal*¹. His *mandal* got old and the old man was not happy with the tune that came from it. But he could not afford a new one.

One day, while grazing his goats on the riverside, he could see a *Honda*² grazing by the river side. He chased it and could catch hold of it. When he opened it he saw a heap of jewellery inside. He made a bundle with his towel and carried the jewellery with him and went back home along with his goats. On the way, he saw a scavenger coming towards the river. The scavenger asked him, "What are you carrying in the bundle, Raja uncle?" "The goatherd replied, "I got some jewellery in a Honda by the river side." The scavenger asked, "What will you do with the jewellery? Give them to me; I shall give you a new *mandal*." Raja thought the jewellery would not give him

happiness, but if he got a *mandal*, he would be happy playing it every evening. So Raja gave his bundle of jewellery to the scavenger in exchange of the *mandal*. He went home, took the *mandal* from the scavenger and played his *mandal* and remained happy. What could be the objective of folklore than the essence and moral of the tales!

This tale which I heard as a child symbolizes that happiness is more than a heap of treasure. We can buy a heap of gold but not happiness. This is an ancient tale but sounds quite relevant even today. Like this one, folktales teach us many valuable truth about life. Tales are embedded with multilayered meanings of great morals. Even though they are prevalent among the obscure and illiterate people, even though they are dismissed as old, out dated and irrelevant by the hegemonic cultures, they can offer lessons of wisdom to the so called educated, modern and urban people. Khubchandani rightly points out: “In hegemonic cultures, local knowledge of the subaltern is ‘denigrated’ as myth, primitiveness, superstition, or at best is exotic and cosmetic. On the other hand, local knowledge of the privileged is passed on as universal truth” (39).

The aim of this paper is to discuss a few folktales from Raj Bora Sambar region and demonstrate that even though they come from an obscure and mostly illiterate and semi-illiterate background, they can serve as words of wisdom to the modern human society.

Story telling

Story telling tradition is as old as human civilization. It perhaps began with people sharing their experience with one another after a day’s work. People would sit together and share their every day experiences. They also told stories about gods and goddesses, legendary persons and other supernatural power which stimulated them to be more imaginary and thus reality and imagination shaped the essence of folktales.

People told stories and listened to them from one another. Tales were transmitted from one generations to the other . Thus, they became vehicle for transmitting knowledge, culture and traditions. Tales are performed in different context,socio-religious ceremonies to transmitting knowledge (values, philosophy and beliefs) and son on. Tales are also told for recreational purpose. Family and society (akam and puram) , as mentioned by AK Ramanujam, have been the two domain of telling stories. It is a well-known fact that *The Panchatantra* was written to educate the princes of royal lineage. It is said that when a psychologically disturbed person went to a mendicant in ancient time, the latter would prescribe medicine and a folktale.

India has a rich tradition of storytelling known as the *Katha* tradition. India is also known as home of many great tales such as *Katha Sarita Sagara*,*Betala pancha Vimsati* , *Dasa Kumara Charita*, *Suka Saptati*, *Panchatantra* and so on. We can find folk elements in the contemporary arts, crafts and forms of literature and culture. Being a multi-lingual nation, it has tales in many languages both in oral and written forms. Even today, there are many tales which are still in oral form. They are predominantly available in rural areas. Hence the rural and the oral go together. But it is also true that one can't ignore the existence of urban folktales. Interestingly, many management guru are now using and reinterpreting folktales and narratives as one of the best instrument in understanding and resolving the complex management situation. Nevertheless, the rural common folks seem to be responsible for preserving this tradition.

Odisha being a state of great linguistic diversity has a sizeable tribal and rural population. It has a repository of tales in numerous languages. This richness drew scholars like Verrier Elwin and Lokaratna Kunja Bihari Das to document tales from the nook and corner of Odisha. Elwin's monumental collection *Tribal Myths from Orissa* is such a pioneering work. Lokaratna Kunja Bihari Dash not only collected folktales but also other folk forms from different parts of Odisha. These forms include myths, riddles, songs, games, folk drama and proverbs. His collection

Folklore of Orissa published by Odisha Sahitya Akademi is a treasure for scholars interested in folklore in general and folktales in particular. Department of Odia, Sambalpur University has brought out two collections of folktales titled *Paschim Odisara Loka Katha (Folktales from West Orissa)* by collecting stories from the undivided districts of Sambalpur, Balangir, and Sundargarh of Odisha. Among his several collections and scholarly works Mahendra Kumar Mishra's *Oral Epics of Kalahandi* and Chitrseen Pasayat's various collections and scholarly works are worth mentioning. All these efforts are praise worthy. However, there has been hardly any efforts to document and study tales from the Raj Bora Sambar region in particular though it has a rich treasure of folk forms. It is our endeavour, therefore, to document selected tales from this region and explore the educational values present in them. It is pertinent here to give a profile of the Raj Bora Sambar region.

Raj Bora Sambar: A Profile

The Raj Bora Sambar (also known as Bura Sambaror Buda Sambar) region covers some areas of Bargarh, Nuapara and borders of Balangir districts of West Odisha. Padampur is been the centre of this region and the Bariha (from Binjhal Tribe) kings of Padampur have been the rulers. There is a legend behind its name-Bora Sambar. Once, the Raja of Padampur went for hunting. He killed a constrictor (known as Bora saamp in the local language). The snake was in the process of killing a deer (known as Sambar in Odia). So the combination of these two words 'Bora' and 'Sambar' makes the word Borasambar. Because it was ruled by the Rajas, the suffix Raj is added to it and together it is called Raj Bora Sambar.

Raj Bora Sambar is a hilly region with its lush trees such and Mohul, Neem, Sahaj, Saal and numerous hillocks all around. It has small rivers and patches of fields. The fields produce a good rice grain which is known for its taste, cereals, groundnuts and other vegetables.

People of many castes (mostly the backward classes) and communities live in this region. They include Binjhals, Sahara, Mirdha, Kolha, Kandha, KishanMali, Kusta, Bhulia, Agharia, Kulta, Kusta, Gond, Kumbhar, Dhoba, Gonda, Chamar, Ghasi, Kulta and Brahmins. Most of communities mentioned above can be termed as

indigenous people. They have been living in this region for generations. They are from common peasants, labourers, servants and known as common folk. They have a rich tradition of folklore including songs, myths, legends, riddles, proverbs and tales. A large section of the people depends on agriculture. After a day's labour they spend their evenings in different forms of entertainment. These include tales, songs, dance, theatre, games, music, and riddles. They also celebrate different festivals which give them opportunities to practice and perform these forms. Rituals are also another occasions for such performances. All these factors make this region culturally very rich and vibrant. The local arts and crafts including handlooms, basket weaving and music are very famous. The people of this region have significant contribution for famous Sambalpuri music and Sambalpuri handloom.

The Tradition of Story telling:

Story telling is a vibrant and living tradition in this region. Children are told stories by parents and grand- parents, by peers and relatives. Children learn traditional values, traits, skills through folktales.

We listened to stories told by parents, grand parents and relatives. Even guests who visited our village also told stories. In the process of telling stories a story teller would sing, dance and perform different acts to make their stories interesting and captivating. Story telling sessions used to be very long, sometimes the entire night.¹⁵

One may caution that these stories are though specific to Raj Bora Sambar region, they might be found in other places as well. This is just because stories travel through different means. However, majority of the tales included in this collection are specific to the Raj Bora Sambar region. An in depth analysis of socio-cultural and economic practices will reveal this. Dorje Penjore in his article titled, "Folktales

¹⁵ I realized that this tradition was disappearing slowly with the spread of modernity. We don't find this kind of performance taking place any more. I thought these tales should be documented in some form. So I decided to recollect them and document them. In case of doubt I had to consult a number of people who share the same experience. I have also referred to a number of secondary sources just to brush up my mind. Thus, I could put together some folk tales so that they could be preserved and could be selectively used for pedagogic purposes later. In addition to these, I have a collection of songs, proverbs and riddles.

in Values Transmission” explains four functions of folktales. The four main functions are:

1. Children Education
2. Entertainment
3. Repository of History, Language and Values
4. Spiritual Function

The folktales in question also perform similar functions. Tales told to children for education and entertainments are usually performed by women at home whereas tales told in public are performed by men. About folklore Blackburn and Ramanujan point out in their introduction to *Another Harmony* (1986) that, it functions as part of a culture; they also act as carrier of culture. As they points out: “Folklore is not only a culture system with a special content, but a culture carrier which diffuses differently than other cultural systems” (19). Based on the tales of Raj Borasambar this can be equally realized.

There are a few tales that perform spiritual function. For instance the tale of “Karamsani” discussed here as the story of fate and efforts are told on the occasion of Karamsani festival to sensitize people about role of destiny or fate.

It is pertinent here to discuss some of the features of these folktales. Most of the folktales are about common folk. We do find a king or queen here and there but common folk like farmers, servants, labourers form major part in these tales. The common jobs performed by them are food gathering, collecting firewood and farming and earn their livelihood with manual labour. Many oral tales portray master and slave relations and the servant outwits the master. We also find that a person, even if he is a servant, can rise to the level of a king through his efforts. Many characters are disguised as tiger, jackal, frog, mouse, crocodile and hippo. More importantly, each of these tales has a lesson.

Another feature of these tales is that, these are familiar to the audience. Because they are familiar, the audiences also take part in the process of story telling. When the audiences are familiar with the tales there is a greater demand on the

performance of the story teller. The audiences respond by appreciating, endorsing or commenting as the story teller tells the story.

The stories are inter-connected. The story teller connects stories and after stories and goes on. It depends on the story teller's skills to connect and continue the session.

The performance of folktales brings together other genres as well. There is convergence of folk forms such as songs, dance and riddles and proverbs. For instance, telling about a old man he would cite a proverb "*Budha ke hela saathe, budhar katha nai kate*" meaning "The old man has turned sixty, his words are not honoured." Such folk forms are integrated into tales which themselves are educative in nature. Sometimes, a dialogue from a story is also used as proverb. For instance, people refer to the story "Story of the Blind Man" and derive the following quote and use as proverb:

Ghoda chinhili niswase

Hira chinhili usase

Raja chinhili biswase.

Translation

I could recognize the proper horse by his respiration

I could recognize the proper diamond by weighing

And the proper king by faith.

Here it is interesting to see how another genre gets into the other. In the first instance, a proverb gets into a tale and in the second example; a dialogue of a tale becomes a proverb.

There are also beautiful songs found in many of the stories. For instance consider the following song from "The Seven Sisters." The bride is asked to get up and join her bridegroom at the altar. But she is not able to do so as she has been bitten by the snake placed on her head by her elder sister. The dialogue is in the form of song:

Uthana, nanire basana nanire

bhai mor asila bare

Uthi naipare, basi naipare bohu

Bodo nani dele kunjabana khusa je

Munda dana dana kare

Translation:

Get up my dear sit down my dear

The groom's procession has arrived.

I can't get up dear sister-in-law nor can I sit down

The elder sister has made my hair

And I get a terrible headache.

A few words may be told about the poetics of these tales. They are a feast to the eyes of the audiences. The language, style and skills of presentation and performance are worth witnessing in action. They are captivating and mesmerizing. The use of symbols, references and suggestions of meaning will be a good area of research for a researcher to appreciate.

Wisdom in the Folktales

Now let us discuss a few folktales and see what they can offer to our society as form of education. "The Story of the Magic Sticks" is about a boy who lives with his mother. He is asked by his mother to go to the forest and get firewood. When he tries to cut down a tree, the tree goddess asks him not to cut down the tree and bestows him with gifts thrice. But he is not able to materialize the gifts for twice due to the cunning of his uncle. However, he is successful at the end. The magic stick gifted to him by the goddess punishes the villains. He has been cheated by his uncle for his un-critical nature. It teaches us not to be carried away by advice of some

body and apply one's intelligence. Intelligence after all is doing the right thing in the right place in a right way in the right manner. We must verify facts as the age has become very complicated. It also teaches us that if we are honest and have faith in God, the worldly forces cannot create hurdles for us. This humorous tale teaches valuable lessons to all of us.

There are stories about practical knowledge and for teaching values. "The story of Fate and Efforts" also known as story of *Karamsani* in this region is one of them. A person is given rewards thrice but he is not able to enjoy that as the right time has not reached. It is about fate. If we don't have something in our fate, we may not get it in spite of our efforts and perseverance. This means that we should not try to control and achieve everything we desire. We need to understand that we can't achieve anything and everything in this world. What ever we get we get them out of the mercy of the Supreme. We should have this faith. If we are too much ambitious and have overconfidence we will be disappointed if we faith to achieve. This belief is very important at this age of neck throat completion and rat race.

We should do our duty and leave it to God's will. "The Story of the Blind Man" deals with recognizing ability of the differently-able person. Though he is visually challenged, he is able to perform tasks that are near impossible for an ordinary person. In this age we are sensitive to such talents and abilities. This particular story reinforces the same lesson.

Folktales are considered to be outdated and irrelevant to the modern society, but we see their relevance in many stories. For instance, the stories- "Balmati and Her Seven Brothers" deal with the barbaric nature of human beings. Balmati is the youngest sister of her seven brothers. Her seven brothers do not hesitate to kill her by coming into the influence of their wives. Their wives are just jealous of Balmati and due to that they prompted their husbands to kill her. Similar in human and barbaric incidents do take place even in our so called modern society.

The tale "Mother Can't Be Replaced" deals with the ungrateful nature and insensitive behavior of the present generation towards elders. Here, the son does not hesitate to bury his mother alive when she becomes old and unwanted. One need not

point out the cruel ways old parents are ill-treated. These two are pertinent issues confronting the society even today. There are disputes and killing among brothers and sisters for property. We hardly find love and cooperation among them. Such cases are more obvious in political families where money and power are the driving forces. The tale “The Seven Sisters” is about jealousy among siblings. Here, there is a plot hatched by the elder sister to kill the girl on the day of her marriage as the girl’s marriage has been fixed even though the elder one is yet to be married. The elder sister places a black snake in her hair while making her hair. As a result she gets terrible headache and is not able to get up and go to the marriage alter. This is discovered later by her groom later. This vice is one of the five vices that has grip over modern man and women too. The story teaches us to get rid of our jealousy and be happy with others success.

These stories are treasure trove of values and education. They not only bear the testimony of a rich local tradition but can serve to teach the present generations. They can be related to the situations that prevail in well-to-do families, industries and corporate offices.

They can also be related to modern narratives including novel and films and selectively be utilized for pedagogic purpose as well. These tales have a lot of things to offer to children. They teach them universal values such as compassion, generosity and honesty while disapproving attributes such as cruelty, greed and dishonesty. Contemporary formal education can offer cognitive, linguistic and vocational skills, but fail to impart social values and behaviour. Folktales can fill up the gap by transmitting human values and moral education. Folktales make children imagine and create their mental pictures and mental exercise leaves deepest impression. Since they are embedded with multilayered meanings, children get a lot of scope to interpret them in different ways. Parents and teachers are apprehensive about exposing certain kinds of tales for they are about immorality, violence and sensual/obscene. A careful selection is necessary. We can always make a selection.

Conclusion

These were just a few examples of folktales that can offer educational values and wisdom to our modern society. As pointed out earlier these tales come from the illiterate and obscure communities, but they have great values to teach our modern, urban and elite society. In the time of moral degradation, it is time that we looked for the tales that are part of our heritage to draw morals from them. Our school curriculum should also include such values in them so that our children learnt to be good human beings instead of running after money, power and positions and achieving things through wrong means.

If efforts are made to select appropriate stories and appropriate connections are made they will be more effective. It is hope that scholars will venture into exploring such possibilities. Management gurus have been using tales from *The Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to bring home certain concepts and skills (e.g. Soft skills). So, why not we also explore possibilities of using folktales? I would like to conclude by narrating another story. The day my grand father went to school for the first time, the school inspector happened to visit the school. He came to my grandfather's class and asked, "Children, how does pond water get muddy?" My grand father answered, "Sir, it gets muddy when people catch fish" There was a guffaw of laughter in the class as the bookish answer was "Rain water makes pond water muddy." This example shows that our education system does not recognize local and experiential knowledge as knowledge but respects farfetched things as knowledge. The plight of folktale is the same. We tend to ignore it as a form of knowledge. Now the global agencies have felt for a need for indigenous wisdom to be part of our formal education. For instance, "Spelling out the challenges of indigenous education, a UNESCO study envisages that traditional knowledge of indigenous people, alive in oral tradition through customs and festivals, folklore and artifacts, should form part of integral education"(Khubchandani 39). It is time we recognized their values. These values will be helpful to the present society which is suffering from the cancer of violence, hatred, fear and threats, natural calamities, environmental pollutions and degradation of moral values. One only hopes that the indigenous wisdom might help.

Notes

¹ a kind of drum

² a magical big iron bowl with treasure in it

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Story : I

Balmati and Her Seven Brothers

The old man Sadhab had seven sons and a daughter. The girl's name was Balmati. All his seven sons were married and lived with their parents together. Balmati was also married. She had come to her parents' home to spend a few days with them. Her sisters-in-law did not like her. They always made complaints against her. Her brothers except the seventh one were also annoyed with her.

One day, the brothers and their wives went to the field to work. It was her turn to cook food for them. While cutting leafy vegetable, she cut her finger. It was bleeding. She thought, "If I wipe it on my sister-in-laws' saris, they will shout at me. If I wipe on my sari, it will become dirty. So let me wipe it with the vegetable. So she wiped the blood with the vegetable and her blood got mixed up with the leafy vegetable.

When the brothers came back home, she served them food. They said, "What have you mixed with the vegetable, dear? It tastes so good." The girl answered, "Nothing as such. While cutting vegetable, I cut my finger and it bled. So the blood got mixed up with the vegetable. Due to this, the vegetable might be tasting good." The seven brothers thought if her blood was so tasty, then how tasty her meat must be? We must kill her and eat her meat. The seventh brother loved Balmati. So he kept quiet. But when the elder ones forced him, he did not raise any objection.

One day the brothers told their father that Balmati had come from her in-law's house for a long time and she was required to go back. If needed,

they could accompany her to her in-law's house. Their parents liked the idea and allowed them to accompany her to her in-law's house. Since they had to walk through forests, they carried bows and arrows with them. They also took their dog along with them. They made their plan to kill her on the way.

As they were walking in the forest, they decided to take rest under a big tree. They told her about their plan. They asked her to climb the tree and sit on a branch spreading her hair open. Then the eldest brother shot his arrow by singing:

Tie your hair dear Balmati

The arrow is going to kill you

Balmati wept and replied:

Let the arrow kill me, my enemy brother

I am not going to tie my hair.

Then the elder brother shot his arrow but it did not pierce her and moved somewhere else. Like that several of them tried but no arrow could pierce her. She also did not tie her hair calling them her enemies. Finally, the youngest one's turn came. He was unwilling to shoot. He was very sad. But the elder brothers forced him to do so. So he sang:

Tie your hair dear Balmati

The arrow is going to kill you.

She replied :

Let the arrow kill me, my enemy brother.

I am not going to tie my hair

Finally, it was the turn of the youngest brother. He loved his sister very much. He did not want to kill her at all. He tried to avoid his aim from her but finally it went and pierced Balmati and she collapsed on the ground.

As she fell down the brothers cut her into pieces and prepared her meat. As the six brothers were busy cooking her meat, the younger one went for an

errand with the dog. There he killed the dog and cooked its meat and hid it with him.

It was meal time. All of them sat down to eat the meat of Balmati, but the youngest one took out the goat's meat and started eating. He hid Balmati's meat in a bowl. After they finished eating, he went towards the pond and buried the meat on the bank of the pond. There Balmati and the dog were born as two lotuses.

At the sunset they came back home and told the parents that they had left Balmati in her in-law's place. The parents were happy.

At Balmati's in-law's house, people were worried as she had not come back for several days. Then they decided to go to her parents house to take her along with them. As they were approaching Balmati's village, they came across the pond. There she saw two lotus flowers. She asked her husband to pluck them. As the old man entered the water to pluck the big lotus, the big lotus asked the small one:

Who comes to pluck the lotus?

Dear, who comes to pluck the lotus?

The small flower replied:

Your father-in-law comes to pluck the lotus

Dear, your father in law comes to pluck the lotus.

The flower moved ahead and the old man could not pluck it and came back. Thus, the old couple continued their journey and reached Balmati's house.

Balmati's parents greeted them and offered them their hospitality. Balmati's in-laws told them the purpose of their visit. They said that they had come to take Balmati back. Balmati's parents were shocked and said that her brothers had already reached Balmati. Then they called the brothers and found out everything. Then the old couple told about the two flowers. So they realized that Balmati might have been born as flower.

Then they went to pluck the flowers. As the elder brothers went to pluck the flowers the big flower asked:

Who plucks the lotus

Dear, who plucks the lotus?

The small flower replied:

The elder brother plucks the lotus dear

The elder brother plucks the lotus.

The flower moved ahead and the elder brother could not pluck the flower. Then they went and called Balmati's husband. He came and went to pluck the flower. The big flower asked:

Who plucks the lotus

Dear, who plucks the lotus?

The small flower replied:

Your husband plucks the lotus dear

Your husband plucks the lotus

The flower allowed herself to be plucked. As soon as he touched her, she immediately turned into Balmati and came out of water. Both of them went home and got their brothers punished by the king and they lived happily.

Story -2

The Story of the Magic Stick

Once there was a boy and his mother who lived in a village. The boy was called Bera meaning fool. His mother prepared *muri*, puffed rice and sold in the village and both of them earned their living with whatever she got from it.

One day the mother said, "Bera, you go and get some firewood so that I can prepare puffed rice." Bera said yes and went to the jungle with his axe. In the jungle, as he hit a tree with his axe the tree God said, "Bera, don't cut me. I will give you a cooking bowl. You just need to place it on the hearth and think of some food you want to eat and that will be ready in the bowl. You need not collect firewood or food any more." Bera was very happy.

He took the bowl and started for home. On the way, he decided to visit his uncle's house. He went there and told his uncle about the magic bowl. His uncle was a greedy man. He said, "All right, nephew. Your bad days have gone. Now you can have a good life." He asked Bera to keep the bowl in the house, go to the pond and have bathe before having his meal. Bera went to have his bathe. When Bera was away, his uncle exchanged the

bowl with their old one and kept it as if it was Bera's bowl. Bera came back after his bath and had his food, bade farewell and went home taking the bowl.

He went home. His mother asked, "Where is your fire wood?" He replied, "Mother, we don't need any firewood now. You need not even cook. The God of the tree has given me this bowl. You just have to place it on the hearth and think of some food and it will be ready in the bowl." His mother was very happy and put it on the hearth and said, "Puffed rice." But there was nothing in the bowl. It was still empty.

Bera thought, "The God of the tree has cheated me. I will go and cut it down tomorrow." The next day, he went and gave the tree a blow. The God of the tree said, "Bera, don't cut me. I will give you an earthen pot. You place it on the hearth and think of some food and it will be ready in it." Bera again went to his uncle's house. He showed the earthen pot to his uncle. His uncle was happy. He told Bera to keep the pot in the house, go and come back after bath. Bera went to the pond. During that time, he exchanged the pot and hid the pot inside. When Bera came back home, his mother got angry and said, "You haven't got the fire wood today. There is nothing in the house. How can I cook without fire wood?" Bera said, "Mother, the God of the tree has given me this earthen pot. If you place it on the hearth and think of any food, it will be ready." The mother placed it on the hearth and said, "puffed rice." The bowl was still empty. Mother got angry and said, "Why don't you get fire wood instead of all these things? We will not have anything to eat tomorrow." Bera said, "Mother, I am certainly going to get fire wood from the tree tomorrow."

The next day, he went to the jungle and gave the first blow on the tree. The tree said, "Bera, please stop. Don't cut me. Today I am going to give you two things. Take these three sweet cakes and a stick. However much you eat from the cakes, three will remain with you. If anybody plays any mischief, the stick will punish him." Bera was very happy. He went to his uncle's house and told his uncle about it. His uncle again sent Bera to have his bath and then when Bera was away they tried to eat the sweet cakes. That time, the stick started hitting them on their face. Then it threw away their things and broke many of their cooking utensils.

When Bera came back home, he saw that the things were lying scattered. Their faces looked disfigured. All of them looked upset. Bera could understand everything and came back home. When his mother saw him without fire wood, she became very angry. She said, "You are not going to change. I don't know what

should I do with you?” Bera replied, “ See, mother, I have got three sweet cakes for us to eat. However much we eat, three will remain extra. If any one plays mischief with us, he will be beaten up by the stick. Our sorrow is over.” His mother had the sweet cakes with Bera but three sweet cakes still remained. They lived happily ever after.

Tale - 3

The Seven Sisters

Sadhaba, the businessman had seven daughters. They reached marriageable age. Among them, the youngest one looked most beautiful. The chief’s son from another village came to know about her beauty and wanted to marry her. But she had an unmarried elder sister. So how could she marry before her elder sister’s marriage? But the boy’s parents insisted to make her their bride. So the girl’s parents agreed to get her married. The boy’s parents came to see the girl and their marriage was fixed.

On the marriage day, the bridegroom came in a procession. The bridegroom’s people were received and treated with care and respect. Then the marriage ritual started. The bridegroom sat on the *bedi*, (alter) and waited for the bride to come. The bride’s father hinted to the bride’s companions to get her to the *bedi*. They went and asked her to come:

Get up dear and come out

Your groom awaits for you at the alter

She replied:

I am not able to get up my dear friends

I am not able to sit down

My elder sister has made my hair

And I get a terrible headache

The time was running out. The groom's people asked the girl's aunt to get her to the alter. The aunt went and said:

Get up dear and come out

Your groom awaits for you at the alter

The girl replied:

I am not able to get up my dear aunt

I am not able to sit down

My elder sister has made my hair

And I get a terrible headache

It was getting late. The groom's people were restless. They requested the girl's family members to accompany to the alter but the girl said the same thing and did not come. Finally the boy said, "Let me go and try." Usually it is not allowed for the couple to meet before marriage, but since it was a case of emergency, people allowed the boy to go and get the girl. He went near the girl and said:

Get up my dear come to the alter

Time is running out

We have to travel a long distance

We have no time to lose.

The girl replied:

I know my dear

But I am not able to sit or stand

My elder sister has made my hair

And I get a terrible headache

The boy wanted to see her head and the decoration made by her girl's elder sister. He could see a black snake in the hair. It had bitten her head and that was why the girl's head was reeling in pain.

The boy took out his knife and immediately killed the snake. A medicine man was called and he cured the girl. Then the marriage ritual was conducted. Both of them came back home and led a happy life.

Tale - 4

Mother Can't Be Replaced

Once upon a time an old woman and her son lived together. The son's name was Dhaneshwar. When Dhaneshwar came of marriageable age, his mother arranged a girl for him and got them married. After getting married, Dhaneshwar was influenced by his wife so much that he started abusing his mother. His wife also started illtreating his mother. Dhaneshwar knew everything but kept quiet. He did not say anything. He was squeezed in between. On the one hand there was his own mother who carried her for ten months and gave him birth. On the other hand, his newly married beautiful wife.

One day his wife said, "We have to get rid of this old woman somehow. I have thought of a plan. You tell her that there is a treasure box in the field and you are going to dig the treasure. She will also come to see it. You dig the pit. While she looks into it, sitting on the edge of the pit, push her inside and cover her there."

Dhaneshwar replied, “ It is a good idea. I shall do as you say.” The next day he told his mother that he was going to dig the treasure box in the field and went to the field with his spade and started digging a pit. His mother was greedy and curious. She followed him. Dhaneshwar started digging the pit. His mother came there and sat on the edge of the pit and started looking into it. That time, he pushed her inside the pit and covered her with soil and came back home. He was very happy to inform this to his wife. His wife also became happy. They had their food and went to sleep. In the middle of the night, they could hear the knock on their door. When they got up and opened the door, they thought that must be ghost of the old woman. The old woman replied, “ No, I am not a ghost at all. How can there be any ghost when I am alive. Dhaneshwar asked, “I had buried you there. How did you come back and what are you carrying in your hands? “ The old woman replied, “ You did not cover the soil properly. So I could get up. These are goods left by the thieves. When I was lying down in the pit, four thieves came under the tree and started sharing their stolen goods. When they saw me getting up, they left the place in fear thinking that I was a ghost. You can take this wealth now. Take this wealth and ask people in the village if they are ready to be your mother by replacing me and by accepting the wealth. Dhaneshwar took the wealth and called at every door, “ Take this wealth and be my mother. “ People saw him and closed their doors.” Then Dhaneshwar came back home and said, “Mother, you be at home. Nobody can replace you. We have made a mistake. You must forgive us.” Since then three of them lived happily.

Five

Effort and Fate

People in early days believed in fate. According to them if you do not have good fate for something, you cannot achieve that in spite of your efforts. The following story is about fate and efforts.

Once the God of fate and the God of efforts were debating under a banyan tree that was situated at the end of the village. The god of Fate said, “People become rich or poor according to my wish. Without my blessings, they are nothing. The God of Efforts said, “If people don’t make efforts they cannot become what they want. It is my blessings that make people achieve what they want to achieve in life.” But the God of Fate did not agree with it. Both of them argued over it for a long time. At that time, an old man was passing by that way carrying a bundle of fire wood. The two Gods asked him, “Dear old fellow, we are discussing a serious subject. Please come and resolve it.” The old man replied, “I have no time to resolve your problem. I have to go home soon and give the firewood to my wife so that she would start cooking. The God Effort said, “All right, you take this bundle of coins and buy things of your choice and live a happy life. Now onwards, you need not have to collect fire wood. You can throw away the firewood and go home.” Then he told the God of Fate, “You will see the old man will become rich and his life will change all together. The God of Fate said, “Let us see, what happens.”

The old man threw away the bundle of firewood and reached home. He found that his wife had gone somewhere locking the house. So he put the bundle of coins somewhere near the door and went to call his wife. At that time the neighbour’s wife came and stole away the bundle of coins. The old man’s wife was furious to see him without any fire wood. The old man said, “You forget about the fire wood. I have got a bundle of coins. We need to collect firewood anymore.” His wife said, “All right give me the bundle of coins you have got. When the old man looked for the bundle of coins above the door, he did not find it there. The old woman got more furious and shouted at him. The next day the old man

was coming that way carrying a bundle of firewood. The two 'Gods saw him and asked, "I had given you so much money, but you still go to the jungle to get fire wood. Your fate has n't changed." The old man said, "No sir, the bundle of coins you had given is stolen." The God of Efforts said, "Okay. You take these gold coins and they will change your fate." The old man was happy to see such a big gold coin. He collected the coin and went to the pond to bathe. He kept the gold coin on the rock and got inside the water to bathe. In the mean time, the coin was swallowed up by a fish. The old man came out of the water and saw that there was no coin. He was sad and came back home. His wife who was waiting for him was again disappointed and abused him for coming empty handed.

The next day, the old man again went to the jungle to get firewood. On the way, he met the two gods. The god of fate said, "See the old man is like that due to lack of my blessings." The God of effort said, "All right. You bless the old man and let me see how he does." Then the God of Fate said, "Yes, your fate will change with in the seven days. You take the seven coins and buy things for you and your family and lead a happy and prosperous life." The old man asked, "What can I buy with these seven coins sir?" The god of Fate replied, "You don't worry as long as my blessings are with you, you will never be in wants." The old man thanked the god of Effort and left for home. On the way he thought what to buy. Then he saw the fisherman with a big fish. The old man bought the fish and came home. He called his wife and said, "See I have got a big fish. You cut it and cook." When his wife cut the fish, she could find a gold coin in the stomach of the fish. When the old man saw it he realized that it was the lost coin which was swallowed by the fish. He became very happy and danced in happiness as if he was possessed. He said, "Yes, I have got the coin. I will get back the money too."

The neighbour's wife heard this and got frightened. She thought, "The old man is possessed. So he will make out that she has stolen his

money. So she brought the money back and laid down before him and gave back the money. The old man and his wife became very rich. They bought land from the village chief and built a beautiful house and lived there.

The God of effort and the God of Fate waited for the old man to come back to them. But he did not come back for quite a few days. Finally, they decided to visit him. When they went to see the old man he was happy to see them and offered them hospitality and told the God of Fate that it was due to his blessings his fortune has changed. God of Fate told him, “ You should worship me as Karamsani once a year. For this reason , people of Bora Raj Sambar worship the Karam tree once a year for they believe that he resides in it.

Six

Story of the Blind Old Man

Once there lived a blind old man called Saran and his wife. Saran’s wife worked in others field and earned for both of them. But her husband was not able to work. So his wife asked him once, “ Dear old man, why don’t you do something and earn.” The old man replied, “ See dear, I have so much talent but it is not recognized. Even the king of our kingdom who seems to be a wise man is not able to utilize my talent. What can I do?” The king was walking that way. He overheard what the blind old man said and called him near and asked him about his talent. Saran replied, “ Sir, I can help you in the time of need. You could just call me and I will be there to render my service.”

Once a horse man brought horses to sell to the king. The king was in a dilemma as to which horse he should buy. So he sent for Saran. Saran came and said, “ Sir even if he offers the horse that stands on the right free, don’t buy it. If

you buy the horse, that is on the left, it would be good for you.” The king said, “Let us make them run and see what you say it right or wrong.” Then they made a race between the two horses. As Saran said the horse on the left side ran faster and reached first when the horse of the right side was slow and tired by the time it reached near the post. So the king bought the horse which ran faster and which was stronger.

After some days, a diamond seller came to sell diamond. The king was not able to distinguish between pure and impure diamond. So he remembered Saran. He sent for him. When Saran came he asked him to tell which among the diamonds would be pure. Saran took each of them to his hands and examined their weight. He said, “Maharaj, the diamond in my left hand is lighter. So it is pure. I suggest You could buy it. Whereas the diamond in the right hand is heavy. That means it is impure. Even if he gives you free don’t take it.” The king was happy and bought the diamond suggested by Saran and it turned out to be the pure one.

After a few days the king thought I should know about myself. He sent for Saran. When Saran came he asked him, “Tell me Saran whether I am a real king?” Saran said with certain hesitation, “Sir forgive me for saying this, but you are not the actual son of the king. You were the minister’s son, but you have been adopted by the king who was childless.” The king did not believe it. He asked his mother about it. His mother confirmed that he was really adopted by the king and made a king later.

Then the king asked Saran, “Tell me how did you know about all these ? How did you recognize real and unreal” Saran replied:

I could identify the horse by its breath

I could identify diamond by its weight

I could identify the king by faith.

The king was happy and made him his regular counselor.

Kondh Narratives in Orissa

Verellin Greet

In May 2001 I visited several villages of the Kondh tribe in the Kalahandi District, Orissa. My visit was quite short, I stayed there only for a week, but it was enough for a first confrontation with daily life of the tribe.

The way of life in Kalahandi is very traditional. Fifty per cent people of this area are cultivators and the rest live on forest products, food gathering and adopting manual labour throughout the year. In comparison to the other regions of Orissa, the locality has not been industrialised or modernised. People of hilly area as well as the peasant society have not got a scope to change their traditional way of life. The appearance of drought in every decade, the exploitative view of the businessmen and contractors, the

continuous crop failure and the lack of self employment in the rural areas, and the socio-economic and religious systems and traditions have made this district backward.

Several programmes have been initiated by the Indian Government as well as by different NGOs to help the Kondhs in their development, but until now most of these programmes failed, probably due to a lack of understanding and appreciation of the tribe's culture.

I read a few things about the tribe before I arrived in the villages. I expected to see people in miserable conditions, no electricity, problems with water supply, not enough food,... In spite of that, I noticed above all that people were living a very simple, but very honorable life with a great sense of community, sharing their pains and pleasures among each other.

Of course, I knew sides of life were present, on the one hand you could see people singing, dancing and sharing their pleasures, on the other hand you could see their struggle for survival.

In this paper I would like to present on the one hand a series of pictures that show my observations in the villages, and on the other hand a story based on a mythical epic of the Kondhs, Bhimasidi , a type of story that I know people were telling a few times, but that were translated to me only in bits and pieces. The story doesn't just tell the epic, but it contains also lots of my experiences, and a lot of information from books.

Together I hope they will construct a kind of exotic picture that maybe represents a little my first experiences among the Kondh tribe.

« Long long ago, there was only Great Bura, the Supreme Being. »

The Jani of the little village Janagarpatlama started to tell the age-old story of how the world and the Kandha people were created. It was now the second day of the Ritual for Harmful Insects, and the Jani was telling and singing stories over and over again. For already one day and one night he was not eating, nor sleeping, only drinking the liquor distilled from the Mahua-flower. His audience was sometimes just listening, sometimes repeating every single word he was telling.

« First Bura God decided to create a consort for himself, Tari Penu, the Earth Goddess.

Afterwards Bura God created the earth.

Bura God found Tari wanting in wifely attention and affection compliance, so

Bura God created man from the earth's substance, to give him really devoted service.

Bura God had intended first to create every variety of animal and vegetable life necessary for man's existence but Tari was so jealous that she tried to prevent him. However she only succeeded in changing the order of creation. So

Bura took a first handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became the trees, herbs, flowers and vegetables of all kinds.

Bura took a second handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it into the water and it became fish and all water creatures.

Bura took a third handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became all the animals, wild and tame.

Bura took a fourth handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it and cast it up in the air, where it became all creatures that fly.

Bura looked behind him and saw.

Bura laid a firm hand on Tari's head to prevent further interference.

Bura took a fifth handful of earth and placed it on the ground behind, where it became the human race.

Tari said : « Let these exist, but create no more ! »

But Bura exuded sweat from his own body, collected it in his hand and threw it around:
« To all that I have created! »

Hence arose love, sex, and the continuation of the species.

This created world was free from all evil:

Men and the Creator were in free communication,

Men enjoyed everything in common,

Men lived in harmony and peace,

Men went unclothed,

Men could move freely on earth and in air and in water,

And all the animals were harmless.

Tari's jealousy then led her to open rebellion against Bura.

Therefore she introduced every form of moral and physical evil.

Into Man she introduced moral evil, sowing seeds of sin into mankind as into a ploughed field. Into the material creation she introduced diseases, deadly poisons, every kind of disorder...

A few individuals rejected evil and remained sinless.

Bura made them tutelary gods : « Become gods and live forever, having power over man, who is no longer my immediate care ! »

The others all yielded and fell into a state of disobedience to the deity and fierce strife against each other. And Bura entirely withdrew his face and his guardianship from mankind. Also because through Tari's interference, everyone was now committing sin, they all became subject to death.

Moreover, throughout the natural world, some animals became savage, the seasons could no longer be counted on with absolute regularity and the earth became a wilderness of jungle, rocks and unstable mud.

At the same time, man lost his power of moving through air and water, he knew suffering and degradation, and he went clothed. »

Bhima was sitting among the Jani's audience.

He was living only a few weeks in the village, but he became good friends with the Jani in this short time, so the Jani asked him to attend the ceremony, which was a very big honour.

The night before most of the people didn't go to sleep. All night they had been dancing and drinking liquor. This morning, from the moment the sun rose above the top of the hill behind the village, the Jani and his priests went to the foot of the hill to call together all the Hill Gods of the surrounding. Twelve rotten eggs were offered to ask the gods to

protect the village from any wild animal living in the forests, especially from tigers, and to let their crops grow abundantly on the lower slopes of their bodies.

Now the Jani was back, and had to keep singing until sunset. Most of the village people fell asleep already, or they went to the fields again to work at least a few hours today.

Only a small group of people stayed with the Jani to listen to his songs and to assist him singing them.

Bhima was not like the other people from the village, but that, they didn't know. Even the Jani didn't know the real identity of Bhima.

Bhima was one of the few individuals that had always fought against evil, so, blessed by the Great Bura God, he was living in the world of gods. As he was the nephew of the supreme rain god Indra , he was worshipped in each and every Kandha village along with goddess Mother Earth. The Kandha people, having a long history of terrible droughts, believed that Indra had a lot of respect for his nephew, and that it was no problem for Bhima to get water from his uncle. So, in periods of severe drought, they invited Bhima in a long ritual of seven days and seven nights to ask him for plenty of rain and a good harvest.

Bhima was very much interested in the life of people on earth, so he liked coming to earth often, taking the form of a human being. This time, he took the form of a beggar, weak, emaciated and full of wounds and worms.

In disguise he had reached the village of Janagarpatlama. The Jani of the village and his wife, took pity of him, and gave him food and shelter. He actually got the nicest place of their little house, in front, under the verandah, where it was very comfortable to sleep at night, always having a little breeze.

Unfortunately he couldn't stay for a long time in the house of these two friendly people. The Jani had two daughters, Konden Rani and Dumer Rani, and they didn't like Bhima at all ; he was too ugly and they were disgusted with his festering wounds.

The two girls could convince their father it was no good that Bhima was sleeping in their house, and drove him away.

Nevertheless, the Jani requested Bhima to stay in the village and to work for him as a servant. So, with the help of the Jani, Bhima build a little place for himself at the edge of the village, just within the protection of the God of Boundaries.

From that moment he had been thinking how he could take revenge on the two girls, and bit by bit, there was a plan emerging ... tomorrow, he would take the first steps.

The next day, Konden Rani and Dumer Rani were taking a bath.

After loosening the chickens, the goats and the bullock from the stable, sweeping the house, going to the well for water and washing the little kids, finally, they could take a bath themselves.

They had been hurrying. Later that day, they had to go working on the big fields of the sahuکار , but first, they wanted some time for their own.

Close to the village there was a small pond. It was a little hidden behind some bushes, which made it a perfect spot to take a long bath without being disturbed. Singing sweet songs about love, they forgot everything around them

You bloom and smell like jasmine,

You smile at the sight of a black bee,

When I approach, you keep a distance,

Who did say you, my love,

You sit alone, please tell me

O Rasarkelire

Bhima was ploughing the paddy fields just a small distance further away. He heard the girls singing. This was the moment he had been waiting for! In his mind he called for his

father, the great god Vayu to fly away their sarees and to put them into the round shaped Jhapi-box back at their house.

The two girls, not knowing what to do, stayed for more than two hours in the little pond, hoping their mother would miss them and would come and look for them. Unfortunately their mother thought that they already went to the sahuakar's land, and stayed at home.

Full of shame, the girls entered the house, covering themselves with a few leaves they took from the bushes near the pond, blaming their little brother he took their clothes. They found their sarees, neatly folded in the Jhapi-box.

Konden Rani and Dumer Rani blamed every child and every young guy of the village, even they blamed Bhima, but their mother kept to the point she didn't see anyone entering the house, so they never solved the mystery.

After this one time, Bhima felt even more like teasing the two girls.

Actually he started to like the girls. Notwithstanding they didn't miss any opportunity to confront him with his unattractive appearance, he couldn't deny they were two beautiful girls with a great sense of humour.

Using his heavenly powers, Bhima played many tricks and jokes on them. One time, he took the shape of a snake, next time the shape of a bear or a tiger. Each time his games became more sophisticated.

The girls really were getting desperate; did they make the gods angry?

In the meanwhile, Bhima was getting along better and better with the Jani.

The Jani was a very simple and sensitive man, gifted with a deep understanding of the problems and needs of all the village people and of the community as a whole. He was a hard working man, doing everything he could to look after the welfare of his family and of the village people.

Bhima noticed the Jani was a little troubled these days. Untill now, except from an few early showers, no rain had been falling on the land. He knew that, if this situation kept continuing, they would be forced to perform the Bad Humour Dance. The Jani was hoping rain was going to come soon, because he knew by experience, performing the Bad Humour Dance was no good for the stability of people's minds, it makes them very nervous.

Most men of the village already cleared the trees and bushes from the new plots they made in the forest, and fire was already set two months ago. After the first rains appeared, the grains had been sowed, but now, due to the lack of rain, the seedlings were likely to dry .

The Jani called together the heads of households to discuss how they could solve their problem. He also invited Bhima, because by now, Bhima was a highly respected man in the village, helping everyone in need, and working very hard and very fast.

Bhima offered, maybe he could find a solution to let it rain. « Wait one day and one night, after, it will start raining. »

Leaving the priest with these words, he disappeared into the direction of the forest.

The Jani was astonished, he couldn't believe his ears, was this man only joking or was he challenging him? How could he pretend, without moving a muscle, he was able talking to the gods? How could he act like this, in front of him, the high priest of the village, the one who was divinely selected by the Creator God?

Somehow, the members of the meeting were impressed by Bhima's words. So, without fully knowing whether they should believe Bhima was able to make it rain or not, they decided to wait a few days more, before starting preparations for the Bad Humour Dance.

The Jani went home, confused in his mind. He walked straight to the ancestors' place in the corner of the cooking space. This was a moment to ask the spirit of the Ancestor Jani for advice.

Respectfully, he gave some tobacco to the ancestor, and in his mind, he began asking many questions.

Did they made a good decision waiting to prepare the Dance?

Were his spiritual powers leaving him, he felt like he had no control anymore over his callings for the Gods of Rain.

Who was Bhima actually? Was he blessed with spiritual powers, or was he a kind of sorcerer ? Or was he may be sent by the Gods, and should they put all their trust in him ?

One day and one night later, the sky colored red then purple then black ...

Flashes of lightening were shooting through the air, and it started. First just a few drops came out of the sky, but soon raindrops were swelling and water was pouring down.

For three days, it rained without stopping.

Bhima came back to the village as a hero.

That night, a goat was sacrificed to thank the Rain God. All kinds of foods and liquor was supplied by every single household of the village, and throughout the whole night they were drinking and dancing, carrying Bhima on their shoulders from the one house to the other.

The Jani praised Bhima extensively for his work, and kept him as his bridegroom in service.

Konden Rani and Dumer Rani didn't know what to think about it.

Of course they also showed a lot of admiration for Bhima due to the very strong ties he seemed to have with the world of gods, but still their feelings towards him were twofold. They were not able to look beyond his ugly face and his emaciated body.

The idea that one of them would had to marry him, filled them with disgust and made them insurgent.

They knew of course, the most important thing in marriage was not finding a beautiful husband, but finding someone that was capable to struggle together with them against the elements to provide adequate food and shelter for their young. In fact, they were aware that Bhima was probably the most perfect being to fulfill this task.

But having to marry this creature ...

Bhima could read from the two girls' faces how they were thinking about him. Convinced of the fact it was time to teach them a lesson again, he was putting together another trick...

Bhima waited two full weeks.

That day a marriage would take place in a neighboring village. The youth of Janagarpatlama got very excited. Later that afternoon, they would go to the marriage to make music and dance with the girls and boys from the other villages.

Konden Rani and Dumer Rani were already more than an hour busy : chosing what saree to wear, which ear-rings, what colour of bracelets, helping each other combing oil through their long black hair and beautifying it white flowers. From time to time, a friend came into the house, asking to borrow a hairpin or to change sarees.

Both of them were silently dreaming about the nice guy they would meet today, about taking him with them to the dormitory, about the love that would grow between them and about how they would finally marry him.

These kinds of thoughts really toke part of both the girls' minds since their father promised Bhima he could marry one of them. So, for them, today was a very special day. It was not allowed to marry someone from their own village or their own clan, so they were forced to find a partner somewhere else. Since there were not so many occasions in which they could meet someone new, they were hoping today someone special would appear ...

Someone special did appear!

They didn't notice him right away, but when they started dancing, they ended up right in front of him.

At first sight, he looked a little shy. But dancing made him more self-confident, and after a while, a divine smile appeared on his face.

...

With the happy eyes of a titeri bird

We shall see you dance,

With the happy eyes of a jogeri bird

We shall watch your posture.

Move the joints of your body,

Move both your arms.

Your mother having given birth to you,

Dance gracefully;

Your father having produced you,

Dance rhythmically

...

Both girls couldn't keep their eyes away from him. His smiling face and his gentle movements were seducing them bit by bit. They were like hypnotized, absorbing every little detail of his body.

All night they kept on dancing, both showing their best sides, trying to get all his attention. Never have they been dancing so gracefully, walking so feminine, talking so tempting.

When everyone was returning home, the two sisters, a little nervous, invited him to sleep in their dormitory that night.

He walked with them to the village, but instead of going inside the dormitory, he walked straight to the little house of Bhima.

« Where are you going? » Konden Rani shouted astonished.

« I'm going home » Bhima called back.

Konden Rani and Dumer Rani knew now the real identity of Bhima.

They fell in love with him even more. Both wanted to marry him, so Bhima asked the Jani for the hand of his two daughters, one as a wedded wife and the other as a

concubine, which was possible according to the social custom that permits the husband to marry his wife's sister .

After the wedding, Bhima took the two sisters under his arms and fled back to the world of gods. The two girls felt heavenly, flying through the sky in the arms of their beloved.

Yet, you could feel a certain tension. Dumer Rani's feelings were twofold, on the one hand she was feeling as happy as her sister having found Bhima and being able traveling to heaven, but on the other hand she was feeling jealous. Jealous because Bhima chose her to be his concubine, being his second wife. Whole her life she would come on a second place, she didn't know if she would be able to handle it!

Looking to her sister, to the happy smile on her face, she decided , it should happen right now.

In the mid sky, Dumer Rani pushed her sister out of Bhima's arms.

Bhima, terrified by this probably very earthly gesture, reacted relentless. He let loose Dumer Rani and caught Konden Rani. Dumer Rani fell down to the earth and turned into a fig tree.

Bhima looked down and said, « Let your fruits be full of worms, but as I was in love with you, you will be regarded as Dumer Rani and people will worship me in you. »

Since those days people continue to worship Bhima under a fig tree.

NOTES

1. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, A hero of the Mahabharata in Folklore of Central Orissa, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993

(Information obtained through te Internet)

2. Earliest known myth that gives a mythological foundation for the practices the Kondh people still observe today. R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 48, 4

3. .Jani: the High Priest, chief religious figure of the village. He celebrates the community sacri-fices directed towards the Creator God and the Earth deity.R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 32

4. .One of the Kondh rituals for their staple food-crops, performed in the month May to protect the young growing crops against plagues of insects or grain rust. Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 373

5. .Each village worships the god of the nearest hill, as the hill is on the one hand a source of danger (mainly from wild animals), and on the other hand the land on which their crops are growing. Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 352, 353, 373

6. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Influence of the Ramayana tradition on the Folklore of Central India, In 'Ramakatha in Folk and Tribal Tradition of India', Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1993 (Information obtained through the Internet)

7. The Boundary deity forms an invisible barrier round the village, safeguarding it against hostile spirits who might attempt to enter with genuine guests.R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp.32

8. Table 1.1 : The Day's Work

Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 70

9. Sahukars : a network of long established Oriya traders, coming from the coastal areas and set-tied in the Kondh hills, often playing dirty tricks on the (drink-loving) Kondh to gain their best paddy-growing lands. Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 61, 359

10. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Folk Songs of Kalahandi, Mayur Publication, Bhubaneswar, 1989

(Information obtained through the Internet)

11. Bad Humour Dance: Ritual performed 'in a year when no rain falls on the land'Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 273, 415-418

12.Sacred place inside every traditional Kondh home. Nobody but family members may approach it, for it is the home of that family's ancestors. R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 81

13.Calendar of Kondh Life

Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 15

14. Heads of households: they function as priests for their own families

R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 33

15. For the Kondhs, there is no separation between the world of the living and the world of the death, they form one mutually dependent community, each guided by the same religious and social beliefs, each carrying on their daily tasks, and equally belonging to the kin-group into which they were born.R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 81

16. Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 51

Separated dormitories are build for young women and men. These dormitories become their social headquarters from the age of about seven until marriage. This relieves pressure on their family's sleeping room and, as they mature, it becomes the beginning both of their community service and of sex-experience.R. Nayak, B.M. Boal, N. Soreng, The Kui People of Central Orissa, Aruna Printing Press, New-Delhi, 1990, pp. 38

17. Traditionally marriages are arranged, but marriage based on mutual attraction resulting from the dormitory system are as well allowed.Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 50

18.Extract from a love song, called 'The Wooing'Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 50

19. Polygamy is permitted, but rarely more than two men in any village possess two wives or more, because it is very expensive. Only the richest landowners can afford

bride-wealth and a wedding for more than one wife. Barbara M. Boal, Human Sacrifice and Religious Change, The Kondhs, Inter-India Publications, New-Delhi, 1997, pp. 53

20. Konden : In order to get rain from the Rain God Bhima, sometimes a symbolic marriage ritual is instituted between Bhima and a virgin daughter of a Kondh priest (Jani). The girl, after the institution of marriage, leads a life of chastity, austerity and purity. After her death, she is worshipped with Bhima as goddess Konden.

21. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, A hero of the Mahabharata in Folklore of Central Orissa, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993 (Information obtained through the Internet)

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Belgium

Kui Oral Tradition

Anuja Mohan Pradhan

Kui language has been classified under under Dravidian group of languages¹⁶. It has no indigenous written literature. In the course of time the Kui people have developed and handed over from generation to generation different forms of oral literature.

Folktales represent the prose form of Kui oral literature. Kui language is said to be an excellent medium for telling stories. In words of Winfield” In general, it may be said that, though

¹⁶ A generic map can be referred at Appendix-I, *Tribes of Orissa* by K.Mohapatra, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

Kui is poor as a medium for a highly philosophical discourse, it is an excellent language in which to tell a story¹⁷.

From time immemorial Kui songs are sung by people speaking the language. Generally Kui songs are composed by men folk and sung accompanied by music of Khanjani, flute, changu and Tuhtu Pota.¹⁸ J.E.F.Pereira¹⁹ elucidates that, "the songs of Khonds have no pretensions to poetry-that is, poetry in the sense of finished literary productions. They are composed in a rude and often ungrammatical language; they are loosely constructed, and carelessly worded and vague in meaning²⁰; they are destitute of anything in nature of metre or rhyme; and above all they are often a grotesque medley of the serious and ludicrous, resulting in a frequent descent to what is known as bathos." At the same time Pereira also mentions," But they yet possess a peculiar charm of their own. They are eminently true to nature; and their crude and half developed thoughts, struggling through a mist of faulty express, occasionally afford a glimpse of high imaginings, of tender feeling, and of fanciful imagery. And when they are sung to the weirdly plaintive melodies that seem to have been caught from the sigh of the wind in the gloomy depths of the forest, or the moan of the waterfall over some desolate mountain side, they reach an intensity of beauty that is enchanting."(ibid)

In words of Sitakant Mohapatra²¹, "(for) riddles open a window on the tribe's perception of the world, the connectivity between objects and the way their minds act on parallel connections." Needless to say that riddles are an integral part of Kui oral literature. The religious chants and invocations, which are the prayers and wishes of the people which are a collection of what is valued for priority. They too contain the confessions and justifications for their deeds. They form one the best examples of Kui "sruti" or the literature learned by listening.

Many of the works cited in the article are without an authentic authorship, unpublished works and are yet to be collected in full. A Kui poet does not think of preserving his creative work. He sings for pleasure and pure pleasure. That is the reason such valuable part of Kui

¹⁷ *A Grammar of Kui Language*, W.W. Winfield, 1928, pp-xiv.

¹⁸ A wooden toy-bird with a flapping tail for producing musical beat during dance in kedu.

¹⁹ Some Khond Songs, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1899.

²⁰ Reader may see the introduction of *An Oriole from The hills* for a detailed discussion on the contrary. A basic difference between poetry and a song is that of a structure and not of the language. Pereira's article referred (supra) was a work published in 1899. Pereira was correct but, as of date this author is of firm conviction that Kui has matured over time where in poetry can be composed.

²¹ The Oriole swings- A foreword to *An Oriole from The Hills*, ATDC, Bhubaneswar, 2007.

literature is lost in the sands of time. However, the current article is an effort to introduce²² the readers the tricks and techniques used by the tellers of all the forms of Kui oral literature while presenting before an audience in a interesting, lively and entertaining manner. Without their artful touch the Kui oral literature will be like a half-cooked buffet.

TELLING A KUI STORY

Folktales constitute the major portion of the Kui oral literature. Kui stories happen to be simple and slow moving. The stories have characters from among the human beings, animals, birds, snakes etc. and supernatural beings like gods and ghosts. The stories relate to the myths of origin and progress of civilization, activities like hunting, fishing and agriculture. Some stories are related to games, rituals wherein Gods have set the procedural guidelines and disobedience to such guidelines invites wrath of gods. The communication and interaction between humans and animals, man and god is quite amusing. Such stories form the foundation of various rituals and customs are passed down the generations. These tales, besides their plot and theme, serve for mass entertainment. The story-tellers use their masterly art and techniques to have a mass appeal.

In the Kui speaking areas the role of story-teller is carried out by the grandmothers, mothers, grand fathers and elders²³. The moving story-tellers, who basically sang their songs composed by themselves on some events of importance and awe provoking. . Currently it is very rare to see such a professional story-teller²⁴. That genus is, perhaps extinct by now. On occasions the choice of the story may be of listeners on demand or that of the story-teller. For example, children may urge their grandmother to tell the story of **Hen and the Brinjal Plant**, or, the mother may instead prefer **The Owl's story** which is a precise one. As of time, grandma's stories are just after early

²² This author humbly acknowledges the inadequacies felt in transcribing Kui words in English due to their frequent nasal and guttural pronunciation and sounds formed by joining two or more consonants.

²³ In Kui the male elders and female elders are generally addressed as Aabar and Aajasanderu respectively. The words here should be taken as a class than exact biological relation.

²⁴ A detail description of professional story-tellers is given by Shri Kshetrabasi Manseth in his work *Hun Marile Kahe*. Sahitya Akademi.

dinner. It is seen that a single elderly lady with a good stock of stories becomes an attraction to children and young girls and will never be alone to sleep in her house. Among the men folk places of gossip such as bathing places, shade of a jack tree or verandahs where they sleep in group, become story-telling avenues. Earlier, the youth dormitories for boys and girls served as story-telling houses respectively. A small group of people faring a distance by foot often go on telling stories in turn. This makes the journey more enjoyable and less exhaustive.

Interactive mode of Kui story telling makes the activity more lively. Both the story-teller and the listeners respond to each other. When the story-teller punctuates after a word or a line, listener says “*hun*” or “*ooun*” in consonance. When the story-teller takes an unusually longer pause the listener enquires “*embade aana aate*” i.e. what happened next. Then, the story-teller resumes telling. Therefore, the interactive mode of storytelling is not a value addition, rather, it is a pre-condition for Kui story telling.

Alike the folk tales of other languages, Kui folk tales often begin with reference to past. The story-teller may begin with “*rogosi kalo kata*” or “*purti pilti delitari kata*” or “*Ana bestai Roga*” literally translated as “long long ago” or “ during the period of creation” or “ what to say my dear(friend)” respectively. After such a prelude the characters come down the plot. The characters are very often the king and the queen, animals, birds, an old man and old woman, and the talking tree etc. As per the plot the characters talk and interact in prose, poetry or in combination of both. Usually the characters talk in first person i.e.in direct speech and in some cases in indirect speech. The story progresses gradually and slowly. For example, in the story of **Hen and the Brinjal Plant**, the hen after a long confusion decides to plant the seed in the earth and after that she lays eggs. Then comes the rain and the seed germinates. In between the eggs are incubated and the chicks come out. The plant too bears flower and fruit. In the stories sometimes injections of simultaneous happening are also seen. For instance, in the “**Bilo/Gada Kerondi**”as the people have nearly completed cutting meat from the dead sambar,at the same time the jackal sets fire to the heaps of *rasi* (til) crop harvest.

In some stories the narrator speaks in the tone of the character. Whatever may be the literary quality of the script, the tone and tuning of the narrator takes the listener on a virtual tour. A simple story may turn into an interesting one with the personal artistic touch of the story-teller. In the story of “**An Old man who hunted a wild Boar**” the dialogue between the daughter of the old man and the man having fire in his hearth is quite amusing. The backdrop setting of the story is winter. The fire in the old man’s house was doused off with melting of fat while baking meat of the wild boar. The girl sees smoke coming from a house on the remote hill top. She goes there and sees a middle aged man is sitting at the fire place.

Girl asks, *O Aaba*, give me a stick of fire.

The man replies Am I your mother’s husband?

Girl- *O Koka*(Paternal uncle), give me a stick of fire.

Man-Was I born with your father?

Girl- *O Mama* (maternal uncle), give me a stick of fire.

Man- was I born with your mother?

Likewise the story progresses with the girl addressing him with all possible socially acceptable relationship and the man rebukes with a question. Lastly,

Girl asks- What shall I call you then?

The man says-“Simple, why don’t you say, *ginaka*, why don’t you give me a stick of fire?”

This brings laughter. The term “*ginaka*” is used by wife to call her husband only. The charm of the word is not in the meaning but it is stuffed with love, blushing of a wife when she calls him to say something lovely personal.

The curry of the Kui people is quite simple²⁵. They add turmeric, chillies and mustard, traditionally they do not have many spices. The taste of the curry lies in the accurate pinch of salt picked by the left hand²⁶ and added. Similarly, the plausible conclusion of the story is dependent on the last masterly stroke of the story-teller. When the story directly or indirectly deals with the establishment of a tradition or custom, the story-teller says, “ *esi dina dai ihingi aate*” i.e. from that day onwards it became so. In the story of the **Wild dog and man**

it is concluded that from that day the wild dog calls man “*mama*” i.e. the maternal uncle and “respects him” by leaving the prey when approached by man. When there is a happy ending, the story-teller adds, “*nai sani paheri pranju malanga kitikoto, kanga kusa bdedibadi*” meaning – let there be no hindrance on my path and be plenty of food. When stories are told to children at place other than their home in the evening or night some child may doze or sleep during the story session. The story-teller concludes saying for them- those who sleep “*Olinga bilonga deka dosa kai*” i.e. let the bears and jackals play harp with (their intestines). It is not an ill omen, but it is an imaginary fear to keep them alert in the next story session.

TELLING A KUI SONG

Song is the beat of tribal heart. A tribal fills his solitude with song. The song finds its full ornamentation and compliment when played with music and dance. The Kui songs are not different. Kui songs were composed by the illiterate people who were rich in their imagination and sense of musical rhyme and choreography. Irrespective of the subject matter few metaphors and symbols commonly used need special mention:

Jeedabana: (jeeda- thin, bana- flag): The term however stands for a frail beauty who is slim, active and flowing like a flag in the wind. She stays top of all.

²⁵ Place fowl in Kui Culture, *Orissa Review*, Feb-March 2005, PP-59.

²⁶ Kui people pick salt by left hand because salt is treated as a non-permanent (melting or decaying) object. There is a cursing in Kui saying “*saaru dehngi rugakanju*” i.e. let he perish like salt.

Soru teepo tari maadi: (soru teepo- hill top,maadi-bamboo): It stands for an un touched virgin, a chaste and pious woman like a hill top bamboo use for making a flag post or useful for making a house yet difficult to obtain.

Paadeli puju : (paadeli- name of a wild tree, puju-Flower): which symbolizes white beautiful teeth (of a girl).

Lada ketanga: (Keta- wet paddy field) highly productive paddy land, symbolizing riches and landed property.

Jili tiranga: (jili-cold, tiranga- starch mixed water left after boiling of rice) Previous day's rice soaked with water. It symbolizes poverty, a poor man's food.

Roga: (A girls's girl friend) : A bosom friend to whom she can tell all confidential and personal feelings.

Sua Sari: (Sua – parrot, Sari- Myna) : Symbolizing a lover couple.

Use of such metaphors and symbols , at the first instance, shows the literary ornamentation of the song. Poet Shri Sarangdhar Pradhan²⁷ wrote” *embeki sainji la nai jeeda bana, redi kdeksana*” addressing a beautiful damsel who goes her way and her waist moves so rhythmically. This author once noticed a song from the students of Sankarakhol girls high school singing-

*Soru teepo tani gundamani maadi,
Isingiana bestai neenge hrudaya naadi,
Nee selu gite la kandruka todi.*

²⁷ Kui poet and author of *Trivasi Kui Byakaran*. The quoted song is an unpublished work.

Literally meaning- O my virgin bamboo from the hilltop, how shall I tell you (about) the fire in my heart and tears I shed for you.

Putting the symbol in abstract sense a song²⁸ goes as following:

*Patali ahana baini Jodi,
Soru teepo tani gundani maadi,
Biludi delita duru pirodi,
Pari pari deli bega bododi.*

Literally the poet describes his beloved as a swelling river flooding the banks, a virgin bamboo of the hill top, A music of a flute coming from far in the evening, and, the bright morning star of the dawn.

A poet²⁹ compares his beloved in some unparalleled similes:

*Sitri besamani mandar punga,
Emba aatkimanu neei todanga,
Neei patka molli punga.*

Literally meaning: your lips resemble with the red hibiscus and your teeth are the (white) chameli flowers.

Another song³⁰ describes teeth of his beloved as:

Lajade lumbite paadeli puju, padeli puju,

²⁸ Unpublished work of this author.

²⁹ Authorship of poem unknown.

³⁰ Unpublished work of this author.

*Sodi puse aanu jeedabanala-
Musuki isi eenu.*

Literally meaning- When the (white) paadeli flower fell to ground in shame, I got the message, that you have just made a smile.

Dance is one of the most beautiful component of Kui culture. It brings merriment to a festive occasion and acts as an anti-oxidant to the exhaustion of hard work. A marriage, kedu etc are the special occasions, but in day to day life a moonlit night was enough to put the feet into rhythm. Such dance was in the middle of the street and in front of all their people. On such occasion the singer was the prime person. In Kui dance males and females stand in two rows face to face. While dancing women folk bend foreward and move in left-left or right-right direction. Sometimes they have to dance in sitting position synchronizing the speed of rotation with their male counterparts. The males play *Khanjani*, a one sided small hand-drum like instrument held with left hand and played with right hand. The player modulates the sound by touching the hide from inside. Those who do not have *khanjani* stand in the row and clap in rhythm. The singer may be part of the *khanjani* players or stand at one end of the row. His tune sets the steps of the choreography. His tune along with the music and clapping charms the women to dance. The audience enjoys the song, the song, the dance and also the setbacks, if any, in the dance. The singer often repeats the theme lines, main appeal and the literally artistic lines. His movement of hand and feat and body are noted by one and all. Real challenge to the singer comes when the dancing night does not come to an end and the women dancing are yet to be tired. On such occasions it is seen that the singers do compose songs then and there. Their creative composition is so perfect that the song, tune, rhyme and rhythm are so matching at their first utterance. Such songs , at many a times are from their own lives. For example, the song “*Luhurangani Petapanga, Ponima trephine kanga*” was composed by Ponima’s husband. The song became so popular that Ponima who had left her husband came back to him and they are still living in village Petapanga of kandhamal district. Late Pyari Mohan Pradhan of village Kalinga, the serving in Indian

Army was on leave to his village and on challenge from the untiring woman in dance composed instantly the song:

*Onisisaha satastori saal,
Novembara saat tarikh, suna,
Aatela milteri fiti,
Sase ladhei paiti.*

The song is addressed to his beloved describing his recruitment to army. This author once checked the singer's Army Identity card and found that the information given in the song are the same and true.

Composition of the song “*esekaka bane mala Baimala gadi*” by Shri Uma charan Digal was also sudden. In 1971 Shri Digal was back from Army and had to appear an interview for job at Bhubaneswar. He, along with three more persons was waiting for the Baimala bus at Adasi Kupa village to go to G.Udayagiri. The bus delayed long. Lastly they started walking towards G.Udayagiri. When they were in Mokoghati the bus came and they embarked. One of the other three persons said that Uma aaba may compose a song on today's bus wait. As a result, the song which is no less than a Kui classic came into being.³¹

TELLING KUI RIDDLES

Riddles in any language are crisp, so are the Kui riddles. Kui riddles are precise, subtle and contain a flavor of wit and humor. Riddles are played between all the age groups- child to child, lad to lass, grandpa to children or women to women, and the like.

³¹ This story of writing was narrated to this author by Shri Digal and his wife at their Bhubaneswar residence.

Riddles give an insight to the understanding of the intrinsic value and world view of their immediate nature, the material civilization and household materials. The scope of subject of riddles³² is so wide and includes what not. Few (translated) examples are :

It goes with an empty stomach and comes belly full.(Ans- Pot for fetching water)

It goes with a filled belly and comes home empty . (Ans-basket taking cow dung to fields).

The art of playing riddles depends on the stock of riddles one knows. A player arranges his stock in categories of similar structure or similar subject. For example a player picks the collection with “ *Rajentai*” i.e. belonging to the king. Few examples are:

Rajen tara poti preepa muai. (You can’t roll the King’s mattress.) Ans-Road

Rajentaa putka kiska muai(You can’t scratch king’s pimples) Ans- Jackfruit

Rajeni rahata gudunga laar.(Rice scattered in king’s terrace.) Ans-Stars in the sky

Rajentaa poteka tubga muai.(You can’t put on King’s necklace). And -Row of black ants.

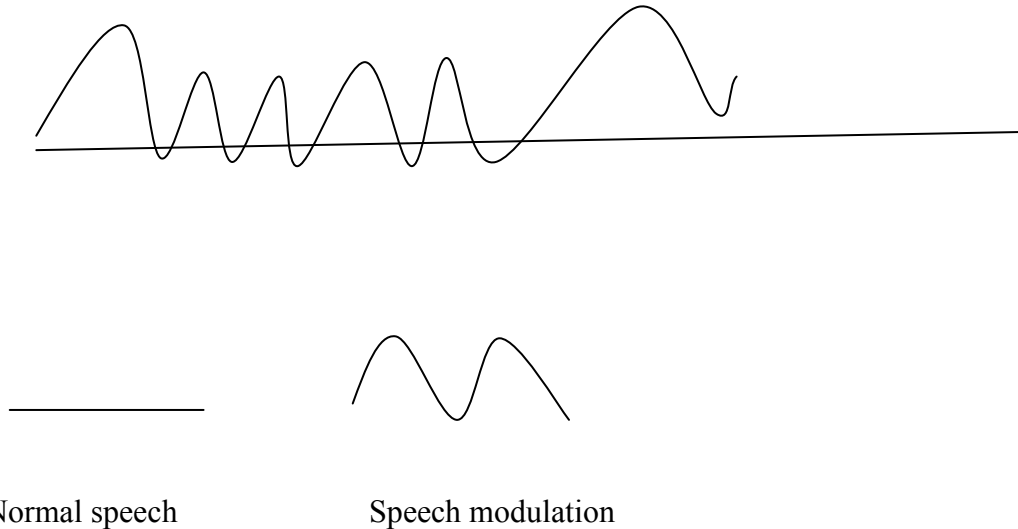
A player while putting a riddle to others makes comical gestures with wink of his eyes, swinging of his thumb or beating eye brow besides voice modulation. With increasing delay in replying the riddle his gestures will be more. To divert the concentration of the respondent he says “*Kuine mane*” i.e. the answer is so imminent, so easy to answer. The opponent, therefore tries to reply at the earliest.

³² For a reading of Kui riddles translated into English readers may see *Indian Literature*, Golden Jubilee issue(Nov-December 2007).

If he knows the answer, he replies before the question is completed, because, a correct reply gives him to put a riddle.

RITUAL INVOCATIONS

Kui speaking people perform various rituals on many social occasions and as per gricultural cycle. Rituals related to agriculture such as “*Keta laka*” i.e. worship at paddy field before harvest etc. are performed by the eldest of the family. However, during death purifications, rituals to ward off chicken pox, Kedu etc. a priest or a shaman or a godman or a jani is requisitioned. The shaman chants long sentences in lucid prose or poetic tone which are equivalent to Mantras. The mantras are artistically phrased. They are musical to the ears and contain a sequence of rhyming homonyms. They call names of hoards of gods and appeal to protect people from evil as well as their wrath. The pitch of their invocation keeps people captive. The speech can be diagramed as following:



A priest, for instance, may pronounce” *Henjar, Henjari de Bura penu,darni penu,tana benu,purti penu,sendo nati,need nati,saata teru, mrut teru.....nee mida tini, boda tini, kodi tini koru tini, koju tini seepa tini, aangana, mrongana, rahi gimu,nisa gimu ,barti gimu..... sepa dai,depodai,kara dai, jala dai.... Rohana, gesana itamu de bodu, johari aapakari.*”

Such invocations are filled with lots of pairs of words. The size of the word and the sequence are grammatically so composed that words like *penu* (god) came flowing and words like *mida*(child) *boda* (children) which are generally used combinely have a special mention. When a priest chants the village elders listen word by word to see that not a minor god or a forefather is left uninvoked. They remind and supplement the names of ancestors, local deities, hills and the places where they believe resides a supernatural being. Coverage of all such names gives people the feeling that they are being insured and made immune to evil. Besides the intrinsic literary and grammatical value the act and speech techniques of the priest makes the occasion more grave and important. The act and speech techniques of the priest make the chanting more captive and enjoyable.

Glimpses of such artistic words can also be seen in the blessings to the new born baby by the grandmothers, especially to the girl child. They bless her to be so beautiful that the young men and the prospective grooms come for her from the front side of the house as well as the back side of the house and camp at both the ends of the street.

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A Kond Cultural Encounter in The Cult Of Jagannatha

Dr. Baba Mishra

The Cult of Jagannatha is the most bewildering and controversial facet of Indian culture. Saturated with varied notions, the cult stands unique in the cultural stuff of India. It seems to

represent a grand synthesis of Vedic and non-Vedic traditions at regional level. This could have been the gradual process of Sanskritization, which had operated in Orissa Tribal origin of Lord Jagannatha has been accepted by host of scholar¹. Yet the pertinent question arises – Which tribe or tribal culture formed the nucleus or the kernel of the Jagannatha cult ?.

SABARA TRIBAL AFFINITY WITH THE JAGANNATHA CULT – A MISNOMER

Up till now, Indologists are having exhaustive discussion on the Savara affiliation with Lord Jagannatha and his cult. Comprehensive studies are being made on the Savara tribe and its culture to demonstrate it as the harbinger of the Cult of Jagannatha. The prevailing traditions and some of the literary sources, which refer to the tribal link of the Lord, also tend towards the Savara association. Lord Jagannatha has been extolled thus as ‘Savara–Deity’ by the elite and laity alike. The hypothesis pertaining to the Savara connection with the Cult may be briefed up as follows :

- i] The Savara tribe was devoted to the worship of Lord Jagannatha from very early time, which is embodied in the story of the Savara chieftain Vishwavasudha and deity Nilamadhava of the *Indradyumna Tradition*.
- ii] The special non-Brahmana priests in the Jagannatha temple of Puri are designated as ‘Daita’ and ‘Soaro’, who claim themselves to be the descendants of the Savara tribe;
- iii] The primary aspect of the Savara religion was the worship of Tree, Log and Stone, which is in vogue even to-day in the Cult of Jagannatha²;
- iv] The term ‘Jagannatha’ is said to be derived from the Jagant incarnation of Kiting³ – the chief Savara deity;
- v] The Oral tradition, current among the Saura (Savara) tribe of Paralakhemundi region of modern Orissa, further lends support to the Savara affinity with Lord Jagannatha⁴;

Consequently, in normal practice, Lord Jagannatha has been deemed to be a ‘Savara Deity’.

However, there are some difficulties in accepting the hypothesis – Savara affinity with the Cult during its formative phase. At the outset, the story embellished in the literary sources should be accepted with caution, particularly when the author refers to any racial element. The Indradyumna tradition was given literary form during the 13th century A.D in the ‘Purushottama-Mahatmya’ of the *Skandapurana*. Prior to this, the said tradition might have

prevailed in folklore, which was picked up by the Brahmanical author of 'Purushottama-Mahatmya'. It is only in the 'Purushottama-Mahatmya' the association of Savara tribe with Lord Jagannatha and his tenet is highlighted. Other Sanskrit text, like the *Brahma-Purana*, although it narrates the Indradyumna tradition, does not refer to the Savara tribe or its chieftain Vishwvasu (Savara chief) or Lalita ⁵ (the Savara girl). The *Narada-Purana* is curiously silent about the Savara devotion to Lord Jagannatha in its early phase ⁶. The *Padma-Purana*, on the other hand, highlights the Bhil tribe as the early worshipper of Lord Jagannatha ⁷. It thus appears that the Puranas, dealing on the Jagannatha cult are not unanimous about the nature of the primitive tribe, who was linked with the worship of Jagannatha in early time.

During 15th and 16th centuries A.D, when the evolution of Jagannatha cult reached its apogee, vernacular poets, like Sarala Das, Nilambara Das and Jagannatha Das, in their literary creations, portrayed the Savara tribe in an exaggerated manner as being the early worshipper of Lord Jagannatha. Oriya poets seem to have made servile imitation of the *Indradyumna tradition* of 'Purushottama-Mahatmya'. Poet Sarala Das, in order to demonstrate the Savara link with Lord Jagannatha has embarked upon another myth entitled *Sabari-Narayana worship* in his *Mahabharata* ⁸ (the Oriya rendering of the *Mahabharata*).

Based on the literary tradition, other beliefs sprang up in the tenet of Jagannatha, where only association of Savara tribe has been projected. One such belief relates to the 'Daita' and 'Soaro' priests (non-Brahmanic priests) in the service of Lord Jagannatha of Puri. It has been held that the Daita priests are the offsprings of the traditional Savara girl Lalita and the Brahmana priest Vidyapati. They are therefore designated as 'Daita' (descendants). Similarly, another section of tribal priests known as 'Soaro', is believed to be a derivation of the term 'Saura' or 'Savara'. They are celebrated as the descendants of the Savara chieftain Vishwvasu.

Any anthropometric study to determine the ethnic features of the Daita and Soaro priests at present is well-nigh impossible in view of the ecological impact ⁹. Indeed, the nomenclature 'Daita' and 'Soaro' ascribed to the tribal priests of Jagannatha-worship rests merely on literary tradition and there is no other data to substantiate it.

However, Padhi ¹⁰ has endeavored to prove the term 'Jagannatha' as derivation from Savara source. According to him, the term 'Jagannatha' was a resultant from the name 'Jagant'. Jagant was another name of 'Kitung', the chief Savara deity. Kitung is said to have

borne ten incarnations, like Lord Vishnu and the ‘Jagant’ incarnation of Kitung is one of them. It is indeed difficult to say anything definite on the etymology of the term ‘Jagannatha’. The name of the deity Jagannatha came into use since ancient time. Literary sources, like the *Ramayana*, refer to a deity, Jagannatha¹¹. *Vishnu-Purana* (7th century AD.), *Jnanasidhi* (8th century AD) and *Trikandadesha* (9th century AD) mention the name Jagannatha¹². In the Saura literatures, reference to Sun as Jagannatha is well known¹³. The expression ‘Jagannatha’ or ‘Natha’ was in vogue in Jaina and Natha traditions.¹⁴ It was only from the beginning of 14th century A.D, exclusive use of the name ‘Jagannatha [Jagannatha] relating to Puri Deity has been known¹⁵. Hence, the term Jagannatha, cannot be said to have been derived from ‘Jagant’, the other name of Kitung, contended still.

Other factors, which connect the Savara tribe with the tenet of Jagannatha, are *Tree worship* and *worship of the Wooden Post*. Rites of Tree worship go back to the hoary past in the civilization of mankind. Tree worship was well known in almost all ancient civilizations and races. *Phallic-Tree Worship or Cultus Arborum* throws sufficient light on the veneration of Tree by the Indians, Arabians, Galician’s, Hebrews and other peoples of the world.¹⁶ The worship of a wooden post, carving of images out of a log, was popular among certain races¹⁷. It is also likely that in the formation of status, wood was employed before stone or marble¹⁸.

Moreover, Trees are closely related with joys and sorrows of the Indian people. The Ficus Tree has been found in the cultural-stratum of Mohenjodaro. The Vedic people retained it as an object of veneration. The Buddhists also adopted the tenet of the Ficus tree, since Lord Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment under its shade. The Saura (Savara) tribes of Orissa have preserved its veneration¹⁹. Likewise, the Sala tree (*Shorea Robusta*) is an object of worship among the Santal²⁰, Kond²¹, and the Gond²² in Orissa. Consequently, Tree Worship and the worship of Log was a seasonal affair among almost all tribes. It cannot be claimed to be the exclusive possession of the Saura (Savara) tribe.

It has been pointed out that Saura tribe of the Paralakhemundi region of modern Orissa preserves a tradition, enumerated in an Oriya text, *Savara-Vasana*, which lends considerable support to the association of the Savara tribe with Lord Jagannatha at the formative phase²³. But a collateral tradition has been in vogue among the Kharia tribe which claims their **descent** from Vasu, an early worshipper of Lord Jagannatha²⁴. These tribal myths of the Saura (Savara) and the Kharia tribes of Orissa appear to be mere traditions without **substantiate** evidence behind it.

Hence, there does not seem to be any rational argument to uphold the Savara affinity with the Jagannatha Cult. In their voluminous work, *The Jagannatha Cult and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, 1978, scholars like A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G.C Tripathy, while admitting the tribal affiliation, have expressed doubt about the so-called Savara bearing on the Jagannatha Cult. These scholars, however, have not presented any other alternative.

KOND CULTURAL RUDIMENTS IN THE CULT:

While evaluating the tribal relationship with the Jagannatha Cult, it is desirable to unravel the socio-cultural anthropology of a particular tribe, which bears some co-relation with some of the distinguishable features of the Cult. In this respect, it will be clarified that only cultural anthropology of the Kond tribe of Orissa bears any real resemblance with some of the features of the Jagannatha tenet.

Kond means a mountain-dweller²⁵. It also seems that from the term *Koi* – the term like *Kui*, *Koitur*, *Kond*, *Kod* and *Kor* etc, were derived owing to the influence of Telugu, Canarese, Oriya and other languages²⁶. However, it appears that from South India, the Konds and Gonds migrated into Orissa and Central provinces²⁷. They speak the language of the Dravidian group²⁸. The Konds are simple in nature, truthful and credulous²⁹. They are generally found in almost all regions of Orissa. In south-western Orissa, the Kond population is considerably large even today. The tribe has retained its animistic and totemic beliefs. The Kond venerate the Post and the Stone with such names as Dharani, Maili, Bhima, Penu, Thenga, Dukree, etc. The tribal centre of worship is usually located in a grove. The sanctum of the deity is of wattle and daub hut with a thatched roof. A typical shrine of the Kond village is characterized by the presence of a Stone and a wooden Post. Where there is a stone as the original symbol of the deity, there will be in front of it but outside the shrine, a wooden Post of either Sala wood (*shorea robusta*), Rohini wood (*soymida febriguga*) or Mahul wood (*madhuca latifolia*)³⁰. Often, the post was deemed both male and female. Post-worship has been a seasonal practice among the primitive tribes including the Kond.

Investigation of their social and religious practices reveals some striking data, which find a resemblance with some of the noticeable features of the Jagannatha Cult. These are-

- [I] Ritualistic renewal of the wooden post:
- [ii] Disposal of the old Post:
- Iiii] Belief of a Guardian deity;
- [iv] Absence of caste distinctions.
- [v] Sojourn of the chief Kond deity.
- [vi] Nature of brother-sister relationship in the Kond society.

Ritualistic Renewal of the Post:

Post-worship has been a seasonal affair among the primitive tribes including the Kond. But the actual practice and customs of Post-worship differ from tribe to tribe. It is worth-mentioning that the ritualistic renewal of the Post, akin to Navakalevara of the Jagannatha tenet, has been practiced only among the Kond tribe of Western Orissa. Some other tribes of Orissa, though worship wooden post, do not emphasize on this renewal aspect. This ritualistic renewal of the Post seems to have late influenced the religious practices of the Dumla tribe and of other Brahmanised deities ³¹.

The ritualistic renewal of the Post, in the Kond religious practice, seems to be the prototype of Navakalevara ceremony of Jagannatha tenet. A field-study in the partly Hinduized Kond villages and in the hilly Kond (Kutia Kond) villages of Western Orissa indicates that on two occasions ³² the renewal of the Post becomes imperative: [I] If the installed Post gets wane or falls or bends; [ii] On the occasion of the Buffalo sacrifice ³³.

The Kond ritual renewal of the Post as pointed out already bears a similarity of Navakalevara ceremony of the Jagannatha tenet. The only difference between the two systems is that while the Kond ritual renewal is simple, Navakalevara ceremony is elaborate, complicated and includes the painting of the figures ³⁴.

Some of the significant coinciding features of the two ritual practices may be drawn as follows:

- (I) The identification of the tree by certain features;
- (II) The interpretation of a dream before searching for such a tree;

- (III) The consecration of the tree before cutting by the main priest;
- (IV) The restrictions under which the carpenter has to live during this work and the insertion of some substances before the installation. In the case of Navakalevara, it is *brahmapadartha* (Life substance) whereas in the Kond ritual it is five-metals.

Disposal of the old Post – Burial Ritual of the Dead:

The process of the disposal of the old Post shows a great similarity between the Jagannatha tenet and the Kond ritual. In the Kond ritual renewal, when the new post gets ready for installation, the existing old Post is deemed 'dead'. As such, it is removed. This is performed by the Jani or by all members of the community. After the insertion of the new Post within the ground, the old one is taken away and buried within the compound of the tribal shrine, towards the south in a ditch already excavated for the purpose. In some instances, however, if there is a stream or river near the Kond centre of worship, the people immerse the old Post into the water. As the old Post is considered 'dead', persons connected with its removal and disposal has to take a bath after the ritual. Sometimes, a Brahmana priest is asked to perform the 'Visarjana' rite.

This Kond usage of disposal of the old post bears a striking parallel to the disposal process practiced in the Jagannatha tenet, though the ritual system in the Tenet is performed in a more elaborated manner. Accordingly, after the carving of new icons, the *brahma-padartha* (life-substance) is shifted from the old to the new images. Thereafter, the old images are considered 'dead'. The old icons are taken away to the graveyard in the manner of corpses. The burial ground, known as Koili-Vaikuntha, is located within the precincts of the temple of Lord Jagannatha in Puri. Thereafter, the Daita-priest starts weeping. They mourn for Jagannatha whom they consider one of their clan. They observe ritual impurity for ten days³⁵. Since they are the heirs of the 'deceased' (Lord Jagannatha), they lay claim on the articles used by the deity. The temple administration offers them some money as redemption payment³⁶.

The Belief of a Guardian Deity

At least, since the time of the *Ramayana*, belief of a Guardian deity has been traced. In the Sundara Kanda of *Ramayana*, Hanuman is said to have defeated Lankini (Lankeshwari), the Guardian deity at the main gate of the Raksasa capital, Lanka. No such Guardian deity is mentioned in the *Ramayana* either at the main gate of the Aryan capital, *Ayodhya*, or at the Monkey capital, *Kishkindhya*, or in the Savara locality³⁷. So appears that the very idea of a guardian deity to ward off evil spirits was prevailing only among the Raksasa tribe in ancient India. Today, in tribal tenure, especially among the Gonds and the Konds, and in the Hinduized tenet like the Jagannatha tenet, the belief of a Guardian deity is evident. This belief seems to have

influenced the Saura (Savara) tribe of the Ganjam region of Orissa during the British period. Hence, the tenet of Sahibosum sprang up and the deity has been set up on village boundaries (of Savara villages) to frighten away evil spirits ³⁸.

In the Kond villages of Western Orissa, however, one may notice the installation of a uniconical stone at the main entrance into the village as a Guardian deity. The Konds call it 'Nisan'³⁹ The *Bhoga* is first offered to Nisan in the centre of their worship. If the Guardian deity or the stone representing it, comes under any harm, the people of the locality consider it a bad omen, fearing that some calamity may befall on them.

A keen observer may recognize the deity, Nrisimha, as the Guardian deity in the Jagannatha temple of Puri. Nrisimha has been referred to in all the texts pertaining to the temple as the 'protector of the wooden figures'⁴⁰. An offering first to Nrisimha precedes every ritual performance of the Jagannatha tenet. At the time of 'anasara', when Lord Jagannatha cannot be seen in view of his 'illness', the main worship is offered to Nrisimha ⁴¹. Moreover, the deity Nrisimha presides over the Navakalevara ritual ⁴². The very idea of a Guardian deity was certainly a Rakshasa concept. Later on, it could have influenced the Kond and Gond tribes of Orissa. The Kond and Gond belief in a Guardian Deity had its role to play at the time of Sanskritization, because of which the Jagannatha tenet evolved. Thus one may notice today its imprint in the Tenet of Jagannatha.

The Absence of Caste Distinctions:

In the Kond ritual practice, caste distinction is conspicuous by its absence. At the time of the Buffalo sacrifice (a prominent festival of Kond tenure), caste distinctions are seldom noticed. So also, in other celebrations, no barriers of caste or creed are taken into consideration. There is also no taboo of eating the *Bhoga* or sacred food, even if touched by an untouchable. Tribal priests and non-tribal priests occupy equally important positions in the worship of Lord Jagannatha. There is also no restriction on the eating of *Prasad* (*mahaprasada*). It is partaken of by the Brahmana and the Chandala alike ⁴³. It should be eaten even when it has fallen out of the mouth of a dog ⁴⁴.

The suppression of the caste system, as evident in Jagannatha worship, makes this tenet unique among the religious traditions of our land. This particular element is reminiscent of the struggle between the Vedic and non-Vedic culture in Orissa during which the cult of Jagannatha originated. Consequently, it embodies within its tradition a clear social equality.

Sojourn of the Chief Kond Deity

Hitherto investigation on the Rathayatra or Car Festival of Lord Jagannatha points out this usage to the Buddhist background ⁴⁵. Yet cultural anthropology categorically reveals its genesis which

is being traced in the tribal stratum. The Kond tribe of Phulbani-Kondmal area performs the most archaic tribal practice, sojourn of the chief deity on the day of *Ashadha Sukla Panchami* ⁴⁶, which is akin to the Rathayatra of Lord Jagannatha.

Nature of Brother-Sister Relationship

In popular beliefs, Jagannatha Trios are considered as brothers and sister. Prevailing tradition exhibits the Trio in deep social bond. Empirical study of the Kond Family system divulges the degree of attachment among the brothers and sisters ⁴⁷. The psychological and emotional attachment among brother and sister discerned in the Kond families of south-west Orissa cannot be overlooked while evaluating legends and folk-lore that bespeak this social fervor in the belief and tradition of Jagannatha Cult.

Conclusion

The analogue, drawn so far, demonstrates the Kond legacy to the Jagannatha Cult. As the Konds are conservative in nature and changes occur among them in a relatively slow degree, it is hardly probable that the Jagannatha cult has influenced this secluded tribe. Rather, considering the process of Sanskritization of autochthonous deities in Orissa ⁴⁸, it appears highly probable that the above features of the tenet of Jagannatha are nothing but a duplication and elaboration of Kond ritual practices. The Jagannatha cult, as it appears today, can therefore be said to be a conglomeration or a synthesis of Vedic lore and Kond ritual practices at the regional level.

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* This is an abridged version of the paper – ‘Tribal Affinity with The Jagannatha Cult’

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Samlei to Sambaleswari

Myth and Reality in Oral Narratives and History

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Sambalpur, above and beyond the seat of *Buddhism* and *Hinduism*, is also abode of other religions and communities such as *Muslims*, *Christians* and numerous indigenous tribal

communities. With this multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual composition, Sambalpur has always preferred the path of social accommodation and social integration. In Sambalpur, as a consequence, people of diverse religious faiths have inhabited collectively in harmony. It may correctly be identified as the most pluralistic society.

The present essay is an effort to appreciate how the autochthonous groups and their religious traditions have been effectively wrapped up in the regional *Hindu* society and culture. Moreover, this paper is an attempt to understand how afterward these traditions have played most noteworthy role in the process of state formation in the regional level i.e. in the erstwhile Sambalpur *Rajya* or kingdom during medieval period. In Sambalpur, as discussed elsewhere, the ruling class was always aware of the fact that communalism would weaken the state and would cause disharmony in social life and would divert the attention of the people from formation of a separate Sambalpur *Rajya*. So, attempts were made to integrate the indigenous communities into one fold under the broad umbrella of *Hinduism*. What's more, their deities were acknowledged, exalted and glorified to the Hindu status by the ruling class of Sambalpur in order to appease the local subjects so that the ruling class could consolidate their power over the natives and exercise their suzerainty over this area. Understandably, in this process of building unified Sambalpur *Rajya* indigenous communities with their religious traditions were successfully absorbed in the mainstream of the *Hindu* Great Tradition through its branches like *Saivism*, *Vaisnavism* and *Saktism*. The area of our study i.e. Sambalpur is the headquarters town of modern Sambalpur district. It is situated on the left bank of the river *Mahanadi*.

From the earliest time, Sambalpur has been celebrated as the land of *Tantrik Buddhism*. It is an ancient town and it has the global reputation of being a *Tantra Pitha*. When *Buddhism* as a religious-cultural power began to decline in several parts of India, Sambalpur shouldered the vital responsibility of the continuation of this faith in its new form i.e. *Tantrik Buddhism*. In this context, it may be mentioned that the existence of Sambalpur may be dated back at least to the early Christian era. The Greek Geographer Ptolemy (middle of the second century A.D.) in his book the *Geographike* refers to a town named *Sambalaka* located on the bank of the river *Manada*. Ancient *Sambalaka* and *Manada* are identified with modern Sambalpur and the river *Mahanadi* respectively (Panda, 1996:34). The suffix *Pur* has been later supplemented by

sanskritising the original name *Sambala* when this region has come under the *Chauhan* rule (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:2-3).

Likewise, the *Samalei Pitha* may be supposed to be much older and the aborigines may have worshiped the deity since time immemorial. Sambalpur is intimately linked with the spread of *Tantrik Buddhism* both in India as well as overseas. It is recognized to be the land where the *Sambara Tantra* was advocated by a famous *Siddha* called *Pitopada* who is as well regarded to have conquered the *Siddhi* of invisibility at *Sambala* (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:446). Sometimes, in the eighth century A.D., *Indrabhuti* was the king of *Sambalaka* / Sambalpur and was believed to have patronized *Tantrik Buddhism*. He was the author of the manuscript the *Jnanasiddhi*. His sister *Laksmikara* / *Laksminkara* is also reported to be *Tantrik Buddhist* perfectionist. She is celebrated as one of the 84 *Siddha-Gurus* in *Tantrik Buddhism* and as the propounded of a religious faith called *Sahaja-yana*, consequently, building a grand name and reputation for herself. It implies that by the time of medieval period, the land of *Sambala* / *Sambalaka* / Sambalpur was one of the key seats of *Tantrik Buddhism*.

There is no denying the fact that the *Vajra-yana* of *Indrabhuti* and *Sahaja-yana* of *Laksminkara* flourished and prospered in Sambalpur region in the eighth century A.D. At that time, Sambalpur might have developed a very high standard of *Tantrik* culture. Most probably, *Samalei Pitha* was an essential part of that great cultural tradition. In the *Garbha-griha* (inner sanctum) of this temple, the fierce and typical shapeless rock made to appear like the face of *Samalei Devi* (goddess) with two gold leaves in the forms of eyes and in the middle a projection resembling the mouth of a cow recommends some influence of *Tantra*. In this context, mention may be made of Panda (1996:37) who has recognized some noteworthy points that in front of the *Garbha-griha* of *Samalei Gudi* (temple), there is a pillared hall wherein a pair of human foot prints with two eight-petalled lotus-rosette motifs on both sides is engraved on a stone panel. This pair of footprints is worshipped as *Sitala-mata*. Such footprints are found to be imprinted on stone slabs at Ghudar and Ranipur-Jharial in the district of Bolangir and *Narsinghnath* in the district of Bargarh. Panda (1985:106) viewed that admiration of footprints of *Siddhacharyas* was very widespread and common to the *Tantrik* School. His view may be corroborated by the opinion of Patel (2004:42) on footprint emblem discerned in the site of Ranipur-Jharial. Patel accepts as true that it is reminiscent of early *Buddhist* worship of an iconic diction. In this respect, availability of

footprints in crude form at Rampad on the riverbed near Sambaleswari temple carries significance to a great extent. For that reason, *Samalei Pitha* had *Buddhist* connection. In other words, Sambalpur had made *Tantrik Buddhism* a potent spiritual power and effective cultural force in the Indian sub-continent. In view of this, Sambalpur might be recognized as one of the important urban centers with intercontinental reputation in between the second and eighth century A.D. it seems that, *Tantrik Buddhism* continued to triumph in Sambalpur till about 13th century A.D. long after *Buddhism* had vanished from many parts of India.

Reportedly, *Laksminkara* had married *Sevole*, the son of the king *Jalendra of Lanka / Lankapuri*. But, *Laksminkara* preferred the career of a *Tantrik Buddhist* perfectionist and practiced *Tantra Sadhana* in *Lankapuri* which was regarded as *Mahayogapitha* or a great centre of *Tantrik Buddhist Yoga*. Continuous meditation and *Tantra Sadhana* for seven years in the cemetery of *Lankapuri Mahayogapitha* made her properly enlightened and she distinguished herself among the people of India and abroad as *Bhagavati Laksminkara* or Goddess *Laksminkara* because of her *Uttama Siddhi* or excellent attainment. *Lanka* or *Lankapuri* is identified with modern Sonepur or Subarnapur (Mishra, 2003:87-88). *Lankeswari*, therefore, may be recognized as *Laksminkara* as the former nomenclature appears to be a corruption of the latter. A legend also ascribes Goddess *Samalei* to *Lankeswari*. Furthermore, *Chaurasi Samalei* are important deities of the *Keutas*, the fishermen caste of Bolangir (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:107). This notion of *Chaurasi* (84) *Samalei* prevalent among the *Keutas* (fishermen) of west Odisha very probably refers to 84 *Siddha-Gurus* in *Tantrik Buddhism*. In view of this, Goddess *Laksminkara* may reasonably be identified with *Laksminkara* i.e. *Samalei* or *Samaleswari* who has been worshipped by the local people in Sambalpur.

Raja Ramai Dev founded the kingdom of Patna in the fourteenth century. Within a very short span of his military career, *Raja Ramai Dev* became the chief of the cluster of eighteen *Garhs* (forts). Patna was an important State in west Odisha under the *Chauhans* since fourteenth century. By the sixteenth century, almost the whole of west Odisha came under the political sway of the *Chauhan Rajas* of Patna who occupied as many as eighteen *Garhs* (*Athara-Garh*) under them.

The twelfth king *Raja* Narasingha Dev handed over to his younger brother Balaram Dev the territory lying north of the river *Ang / Ong* (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:3). It is said that one rainy night when the *Rani* of Narasingha Dev was in the throes of childbirth, Balaram Dev swam across a hill-stream named *Mayabati*, which was flowing in between the capital town of Patnagarh and the village Barapada, and brought the nurse from that village to attend the *Rani*. It was reward for this courageous and faithful service that *Raja* Narasingha Dev gave the northeastern part of his dominion to Balaram Dev. Later on, there arose a quarrel between the two brothers concerning the extent of their respective territories. However, it was cordially settled by the intervention of the Queen mother. Tradition goes that the Queen mother took her both sons to the bed of the river *Surangi* and asked the elder and the younger to sit on her right and left laps respectively. After that she told them that the river *Surangi* should be taken as her own body (*Ang*). The elder brother should enjoy the territory to the right of the river and the younger one to the left of it. Both the brothers acknowledged the decision of their mother and from that time onwards the river was called *Ang* and was regarded as the natural frontier between Patna and Sambalpur territories.

It appears that *Raja* Narasingha Dev placed the Sambalpur region under the charge of his younger brother Balaram Dev to check the aggression of *Haihaya* power of Ratanpur (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:52-53). In other words, Balaram Dev was given the Sambalpur tract where he, later on, assumed the power and founded the state of Sambalpur, which became most powerful of the *Garhjat* cluster and from that time onwards, the importance of Patna declined (Senapati and Sahu, 1968:3). Accordingly, Balaram Dev became the first *Chauhan Raja* of Sambalpur *Rajya* about the middle of the 16th century A.D. As per the prevailing tradition, he discovered the image of *Samalei* beneath a *Semel* (silk cotton) tree. The botanical name of this tree is *Bomax malabaricum*. Because of phonetic resemblance between *Semel* and *Samalei* some scholars give credence to this tale that the deity worshipped under a *Semel* tree has come to be recognized as *Samalei*. Oral tradition relates that *Raja* Balaram Dev was given a grant of this area by his elder brother *Raja* Narasingha Dev of Patnagarh. Balaram Dev established himself first at Bargarh on the bank of the river *Jira*. Bargarh is on the National Highway No.6 and is about 50 kms. to the west of Sambalpur. The original name of this place was *Baghar-Kota* as identified from an inscription of the 11th century A.D. It was called Bargarh probably from the time of *Raja*

Balaram Dev who made it for some time his headquarters and constructed a big (*Bar / Bad*) fort (*Garh*) for its protection. Later on, *Raja* Narayan Singh, the last *Chauhan Raja* granted this place in *Maufi* (free hold) to two *Brahmin* brothers Krusna Das and Narayan Das, sons of Baluki Das who was killed in action by the Gond rebels led by Bandya Ray and Mahapatra Ray. The grant is known as the *Sri-kata / Sir-Kata* grant (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:510). Etymologically, the word *Sri-Kata* or *Sir-Kata* is a combination of *Sir* and *Kata*. The word *Sir* means head and *Kata* means cutting. In other words, the award is meant for sacrifice of life. However, *Raja* Balaram Dev is believed to have shifted his capital from Bargarh to Chaunrpur, on the right bank of the river *Mahanadi*. In all probability, during this phase when *Raja* Balaram Dev carved out a new *Rajya* out of the territory of his elder brother he named it *Huma Desa*. Thereafter, the time of foundation of Sambalpur *Rajya* was about the year 1570 A.D. (Panda, 1996:35).

As per the legend, the village Chaunrpur is supposed to be the seat of *Raja* Balaram Dev previous to his coming to Sambalpur. One day while hunting, *Raja* Balaram Dev crossed the river *Mahanadi*. When he arrived at the left bank an attractive hare appeared before him. *Raja* Balaram Dev set his hounds at the innocent creature. But the outcome was contrary to his expectation. After some time, *Raja* Balaram Dev discovered his hounds repulsed by the hare. He had not anticipated such a scene. Struck by the most timid of animals, he thought that there might be some supernatural power in the land. That night Goddess *Samalei* appeared in his dream and said, “Why do you appear so sad? Don’t think that there appears to have been a mistake. I am *Lankeswari* here. Worship me. Your expectations and hopes will be fulfilled.” Next day, *Raja* Balaram Dev discovered the deity in the form of a stone. Afterward, he decided to build his *Gad* or *Garh* nearby. Having built a *Gad* he installed in it the deity *Samalei*. The place where her image was set up was a *Kud* (island) on which stood a *Semel* tree and hence was called *Semel-Kud* while the deity was named *Samalei*. Later on *Samalei* has been sanskritised to *Samaleswari*. Etymologically, the name *Samaleswari* is a combination of *Samala* and *Iswari*. The word *Samala* refers to Sambala or Sambalpur. Accordingly, *Samaleswari* means *Iswari* of *Sambala* in the reigns of *Chauhans*. In other words, Sambalpur is acknowledged as the land of *Samalei* and she is the reigning deity of Sambalpur (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:2-3). Be that as it may, identical stories prevail about origins of other places of Odisha like Cuttack, Talcher and Baripada. Matching story is also associated with detection of deities like *Banibakreswari* of Kuapada village under Delanga block in Puri district and *Barala Devi* of Balasakumpa village in Phulbani district. This is why, it is hard to estimate the accurate time and locate the exact place of the

origin of this myth (Pasayat, 2003:10-12). Nevertheless, this story attests the fact that the aboriginal religious shrine like *Samalei* has received royal patronage. *Raja* Balaram Dev enshrined *Samalei Devi* inside his *Gad*. During his reign, *Seva-Puja* (*Puja* services) was provided from the royal treasury. In other words, State funding of *Seva-Puja* has been introduced since then. Subsequently, the present temple was built during 1657-95 A.D. in the reign of *Raja* Chhatra Sai (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:548). In view of this, it may be suggested here that *Samalei Pitha* already existed when *Raja* Balaram Dev arrived here. Perhaps, the temple was in a dilapidated condition. So, *Raja* Balaram Dev extended royal patronage and rebuilt the temple. Afterward, *Raja* Chhatra Sai had also most probably rebuilt or renovated the temple.

There is no denying the fact that *Raja* Balaram Dev adopted this *Sakti-Pitha* and extended royal patronage. But, the most significant development in the period of *Raja* Chhatra Sai (1657-95) was endowment of forty villages for the regular worship of *Samalei Devi*. Names of some villages have been collected from the natives. These are Jayaghanta, Kalamati, Ambasada Katapali, Nunia Jampali, Karpula Senapali, Chaunrpur etc. In other words, *Raja* Chhatra Sai made a permanent arrangement for the maintenance of the *Samalei Gudi*. It means that recognized steps have been taken by the *Chauhan* rulers for the state-funding of the *Seva-Puja* in *Samalei Gudi* and she has been elevated to the status of *Rastra-Devi* and called *Sambaleswari* i.e. *Iswari* or presiding deity of *Sambala* or Sambalpur. However, the landed property assigned for the performance of the daily and special *Puja* of *Samalei Devi* have been converted into personal property by the priests. This had been possible, most probably, during the British rule, either by hiding or destroying the copper plate grants. Any how, the priests are now managing the *Seva-Puja* of *Samalei Gudi*. Allegedly, the temple has no landed property at present (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:548).

It may be understood with exactitude that in the 15th and 16th century A.D., after collapse of the Ganga empire of Odisha, a strong pull towards political fragmentation as well as decentralization of power took place to a certain extent due to the partition of ruling chiefs who ended up as independent potentates. In the frontier zone of uncertain control like *Daksina Kosala* (roughly modern west Odisha) the indigenous tribal chiefs and chiefs of obscure origins took advantage of weak central authority; they assumed power and formed several small *Rajyas* (Deo, 2003:96). Formation of a separate Bargarh and subsequently Huma *Desa* and finally Sambalpur

Rajya by *Raja* Balaram Dev in the 16th century A.D. was the product of the partition of the ruling family of Patnagarh. In all probability, this was a forested area and inhabited by aboriginal people when *Raja* Balaram Dev first arrived here. He was a reputed warrior. Owing to military necessity, the administration of this tribal dominated, hilly and forested part was entrusted to him by his elder brother *Raja* Narasingha Dev, the-then *Chauhan Raja* of Patnagarh. *Raja* Balaram Dev was successful to consolidate and strengthen the *Chauhan* rule in this part of the *Rajya* and he carved out a new *Rajya* out of the country of his elder brother. Subsequently, he and his successors extended and strengthened *Chauhan* rule in Sambalpur *Rajya*. In order to sustain a separate and independent Sambalpur *Rajya*, most probably, *Raja* Balaram Dev and his successors had to depend upon the *Bhagas* (share) and *Bhogas*. They had to influence the local tribal people to become settled agriculturists, so that production would augment because tribal economy based on hunting and shifting cultivation cannot maintain a *Rajya* as analysed somewhere else by Deo (2003:96). To legitimize their status as *Rajas* and to their share (*Bhaga*) of the produce, the *Chauhan* rulers granted lands to *Brahmins* and temples, which contributed to altering the agrarian situation, formation of hierarchical social order and also encouraged *Brahminisation* or *Hinduisation* of society in this area. In view of this, it may be recommended that *Samalei Pitha* previously existed when *Raja* Balaram Dev arrived here. Perhaps, this religious *Pitha* was in a decaying state. He extended state patronage and rebuilt or renovated this *Pitha*. Later on, *Raja* Chhatra Sai was also, most probably, instrumental in rebuilding or renovating it. As a result, the temple of *Samalei* or *Sambaleswari* became an important apparatus of *Hinduisation* in Sambalpur.

There is a tale, which reveals that during the demolition of idols of *Hindu* Gods and Goddesses by *Kalapahada*, the *sevakas* or priests of the *Sri Jagannath* Temple at Puri escaped with the images of the deities. They buried the images on the Mahanadi in Soneur or Subarnapur, which is situated to the south of Sambalpur. *Kalapahada* and his army followed the priests and arrived at Sambalpur where *Samalei Devi* prevented them from proceeding further. She assumed the appearance of a milkmaid and emerged before them. She sold milk and curd to the soldiers who were very thirsty at that moment. Straight away, the soldiers drank the milk and curd, which spread desolation among them. At this hour, *Raja* Balabhadra Dev of Sambalpur drove back *Kalapahada* effectively. Accordingly, *Samalei Devi* satisfied *Kalapahada's* thirst for quest to destroy the image of Lord *Jagannath*. It would not be out of place to mention that matching stories prevail in other shrines of Odisha namely *Chalhakhai Devi* at Kulada in Ganjam district,

Dahikhai-Chamundai Devi at Rambha in Ganjam district. This tale is also associated with *Danteswari Devi* at Bastar in the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh (Pasayat, 2003:20). It may be suggested that the foundation of this narrative is a feat of imagination. This is why, it is complicated to identify the place wherefrom and classify the time when this tale has initially been conceived and later adopted in other religious shrines. Nonetheless, we cannot disregard the information that this tale has singled out the supernatural power and deeds of *Samalei Devi*. It has established socio-cultural affiliation between the aborigines and the caste *Hindus*. By assimilating such stories into *Samalei* cult, the aboriginal people identify themselves as part of the larger *Hindu* religious culture, thus, contributing to *Hindu* cultural unity at a larger level which had facilitated at the time of state formation in Sambalpur.

Samalei at Sambalpur is a shapeless rock made to appear like a face. It may be believed to be a big piece of head-like stone structure. According to the oral tradition, *Daksa* arranged a *Yajna*. He invited all the deities and relatives to be present at the function. But he did not call his own daughter *Sati* and son-in-law Lord *Siva*, for the reason that *Sati* married Lord *Siva* against the desire and wish of *Daksa*. When *Sati* came to know about it, tears rolled down her face. When she settled down she got down at her father's residence to attend the ritual ceremony without invitation. Unfortunately, *Sati* was received with dishonor and disgrace. She protested and accused her father for his neglect and disregard shown to her husband. *Daksa* broke into anger and cursed Lord *Siva* as a beggar, ashman, *Yogi*, king of goblins and so on. *Sati* could not put up with such abuse and insult; she jumped into the *Yajna-Kunda*. Consequently, Lord *Siva* became furious and started his *Tandava* bearing the corpse of *Sati* on his back. It was terrible and the destruction of the entire universe was imminent. So, Lord *Vishnu* came out to protect the mankind. He instructed his *Sudarsana Chakra* to slash the dead body of *Sati* into pieces. When Lord *Siva* became conscious, Lord *Vishnu* consoled him and the anger of Lord *Siva* cooled. Thereafter, Lord *Siva* retired alone to his abode *Kailas*. The corpse of *Sati* hewn into a number of pieces and wherever a fragment touched the earth, a *Sakti-Pitha* i.e. shrine of mother goddess sprang up. It is understood to be the head of *Sati*, which is enshrined and worshipped in the *Samalei Gudi* of Sambalpur.

Though mythological origin of the *Sakti-Pitha* at Sambalpur is connected with the most famous *Daksa-Yajna* story, originally it is not reported or recorded in any of the epic tradition of

the *Hindu* religion. There is no denying the fact that the image of *Samalei Devi* is a large block of stone. There is also a projection with a narrow groove in the middle of the stone image of the deity. This projection is supposed to be the mouth of the deity. On both sides of projection are depressions covered with beaten gold leaves, which symbolize the eyes of the deity. Moreover, the image of *Samalei Devi* does not bear a resemblance to any other *Sakti* goddess found in Odisha. There is a *Parsva-Devata* of *Samalei* identified as *Pitabali* who is understood to be the deity of tribal people namely *Kandhas* (Senapati and Mahanti, 1971:547). The above account of *Samalei Devi* recommends us to accept as true that she is a non-*Brahmin* deity, formerly worshipped by the aborigines of Sambalpur. Addition of *Daksa-Yajna* narrative is very likely a later improvement to add to *Samalei* some supplementary doses of Sanskritik fundamentals. This may be recommended to be an excellent illustration of localization or parochialisation of renowned *Daksa-Yajna* account to validate the faith of the aborigines with the *Hindu* epic tradition (Great Tradition) of India. By identifying Sambalpur with the manifestation of *Sakti* as *Sambaleswari* and her mythical and miraculous actions, the local people identify and classify themselves as component of the larger *Hindu* culture (Great Tradition), thus, contributing to cultural unity and consolidation of *Chauhan* rule in Sambalpur.

There is one more story, which indicates the dietary pattern of *Samalei Devi*. On one occasion, the priest was offering prayers to the goddess. His small daughter was standing by his side. The priest had fruits and flowers on a plate. All of a sudden, the priest discovered that the deity had disappeared. Looking up, he found the deity devouring his girl child. He was dumb-founded. Thereafter, the priest threw the plate right away at the face of the deity. As a result, the face of the deity turned to back side. So, the deity is thought to be facing away from the main entrance and that is why there is no face on the front side. Interestingly, this tale with little variation is found in the following religious shrines namely *Kanaka-Durga* at Piteipur village in Jagatsinghpur district, *Janlei Devi* at Hinjilikatu in Ganjam district and *Kumari Devi* at Bonai in Sundargarh district. In addition, the narrative is associated with *Chandrasahini Devi* at Chandrapur in Bilaspur district of the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh (Pasayat, 2003:19). However, the meaning of this tale is more important for our study. This story is meant not only to frighten children away but also suggests the practice of severe form of blood sacrifice and influence of *Tantra* on this *Pitha*. As per the oral tradition, once upon a time human beings were sacrificed before *Samalei Devi*. It is said that once a *Siddha Brahmin* arrived at Sambalpur. Priests of *Samalei Devi* caught him for sacrifice before the deity. The *Brahmin* told the priests to

leave him alone and no one else before the deity inside the *Garbhagriha* so that *Samalei Devi* could munch him if she required. Accordingly, the *Brahmin* was not beheaded and rather left alone and alive in the *Garbhagriha* and the doors were closed. The episode went contrary to the interest of the priests. Next morning, the *Brahmin* came out from the *Garbhagriha* alive and unhurt. The account spread quickly throughout the *Rajya* that the *Brahmin* had contended and pleased *Samalei Devi* and the deity had blessed him. *Maharaja* Baliar Singh heard this incredible and miraculous incident; he gave order to bring to an end the practice of human sacrifice before *Samalei Devi*. Since then, buffaloes were sacrificed before the deity. Now a days, *Buka* (he-goat) and cock are familiar sacrificial objects in *Durga Puja*, *Chaitra Purnima* and other occasions in this *Sakti-Pitha*. This may be understood to be the process of legitimization of *Brahmin* priests in the non-*Brahminik Samalei Gudi* and minimization of severe practice of blood sacrifice in this *Pitha*.

According to the tradition, *Samalei* was worshipped in the beginning by the natives belonging to *Sahara* and *Jhara* communities living on the bank of the river *Mahanadi*. The chief occupation of these people was to collect diamonds and gold from the riverbed of *Mahanadi*. On one occasion, they found a big piece of stone under the deep water. They brought it out with the hope to extract diamonds and other valuable stones from it; they positioned it under a *Semel* tree on the bank of the river. Later on, they realized it as a deity in the shape of a stone. Thence, they started worshipping her (Dash, 1962:227). Although, *Raja* Balaram Dev adopted the local deity, he did not reject and exclude the traditional servitors of the deity from the temple cult, which was emerging as a testimony to *Sanskritisation* or *Hinduisation* of *Samalei Devi*. He appointed the *Saharas*, the traditional worshippers of the deity as the priests and *Jharas* as the servants and holders of canopy of *Samalei Devi* (Sae Deo, 1985:7-8). *Saharas* are generally considered to be untouchables in the social hierarchy of this culture area. In villages, the *Jhankar* worships *Samalei* as village deity. Though the *Jhankars* do not belong to any specific caste or community they are, in fact, non-*Brahmin* priests who also worship other village deities namely *Mauli*, *Budhi-Ma* and *Gram-Pati*. Previously, *Jhankars* were granted rent-free lands for their service in the villages. All these combinedly point out that *Samalei* has the personality of a non-*Brahmin* deity. Most probably, the rulers intended no harm to the sentiments and feelings of the aborigines. In view of this, it may be suggested that *Saktism* has taken all care to adopt and approve the features of the aboriginal or local religious cult i.e. *Samalei*. In other words, numerous local indigenous communities with *Samalei* tradition of erstwhile Sambalpur *Rajya* have been deeply

attracted towards and absorbed in the mainstream of the Indian cultural tradition through *Saktism* i.e. Great Tradition. *Saktism* coupled with *Saivism* has formed the centre of the integration of Indian civilization and has a great influence on the regional religious culture of Sambalpur i.e. Little Tradition.

A very important characteristic of the development of religious system in Sambalpur region during the medieval period is the introduction of *Tantrik* elements in worship. As it has been discussed earlier, historical and archaeological remains attest the fact that Sambalpur region has been a stronghold of *Saivism* and *Saktism* united with *Tantrism*. Furthermore, severe practice of blood sacrifice at this *Pitha*, absence of caste distinction, employment or engagement of tribal or non-*Brahmin* priests, installation of the guardian deity (*Samalei*) in the *Garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum), belief in the replica or proxy divinity (*Chalanti Pratima*) of the main deity, annual or periodical journey (*Yatra*) of the *Chalanti Pratima*, spirit possession or descending of *Samalei Devi* through human beings etc. suggest some connections with the *Tantra*. As it is discussed elsewhere, Sambalpur as well as *Samalei Pitha* has been identified with an important seat of *Tantrism* where a very high standard of *Tantrik* culture had developed during the *Buddhist* and pre-*Chauhan* period. But, thereafter, particularly during the *Chauhan* period the unique blend of *Saktism*, *Saivism*, *Tantrism* and *Sanskritik* or *Brahminical* culture rose to a new height in Sambalpur region. Most probably, the *Chauhan Rajas* have brought their own faith with them. But they have not enjoined on common people of this area to believe and follow their faith and worship their deity rather they have reckoned their own faith with that of the locality. It was not what they practiced and worshipped but what they felt under what they believed that was important. The *Chauhan Rajas* have taken all care to retain the primitive character of this *Pitha* like aniconical image of the deity, non-*Brahmin* priests of the deity, blood sacrifice and the like. By constructing or renovating the temple they have introduced elaborate rituals in a orderly manner. By giving rent-free land grants to the temple they have ensured regular and expected *Seva-Puja* for the deity. They have also manufactured myths wherever required to classify the deity as a *Hindu* goddess. In all probability, they have cautiously followed this principle under political expediency with a view to pleasing the local subjects.

In this context, mention may be made of *Asapuri Devi* who is the tutelary goddess of the *Chauhan Rajas* all over the country. *Raja Ramai Dev*, the first *Chauhan Raja* of *Patna Rajya*

identified her as *Pataneswari* in Patna or Patana-gad meaning *Iswari* of Patana. Since then Pataneswari has been the tutelary goddess of the *Chauhan Rajas* of the Patana-gad or Patana house. In the same way, *Raja* Balaram Dev established Sambalpur *Rajya*. He also extolled the local deity *Samalei* as *Sambaleswari* meaning *Iswari* of *Sambala* or Sambalpur and the *Raja* accepted her with his own tutelary goddess. This way, the Hindu scholars and priests hinduised the local name of the deity i.e. *Samalei* to *Sambaleswari*. According to this name, she is the deity of all who dwell in Sambalpur. In other words, the deity represents a larger society wherein people of various ethnic background stay together. Thus, the deity has become the source and symbol of unity and integrity mainly between the aboriginal people and caste-*Hindus* in Sambalpur. It may be understood that the *Chauhan Rajas* have made it their principle to esteem and extol the deities of the aborigines or natives wherever they have established their kingdoms and expanded their territory. *Samalei*, the deity of the autochthonous people has been hijacked by the ruling classes and used as tool to exercise their authority and control over the latter. Not only *Samalei* of Sambalpur but also *Asta-Sambhus* in different parts of erstwhile Sambalpur *Rajya* namely *Bimaleswara* at Huma, *Kedarnath* at Ambabhona, *Biswanath* at Deogaon, *Balunkeswara* at Gaisama, *Maneswara* at Maneswar, *Swapneswara* at Sorna, *Bisweswara* at Soranda and *Nilakantheswara* at Niljee have been adopted and given royal patronage in the reigns of *Chauhan Rajas*. Temples have been constructed and elaborate rituals have been introduced in these temples. Rent-free lands and villages have been granted and regular *Seva-Puja* of these deities has been ensured. This fundamental principle has made them admired and popular among the local inhabitants and also helped them to expand, consolidate and strengthen the *Chauhan* rule in Sambalpur region.

It may be noted here that *Pataneswari* temples are found only at few places like Patnagarh, Bolangir and Sambalpur whereas the number of *Samalei Gudi* or *Sambaleswari* temples in Sambalpur is quite large. Besides the *Samalei Gudi* to be found in Sambalpur, Barpali and Subarnapur, the deity occupies a pivotal position in the religious life of the common people through out the length and breadth of the land of *Samalei* i.e. Sambalpur. She is being commonly worshipped under a tree in the form of a stone in the vicinity of almost each and every village of erstwhile Sambalpur *Rajya*. This indicates the extent of reverence shown to *Samalei* in every part of Sambalpur region. In villages, *Samalei* is worshipped by the *Jhankars* who enjoy rent-free lands for their *Seva-Puja* as mentioned earlier. Moreover, many indigenous, aboriginal, native, local, folk or tribal communities with their religious traditions (Little Tradition) of Sambalpur

region have been successfully absorbed in the mainstream of the *Hindu* Great Tradition through *Saivism*, *Saktism* and *Vaisnavism* and helped in the process of state formation during medieval period in erstwhile Sambalpur *Rajya*. Bose (1941:188) has correctly pointed out, “*Hinduism* has grown by the incorporation of many tribal cults, until it has become a kind of federation of religious beliefs and practices...which goes by the name of *Hinduism*”. In sum, it may be concluded that as most of the rulers originated from one of the local groups it was easy for them to raise their deity to be the state deity or *Rastra-Devata*. In this process, it has helped them to legitimize and consolidate their political power over this area. Deities have become the linkage between the ruler and the ruled. The patronage of local deities and their elevation have helped the ruler to spread the narrative that the local deity has been pleased with the new ruler or the deity has blessed the ruler or the ruler has pleased the deity. They have successfully used the emotional attachment and religious sentiments of the local communities to the deity. This has helped the ruler to mobilize support of the local people and to legitimize their position and status in this area. This pattern has emerged partly because the rulers have needed the support of the local communities for their numerical strength and partly because of the fear of the deity whose wrath might result from absence of worship. The incorporation of local communities into the wider social order and their indoctrination proceeded in multifaceted manner through ceremonial and enactment of hierarchical relations. So, multiple simultaneous processes of *Hinduisation*, *Tribalisation* and *localization* / *parochialisation* are found linking between the *Hindu* Great Tradition and the local Little Tradition of Sambalpur. These processes of diffusion, acculturation and assimilation were never one-way flow from *Hindu* Great Tradition to local Little Tradition alone. In Sambalpur area, simultaneous process of acculturation and de-culturation has been observed down the ages. It has proceeded through complex processes of interaction, which are confirmed by myths, legends and historical evidence.

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BALI YATRA

Animal Sacrifice Ritual among the Tribal Folk of Sonepur

Sarmistha Barik

Bali Yatra is a famous ritual folk festival of Sonepur, which is situated on the confluence of two rivers namely the Mahanadi and the Tel. It is the headquarter town of Sonepur district, created in 1993. One finds some visual ritual performances in Sonepur through which the idea of supernatural power is spread to others.

Bali Yatra of Sonepur is an annual festival celebrated in the Hindu month of *Aswina* (September-October) from *Amavasya Tithi* or *Mahalaya* (New moon day) to *Purnami Tithi* (Full moon day). It continues for 16 days. On this occasion, the *Barua* represents the deity to whom the people worship. He moves from temple to temple and from place to place dancing vigorously with the beating of *Dhol*, *Nisan* and *Ghant*.

The literary meaning of *Yatra* is traveling. Different deities make journey to various places, where they are worshipped by the common people. So, this festival is known as *Yatra*. *Bali* or animal sacrifice is the essential part of this ritual. Hence, this festival is known as *Bali Yatra*. *Bali* means sacrifice. This festival is known as one of the appealing festivals in the neighbouring areas including Sambalpur, Bolangir and Boudh.

It is said that *Bali Yatra* started in Sonepur during the reign of *Raja* Madan Gopal Singh Deo (1635-1660). He was the first *Chauhan Raja* of Sonepur. Originally, he belonged to Sambalpur Raj-Paribar. He was awarded Sonepur as his share. However, according to the noted historian B. C. Majumdar, the wife of *Raja* Rajsingh Deo had initiated this festival in Sonepur.

Three *Sakti Pithas* namely Sureswari, Khambeswari and Samaleswari are the main centres of *Bali Yatra* in Sonepur. Role of Brahmin priest during *Bali Yatra* is insignificant and unimportant. On the other hand, function of non-Brahmin priests in this *Yatra* is noteworthy.

Yatra begins from *Samaleswari* temple on the night of *Amabasya* i.e. new moon day in the *Hindu* month of *Aswina* (September-October). The deity ascended through two non-Brahmin human beings i.e. *Thanapati Barua Dangua* and *Keunt Barua*. The traditional musical instrument namely *Dhol* plays an important role. It is the *Bharni-Par* which is played at the time of ascending the deity through the *Barua*.

When the deity appears in the body of *Barua*, at that time he loses his sense and acts according to the direction of the unseen force. Here he is addressed as *Maa*. People worship him (deity in the body of the *Barua*), ask him various questions to solve their problems and the deity replies them accordingly. It is said that Bali can foretell the past, present and future of the devotees on prayer.

The Brahmin priest hands over the *Kala-Bauti Chhatar* to the *Keunt Barua*, who carries it and leaves the temple. Thereafter, *Thanapati Barua* leaves the temple. It is believed that, if at that time the *Thanapati Barua* pulls the *Chhatra* carried by the *Keunt Barua* then the death of *Keunt Barua* is imminent. Such situation also indicates that Sonepur has to face a lot of tragedies and misfortunes that year.

When the *Keunt Barua* arrives at the palace, the deity leaves his body. *Thanapati Barua* sits near the *Budharaja* temple situated in front of the Sonepur palace. Samaleswari ascends him. One or two *Buka* (he-goat) are offered to the deity (*Barua*). After that, the *Barua* returns to Samaleswari temple and the deity leaves his body at the twin poles (*Juda Khamba*) near the temple.

After the *Amabasya* ritual, *Bali Yatra* of *Pratipada* (first day), *Dwitiya Tithi* (second day) and *Trutiya Tithi* (third day) is called *Nisa-Bali*, because it is performed at mid-night. *Nisha* implies mid-night. In these three days, *Samaleswari* ascends the body of the *Barua* and visits the palace to be worshipped and returns thereafter at mid-night. At this time, a lot of curd is poured over the head of the *Barua*, who is found in the state of ecstasy.

Chaturthi Tithi is a significant day of *Bali Yatra*. On this day, the *Barua* collects sacred soil from the *Khaul-Gad*, situated near *Sureswari* temple. This *niti* is called *Khaul-Phita*. At night, animal is sacrificed here. This is known as *Khaul-Bali*. It is performed in secret and very confidentially. General public are not allowed to witness this ritual. Only the non-Brahmin priest called *Khambeswaria Purohit* and *Khaul-Phita Dangua* are present on the spot when this *niti* is performed.

Sonepur is viewed as the land of *Parasuram*. The *Khaul-Gad* is supposed to be the birth place of *Parasuram*. It is also said that, *Parasuram* killed his mother *Renuka* on the instruction of his father. Later on, he repented a lot and performed a *Yajna*. *Khaul-Gad* is understood to be that *Yajna-Kunda*. It is also believed that, *Parasuram* raised his war against the *Kshatriyas*. Then, he threw all his *Pothi* in the *Khaul-Gad*. As per the other oral narrative, *Parasuram* performed a *Yajna* here and on his mother's instruction he installed *Sureswari Devi* here. So, it is famous as *Renuka-Pitha*.

The ritual of *Panchami Tithi* is known as *Ghoda-Panchami*. As per the tradition, the *Barua* leaves Samaleswari temple and visits the palace at night. After the ritual of animal sacrifice, the deity i.e. the *Barua* returns to the temple. The ritual of *Sasthi Tithi* is also very

significant when the *Barua* goes to the palace at night and the ritual of animal sacrifice is performed. *Sodasa Puja* begins on *Saptami Tithi*.

Rituals of *Astami Tithi* are imperative. The ritual of animal sacrifice is performed in the temples of *Asta-Chandi* (*Sureswari, Narayani, Bhagavati, Samaleswari, Khambeswari, Ramachandi, Dasamati* and *Bimalakshi*) of Sonepur. Also, the ritual of animal sacrifice is performed at *Chari-Nala* (*Sashi-Sena Tikra, Rana-Rahu Tikra, Hul-Bhita Tikra* and *Sulia Tikra*), *Chari-Khala* or *Gada* (*Manei-Gad, Danei-Gad, Mahi-Gad* and *Kanhei-Gad*), *Chari-Bata* (*Khambeswari Bata, Kulipada Bata, Budharaja Bata* and *Samalei Bata*) and *Chari-Ghata* (*Raj Ghat, Gouri Ghat, Kadamb Ghat* and *Samalei Ghat*) of Sonepur. Sonepur *Raja* used to perform the ritual of animal sacrifice in these places for the safety of Sonepur.

Rituals of *Navami Tithi* are also very important. *Mahakali Devi* spends this day with *Samaleswari Devi* in *Samaleswari* temple and returns thereafter. *Bali Yatra* of this night is known as *Maha-Bali* or *Khambeswari Bali*. *Khambeswari* temple is the main attraction of this ritual. At night, *Khambeswari Devi* ascends the *Barua*. The ritual of animal sacrifice is performed and then the deity (*Barua*) visits the town.

On *Dasami Tithi*, *Dasahara Bali* is organized in the temple of *Samaleswari*. This is known as *Maidhania Bali* because it is performed in the noon. On this day also, *Barua* visits the palace with the two *Kala-Chhatras* final ritual is performed on *Aswina Purnima* i.e. on the full moon day. At night, *Puni Bali* otherwise known as *Jaunli Bali* or *Nisha Bali* is organized. *Mahakali* is worshipped on this occasion. As per the tradition, the deity i.e. the *Barua* visits the palace where *Podh* or *Mahisi Bali* i.e. buffalo sacrifice was once prevalent. Once upon a time, the *Gauntia* i.e. the headman of the village Sakma and his family members were performing the role of *Barua* on the occasion of *Bali Yatra* in Sonepur.

Barua is an important character of Bali Yatra in Sonepur. Besides being the hero of Bali Yatra, he is also the mouth-piece of the deity. He represents the deity. *Barua* symbolizes the deity. So, *Barua* though male by sex is addressed as *Maa* when the deity appears in his body.

Hundreds of people assemble near the *Sureswari*, *Khambeswari* and *Samaleswari* temples and near the Sonepur palace on different events of *Bali Yatra* and witness this rich folk festival of Sonepur. In fact, the entire Sonepur feels the vibration of *Bali Yatra* right from the beginning of *Aswina*.

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Death Rituals and Spirit Beliefs among the Tribes of Bastar³³

I thank Chris Gregory for his help with the English translation.

*This breath,
Which lives in this body?
What is it?
What is this body?
That houses the soul,
Not for ever,
But for a short time only?
What is Earth?
Body? Soul?
Breath!
Like the leaves of the sacred fig tree
The swaying of the breath
Is exactly like that.
Like
The water lying on the leaves
Which is about to fall down
Within an instant,
So from the leaf that is our body
The soul is about to depart.
Life is very short.” (A ritual song from Gadaba Tribe)*

This folk song, sung in Gadabī, an endangered language from the tribal region of Bastar region, reveals their beliefs about life and death. The original song, taken from Lālā Jagdalpurī's *Bastar: Itihās Avam Sanskriti* (Bastar: History and Culture), 1994: 161, is as follows:

Hoy jīwī hoy ho, hāsā hoḍmo

He sāk sākām lekā hipid-hipid.

Sāk sākā madāk lekā jiwe mā ṭhol- ṭhol

Noā setāf sisor wāng tāhenā.

Almost the same beliefs about life and death are found among other tribes of Bastar.

All tribes accept the existence of the soul. The Muriyā tribe even accepts death freely and honours it. This is very clear from their traditions, beliefs, and rituals. Death is always very easy going affair in these tribes. This is because they believe in life after death. The body is perishable but not the soul. They know this fact very well. Death of an old person brings them happiness because the dead become their deities. In Bastar region there are many deities like this including: Muttal Ammā, Chirpaṭṭī dev, Jananī budhī, Kesarpālin, Gangādaī, āmābālin, Lohanḍigudin, Dābāgosin, Gapāgosin, Dulārdaī, Rewāgadin, Konḍrāj, Hurrāmarkā, Hurremārā, Usenḍidev, Pilābāī, Banjārin, Bāstānārin, Koṭṭigudin, Badepāt, Pilāpāt, Bārābhujā, Narsingnāth, Kudumtulā, Bhangārām, Guṭṭādev, Kolarpāt, Kareyārāv, Rajārāo, Ingāhungā, Dokrādev, Mirchuk, Jantarbāī, Pardesin, Karnākoṭṭin, Hinglājīn, Kārī Telangin, Ghāṭmunḍin, Mānakdeī, Jhābardeī, Phurlādeī, Bhimādev, Bhairamdev, Balhā, Kunwar, Siyāndev, Choureyāḍokrā, Mātlādev, Panḍarārāv, Jokhārāv, Kodaībudī, Chitarārāv, Bagaḍirāv, Godanāmātā, Sitalādaī, Kunwārīrāv, Nilrāv, Kudakānārin, Nandirāv, Bhanḍārin, Chinammī, Phenbatī, Kunwārī, Neelmatī, Garabbatī, Sonmatī, Singādin, Bhānmatī etc. This indicated how a human being after deceased turned in to a clan God or Goddess and is worshipped by the descendents.

Funeral songs are sung by the Muriyā tribe, who are known as the 'Muriyā' in the plains, as the 'Mādiyā' in the hills and as the 'Abujhmādiyā' in the deep forests of the Narayanpur-Bijapur tehsils. But these funeral songs are only sung on death of old people. These songs express both sadness and happiness. They are called *āmur pātā* or *hāmur pātā* (literally 'death song'). The *āmur pātā* consists of two types of song: *kilanā pātā* (weeping or mourning song) and *giradā pātā* (happy song). The wife, mother, sister, daughter or other family members of the deceased sing the *kilanā pātā*, while the deceased's daughter's son and daughters sing the *giradā pātā*.

The *giradā pātā* also consists of two types of song: *poroy pātā* or *ḍhol pātā* (drum song) and *ānā pātā* or *ānāl pātā* (crematorium song and spirit song or soul song). In general, all tribes of India believe that in the existence of a spiritual afterlife. They believe that the life continues after death and that the souls wander around. When the time comes they are reborn in the same or close family of the deceased. The departed souls are not forgotten but they are worshiped regularly.

They feel close to them. They also believe that the souls of the ancestors cause the bad spirits to depart and thus save them from calamities. We can find beliefs about life and death in some of the folk songs sung by the Halbi-speaking people of Bastar, which was formerly the language of the Halba tribe but has now become the lingua-franca of the Bastar region:

*O yes, the parasitical **amarbel** creeper that entangles itself;*

Dive into the water of the four-sided well and play,

Lejā re hoy pāpā, dive into the water and play

In other words, as difficult is to recognize the beginning and end of the parasitical creeper called *amarbel* (literally 'immortal vine', *cuscuta reflexa*) which wraps around itself as it grows, so is difficult to know the beginning and end of the spirit that animates life. Life and death are twisted around each other so much that beginning and end are difficult to identify. This life only lasts for four days and after that one has to die. So, we must live in a good way. We must leave behind the sadness and dive into

the bottomless ocean of happiness. Almost the same thing is said in this Halbi folksong too.

The music and the sweets are here to stay.

The manôa× fair, which lasts but two-days, is our fair.

In other words, the drumbeat of enjoyment and happiness, of pleasure and prosperity, of love and affection and all other good things will stay; but our life is like this annual fair, it only lasts for two days. Similar philosophical ideas are expressed in this Halbi folk song too:

It is known that earth, sky, fire, water

with air mixed form the human body

But it is the spirit, having wandered in countless (8,400,000) wombs,

that animates the body

It is true that the tribal people of Bastar have no knowledge of *shāstra* or *purāna*, but is it necessary to read the *shāstra* or *purāna* to acquire eternal truths? If it was then how could the illiterate tribal people of Bastar have sung these songs that are so full of wisdom? It is only the experience of life that has enabled them to express thoughts about the mysteries of the body and soul in the manner of a priest-philosopher. The ideas expressed in the songs above are also found in Hindi and Sanskrit scriptures: 'only the lucky are reborn as a human being; even deities face difficulties in this respect.' This scripture also notes that the soul has, after wandering in countless wombs, entered in the body of human being. The message of the folklore is clear: the soul is immortal and never falls ill while the body is mortal and subject to illness. Let us look at a few lines of another Halbi folk song in which it is said that the body that contains the soul is an endless cycle of life and death, pleasure and sadness.

Into the cyclical trap of life and death, happiness and sadness,

this human animal has fallen

It is very clear here that it is the body that swings between life and death, pleasure and sadness, not the soul. The soul enters the body for a short time only, not forever.

Apart from folksongs, there are endless references that reflect the idea of the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body. These are found in folktales, myths, legends, idioms, proverbs and everyday language. Among the Muriyā (Gonḍ) tribe there is a custom of bringing home the soul of the departed person. During this ritual they sing the *ānā pātā* or *ānāl pātā* (the soul song) which also develops the theme of the immortality of the soul. The song goes:

Rī relo yo re relo yo re relo re relā re

Ingo bade bum tā āndī rā dādā, bade bum tā āndī rā le

Ingo alāy le.....

Wāyo dādā wāyo rā Wāyo dādā wāyo rā

Nimmā bātā jodā kinton rā dādā, Ingo alāy le.....

Bātā jodā kewe nā dādā, wāyon bārāy to inde wāy alāy le.....

Ingo jodā-modā kinton nā dādā, jodā-modā kinton nā

Jodā-modā kinton nā dādā, inde wā alāy le.....

Sange dākād inton nā dādā, sange dākād inton nā.....

'To what land do you belong?' the singers ask the spirit. 'To this land,' comes the reply. Then they call the spirit and invite him to enter the house. But the spirit is reluctant to enter. 'Why the delay?' they ask, 'Are you preparing for something?' 'Yes,' comes the reply, 'I am making preparations'. Again they invite him into the house. He

finally agrees and enters. He is requested to live for ever in the house and to protect the family.

In Bastar, Penḍarāwanḍin devī is worshiped as *kul devī* (the family goddess) among the tribal and some none-tribal people e.g. Kosṭā, Marār, Dhākad, Kalār etc. She is also the *kul devī* of the royal family in the adjoining state of Orissa. Penḍarāwanḍin is also known as Gapāgosin, Gonḍin, Gharjiyain and Satīmāy. The name Penḍarāwanḍin comes from the village in which she was born, named Penḍarāwanḍ; she always used to carry a big basket called *gapā* on her head so she is known as Gapāgosin; she belonged to the Gonḍ tribe so she is known as Gonḍin and finally she died with her husband (became satī) so she is also known as Satīmāy. A myth about this devī, told by many people, goes as follows.

In the village of Penḍarāwanḍ a young Gonḍ woman lived with her brothers. She was the youngest and beloved by all. Her brothers found a *lamsenā* (live-in fiancé) for her. She and her fiancé each other soon fell deeply in love. Her fiancé was very hard worker. He worked all day and night. They had their farm at the edge of the village. A brook flowed nearby. Her brothers and fiancé wished to make a dam on that brook. They made the dam many times but each time it broke. One day they consulted a *sirahā* who told them that the dam will not work unless a man is sacrificed and that will continue breaking until the sacrifice is made. The brothers became worried. They looked everywhere for a man to sacrifice but could find no one. Finally they decided to sacrifice the *lamsenā* reasoning that it would not be had (?) to find another man to replace him as the *lamsenā* of their sister. They made a plan and sacrificed the *lamsenā*. After the sacrifice they buried the corpse in the dam bank. At noon when all brothers came back home for lunch the sister noticed that her fiancé was not with them; nor did he return in the evening. When she asked her brothers about him they gave various evasive replies. She became very worried, took her *gapā*, and went to the farm. When she was walking along her feet touched something. When she looked down to see what it was she saw a finger. When she cleaned the soil away she found her husband's corpse and understood what had happened. She became (should become be deleted?) overcome with grief, and committed suicide by jumping into the dam. The next day disaster struck the village. The *sirahā* was consulted who told them that it was due to the actions of the souls of the two lovers. The village people then prayed and began to

worship them. As they did the problems facing the village departed. People began to worship as gods from that day on, something that continues to this day.

The village of Penḍarāwanḍ is situated at 3 kilometers from the village Wishrāmpurī which is 20 kilometers in east from Keskāl on the Raipur-Jagdalpur National Highway 43. The temple of this *devī* is situated at the bank of a brook between the villages of Wishrāmpurī and Penḍarāwanḍ. Many people say that the names of these deities are Jhitku and Mitkī. But when I recently visited this village and consulted Mr. Ḷamarū, the priest of this *devī*, and Mr. Kumotī, his father's brother, they said that her name was Hido. The priest belongs to Hido's father's family. He said that his ancestors were called Penḍarā which was possibly the name of their lineage. The village Penḍarāwnḍ was settled by their ancestors. Penḍarāwanḍin *devī* was born some 200 to 250 years ago. Penḍarā is actually a kind of thorny shrub. Maybe there were many thorny shrubs before the village was setteled, hence the village was named so.

A deity named Dolhā Dokrā was worshiped by the royal family of the Bastar state. Dolhā Dokrā served Danteshwarī Devī, the tutelary goddess of the state, in the palace temple. He became a god after his death too. Although the king no longer rules his kingdom, the royal family still worships Dolhā Dokrā.

In the villages of Sambalpur (4 kms from Kondagaon) and Sonābāl (12 kms from Kondagaon) the Muriyā and Kalār families worship deities named Somī and Dāmī. Somī and Dāmī were brothers who belonged to a Muriyā family in Sambalpur. Both the brothers fell in love with the two Kalār girls from Sonābāl. The Kalār family violently disapproved of this inter-caste relationship and killed the brothers when they became aware of it. The souls of those brothers became deities.

Two deities Kāchhin Devī and Railā Devī are worshiped in Bastar's spectacular annual Dashharā ritual. Kāchhin belonged to an untouchable community while Railā belonged to the Kākatiya royal family. Such is the importance of these devīs that the Dashaharā festival can not be celebrated without their pujā. There are many of the deities worshiped in the region today were originally human beings who became gods after their death.

The folktales of Bastar also contain many stories that illustrate the spirit beliefs of the people. In a folktale entitled 'Belkanyā (please note that Belkanyā is Hindi while Belkainā is Halbi, so please make it Belkainā) (The Wood-apple Girl)' a girl named 'Bel' is reborn many times. When she is killed she becomes a lotus flower, when the flower is destroyed she is reborn as a vegetable, when the vegetable is destroyed she is reborn again as the fruit on a wood-apple tree, and finally when the fruit is destroyed she is reborn as a girl.

The conclusion that one must draw from this evidence is that Bastarian beliefs about the body, the spirit and the afterlife are similar to that found in the Hindu scriptures such as the Gītā:

For the spirit there is neither birth nor death.

The spirit was never born nor ever will be.

The spirit is immortal, the body mortal.

(Gītā 2/20)

In Bastar many non-tribal communities such as the Māharā, Gānḍā, Ghasiyā, Ghadawā, Mirgān, Canḍār, Kalār, Dhākad, Marār, Nāhār (Pāradī), Jogī, Panakā, Loharā etc live with the Gonḍ (Muriyā, Mādiyā), Dhurawā, Parajā, Doralā, Gadabā, Bhatarā and Halbā tribes. The Gonḍ tribe belongs to the Dravidian-speaking culture while the others belong to the Indo-Aryan speaking culture. This is why so many of their customs and rituals differ greatly from that of the other communities. One can see these differences in their birth, weddings and death rituals.

The people who are called Gonḍ do not call themselves Gonḍ. They call themselves Koytur. Those who live in the hills are called Meṁṁ Koytur while those who live on the plains are just Koytur. Ḍaḍḍe Burkā-Kowāsī are their founding ancestors. According to the anthropological record they are Gonḍ but, as mentioned above, this is not their appellation. In the Kondagaon area they are known as Muriyā; in the parts of Nārāyanpur, Jagdalpur and Dantewādā districts they are known as Mādiyā and Ḍanḍāmī

Mādiā; from Pharasgaon to Kanker, and in Bhānupratāppur Tehsil, they are called Gond. The Muriyā and Mādiyās call themselves Koytur. According to Russell and Hirālāl (1935), the word *koy* refers to the child of a wild animal or a monkey. In the Gonḍī language the meaning of *koytor* is man. A monkey is called *munjāl* in Gonḍī not *koy* or *koyā*. Thus the word Gonḍ was not originally used in Bastar. It has come in being because of the official classification system used by government officials.

There is a rich tradition of funerary song among the Gonds. These are sung to the accompaniment of drums. Their death rituals are totally different but the tradition of funerary song is current only in particular areas; it is not found throughout the entire Bastar region. The death rituals also vary from area to area.

Death rituals in Muriyā community:

In Muriya communities around Kondagaon, Jagdalpur and Gīdam the custom is to wash the corpse and then to rub it with oil and turmeric. In Nārāyanpur area they do not wash or apply oil and turmeric to the corpse; they simply (or simply?) put a few drops of liquor in the mouth of the corpse instead. When an old man dies they beat a drum and blow the *todi* to inform people. In Jagdalpur-Lohanḍīgudā and Kilepāl-Tokāpāl areas they have a special person called *anmer hurrā* who beats the drum to inform people of the death. In Kondagaon and Nārāyanpur area the deceased's daughter or daughter's children usually do this, but the deceased's sister may sometimes do it. The drum is beaten continuously from the time of death to the time when people return home from the funeral. In the Kondagaon and Nārāyanpur area they fasten a black chicken to the waist of the drummer (i.e. the daughter or daughter's children). The drummer dances with the chicken which is called *tum kor*, *hānāl kor* or *tum kukadī*. The chicken remains fastened to the drummer's waist until it dies. Whilst the drumming is happening they sing the *giradā pātā*, the happy song. This song is a sub-type of the *hāmur pātā* (or *āmur pā ṭā*). This song is sung in certain areas only, not in the whole of Kondagaon Tehsil. Two groups of men and women sing this song. The tradition of singing also exists in the Nārāyanpur, Lohanḍīgudā, Gīdam and Dantewādā areas. They immediately inform close relatives who live in distant parts. Generally they wait a couple of days for the relatives to arrive before the corpse is taken to the cemetery. Affinal relatives prepare the bier. The deceased's family members can touch the bier

but not take it on their shoulders. The affine carry out all the ritual work from preparation of the bier up to the internment. Generally they bury the corpse but when some one has died of swelling they are cremated. The custom of applying oil and turmeric is only performed if the deceased was married. Furthermore, only married persons can perform the anointing. In some areas they put on oil on the corpse before taking out the bier, in other areas they do it at the cemetery. The women also go to the cemetery to witness the internment. After this has taken place the spirit of the departed is brought home to the beating of the drum. Meanwhile the affine cook rice, *udid dāl* and chicken and place the food on the homeward track. As the funeral party returns the chief mourner picks up the food the affine have prepared and offers it to the soul of the departed. Before doing so he gives the soul a toothbrush (*datun*) and water for washing. The food and water given in the leaf-bowls made from the leaves of a *ādan* tree.

On the third day they perform a ritual called *kaimul* in Gondi and *pitā cābanī* or *bisar chiwanī* in Halbi. They make three leaf-bowls (*donā*) from the leaves of *tendu* tree. The first is made for the affine; the second is for one's own family and the third for other communities. They put *sukasī* (dried-fish) in each leaf-bowl along with *dubī* (a kind of soft grass). The affine give their *donā* to the head of their (please note that they give the *donā* to the head of the family of the departed person) family who touches it with his tongue and throws it over his head. Then all the people gathered there do the same. That is the ritual called *kaimul*, *pitā cābanī* or *bisar chiwanī*. After this ritual has been performed the family members of the deceased are free to eat non-vegetarian food, before it they cannot.

On the day after the *kaimul* ritual they perform the *uālā nāhanī* (small bathing) and, on the day after that, the *barahā nāhanī* (big bathing). The bathing rituals are for purification. In Gonḍi they call these rituals *nenḍ kaimul*, *nād uālā nāhanī*, *manne barahā nāhanī*. There are no hard and fast rules for the *nāhanī* and they are not compelled to do it on the third or fifth day. It depends on the financial condition of the family; some people even do it even on the funeral day although this is rare. However the *hā ṽ nikarānī* and *ḍumā ningānī* ritual are always done after eight to fifteen days.

On the day of the *uālā nāhanī* (small bathing) ritual they cook rice and meat and take it to the cemetery. They make a fire on the grave and place the cooked rice and meat apart. A live chicken is taken to the rice dish. If it eats it then it is considered auspicious. They then burn the chicken alive on the fire. On the day of the *barahā nāhanī* (big bathing) ritual they make a memory pillar to commemorate the deceased. They draw pictures of birds and animals on it, or sometimes a pictorial account of the life history of the deceased. These memory pillars are called *gātā pakhanā*. The pillars are also called *Mādiyā khamā* because this tradition exists mainly in the Māriyā community. The custom of making memory pillars is found from the Tokāpāl to the Lohanōīguda areas.

The *hāt nīkrānī* (literally 'market outing') and *āmā ningānī* (literally 'soul coming inside') mark the end of the period of mourning for the deceased's close relatives. The *hāt nīkrānī* involves the performance of a mock market ritual while the *āmā ningānī* involves the bringing of the soul inside the house. On the day of *hāt nīkrānī* the married daughters or sisters cook *bobo-ro ṛī* (sweets made of rice-flour cooked in oil), parched rice and parched *canā* dal and take them to a crossroad or courtyard where they sit there to 'sell' them. These things are placed on the ground in the same way that sellers in real markets arrange them. The affine take the chief mourner to this mock market to buy the savouries. But the purchasing is not done openly. He buys the things secretly, puts them in a small basket, covers it with a new cloth, and brings the goods home. But he does not enter the house. He hands the goods over to his wife from outside his house. Then the affine worship the basket and take it inside the house, all the time treating it with the greatest respect. During this time they sing the *hānā pātā*.

The *hāt nīkrānī* and *āmā ningānī* rituals only take place if the deceased was married and is performed for both men and women regardless of age. The *giradā pātā*, a sub-type of *hāmur pātā*, is only sung when the deceased was a very old man. They sing the *kīlanā pātā* at death of younger people or children; in the case of a man it is sung by his widow and his daughter-in-laws.

Death rituals in Halbā community:

It is said that the Halbā community originally migrated to Bastar from Wārangal (Andhra Pradesh). According to some people they have come from Maharashtra. Mr. Jay Ram Patra of Badedongar in north Bastar says that their ancestors came from Orissa. They have different myths about their origin. Their customs and rituals derive from the Indo-Aryan speaking culture but they contain elements drawn from the Dravidian culture too.

In this community on death of any family member or a close relative they shave the head and moustache but leave the *shikhā* (pony tail). On the death of the father the son of a deceased man has his head completely shaved but not when his mother dies. Whenever any person dies his corpse is lowered to the ground immediately. They place a winnowing basket full of rice (paddy) and lamp a *diyā* at the corpse's head. They wash the corpse before they take out the bier. When a woman predeceases her husband her corpse is adorned like a bride. They cover the body with new cloth and apply turmeric on it with the left hand. Anyone can do this be the deceased was man or woman, married or unmarried. As the bier is taken out parched rice and coins are thrown on the way. One of the family members of the deceased carries fire in a small pot and leads the bier. When the bier is taken from the house the feet of the corpse are to the front, the head to the back. When they arrive at a crossroad they circle it three times and place the bier down on the ground. A winnowing basket full of rice (paddy) accompanies the bier. They take rice from this winnowing basket and offer it to the four directions. The things that belonged to the deceased but no longer useful are discarded at the crossroad. Women do not go to the cemetery; they head off in line to river or pond for bath instead. The Halba community buries their children but cremate adults. The youngest son ignites the pyre of his mother's corpse by putting fire onto her mouth; the eldest son ignites his father's pyre in a similar manner.

The *tīj nahānī* (3rd day bathing) ritual happens on third day. On that day affine cut their (own) hair. They pick up the bones from the funeral pyre and wash them with milk. The washed bones are put in a small pot and hung with a banyan or mango tree. They light a lamp and leave it there. The *bisar chiwanī* ritual takes place on this day too, but only the affine perform it. They put *sukasī* (dried fish) in a *donā* (leaf bowl) and cooked rice, dāl and dish in another *donā*. They also put some water in third *donā*. The relatives of the deceased, having bathed, come and touch the water, *sukasī* and food

one-by-one; they then wash their hands. This is called *bisar chiwanī*. After completion of the ritual they ritually 'cool' these things by immersing them in water.

On the tenth day they perform the ritual of *das nahānī* (10th bathing). On this day the women from the widow's side adorn the widow and take her to the river or pond. A barber breaks the widow's glass bangles and takes her other ornaments to his house. The custom used to be that the barber took all her ornaments but this no longer happens; the barber takes them home and exchanges them for money. The women wash the widow and sit her beside the bathing place. Relatives of the widow come and put new *sārīs* on her shoulder. On that day the hair and moustaches of male mourners are shaven before they perform the *bisar chiwanī* ritual. The relatives are served with parched rice and a mixture of raw-sugar and water. If the departed was an old person they cook and eat a meat dish.

They have another custom called *pagbandhī* or *sudes* which is performed either on the 10th day or the day after. Affine fasten turbans on the mourners, cause them to look into a mirror and to comb their hair. They also cause them eat *bīdā pān*. The affine then honour the mourners by sitting them down, washing their feet, and putting rice marks on their foreheads. The daughter of the deceased, her husband, and other affine cannot take food from the family of the departed until they have done the *sudes* ritual. On that day the affine give sympathetic counsel to the mourners.

The Halba community, like many others, also has *hāt nikarānī* custom but educated, urban-based members of the community have put a stop to it; however it is still performed in the rural areas.

Death rituals in Bhatarā community:

The Bhatarā tribe is said to have come from Orissa with the King Purushottam Dev when he was returning to Bastar from a pilgrimage to Jagannāthpurī. Some people say that the Bhatarā word derives from the Oriya word 'Bhadra', meaning 'excellent.'

The Bhatara do not beat drums or sing funeral songs. They perform the *tīj nanānī* on the third day and the *das nahānī* on the tenth day. They also place the bier down at a cross road like the Halbā tribe. The women put turmeric and a handful of soil on the corpse and go to the river or pond for bath. They do not go to the cemetery. The corpse is generally buried but if the death was the result of any serious illness or swelling it is cremated. Before putting the corpse into the grave or on the funeral pyre the bier makes three rounds of the grave or funeral pyre. They throw coins into the grave and drop a mixture of raw-sugar and water on the mouth of the corpse. People then throw soil and tobacco into the grave or salt onto the funeral pyre. Well-to-do people build a grave stone. After the internment they go directly to a river or pond to bathe. The chief mourner soaks a cloth in the water and upon returning home squeezes water on the place where the person died. The ritual of *kasā pānī* and *bisrāhān chiwanī* or *bisar chiwanī* happens on this day too.

They place a mango leaf and the bark of the mango tree in water and spray it in the house. This ritual is called *kasā pānī* (literally 'astringent water'). Its purpose is to purify the house in the same way that *Ganga pen* (the water of the Ganges) is used by caste Hindus. The *bisarāhān chiwanī* ritual then takes place. Everyone except a male head and a female head of the departed's family perform this ritual. They make two leaf bowls, one for the family members and another for the affine. They put *sukasī* and cooked rice in each bowls. All the people touch this. They burn fragrant gum and remember the deceased and the family deity. After that they have food. Food cannot be cooked in the deceased's family for three days (until *tīj kiriyā*). Affine prepare food in their houses and bring it.

On the third day they do the *tīj nahānī* or *tīj kiriyā* which is called *pitā cābanī* or *bisarāhān chiwanī*. On that day all the relatives go to a pond for bath. They make an image with knotted grass. All the family members and affine offer double handfuls of water to grass image in memory of the deceased. The affine take the family members to the pond or river for the bath. When they come back from bathing the affine are

served parched rice and raw-sugar. They also fix the day on which the *das nāhanī* is to be performed.

Affine perform the functions of *bhanārsāreyā* (store keeper) and *randhārī* (cook) on the day of the *das kiriyā* or *das nahānī* ritual. They have responsibility for store keeping and cooking as the word suggest. On the day of *das nahānī* the barber shaves both mourners and affine. They place two baskets containing a coconut, one for the mourners and another for the affine. The affine take both baskets to the bathing place (river or pond as the case may be). The barber clean shaves the head of the chief mourner; then three, five or seven affine give him a bath. The eldest son has his head and moustache shaven on his father's death, the youngest son on the death of the mother. Others have their head shaven regardless of who dies. After the bath the chief mourner is seated separately from others; a coconut is broken and a few drops of liquor is offered. The family members give gifts of new cloth to the affine who reciprocate by presenting a gift of cloth to the chief mourner. On that day affine cook food and offer it to the *āumā*, the soul of the deceased. This ritual is called *arwānī*. After the *arwānī* ritual everybody eats.

After having food a ritual called *bāndhan kātā* takes place. During this ritual a special gift called *dān* is presented to the cross nephew, the sister's son on the death of a man, a brother's son on the death of a woman. The cross nephew becomes a Brāhmaṇa for this day. It is believed that only the cross nephew is able to free the *āumā* of the deceased from the world.

On the day after the *das kiriyā*, a ritual called *tapalā pānī*, literally 'hot water.' takes place. On this day the family members, affine and neighbours gather and the guests are served with liquor and food. Family members of the deceased wash the hands of the guests with warm water. The guests then splash themselves with the hot water. Family members of the deceased do the cooking on this day. On the day after, *tapalā pānī* family members request for money from their married daughters and sisters which they use to buy food. The daughters and sisters cook the food and serve it. Meat dishes can be eaten on this day; liquor too is served.

The *hāt nikrānī* custom exists in Bhatarā tribe just like as in Muriyā, Gānōā, Māharā and Ghadawā communities. This ritual takes place generally on the day of *das kiriyā* or sometimes on the day of *tapalā pānī*. After eating they make two small market stalls (*pasarā*), one for the family members of the deceased the other for the affine. The chief mourner is then taken to the market place. They adorn his head with flowers

and rice-marks, ritually welcome him, and fasten a turban on his head. They then burn incense sticks or fragrant gum and hold an umbrella over his head. They then set up the two symbolic market stalls with parched rice, raw-sugar and liquor. The affine then 'steal' the goods from one stall and buy from the other stall and bring it. After making *pujā* the affine take the chief mourner on a circle of the market. He is then taken home where he makes *pujā* to his family deity. After this the affine counsel him and his family members and return home.

Finally it should be noted that among all these tribes the custom is to bury women who have died during pregnancy. She is always buried on the far side of a river or a creek; when there is no river or creek near the village she is buried outside the village boundary. It is believed that the pregnant woman becomes a *rākshashī* (demoness) and causes troubles to the people; however, it is believed that she is unable to swim which is why she is buried cross the river or creek.

Source:

1. *Durjan Rām Sorī*, 38, Muriyā tribe, Village: Kejang (Bastar-C.G.).
2. *Rāmesar*, 35, Muriyā tribe, Village: Kibaībālēngā (Bastar-C.G.).
3. *Kānsāy*, 28, Muriyā tribe, Village: Kibaībālēngā (Bastar-C.G.).
4. *Gaḍāru*, 55, Muriyā tribe, Village: Kibaībālēngā (Bastar-C.G.).
5. *Usāru*, 75, Muriyā tribe, Village: Kibaībālēngā (Bastar-C.G.).
6. *Hari Rām*, 48, Gonḍ, Village: Borgaon (Bastar-C.G.).
7. *Dhannu Rām Dehārī*, 65, Halbā, Village: Kondagaon (Bastar-C.G.).
8. *Mrs. Shivbatī Dehārī*, 62, Halbā, Village: Kondagaon (Bastar-C.G.).
9. *Balrām Singh Bhanḍārī*, 40, Halbā, Village: Duganpāl (Bastar-C.G.).
10. *Madhurām*, 70, Bhatarā, Village: Bāgrāy (Bastar-C.G.).
11. *Sampatrām*, 60, Halbā, Village: Bāgrāy (Bastar-C.G.).
12. *Jayrām Patra*, 80, Halbā, Village: Badeḅongar (Bastar-C.G.).

Harihar Vaishnav Sargipalpara, Kondagaon 494226, Bastar-Chhatishgarh, india

International Seminar on

Book culture from below in focus at the SHARP conference Helsinki

Kirsti Salmi-Niklander

Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki

The 18th annual conference of SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing) gathered nearly 300 scholars from all parts of the world to Helsinki, Finland in August 2010. The conference theme “Book culture from below” attracted book historians, literary historians, folklorists and scholars from media and library studies.

Apparently, book history and folklore studies are quite distant fields of research: book history focuses on the production, transmission and reception of printed word, whereas folklorists explore the genres of oral tradition and performance. Book history is a relatively new and emerging field, whereas folklore studies has historical roots in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the “from below”-perspective and the re-evaluation of the complex relationship between oral and written communication seems to bring these fields closer to each other. The new trend appear in the term “book culture”, which is now widely used parallel with “book history”. “Book culture” focuses on the entire cultural context of books and other written materials.

SHARP is the main international society for the book historians, established in 1991. The annual conferences have been organized since 1993 in North America and Europe on alternate years, with thematic interim conferences in, e.g., Kolkata and Cape Town. Organizing the annual SHARP conference in Finland was quite a challenge, since book history does not have any established academic institutions in Finland. Individual scholars from different disciplines have become interested in book history. My own interests on book culture have originated in my research on hand-written newspapers,

which have been a strong tradition in 19th and early 20th-century Finland. At the SHARP conferences in Mainz (2000) I was inspired by the warm multidisciplinary atmosphere and joined the society.

The SHARP2010 conference (www.helsinki.fi/sharp2010) was organized with the co-operation of many institutions, networks and individual researchers: University of Helsinki (Folklore Studies, History and Church History), Finnish Literature Society, Society for the Swedish Literature in Finland, Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies (NCMS) and the Nordic-Baltic-Russian Network on the History of Books, Libraries and Reading (HIBOLIRE).

The conference focused on the book culture of various under-represented and oppressed groups of society: workers, peasants, immigrants, prisoners and slaves. Book culture has much too often been depicted as a high-cultural elitist project: the “from below”-perspective not just turns this scheme upside down, but highlights the complex relations of “high” and “low” culture. Finnish scholars had special reasons for taking up this theme. The Finnish, Nordic and Baltic perspectives on book culture are related to the strong traditions of the Lutheran church, folklore archiving and research and the promotion of national cultures and languages in the 19th century. The church has provided the common people with the basic reading skills. Research institutions such as the Finnish Literature Society and the Society for Swedish Literature in Finland have promoted literary culture and the archiving, publishing and research of oral tradition. They have also encouraged many peasants and farm labourers to publish their own texts: autobiographies, fact and fiction.

As the chair of the program committee I was very impressed by the quantity and high quality of the paper and session proposals. I was especially pleased to see many folklorist colleagues among the speakers. It was also delightful to see that the Call for Papers has inspired many SHARP members and established book historians to take a new perspective “from below” on their research themes and materials. The abstracts provided an excellent possibility for creating international, multi-disciplinary sessions. Seldom

have I hoped so much to possess magic powers to be able to be present in several places at the same time: with 9-10 parallel sessions choices were difficult to make.

National, transnational and alternative book cultures

During the recent years, texts written by self-taught writers have become a topic of international and comparative research. Martyn Lyons (University of New South Wales, Australia) is one of the leading researchers on the history of reading and writing, who has worked on texts produced by autodidact writers in various European countries. In his opening keynote lecture, Lyons discussed the complexities of the “from below”-perspective, related with the changing focus from societal to individual perspectives in social history. How to proceed from individual case studies to wider perspectives? He presented his wide research materials of letters written by immigrants and the soldiers in the First World War: the mass immigration and the war was encouraged and forced many practically illiterate people to write, even though many letters might seem very laconic and formal to an outside reader.

On Wednesday 18 August I followed sessions on self-taught writers and working-class book culture with many strong papers. Archie Dick's (University of Pretoria) presentation was based on unique research material: the notebook of Johannes Smiesing, who became a teacher in the slave lodge of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) at the Cape of Good Hope, in the early 18th century. The slave lodge housed the Company's slaves from 1652 until 1808. During this time about 63 000 slaves were imported to the Cape from the Indonesian archipelago, the Indian subcontinent, Madagascar, and Africa. Archie Dick discussed Smiesing's notebook as an example of an alternative book culture. In his notebook, Johannes Smiesing does not determine himself nor his family as slaves. Rather, he depicts himself as a writing and reading master – a black intellectual. The notebook is a valuable source for many socio-cultural phenomena: the development of vernacular language (Cape Dutch) and religious practices related with the reformatory church. It also includes folkloristic materials: Malay, Arabic and South Indian fairy tales and a list of Tamil medical remedies.

The other two speakers in the session, Gillian Thomas (Saint Mary's University, Canada) and Tuulikki Kurki (University of Eastern Finland) brought up the complex position of autodidact writers "on the margins" and their relationship with their upper and middle class mentors and patrons. Gillian Thomas presented John Harris (1820-1884), a self-taught "Mining-Methodist" poet from Cornwall, whose "rustic stanzas" with fatalist ideas on mine accidents and romantic images of Cornish life attracted the literary elite. Tuulikki Kurki applied Homi Bhabha's term "third space" to research assistants, amateur ethnographers and autodidact writers presented both in anthropological and folkloristic research (George Hunt, Ogotemmel, Talayeswa) and in Finnish folklore studies and literary history (Heikki Meriläinen).

Stephanie Maatta Smith (University of South Florida) presented an unique case study of working-class book culture: "The readers" (El Lector) in cigar factories in Tampa, Florida. These readers were hired by the workers to read out aloud to the workers during the long days, providing both entertainment and enlightenment. The factory workers were immigrants from Cuba, the Caribbean, Italy and Spain. The tradition of "El Lector" lasted from 1870s until the 1920s. Stephanie Maatta Smith analysed the complex relationship between the reader, the laborers and concepts of literacy. Many of the workers were illiterate, but through the factory readers they could gain access to literary culture. The books to be read were selected by the workers. Could this be called "oral literacy"? The sessions of working-class book culture included interesting papers by Timothy Ashplant, Nathalie Ponsard, Ruth-Ellen St. Onge and Sami Suodenjoki on reading, writing and publishing in Finland, Britain and France.

Debates and re-evaluations

The "from below"-perspective and the relationship of oral and literary communication are issues, which raise strong emotions in academic communities. These perspectives lead to re-

evaluations of many basic concepts and paradigms; this process is healthy, but sometimes it can seem painful and threatening.

The oral and literary background of fairy tales has become a heated issue of international debate, which brings up essential questions about the interaction between oral tradition and book culture. This debate started in the ISFNR conference in Tartu in 2005, and has continued in several publications and conferences, most recently in the recent special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (Vol. 123 No 490). The SHARP2010 conference provided an excellent forum for this debate in front of a multidisciplinary audience. The fairy tale panel was sponsored by Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, starting with the keynote lecture by Ruth B. Bottigheimer. She presented a profound and entertaining history of fairy tales in popular, print and proletarian culture from 1550 until 1850. The lecture was followed by commentaries by prof. Satu Apo (University of Helsinki) and Dr. Caroline Sumpter (Queen's University, Belfast). Ruth Bottigheimer's keynote lecture and the commentaries will very soon be published in the Finnish on-line Folklore journal *Elore* (www.elore.fi).

Thursday 19 August was the real "Folklore Day" of the conference with two morning sessions in Finnish Literature Society focusing on oral tradition and book culture. David Hopkin (Oxford University) explored the complex role of domestic (mostly female) servants as informants for the early folklore collectors, researchers and publishers. Maria Kaliambou (Yale University) presented the popular collections of fairy tales and folktales published in Greece since the late 19th century. These publications were produced cheaply and available for readers in kiosks, markets and bookstores. They have been considered "worthless" by both fairy tale researchers and book historians, but Maria Kaliambou re-evaluated their role in the distribution of Western fairy tales to ordinary Greek readers. The papers of Marija Dalbello (Rutgers University), Cecilia af Forselles and Kati Mikkola (Finnish Literature Society) and Marie-Hélène Jeannotte (University of Shrebrooke, Canada) discussed the role of literary societies in the collection and publishing of oral tradition of in nation states and among minority groups in Finland, Habsburg Austria and 20th-century Québec.

On Friday 20 August I followed sessions on book culture in immigrant communities and in prisons. I presented a co-authored paper with Anna St. Onge (York University) on the book culture of Finnish-Canadian immigrants. Immigrant book culture is a challenging topic both for researchers and archivists, since it requires special language skills and the source materials are fragmented. The hand-written newspapers of Finnish-Canadian immigrants are hard to understand even for Finnish researchers, since some of them are written on Canadian Finnish, a hybrid language quite distant from standard Finnish. Immigrant book culture brings up the issue of reading and writing as collective activity with strong relations with oral tradition.

Prison book culture was presented by Jenny Hartley (University of Roehampton) and Larry Sullivan (The City University of New York) from very different perspectives. Jenny Hartley has been running Prison Reading Groups, which provide “chances for civilized socializing” and conversational skills. Larry Sullivan has studied censorship of literature related with Nordic mythology in American prisons, associated with certain criminal gangs: in these cases, reading was considered a dangerous activity to be controlled by the prison officials.

The conference program included two international panels. On Wednesday, the conceptual re-evaluations of book history were vividly discussed by the panelists: Jonathan Rose (Drew University), one of the founding members of SHARP, wanted to keep the focus of book history in the printed culture. The other panelists (Johan Svedjedal from Sweden, Anna Kuusmin and Nils-Erik Villstrand from Finland) supported keeping the gates open between different disciplines, research materials and forms of communication.

The main question in the final panel on Friday was “How the aspect ‘from below’ changes book history?” The panelists (Ann Steiner, Jonathan Wild, Tuomas Heikkilä and Esko M. Laine) discussed book culture from Middle Ages until our times. In all historical

periods, the print culture has had strong interaction with other modes of communication: oral and manuscript tradition and digital communication.

The SHARP2010 conference will hopefully provide basis for many new networks and publications. The issues on the complex relationship of oral tradition, publishing, authorship and reception require co-operation of scholars from different fields. Although the conference had participants from all continents, most papers discussed European and North American topics. SHARP (www.sharpweb.org) welcomes initiatives on co-operation in the form conferences, seminars and workshops from institutes, projects and scholars involved in book culture.

Fri 08 Oct 6.00 pm

Seminar : *Gond Tribal Artists' Adoption of New Media*

The Nehru Centre
8 South Audley Street

London W1K 1HF



The artistic traditions of the Pardhan Gonds of Madhya Pradesh in Central India have evolved over the past thirty years with external influences and new materials, to provide a growing number of Pardhan Gonds with an artistic profession that carries their ancient culture into the contemporary environment.

Pardhan Gond artists Venkat Raman Singh Shyam and Rajendra Shyam are exhibiting their paintings at the Horniman Museum in September 2010. In response to an urgent need to preserve the culture of indigenous minority communities, this seminar provides a forum for discussing such Pardhan Gond artists' collaborations with documentary and animation film makers, academics and contemporary artists.

Special Guests : **Venkat Raman Singh Shyam** trained as an apprentice to his uncle, renowned Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam. He has worked as a professional artist for over twenty years and has received appreciation in India and abroad. Venkat's cousin **Rajendra Shyam's** talents were also recognised by his uncle Jangarh Singh Shyam. Both artists have recently participated in the

“Painted Songs and Stories” exhibition of Pardhan Gond paintings at Wellesley College, Boston, USA (2010), and in the *“Exhibition of Pardhan Gond Paintings”* at the New Art Exchange in Nottingham, UK (2009).

Speakers : **Dr Michael Yorke** is an anthropologist specialising in South Asia. He wrote a Ph.D. thesis and did post doctoral research on The Mundari and Gondi speaking South Asian tribal peoples. As an academic he was involved in visual anthropology and shot and edited a film on the Ho tribe. Drawn into professional film-making, he became part of the BBC Anthropology Unit. He has received many major international awards, including the Earthwatch Award and the Golden Gate Award from San Francisco, and The Royal Television Society and BBC Asia Award in the United Kingdom. At present he teaches practical filmmaking in the Department of Anthropology at University College London.

Dr Daniel J Rycroft is Lecturer in South Asian Arts and Cultures at the School of World Art Studies and Museology, University of East Anglia. He is joint editor of the journal *World Art* (Routledge), and is currently writing a book on anthropology and indigeneity in India. At UEA, he teaches the MA programme in Cultural Heritage and numerous BA modules on ancient and modern art in India. In 2006 he published *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), and has directed two ethnographic documentaries on Santal Adivasi history and heritage. In 2011 his co-edited volume on *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi* will be published by Routledge.

Tara Douglas is a British animator and the Secretary of the Adivasi Arts Trust. She has collaborated on several projects with indigenous Indian artists, including *“The Tallest Story Competition”*, a collection of short animated folk tales that includes the popular Pardhan Gond story *“The Best of the Best”*.

In association with the Adivasi Arts Trust (www.adivasiartstrust.org)

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Field Reports



Great 'Indian' Myth @ CWG

Rasika Abrol

Introduction

The honour of hosting the XIXth Commonwealth Games was given to India. Delhi promised to deliver the games. Lots of planning and preparation went into delivering the event in time. The process was a mixture of honest efforts, procrastinating planning, corruption glitches and just on time delivery. My paper is trying to understand the grand opening of the Grand Commonwealth Games 2010. I witnessed the ceremony, celebrated the grandeur of it all with the crowd. Yet, when I sit back and think about the entire event nothing strikes me but the play *Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco. I had turned into a rhinoceros and had completely succumbed to the crowd's roar. The influence of the crowd couldn't cloud me for long.

With the blow of the conch shells and Tibetan pipes, the rising of the Rajasthani puppets and the bombardment of lights began the grand opening of Commonwealth Games 2010. The stadium was in blaze of lights and was in echo of Hariharan's *swagatham*. The swelling roar of the drums, *tabla* prodigy Keshav, Rehman's anthem, rhythmic dances and music displaying the cultural multiplicity of India was the just of the opening ceremony. The gigantic helium balloon floating in the center was the mirror image of the action down below. The stadium had transformed into a mythical world, the core and the periphery, the core from where all the action emerged to spread all over.

The ceremony didn't induce the spirit of sport in all the participating teams present at the event. Instead it was reiterating and reinstating the Nationalist agenda of India. The anthem of '*jiyo, utho, badho, jeeto...*' soon dissolved in the air. Projecting the image of the mythical India of unity in diversity, forgetting all the problems and complications of this image, we tried to recreate the great Indian myth via the Commonwealth Games.

The idea behind the opening ceremony was to bring out the Rhinoceros effect and completely take over our sentiments. And they succeeded. After the opening ceremony, people were absolutely taken over and fully participated in all the events. Metamorphosis, isn't it?

Analysis

³⁴ "On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality."

B R Ambedkar concluded his presentation with this powerful pointer while chairing the committee that drafted India's democratic constitution. In fact this inequality is the biggest challenge that India faces in the new millennium. The inequality in gender, class, caste and economic conditions are yet to be bridged and our pace to resolve these challenges is very slow. Also, we build an aura of romanticism around this inequality, we celebrate

³⁴ See, The Argumentative Indian, Amartya Sen(Penguin, 2005 edition), pg 36

and elaborate it for defining the Indian identity. Celebration is initiated by acceptance. The multiplicity that India displays co-exists with the concept of ‘*swikriti*’ or ‘acceptance’. Akbar, the great Mughal emperor had talked about his two visions of a true multicultural community, ‘acceptance of plurality’ and ‘dialogues and exchanges’ among holders of different beliefs and convictions. Well, in diverse ways one tries to explain or chose history for the true Indian identity. And the choices made again become a part of history.

The choice was made and the *metatext* was drafted conforming to the former. The choice of highlighting the concept of ‘tolerance’ and ‘acceptance’ of the pluralism and silently warding away the many challenges within the diversity by the Organizing Committee of the Commonwealth Games through the Grand Opening Ceremony that had live coverage and was a matter of pride for the ‘Nation’. The stage was constructed within seven days and was based on the concept of *mandala*, symbolic design of universe in Hinduism and Buddhism. Patris Pavis explains *metatext* as,³⁵“an unwritten text comprising the various choices of a *mise-en-scene* that the director has consciously or unconsciously made during the rehearsal process, choices that are apparent in the final product.” The Commonwealth Games was a set of choices made, an abstract ensemble of signs delivered to the country and the entire world.

The outlook of people towards Commonwealth Games changed after the Grand opening ceremony. Just before the opening, the games had several interpretations, it meant...

Changing face of the capital Delhi, Metro lines, Flyovers, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, The Games Village, The International Airport, No blue lines, so on...

After the opening ceremony, the spirit of the games had completely changed. The spirit for the sports and the enthusiasm for Queen’s baton took off from

³⁵ See, Analyzing Performance, Patris Pavis, The State of Current Research, Pg 8

opening ceremony. All Hullabaloo around the Commonwealth Games was finally confined to the games.

What was the opening ceremony?

- An act of covering-up for the sorry state of the Organizing Committee, headed by the ‘true mascot’ of the Commonwealth Games, Mr. Suresh Kalmadi. (Kalmadi replaces ‘shera’)
- A spectacle, a revelation or a change...

Roland Barthes, reads the act of wrestling as a spectacle, he says³⁶“Wrestling is not a sport, it is a spectacle.” While reading the act of wrestling, Barthes observes that the “ function of the wrestler is not to win, it is to go through the motions which are exactly expected of him... act of suffering” and “gesture of the vanquished wrestler signifying to the world a defeat which, far from disguising, he emphasizes and holds like a pause in music...”

This kind of spectacle was also created through the opening ceremony, it displayed what people wanted to see, they were expecting to see the grandeur that doesn’t exist, the romantic and unreal grandeur that we believe in yet never come across. The blowing of the conch shell, the announcement of a new beginning, then the fireworks that lit up the stadium which had forgotten the blow and the toils of sport... the magic that any sport does to the body, the presentation of the opening did to the stage and the people. The Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium was after a long gap pregnant with action. The musical extravaganza, the various dances from the different regions (classical and folk), the glimpses of what India is, A R Rehman’s anthem, Hariharan’s ‘*Swagatham*’, Indian Railway’s ‘Kingdom of Dreams’ i.e. India... The 1,200 moving lights, 120 space cannons and 16 follow spots weighing approximately 75 tonnes was what it took to enchant 60,000 spectators. The 25 stacks of speakers produced 500,000 Watts of sound

³⁶ See, Mythologies, Roland Barthes, Selected & translated from French by Annette Levers

The opening ceremony was such a spectacle for the nation that³⁷“The Indian postal department has brought out a special stamp to commemorate the opening ceremony of the 19th edition of the Commonwealth Games that kickstarts in the capital today.” (For the 1958 Commonwealth Games in Cardiff the stamps released figured themes featuring the Welsh Dragon, to indicate the association of the Games with Wales. In 1970, the stamps commemorating the Ninth Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh showed progressive action shots of athletes competing in running, swimming and cycling events.)

In the Hullabaloo of all the celebration and jubilation, we forgot about the problems that had just scrubbed our political and social system. Cheering in the crowd, we had constructed an imagined India, we saw through the mammoth helium gas balloon that was floating in the air, which was untouched by the Kashmir problem that hasn't subsided even today and was at peak during CWG preparations, the Babri Masjid Verdict that led to different opinions, dengue's terrible attack on the NCR region, shoot out at players, collapse of the footbridge and lots of corruption charges that are yet to unfold.

One could see the spectacle from a distance, it was taking place on the grounds and the 60,000 people were seated away from the performance space, to witness the spectacle either through the mammoth helium gas balloon or through a TV screen. The helium gas balloon had embodied the signification i.e. the myth as pointed out by Barthes³⁸“In semiology, the third term is nothing but an association of the first two (signifier and signified), as we saw. It is the only which is allowed to be seen in a full and satisfactory way, the only one which is consumed in actual fact. I have called it: the signification.” It is the signification because it empties the meaning of real India and leads it to form a new meaning, a new beginning that is embodied by the opening ceremony and the entire act of hosting an international event whether or not we are actually in a position to take such a responsibility on our shoulders.

³⁷ See, News Report, The Hindu: Cities, Special Opening Ceremony Stamp on CWG, 3rd October

³⁸ See, Mythologies, Roland Barthes, Selected & translated from French by Annette Levers

Commonwealth Opening, a landmark in the history of Indian sub-continent . Oh, yes it is in our history and we know that Barthes emphasizes on historical limitations and warns against the ‘little formalism’. Yet again, he states that mythology studies ‘ideas in forms’.

Conclusion

Truly, ideas in form, an idea conceived by the fathers of our Nation, multiple ideas come together to open the Commonwealth Games ‘the Indian way’, repeating history or creating history in forms. Repeating history in ways by recreating our glorious past and creating through the several choices made by us...

Even post commonwealth games the agenda remains intact. The winners have now been transformed into heroes, they are bestowed with lot many accolades. The respective state governments have given them a support system to survive and become state ambassadors. But no efforts are been made to encourage the upcoming athletes. They still are in a sorry state.

I end with what I had begun, the saga of the ‘Indian myth’. The great India of contradictions as stated by Ambedkar versus the ‘perfect’ India projected at the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony. This binary opposition that emerges from the contradictions constructs the Great Indian Myth @ CWG

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Surabhi's Magical Realism unfolded

Every time I think of the term 'theatre', a new meaning emerges. What instigates my thoughts is the variety of the creative expression that exists in India. And one rare and extraordinary kind amongst the many that exist in India is the Surabhi Theatre that overcomes the language and cultural differences to leave the viewer with bewilderment and admiration.

Surabhi is synonymous to family theatre, a rare kind, with a history of 125 years of survival. It began in a tiny hamlet of the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh called Surabhi. Surabhi was formed by the members of the Vanarasa family, who were the masters of the shadow puppet genre 'Tholu Bommalata'. Later, Surabhi evolves into a complete theatrical genre.

I had the chance to see some very popular works of the Surabhi genre, a week full of exciting stories and their execution at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

A bell rings on the stage, dressed like a set of mythological films where prayer is offered by the performers to Gods and thereafter magic begins to unfold itself on stage.

Narada descending from sky, Vishnu suddenly appearing from nothingness when a bhakta calls for him, curtains changing, human change to animal and vice-a-versa, music, dance, melodrama and happy ending. There is no time for the viewer to relax his/her eye muscles.

Surabhi re-creates the magic of the mythical stories, we believe it or not, these stories are ingrained in our lives so deeply that we constantly live these in different ways. The story of Balanagamma, a story about a wicked magician and his desire to acquire the most beautiful woman as his companion, is a story full of fantasies. In this story when I saw the magician turning Balanagamma into a dog on stage, I was awestruck. When Narasimha avatar appears from the beam of the wall when Bhakta Prahlad calls for him, it was thrilling.

Surabhi has this amazing power to leave you in awe and wonder both. Its magical realism re-defined. All the images that existed in our worlds of fantasies appear in front of our eyes. It's magic yet it's real. Its magic performed in the real world to re-create a fantasy world for us. But it's not for us to believe in but to experience that split second chill in our spines.

Surabhi borrows a lot from other spheres of theatre as it has evolved over a period of time. "The painted plunging curtains of the Parsi Theatre of which Surabhi is a sub-genre,

was influenced by colonial India's modern popular imagery that emanated from the pedagogy of the colonial art school that put value on perspective, and from the arrival of the techniques of engraving, lithography, and oleography leading to mass- production and circulation of illusionist pictures" says Dr Jyotindra Jain.

These curtains bring together a mammoth world with them, the colours and the concept of perspective lends them a grandeur and depth. As observed by Dr Anuradha Kapur the curtains evoke 'surplus illusion', 'floating spaces' and 'space of fantasy' and 'by which the Surabhi stage appears to accommodate as it were several different spaces within it'. In fact because of these characteristics Surabhi was so popular that its actors were the first to become the leading actors of the Tamil talkie.

Coming from the shadow puppet tradition, elements of puppet theatre remain to exist even today. The characters never seem to be grounded on stage, they are always floating characters, just like puppets. As if someone's controlling them and like each character and each scene is do dependent on each other that no single character or act is in priority. There are clear and stark entries and exits of the characters. These stark changes on stage are complemented by live music.

But all the illusion and the fantasy are not reciprocal backstage, as the backstage is a different world. All the grandeur and magic of the Surabhi is limited to the stage itself. The dynamism and action on stage is absent backstage. The preparations of the scene are performed just like any mundane household chores. The entire family seems to be involved yet there is no anxiety, backstage is calm and quiet yet every action occurs at the right moment and in the right manner. I saw little kids performing their role and then going for an ice cream to the vendor, coming back and performing again. The family is so used to performing that it's become a way of life for them.

Backstage is the stark reality conforming to the popular phrase that the 'show must go on'. The Surabhi family performs and survives with great difficulty in the absence of any patronage. There are no stage designers, painters, main actors or so on. All the members are same and equipped with all skills. The costumes, the backdrops, the stagecraft and the make-up are all done by the family itself. The actor is also a painter, carpenter, tailor while not performing. Every actor plays a multiple role in the production yet is not striving for any recognition.

While watching the plays, I didn't see any character or actor emerging as the central or the main. Here, the plot and its execution are important. Each character is played by multiple actors and each actor plays different roles of different capacities. Even Narada in a particular play is performed by an adult, a teenager and a kid. In fact when I spoke to some actors regarding this unique unity in the unit, all had just one response that they believe in the execution of the production and survival.

Is this what we call pure art or pure submission for art?

I fail to understand which is the real love of the Surabhi unit, is it love for the family tradition or for theatre?

Surabhi embodies a strange love for its form. It has preserved the soil of its first performing land, all old stage material, jewelry and costumes and they refer to them with immense sentimental value. It has also restored the themes and the people. A team of eighty performers had come to Delhi, they belonged to a varied age group. During the stay, each performer went through challenges but it's interesting to see them emerge together as a team on stage. Now, the family doesn't survive only on theatre but each member has an alternate profession, they have taken up jobs as teachers, painters etc.

Surabhi theatre is striving to survive through difficult times and in the process is making a special space for itself in the world of arts. It's a creative expression that has been forgotten in the changing times but it still hopes to regain the fame through its world of magic and wonder.

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NRITYANTAR

ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS, Bengaluru

Nrityantar Academy of Performing Arts was established by Pratyusha Public Charitable Trust on October 5, 2009 as a unit of the Trust. The idea behind starting Nrityantar was to expand and accelerate its charitable and cultural activities, to promote and preserve India's rich pluralistic cultural legacy by promoting art, music and dance, to nurture great talents, and to help and assist aspiring artists for a better living by training and support. Nrityantar, as the name suggests, was formed on the philosophy of transformation within and outside through dance. It strongly believes in the great powers and benefits of Indian classical dances, spiritual, curative, developmental and emotional.

Nrityantar considers dance as a very useful tool to affect positive changes in the society and has included and emphasized on social issues in its teaching and renditions. Nrityantar is devoted to the promotion of Indian classical dances in purity. However it does intend to extend the frontiers with innovative themes and ideas and participate in inter-disciplinary ventures without diluting fundamentals of these great art forms.

Nrityantar since its inception has undertaken many of the trust's activities with renewed enthusiasm and spirit. It considers educating and sensitizing people, on our rich cultural legacy and its traditional art forms, as the most important step towards its noble objectives. Nrityantar organizes regular and special dance classes for children as well as elders. It holds free regular classes for underprivileged children belonging to economically weaker sections and many government schools.

The idea is to discover and nurture great talents who in spite of having a lot of potential and passion, do not get ample opportunities and resources. Trainees and students are properly trained, groomed and assisted in their dance as profession and as a good career option. Nrityantar has organised many lecture demonstrations and performances at several public places in the city to create awareness and to instill a sense of responsibility in individuals, institutions and society towards promotion and preservation of these art forms. It plans to hold many more such public displays and performances in future.

Nrityantar has been working with many schools in the city with the idea of including classical dance as an integral part of the curriculum and routine schooling. Something the children enjoy so much amidst the monotonous school activities, and alongwith it, they get to learn great dance forms and a bit of our very rich and proud culture. It does make them more confident and interactive. Dance instills in them discipline, a sense of togetherness and teamwork, willingness for hardwork and focus for achieving goals. These values do help a child grow as an individual. Nrityantar is a unit of Pratyusha Public Charitable Trust, a non-profit organization registered under the Charitable Trust Act and with the Income Tax Department u/s 12(A) and 80(G). All donations made to it are entitled for Income Tax deductions under 80(G).

Nrityantar seeks patronage, partnerships and support from willing individuals, Institutions, organizations and dance enthusiasts in its noble endeavours.





Madhulita Mohapatra



Madhulita Mohapatra is an accomplished Odissi dancer and trainer. She has received her Nrutya Acharya from Orissa Dance Academy, Bhubaneswar, and Nrutya Shastri from Orissa Sangeet Natak Academy.

Born at Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi, Orissa in the year 1978, she started her Sambalpuri folk dance and Odissi in childhood. She began her initial Odissi training under Guru Krushna Chandra Sahoo at Kalahandi Kala Kendra, Bhawanipatna. Since then she has been undergoing formal and professional training under many eminent gurus. Her



dedication and an extreme thirst for mastering the art of Odissi took her to Orissa Dance Academy at Bhubaneswar in 1999 under the guidance of Padmashri Guru Gangadhar Pradhan. Under the able tutelage of Guru Pabitra Kumar Pradhan she has successfully imbibed the



purity and grace of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra's style. Inspiring guidance of Guru Aruna Mohanty has infused in her a remarkable sense of artistry and discipline.

She has been performing Odissi on stage across the country since childhood.

Some of the programmes she has taken part are

- ✧ Kalahandi Utsav, Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000
- ✧ National Integration Camp, Mysore, Karnataka, 1994
- ✧ Dream Festival, Cuttack, 1996
- ✧ The 25th All India Short-Play Competition & Theatre Seminar, Allahabad, 1992 and 1993
- ✧ Youth Festival organised by All India Radio, Jeypore, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2005
- ✧ Jharsuguda Festival, 2002



☀ Performed at Doordarshan Kendra, Bhawanipatna for the TV telecast, 1999, 2000, 2001

☀ Performed at Doordarshan Kendra, Bhubaneswar for the TV telecast, 2002

☀ Cuttack Bali Yatra, 2005, 2007

☀ Konark Music & Dance Festival at Konark, 2006, 2007, 2008



☀ Mukteshwar Utsav organised by Doordarshan Kendra, Bhubaneswar, 2005

☀ Performed solo at Ganesh Puja Mahotsav 2008 Programme organised by Orissa Cultural Association, Bangalore, 2008

☀ Dance Jathre 2008 at Bangalore organised by Shambhavi School of Dance in collaboration with SCZCC, Nagpur

☀ Conducted an Interactive Odissi Workshop at HAL, Bangalore and performed at the even, Bangalore, 2008



- ✦ Performed solo at ZTE Telecom India Pvt. Limited programme at Bangalore, 2008
- ✦ Performed solo at Ravindra Kalakshetra, Bangalore on World Dance Day Programme, Bangalore, 2009
- ✦ Showcased Odissi on Sri Shankara TV Channel, 2009
- ✦ Performed at Purusha Bhushana at Mysore, 2009
- ✦ Presented Odissi solo at Vinayak Mahotsav at Koramangala Indoor Stadium, Bangalore, 2009
- ✦ Performed solo at Kumara Uthsava at Rotary Club (West Auditorium), Mysore, 2009
- ✦ Presented Odissi at Nrithya Dhare 6 at Seva Sadan Auditorium, Bangalore, 2009
- ✦ Performed at Samanvaya at Town Hall, Mangalore, 2009
- ✦ Performed at Palace Grounds, Bangalore at the International IEEE Symposium, 2010
- ✦ Performed at Nrithya Sambrama 2010 at Sullya, 2010
- ✦ Performed at Maha Shivarati Mahotsav at Karkala, 2010



Apart from being a gifted Odissi dancer, she is an excellent Sambalpuri folk dancer, choreographer and performer. She was initiated in Sambalpuri folk dance by Shri Bhimsen Sahoo, Bhawanipatna. She went on to perform this folk dance form at many places in the country.



Some of the numerous programmes where she performed are

- ✳ National Integration Camp, Krishna Raj Nagar, Karnataka, 1994
- ✳ National Integration Camp, Mysore, Karnataka, 1994
- ✳ The 25th All India Short-Play Competition & Theatre Seminar, Allahabad, 1992 and 1993
- ✳ Farm & Home Programmes organised by All India Radio, Jeypore, 1994-95
- ✳ Youth Festival, Akash Vani, Jeypore, 1995, 1996, 1997
- ✳ Beach Festival, Puri, 1993, 1998



✽ Utkal Divas, Bhopal,
1996

✽ The 50 Years of
Independence, Folk
Dance Festival,
Bhubaneswar, 1997

✽ Integration Camp,
Pondicherry, 1996

✽ National Integration
Camp,
Bhubaneswar, 2000



Academically, Madhulita Mohapatra has Masters in Commerce and Business Administration. Presently she is based at Bangalore and running her Odissi institution, **Nrityantar Academy of Performing Arts** at Kasturinagar, near Banaswadi, Bangalore. She can be reached at madhulita.m@gmail.com; Phone No. +91-80-42052233

Dance

Naman foster



Naman mailer Madhulita Mohapatra is an odissi dancer

Three different styles of odissi will be represented at an upcoming festival dedicated to the dance form, finds **Joshua Muiywa**.

Through the '90s, odissi remained a significant part of Bangalore's cultural imagination owing to the efforts of the late Protima Gauri's dance village Nrityagram and their annual festival, Vasantahabba. But after these brief moments of cultural prominence, the dance form seems to have wilted from our collective memories with only occasional spikes on the graph of the city's dance calendar.

This fortnight, Madhulita Mohapatra, odissi dancer and teacher, hopes to ensure the form's continued visibility with the first edition of an annual odissi festival – Naman. "Two years ago, I moved to Bangalore and noticed that there were very few odissi shows in the city," said Mohapatra. "It

seemed like all the other dance forms were overshadowed by the prominence of bharatanatyam, both in the case of individual shows as well as in festivals."

Mohapatra's efforts to keep the dance form alive began with her dance school, the Nrityantar Academy of Performing Arts in Kasturinagar. Realising, however, that to make a significant impact, changes would have to be made at the festival level, she started working towards a group of shows that would showcase odissi. "It seemed like a logical way to imprint odissi in the minds of dance audiences in Bangalore, as well as draw other people who want to sample the form," said Mohapatra.

Recounting the one significant obstacle she faced in putting the festival together, she said, "Since Bangalore has never been a major stop on the odissi performer's map, it needed to be force-fitted into the dancers' plans." But after her teacher, Gangadhar Pradhan,

founder-teacher at the Orissa Dance Academy (Mohapatra's alma mater), Bhubaneswar, agreed to attend, the festival began to take shape rapidly.

The dancers participating in the festival are, from Bangalore, the duo Uday Kumar Shetty and Soumya Shetty, and Sharmila Mukerjee; Sangeeta Dash from Pondicherry; and two male dancers – Pankaj Kumar Pradhan and Amulya Balabantaray, from Bhubaneswar, Mohapatra said

'It seemed all the other dance forms were overshadowed by bharatanatyam.'

that apart from maintaining a balance of new talent and seasoned performers, she also wanted artists who danced the different styles of odissi – the Pankaj Charan Das, Deba Prasad Das and Kelucharan Mohapatra styles. "The Pankaj Charan Das and Deba Prasad Das styles don't have torso movement, Kelucharan Mohapatra added the torso movement to the vocabulary of the form," Mohapatra explained. "Very few people are aware of the fact that there are three styles of odissi, and it will be interesting to see responses to the subtle changes. Also, in a way, the depiction of these three styles is a mapping of the broadening movement vocabulary of odissi."

In addition to providing the audience with a chance to experience the different forms of odissi, Mohapatra will also be bringing in rare photographs of the evolution and history of odissi from the vaults of the Orissa Dance Academy to be exhibited at the venue. This, said Mohapatra, will give visitors an insight into the three traditions of odissi – the mahahari, or temple dancers; gotipua, or the acrobatic odissi performed by young boys; and nartaki, or dancers of the royal courts.

See Festivals in Listings.

Folklorists in the Field Work

Nagaland

Arunachal Pradesh

Report by Tara Dugals

Adivasi Art Trust, India and UK



Research in Nagaland, North East India

22 March - 14 April 2010

by Tara Douglas



Aim: to make audio recordings of traditional folk stories from tribes in Nagaland

There are 16 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes in Nagaland, a small state in the furthestmost eastern corner of India. Although the Naga tribes never had a written history of their own, they did have a rich tradition of oral storytelling. In the evenings, after a hard day's work in the fields, the older generation entertained their youngsters by the fire that still dominates the Naga kitchen, with fantastic stories of families, heroes, spirits and talking animals. These stories would inevitably contain a moral lesson on how to live life well in the village. For the most part, this tradition has been lost, with the extensive conversion of Nagas to Christianity, and even more recently, with the shift towards the modern way of life and popular television entertainment.

I became interested in the art and culture of Nagaland after visiting several collections of artifacts in museums in the United Kingdom. Initial research on folk stories from Nagaland in the library at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London revealed an unusual tale; it was an Angami story that told of how once Spirit, Tiger and Man were brothers. This story motivated me to visit Nagaland for the first time in 2008, to find out more about the curious culture that I had been reading about. I decided to make a short animation film based on the story of the three unlikely siblings and needed help from the Nagas. In January 2009 I conducted an animation workshop for youth in Dimapur, Nagaland, and my initial fascination for Naga culture further evolved. I discovered that all the tribes had their own traditions and stories, and I realized that to animate the folklore of the Nagas I would have to research stories from all the tribes. Naga folk stories are largely unknown outside the state, although recently, a few new collections of stories have been published. I was awarded a grant from the Indian National Trust For Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) who were interested in preserving the intangible heritage of the North East, and I went off for a third visit to Nagaland in the spring of 2010 to collect audio recordings of folk stories from some of the most remote areas.

It is difficult for foreigners to visit Nagaland as they require a restricted area permit and are obliged to travel in groups. I was lucky to have an opportunity to travel with Richard Kunz, Curator of the Southeast Asia Department, at the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, Switzerland. Richard curated an exhibition based on Naga collections in the Ethnologische Museum in Berlin, the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich and the Museum der Kulturen Basel in 2008-9, supported by field research in Nagaland. Richard, together with Vibha Joshi produced an impressive book for the exhibition, *"Naga, A Forgotten Mountain Region Rediscovered"* (published by Christoph Merian Verlag and the Museum der Kulturen, Basel, 2008). Richard wanted to go back to Nagaland, revisit all the places where he had done research and give photographs and copies of the book to those who had helped him. We met up in Guwahati on 22 March, and later that afternoon we took the train together to Dimapur.

Naturally, Richard had plenty of contacts in Nagaland and when we disembarked from that train we were greeted by our respective Naga friends. Richard had a reception committee, and my young friend Oyimbong (Abong), who has helped me out on several animation projects, was there to meet me. Abong informed me that his young friends, Lima and Sariyongba had recently started a multimedia institute in Dimapur, and he asked if I would conduct a one day seminar at the Institute to inspire the students. I agreed, a date was set for Thursday 25 March, and we began preparing some artwork. I would give an introduction to animation, screen some of my work together with some short artistic animation films made by international masters of animation, and there would be a practical session. As there would not be enough time for participants to get into storytelling and making characters, Abong and I decided that we would make a few animation puppets of generic characters that might appeal to the young Nagas. We designed these characters on card paper and then cut out separate limb parts that could be moved by the students in increments and captured frame by frame with a digital camera to create sequences.



The day passed in frantic activity, with groups of students taking turns for film screenings and practical sessions. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, confirmed by the feedback slips received from participants. Guests had applied to attend the final session, and there were several who already had some experience in animation. Everyone was interested in the idea of adapting Naga folk stories for animation.

On the morning of our workshop we left early for the Nagaland Institute of IT and Multimedia, a modest place recently opened above a mechanic's workshop in Naharbari, Dimapur. A laptop and projector had been put in one room and in the other there were two animation set-ups with cameras connected to tripods, lights, background drawings and animation characters.



Film screening and lecture

We were eager to leave Dimapur and head off to the countryside, but first we had to stop in Kohima. The road to Kohima is the best in Nagaland, and the drive takes about two hours. Abong volunteered to come along for our trip around Nagaland, claiming that it would be a valuable opportunity to see more of his home state. He had recently returned from Delhi, and was staying with his parents who run the Imchen Guesthouse on Minister's Hill in Kohima. From the Ao tribe, Abong had not travelled beyond his home district of Mokochung. Richard had also invited a young Konyak called Ebbe to accompany us. On previous visits to Nagaland, Richard had spent a lot of time in the Konyak region, where he documented the tradition of acquiring, making and bringing one of the vast log drums from the forest and installing it in the village of Yonghong. Yonghong was Ebbe's ancestral home, and it was a priority destination for this trip too.

But we first had to reach Laruri, a remote village in Phek district, just two villages from the Myanmar border. We hired a vehicle for our trip around Nagaland as many areas are poorly connected by public transport and the roads are in a much neglected state. It was a long, tiresome journey that took us through a tiny corner of Manipur and onto Meluri, where we met up with a gang of Pochury Nagas that were expecting Richard.



Laruri village, Phek District

I did not know anything about the Pochury Nagas. I was surprised to discover that our new friends could speak some English, and they told me that there are 29 Pochury villages with a population of about 20,000, with eight dialects spoken amongst them. The Pochury Nagas also have a tradition of nominating a Raja. In Kohima we had met Richard's friend, the current Raja, Parliamentary Secretary Hitachu, who had encouraged me to find out more about a belief amongst the Pochury Nagas that certain people share their spirit with a tiger.

It was five hours further to reach Sütü village along roads that barely existed, where we would spend the night. There were no guesthouses in Sütü, so we were provided with a room by the local pastor. Everyone was very excited to be receiving exotic visitors from far away, and the best meat available was cooked for us. I am vegetarian, so the cuisine of Nagaland was not particularly appealing to me, but Richard loudly complimented the food, assuring me that one of the main incentives for him to come to Nagaland was to enjoy the various pork dishes that are relished throughout the region.

The next day our hosts invited us for a fishing trip and picnic by the Tisü River, which flows on into Myanmar, but first we had to deliver Richard's book to the headman of Laruri village.

In Nagaland, certain protocol is expected at such occasions and Richard was ready with a formal speech to all the elders that had gathered in the village hall, dressed in their best elaborate red waistcoats woven with tribal designs. Richard thanked everyone profusely for their cooperation, adding that he was honoured to have this opportunity to reconnect with the village.



Storytellers of Laruri village: Chimpong-Tsü, L. Jimpong, Pagnretsü, T. Kamsang, Tampingtsü

I felt it was a good opportunity to bring up the topic of folk stories and I appealed to the group for some Pochury stories. A storytelling session ensued, and I was able to record several stories in Pochury language, all telling of the relationship between humans and animals. The stories were later translated for me by the local head teacher, Lalmangaiha, back in Sütü village.

The Tisü River flows close to Laruri. To our great delight, we inched our way across the river over a precarious hanging bridge made of vines, before bravely plunging into the cool water, having heard how people get swept away every year by this fast flowing river. Our hosts were determined to provide fish for our lunch, and they made several home made dynamite bombs to stun the fish and ensure that there was something to eat with our rice.



Dokiu also wanted to show us his farm in Shamator, and on the way we stopped at a Yimchunger village called Wapher to see an outstanding log drum. All log drums are kept in morungs in the Naga village. Villages are divided into khels or clans and each khel has a morung. In the past, the morung was an important community centre and dormitory for the men of the village. The log drum in Wapher is huge and ancient; it is said to be at least 200 years old. Unlike the usual Naga log drums, the ancient log drum of Wapher is completely hollow and it can be played by going inside and banging on the wood with a stone. There was a special story about the log drum of Wapher village and the headman, Mr. K. Pensokiu related the story to us:

In olden times, when the village was raided by head hunters from neighboring villages, it would be set alight. The drum would slither off into the jungle like a snake to save itself and when the enemy had gone, the villagers would go into the forest and retrieve it. Mr. Pensokiu claims that he remembers the tracks left by the retreating log drum during the last recorded raid on the village in 1954. He is a lively raconteur, and Dokiu hinted that I will have to make another dedicated trip to the Yimchunger area to make a thorough documentation of the history and folk tales.



Unlike the usual Naga log drums, the ancient log drum of Wapher is completely hollow and it can be played by going inside and banging on the wood with a stone.

Our next destination was Tuensang and in the van I wondered how the locals tolerate such poor roads every time they need to reach their district capital. When we finally reached Tuensang, we found that even the roads in the town needed maintenance. In Tuensang we had arranged to visit Iris Yangzen. A friend of Richard's, Iris teaches at the college and she is also studying history of art in Nagaland for a PhD. Her friendly cottage, just down from one of the muddiest roads in Tuensang, is decorated with her own paintings and her collection of Naga baskets. Iris is from the Lotha tribe, but her husband is Chang Naga. Tuensang is mostly inhabited by Changs, who have had long-term land disputes with the neighboring Konyaks. As we head on to Tobu we cross a small stream over an iron bridge. Ebbe tells us that this marks the boundary established by the British between the Chang and Konyak territories.

Ebbe's home is in Tobu, and he tells us that there is still animosity between the Konyaks and the Changs. Tobu once belonged to both tribes. It seems that the Changs were not happy with their lot, and they began encroaching on Konyak land. Aggressive outbursts would happen between the communities at intervals and the Changs were only permitted to continue living there under strict conditions. In the early 1990s the village was burnt down, and it was only rebuilt several years later.



Tobu town



Meshiang Nyakhu

I am still on the quest for Naga folk tales and we manage to find the oldest man in Tobu, Meshiang Nyakhu.

I am told that he is at least a hundred years old, and according to events that he remembers, we decided that he must be at least ninety. But he is too old to remember any folk tales. He talks of the old days of tribal warfare, declaring that he also had been a head hunter once. He speaks the Konyak dialect of the area (there are four Konyak dialects) and Ebbe explains that he remembers events in the 1930s that led J. P. Mills to order the burning of Pangsha village in 1936 as punishment for head hunting raids. Richard brings out his laptop to show a collection of photographs taken by Christof von Fürer Heimendorf, and our storyteller recognizes several of the Nagas in those historic pictures. He also remembers that the Japanese reached this area and that they fought with the Konyaks; the Konyaks had bravely defended themselves with their spears, but a couple of villages had been burnt down and Pangsha was burnt for the second time in 1944.

Ebbe planned for us to spend a night in his field hut, down by the Hamshü River, which marks the boundary between the Konyaks and the Phoms. We piled into his jeep, collected a couple of his friends and some rice beer, and then we drove as far as we could, through landscape that had been ravaged by jhum cultivation. The Naga Hills are steep, and I had wondered how enough rice could be cultivated here to meet people's needs. I now know that often the only way to grow rice is to cut down and burn all the vegetation, stripping the hillsides bare. At the right time for the rainfall, rice is scattered to grow and produce a harvest. Often the jhum fields are far away from the villages, so Nagas build small huts entirely out of bamboo to rest in. Ebbe's field hut was down at the bottom of the valley and once again we swam and fished in Nagaland. Ebbe's companions used woven bamboo fish traps to catch whatever they could – plenty of small fish, prawns, crabs and frogs – and as darkness fell they lit a fire in the hut and made a delicious stew of their catch, with some foraged wild ferns and rice that they had brought along. It was wonderful, and our Konyak companions also reflected on this rare opportunity for us all to be together.

The next day we set off for Yonghong village. I felt the thrill of adventure at being in such a remote part of the world. It was a place where roads barely existed, electricity only reached once in a while, and it was one of the last villages from the international border. Crowds of ragged, bright-eyed children greeted us, the older ones carrying their young siblings on their backs.



We sat around in Naga kitchens drinking black tea and we were given tamul to chew. Tamul is made by mixing betel nut with lime, and it is a favorite amongst the Nagas. I am warned to not to swallow it: also containing tobacco, it can make one nauseous; it stains the teeth black and promotes tooth decay.

In the evening we assemble in one of the *morungs*. Richard is keen to record the sound of his favorite log drum, and many of the young men have gathered to oblige him, though we are told that as *Aoling* festival has finished it was unconventional to play the log drum at this time. It is incredibly atmospheric to witness the youth of Yonghong singing their ancient war songs, punctuated at intervals by banging rhythmically on the long log drum. I discover that these songs are sung as insults to their enemies from the neighboring villages.



The log drum in Yonghong village

A room is vacated for us in the headman's house, but when I ask for stories no one knows what I am talking about. Finally the head teacher of the Government Primary School suggests that I visit his school and ask the children for stories, so the next morning I go to the local school with Abong and the teacher, Mr. Yangang Yongmei.

I am humbled to find a basic shack with a tin roof that has been divided into classrooms. Ragged, dirty children sit on benches waiting for their teachers to attend to the classes by rote. My arrival creates a lot of excitement, and in each classroom I bring out my Marantz recording device and start talking to the children. Yangang translates into Konyak, and I am surprised to discover that very few of them have ever seen a cartoon. When I press the children for stories, they are shy, but soon a few courageous boys volunteer stories.



We decide to drive on to Longwa, a village in northern Nagaland, on the border of Myanmar. The road is long and it passes through Mon before continuing east. We reach Longwa in the evening, and we are greeted by Richard's friend, Longshah.



Longwa is on the international border



A Konyak warrior with face tattoos indicating his status as a head hunter

Because of its romantic location right on the international border, Longwa has become one of the better known places on the tourist circuit of Nagaland, and Longshah is doing very well as a business man. He has recently built himself a large hut in the traditional Konyak style on the newly-made road, and he is very popular with foreign visitors. Several international television celebrities have also visited Longwa, and tour groups are quite common. Tourism has taken its toll on Longwa, and many Konyaks now have the habit of demanding money for photographs.

The large, war-like Konyak tribe had proven to be very troublesome to the British administration and opium had been introduced to curb their rebellious temperament. Nowadays many Konyaks in Longwa are addicted to opium that is traded with Nagas from across the border. As is customary, we visit the Chief Angh of Longwa. There are only four Chief Anghs amongst the Konyaks and legend says that the palace of the Chief Angh is half in India and half in Myanmar. The Chief Angh is a divine king, and the position is hereditary; The Angh of Longwa, smokes opium, has several wives and is an impressive figure decked out in Konyak jewelry and a wide brimmed hat.



The Burmese side of Longwa village

Seven villages come under his jurisdiction, three of them in Myanmar, and the rest in India.

In the evening, I sit by the fireside in Longshah's family kitchen, and his father, Mr. G. Nahnyei tells me a few Konyak folk stories. I discover the Konyak belief that they originated from a gourd, and many of the problems that exist today between people is also explained through stories that tell of the consequences of individuality and selfishness.

On our way back to Kohima, we drive through the Mokokchung district of the Ao Nagas, stopping for a night at Chuchuyimlang village, with our friend Latong Meren Ao. There are two main dialects amongst the Aos, known as Mongsen and Chungli. Latong has arranged for an elder from his village to tell me some Ao folk stories, and a few more Ao stories are recollected back in Dimapur by Arenla Subong. Arenla and her husband Moa have a musical group called *Abiogenesis* and many of their songs are based in Naga mythology.

The research project to record Naga folk tales had proven to be more challenging than expected. On leaving the main urban centres, facilities are few and Naga villages rarely get foreign visitors. Permit restrictions make research difficult in Nagaland where time is required to establish trust amongst village people and for them to share their folk tales, but travel is excruciatingly slow and one often arrives at the destination late in the day. English speakers are fortunate: English was introduced by missionaries as a medium for education so there is usually someone willing to translate the stories.

With modern living and a lack of economic incentives for cultural activities, Naga youth in the urban environment have already lost touch with their oral traditions and it is only the older generation that still remembers folk tales. Heavily influenced by Indian and Korean television channels young Nagas will instinctively mimic commercial cartoon styles rather than refer to their own artistic heritage. Urban Naga youth need to keep in touch with their cultural heritage, perhaps through contemporary digital media that will be more appealing to them. In rural areas where children have yet to be exposed to television they still listen to folk stories but have no way of sharing them beyond their village. Children in remote villages would benefit from opportunities for interaction within the context of sharing the stories that they know.

I managed to collect thirty stories during this initial research trip. The audio recordings will be available to researchers in the archives of ethnomusicology at the American Institute of Indian Studies, based in Gurgaon, (India), and the collection is accessible online (<http://www.adivasiartstrust.org>). The stories would also provide captivating content for an illustrated children's book and a series of short animation films.

A lot more time is required to document, translate understand and the full wealth of Naga folklore before it is lost. The Adivasi Arts Trust would like to thank everyone that shared their stories and provided assistance as translators. The Trust would also like to thank INTACH for supporting this project.



An animation scene created in the workshop at the Nagaland Institute of IT and multimedia

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Research in Arunachal Pradesh, North East India

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by Tara Douglas



My interest in tribal folk tales of India was ignited through a project that I had been involved with during 2003-6. *"The Tallest Story Competition"* (www.talleststory.com) was a half hour collection of five short tribal folk stories from Central India that had been adapted for animation films by a small animation company in Scotland, West Highland Animation. Concerned about the threat faced by minority cultures, Leslie McKenzie, from West Highland Animation, had spent many years exploring ways of adapting Gaelic mythology for cartoons to make it more appealing for the young generation; *"The Tallest Story Competition"* was her first foray further afield, and it was through this collection of short films that I came to know of, and admire, the legendary anthropologist Verrier Elwin.

Elwin had come to India in 1927 as a missionary but before long he had abandoned these activities, and instead went on to make a major contribution to the documentation of tribal art, culture and folk stories of Central India. His collections of stories from the tribes of Central India provided the inspiration for the animation films that I had helped to produce. Having spent 28 years based a tribal village in Madhya Pradesh called Patangarh, Elwin was offered a job by Jawaharlal Nehru as advisor to the new Indian government on policies for the integration of the tribes of the North East region. During this period he wrote several important books on the tribes of the North East, and I came across *"Myths of the North East Frontier of India"*, one of only a few of his books still in print, in a bookstore in Delhi.

The first time I read the book, I had no idea where the North East Frontier was, but I soon discovered that the weird and wonderful stories of spirits, creation and the origins of living things were from remote tribes that lived in the area now known as Arunachal Pradesh, hidden away in the furthest corner of India, bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar.

"The Tallest Story Competition" had received appreciation at the many screening events I had organized for the distribution of the programme. I had already visited several states of the North East, and through the newly established Adivasi Arts Trust (www.adivasiartstrust.org), I wanted to explore the possibilities of developing a similar collection that would include stories from this fascinating region. On receiving an orientation grant for foreign researchers from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, I decided to go to Arunachal Pradesh with the hope of establishing a link between Central India and the North East, through the work of Verrier Elwin.

For foreigners, a restricted area permit is usually required to visit sensitive areas of the North East, including Arunachal Pradesh. The permit for Arunachal is available at a fee of \$US50 and applications must be made by two or more foreigners. I was fortunate in that my friend Oken Tayeng who runs a travel company in Arunachal was able to arrange for my permit to be faxed to me from Itanagar. I set off from Delhi on the Brahmaputra Mail to Guwahati; over 40 hours later I arrived, and from there I continued by coach to Itanagar, a further 8 hours by road.

It is always a good idea to do some initial research before venturing off to investigate a new area, and contacts had provided a few recommendations of people to meet in Itanagar. Dr. Tomo Riba, Associate Professor at the Rajiv Gandhi University in Arunachal, assured me by email that I would be able to stay in the guest house at the University for a few days, and he also offered to introduce me to some storytellers.

Dr. Riba picked me up early that first morning from Nirjuli, and he took me to the University, located on the top of scenic Rono Hills, just outside Itanagar. As it was the vacation, the University was largely empty but for a few staff engaged in marking examination papers, and I felt very fortunate to find myself in such a safe, peaceful and distinguished environment.



Dr Tomo Riba

Dr. Riba, from the Galo tribe, is exceptional; helpful and full of enthusiasm, in no time at all, he had become a firm friend. He explained that there are 26 major tribes, and he meticulously wrote out a list of their names, indicating their locations and relationships.

He told me that the tribes could be broadly grouped according to similarities in origin, language and tradition. Several of those in the central region (including the Nyishi, Apatani, Aka, Adi, Galo, Bori, and Tagin) belonged to the Tani group that shared belief in a common ancestor called Abo Tani and in the sun and moon as supreme deities.



Mishmi girl

Amongst the Buddhist tribes, those that had migrated from Tibet included the Monpa, Sherdukpen, Memba and Khampa and they maintained traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Buddhist tribes dwelling in eastern Arunachal included the Khampti and the Singpho; they had migrated from South East Asia, and practiced Theravada Buddhist traditions.

Naga tribes also inhabited the eastern districts of Changlang and Tirap. The Mishmi, he said were different again.



Dr Tai Nyori

Dr. Riba introduced me to the eminent Director of Tribal Studies, Dr. Tamo Mibang, author of several books on tribal subjects, and to Dr. Tai Nyori, who has also researched and written extensively on tribal mythology. Some of the Adi tales have morals, explained Dr. Nyori: A story of a pig and a dog (similar to one I had already heard in Nagaland) reflects the unfairness that exists in society, while a story of a tiger and a *mithun* indicates the foolishness of exposing one's weakness to the enemy.



Takhe Kani

I was eager to find a short story that would be entertaining for children to represent Arunachal in a new collection of animation films from the North East "*Tales of the Tribes*" that I am developing. As the first ancestor, Abo Tani had captured my imagination. Dr Nyori presented me with an article that he had written on stories about Tani, and several days later, another author, Mr. Takhe Kani from the Apatani tribe, gave me a booklet that he had published, but I still found the Tani stories difficult to comprehend. Although they are vivid in the minds of the storytellers, they have yet to be well communicated in English, and as oral traditions are generally maintained by priests, emphasis is placed on remembering the intricate lineages of the clans.



Dr Riba suggested that to know more of tribal life I needed to go and stay in a traditional village. I was very pleased when Dr. Riba easily arranged for my stay in his village, Disi, in Basar District, West Siang. His niece, Karpi Riba would accompany me; it would be a good experience for both of us, and we set off early one morning in a shared jeep for the long journey to Basar. There are very few roads in Arunachal Pradesh and during the monsoon season there is a real danger of road blocks caused by landslides so we were advised to exit Arunachal, travel along the flood plain of Assam, and re-enter central Arunachal. Nearly all of Arunachal is mountainous and there are few of the shops and small businesses that line the roads of other parts of India. The journey took about eight hours, and it was mid afternoon by the time we were met at Basar by Dr. Riba's younger brother, Toba.

Toba Riba maintains the ancestral home in Disi, 12 kilometers along a rough road from Basar that winds through dense forest and lush green paddy fields. Disi is a beautiful village on the banks of the small Kidi River, tucked away against a backdrop of verdant forest. Traditional Galo houses are

remarkable; many of them are quite large, and they stand high off the damp ground on stilts and, made entirely of bamboo and wood, they are extremely appealing. Each family also has a charming wooden granary amongst a cluster of granaries, to store the rice crop and it is also made of wood and bamboo.



The most important room in the Galo household is the kitchen, a large room with a bamboo floor and a mud fireplace at the centre. While mother prepares dinner in the evening, the rest of the family sit around the fireside which provides warmth and light where there is no electricity.

The meal consists of rice; wild vegetables foraged from the forest and meat. "Tribal people get everything for free from the forest", explains Toba Riba. "We have learnt to respect nature", he adds.

Toba however, like many people in Arunachal, has converted to Christianity. When I ask him what prompted him to do this, he explains that Galo animist traditions always involved a lot of expensive rituals and animal sacrifices, and that the debts which were incurred would be crippling for the villagers.

In Disi, families that still practice the modern version of animism, *Doini-Poloism*, announce their faith with a flag that depicts the sun against a pale background, in front of their houses.

We spend three days in Disi, and it rains continuously. Although the rainy season is hardly the best time to visit Arunachal, the intensity of rainfall brings its own charm and a peaceful, sedative mood, for it hard to do anything or go anywhere. Toba and his wife Henbon still go out to their fields every day, as it is the season for weeding.

I am tempted to accompany them for the three kilometre walk that entails wading through the river several times, but I am soon deterred by warnings that leeches are plentiful in the lush wet vegetation of the monsoon hills. A Tani folk tale tells that the leech is a brother of man, and I wonder if this can reduce the repulsion one instinctively feels towards leeches. A visit to Arunachal in the monsoon is not for the faint hearted, for I have never seen such a multitude of large exotic insects as during my stay!



Tomo Dirchi

On telling Toba of my mission to find out more about Galo folk tales, he promptly called Tomo Dirchi, the oldest man in Disi village, to the house. I made several audio recordings of stories of Tani related by Tomo Dirchi. As a priest, he was able to recall the lineages of the clans right from Abo Tani, but it still did not provide me with a suitable story to entertain children.

On showing Toba my book of stories collected by Verrier Elwin I would find him pouring over it on the all important verandah of his house in the mornings. After much consideration, Toba pointed out a Galo story of Tani and the Yapom in the book, and declared that this would be a suitable story for the animation film. The story certainly had potential – it told of Abo Tani's relationship with his brother Yapom, who was a spirit, and the subsequent ancestor of all *Wiyus* (spirits). All the tribes of Arunachal believe in spirits, and amongst the Tani group, these spirits, usually malevolent, needed to be appropriated regularly.

The understanding of stories depends on the storyteller, and this story would need to be elaborated on during an animation workshop, to adapt it for a short film.



Moji Riba conducts a workshop at JNK Public School, Itanagar

In Itanagar I arranged a meeting with Moji Riba, a dynamic young documentary film-maker with an outstanding reputation in Arunachal Pradesh.

Moji established the Centre for Cultural Research and Documentation in Naharlagun twelve years ago with support from the Ford Foundation, after graduating from Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. Since then he has directed many documentary films on cultural traditions of Arunachal Pradesh, and he also conducts workshops in schools and teaches at the University.

Moji was eager to collaborate for an animation workshop in February.

In 2001 Moji made a film called "*Prayers for New Gods*", and I asked him to tell me more about *Doini-Poloism*. He explained that this revival of traditional faith in a new form has been promoted by Talom Rukpa against the spread of Christianity, which now claims 60 percent of the population, many of whom come from the largest tribe in Arunachal, the Nyishi.

The Indigenous Faith Practices Act of 1979 forbids missionary activities and during the past eight years, tribal identification has become more aggressive. As old traditions become outdated, conflict has arisen between the elder and younger generations.

Moji believes that tradition needs to be brought into a contemporary form, and *Doini-Poloism* is part of this search for tribal identity, though there is also a tendency for it to be motivated by right wing Hinduism. In traditional animist rituals there were never any images of deities and the way it is practiced now, with temples, images and Saturday prayers is new.

The Apatanis are a tribe that inhabit the Apatani plateau and have been well documented by several eminent anthropologists. Unable to visit Ziro for the Dree festival, I went to the Dree Gound in Itanagar to experience the festivities. Dree is an agricultural festival held to appease various deities to ensure a healthy crop. Effigies are made of bamboo and a *nyibu* (priest) offers prayers and sacrifices. The festival is also an opportunity to see indigenous costumes and to taste Apatani food.

In the past, Apatani women favoured large nose plugs and facial tattoos, but now neither is considered attractive by the youth.

Some women at the festival had clearly tried to have their tattoos removed, and I was surprised to find out that these days the striking traditional knotted hairdo worn by men is often just a wig!

I then asked Moji about the sentiment amongst the tribes towards the Indian nation, and he explained that the idea of identity beyond the village only came about with the British; Christianity and the education it brought arrived much earlier amongst the Nagas, enabling them to conceive of an identity beyond the tribe. Policies devised for the integration of the tribes of NEFA limited intervention and higher education only reached the region in the 1960s so the inhabitants had never developed any notion of being non-Indian.



At the festival I met Gyati Rana and bought a copy of his booklet on nurturing indigenous culture. As Secretary of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh, Mr. Rana feels that identity is deeply embedded in faith, culture and tradition inherited from ones ancestors and that indigenous people should protect and promote it rather than converting to other religions. He is particularly concerned by the loss of mother tongue amongst the young generation.

At the University, Abani Doley, a young assistant professor at the Government College in Bomdila, presented me with his book on Mishing oral traditions.

I also had the contact of an author from the Adi tribe, Mamang Dai, and I went to visit her in Itanagar. Mamang was born in Pasighat in East Siang district and she has published several books including *"The Legends of Pensam"* a novel that weaves a web of stories and characters to evoke the mood of Arunachal. Mamang agreed that it would be wonderful to see a first animated folk tale from Arunachal.



Nang Pheyhom Chakhap and Chau Phatra Longchot

I was thrilled to discover an old worm-eaten volume of folk tales collected by Verrier Elwin called *"A New Book of Tribal Fiction"* that I had never heard of before, in the dusty, neglected Directorate of Research in Itanagar.

On visiting the State Museum with my new Apatani friend, Pura Khongkhung (Kim), I marvel at the elaborate dioramas that have been created for each of the tribes. "How will I ever remember so many tribes?" I wondered.

I also noticed that while highly accomplished in weaving, there is little in the way of figurative artwork other than the wooden sculptures of the Naga tribes (from an area closed to foreign visitors), to use as references when it comes to designing characters for the short film in our animation workshop.



Wancho wood carving
from Tirap District

Eager to visit eastern Arunachal Pradesh, the opportunity came when I met Nang Pheyhom Chakhap, Secretary of the Centre for Cultural Research and Documentation. Pheyhom is from the Tai Khampti tribe in Lohit District, and she informed me of the coronation ceremony for the new Tai Khampti chief in Chaukham on 16 July.

Every village has its own chief, and there is also a grand chief of all Khamptis. The previous chief had died in February, and in the beginning of July there had been a meeting to select the new chief. The Khampti chief is elected through majority, and the chief of Chaukham, Chau Muhua Namchoom, had been chosen because of his abilities and experience. Pheyhom wanted to document the important coronation ceremony with help from the team at CCRD, and so I accompanied them on the 14 hour drive right through northern Assam to Namsai, arriving late at Pheyhom's ancestral home in Piyong village.

Tai Khamptis migrated from the Yun-nan region of China in the eighteenth century. They have a sophisticated culture and are determined to preserve their traditions. Khampti language is derived from northern Shan, and they have had their own script for over 500 years. Certain Khampti elders assume the job of recording Khampti history in hand written books, and on our research visits to nearby villages we were shown several of these.



Everything was ready in Chaukham on the morning of the coronation. Village elders had been invited from all the Khampti villages and the organizing committee had erected a very large tent to accommodate several thousand Khamptis, all dressed in traditional outfits.



Pheyhom tells me that Khampti society is conservative and that in their own environment Khamptis usually choose to wear traditional clothes. On this coronation day, all Khampti men wore traditional long checked sarongs with white shirts. The dress is similar for women, though they clearly favoured black sarongs with large green sashes and white blouses.

There were some youthful volunteers from the scouts, but I noticed that there were few other young people in the crowd. The master of ceremonies instructed a welcome committee which included beautiful young women carrying ornamental displays of flowers and musicians in traditional costume banging gongs, to go to the chief's house and escort him to the ceremonial venue.



The new chief and his family were elaborately dressed in shiny silken robes, and on reaching the venue the Khampti flag depicting a tiger was raised and the crowd burst into a rendition of the Khampti anthem.





Everyone then went into the gold painted temple to offer prayers for the new chief, before the long formal speeches by government officials of the area.

Oral histories were read out in Khampti language, the chief swore his oath of allegiance and at last he and his wife were crowned with glittering headdresses made of paper and tinsel. A photo session was followed by various cultural programmes and I smiled as I remembered Elwin's account of dull performances that he had attended during his days amongst the Khampti.

The Khampti are evidently politically aware. Pheyhom was attracted to the idea of politics and saw this chance to document the ceremony as a move towards getting noticed by her community. Her retired father had been a teacher and she felt determined to uplift the position of women amongst the Khampti. She was exceedingly motivated and had asked her friend, Chow Swinwai Longkan, a teacher in Chaukham, to help arrange interviews with all the right people.

Still on my mission to find out more about folk tales, I brought out my Marantz audio recording device to record a love story related by a Tai Khampti woman, Nang Ken Khamhoo. Tragic love stories are popular, and Nang Ken was able to capture the melodrama, though I personally feel that comic stories are better suited for animation.



Chau Muhua Namchoom
Tai Khampti Chief

I had been promised stories by a Singpho chief in Piyong village, but time did allow for this storytelling session. Pheyhom, however, was determined to interview the oldest man in Namsai, Chau Khouk Manpoong for her documentary, and I took the opportunity to ask him for some more Khampti folktales. In perfect English, he related two from a text book that he has written to promote Khampti language in local schools. One of the stories told of a competition of strength between a boar and a tiger and it was similar to one I had heard before in Nagaland; the second, a short story of a crow and a jackal had an obvious moral about vanity, for the crow is easily tricked by the jackal's flattery.



Tara interviews
Chau Khouk Manpoong

Chau Khouk soon had us captivated with his personal historical memories and I took a chance and asked him if he had ever met Elwin, to which he replied that he remembered him well. In fact Elwin had encouraged him to go on to become the first university graduate from Arunachal Pradesh.

Driving at night in Lohit district becomes akin to an obstacle course. I am amused by all the slim, trim cows that assemble in family groups to settle down right in the middle of the road for the night. Electricity in Piyong is intermittent, and marveling at the vast number of fireflies sparkling like spirits in the dark night, I imagine that the fireflies have stolen it. Sheltering on the verandah from the rain with a notion of the firm belief in spirits that exists in these parts, I ask Pheyhom if she knows of any ghost stories. She delights in relating her own numerous ghostly experiences: She believes that she has seen ghostly fingers inserted into the ventilation holes in the wall of the house; going out to investigate, she discovered a single footprint, and later, on consulting the local priest, it turned out to be a well known one-legged ghost!

Amongst the Tais there are many rules to be observed otherwise the spirits may be displeased, or they may even get attracted to humans. Pheyhom believes that ghosts can be deterred by burning mustard seeds, chilli, ginger and a certain resin. She also tells me of two childhood friends whose father was popularly thought of to be a forest spirit. Spirits can assume any form she says, and Tais will never look into a mirror at night, for the spirits just may steal their image.

Arunachal is replete with lush large-leaved plants such as tree ferns and banana. Paddy and tea plantations make the plains of Arunachal even more verdant, vibrant and luminous green. It is said that in this area the jungle was once so dense that one could not see through it, though now it has been greatly diminished through recent exploitation by the timber industry.



Pheyhom's family house in Piyong



The weekly market in Piyong



Tea garden in Arunachal Pradesh

The next morning we set off as early as possible for the long, arduous drive back through Assam.

Before returning to Delhi, I decide to continue on the trail of Verrier Elwin to Shillong in Meghalaya, where he was based during his sojourn in the North East. Shillong is quite the antithesis to remote, undeveloped Arunachal in that it was once the capital for the British presence in the North East. The comfortable three hour drive from Guwahati takes one up into the cloudy hills past tea plantations and pineapple farms, and as it is pineapple season, and I am delighted by piles of ripe pineapples for sale by the roadside.

Good fortune shines on this research trip: I have managed to make contact with Verrier Elwin's youngest son, Ashok, and he is expecting me in Shillong. As a devoted fan of Elwin, I have read many of his books, including his entertaining autobiography, *"The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin"*, and I have a strange sensation of familiarity on my first meeting with Ashok.

I am thrilled at being able to see the legacy left by Elwin - numerous albums of historical photographs of the tribes, decades of hand written diaries, scrap books of articles, publications and personal letters from Mahatma Gandhi. I eagerly try to convey the work of the Adivasi Arts Trust to Ashok, and even go as far as suggesting that had Elwin been living today, might he perhaps have encouraged the young tribal generation to adapt their folk tales for animation films? Quite unexpectedly, Ashok suggests developing a cartoon character of Elwin, and I agree that this is a very interesting idea for the *"Tales of the Tribes"* project that is unfolding in such an organic way.

This research trip has brought new impetus to the fantastic idea of creating a collection of tribal animation films from the North East region.

It has now become apparent that the stories would share common themes of nature spirits, which is the essence of tribal North East.

Verrier Elwin's work had significant impact on the region, especially in Arunachal Pradesh, where he is still fondly remembered. Elwin would be able to provide an obvious link between the tales from the states, perhaps even as a cartoon avatar and presenter for the stories (if this could be realized with the cooperation of his family), in which case a story from Arunachal demands to be included in the collection.

Enthusiasm was expressed in Arunachal for an animation workshop to bring young people together to develop a story for the series. It will be a challenge to find young animators from Arunachal to develop a new artistic style suited to the story, in light of the fact that traditional artistic reference material is limited, though a combination of 2D and 3D techniques may be used for the film. Past experience has shown that a local partner is essential for the success of workshops and I am looking forward to collaborating with the Centre for Cultural Research and Documentation for the Animation Workshop in Arunachal.

The Trust would like to thank the storytellers and new friends in Arunachal and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for their support of this research project.



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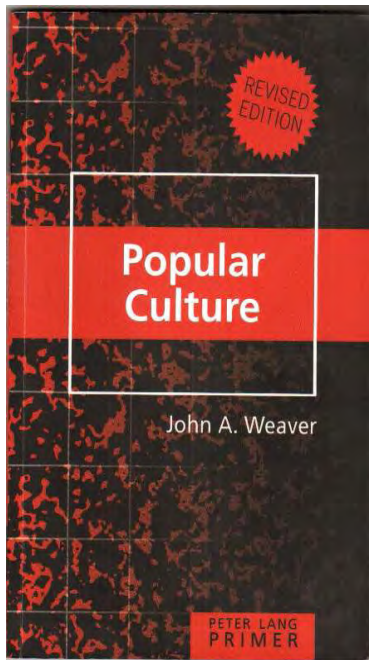
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BOOK REVIEW



Written by John Weaver

Publisher Peter Lang, New York 2009

Reviewed by Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra

(1143 words)

The Peter Lang publication titled *Popular Culture PRIMER* (2009) by John A. Weaver is a commendable work in the field of understanding the paradigm shift from conventional definition of culture to popular culture. This shift cuts across the histories of human civilizations.

The book explains definitions of culture and its development through ages. The definition of 'culture' in ancient times had different values than in the modern age. Culture then was a possession of the privileged classes, denied, in a way, to the masses. Popular culture in 20th century, however, poses a major challenge to the rest of the centuries.

In 18th century, European intellectuals held an elitist perception of culture. Common masses, according to them, were not supposed to visit museums and Opera theatres, as they would not be able to understand the meanings of these cultural contingencies. Their time should be, ideally, utilized in manual labor and not be wasted in theatres.

Kant said, 'freedom and rational thought were beyond average people; cultured persons knew how to exercise their freedom' (p. 49). Mathew Arnold and Oscar Wilde also believed in excellence, by telling that arts dominate the spectators. Any university, said F.R. Leavis, which attempts to function on democratic principles simply could not create a cultured public (p. 9). Similarly, Levi-Strauss advocated for the 'cultured few'.

The writer has critically examined the history of elite culture that was advocated over centuries, and focuses on the major breakthrough – the first decade of 19th century. This was the period when popular culture emerged, after introduction of audio-visual media to the entertainment world of society: film, radio and television, where common people equally shared the cultural space irrespective of their class status.

The author then examines the influence on popular culture of the inescapable phenomenon of Americanization. The process denied other cultures into the scenario and there was a rapid paradigm shift. Opera was replaced by film – stage performers got international attention after joining the film industry. Cultural figures, confined to the limited theatre audience, became screen actors and gained wider popularity. There was a palpable change from iconic/traditional cultural images to popular culture images/digital images.

Invention of TV, film and Radio brought a radical change in the way entertainment was internalized by the audience: mental images gave way to physical images, written truth was replaced with oral truth. Visual image challenged the written image in terms of representing meaning. Likeness to religious iconography was developed and logical

positivism was adopted where it was believed that image is a pure representation of nature/reality .Thus 'literature versus art and image was synthesized as images and texts; these echo one another at safe distances.' (p. 17)

Alongside, too, the written image was replaced by the visual image, and the visual image transformed to digital images through compositing.

This shift from the human to non-human transformation of images almost makes the role of human being redundant. The truth at the same time weighs that the living man is the source of action and interpretation so that images bear their corresponding meanings.

Popular culture successfully meets these challenges and alters the world that digital images construct one pixel at a time.

Weaver underscores the fact that definition of culture goes through alterations with different time stretches, viz. modern, ancient, and so on. He defines the concept of culture in the context of popular culture: culture is a blend of traditional and popular cultures with historical contexts. Further, he states that power-centers as a major component of cultural studies, that ultimately defines the geographical dimension of culture, is another area of concern.

Frankfurt School purports to be the prime intellectual custodian of the tradition of popular culture. They stretched their study on culture from the economics of culture to the cultural domain. The school propagated a critical theory based on cultural industry, which gave rise to the rise of popular culture. Art in the age of mechanical reproduction gained popularity, though at the loss of democratic flavor.

As the book progresses, Weaver convincingly brings home the growing role of film, TV, radio and photographs in the changing scenario of human culture. Audience is absent in the film, where as "every commercial is the big lie in which advertising becomes art and nothing else".(P. 29) Film and photography is aimed against death of the audience. Film also reduced the "distance in both time and space between the image and the viewer." Film becomes reality in a process of simulation, following which simulation is a reality. Television is a way to ensure access to adequacy; it has a polysemic functional character. Music, as a cultural agent, too was threatened by technology in the beginning when it saw the separation of human voice from the body. Next came the hip hop culture in music, characterized by its hybridity. They also co-opted in a cultural setting of iteration. Sports in modern context is not cruel like its ancient counterpart, but became an

embodiment of a culture's highest values with its eventual evolvement of the fan culture.

Chapter Four highlights new areas of study in the field: the cultural studies of techno-science. Thomas Kuhn was the pioneer on spelling out the fact that scientific theories represent different values, cultures and beliefs which is incommensurable with one another. Kuhn had a worthy successor in N. Catharine Hayles, the noted writer on techno-science in relation to culture who discussed cosmic web. Her theory reiterates that both scientists and litterateurs think alike and do the same job under two labels, unknown to each other, and are connected to a cosmic web. The concept and practice of electronic literature and interconnection of materiality of culture with interdisciplinary sciences has been established in the field of human resource, and the dichotomy of two cultures, i.e., humanity and science has ceased. Electronic literature has replaced print literature by adopting e-books. The post-human condition is the next stage in this evolution, where human brain is supported with the machine termed as cybrog, cybernetics and neuro-net computers. This leads to techno-culture and hypermediacy and ultimately, to the emergence of bioscience.

Chapter Five of the book balances the concept of cultural study against its curricular positioning. This chapter emphasizes the significance of the study of childhood and counseling children, for making the most of the subject as a curricular challenge. Alongside runs the statement of the author, that critical pedagogy, critical media literacy and curriculum theory hold the basics of contemporary popular culture and provide space for the mass.

The book contains instances of popular culture of western societies. It is a significant project that will be useful for scholars interested in pre-modern and modern cultural worlds of developing countries, to understand and assess the values of popular culture in terms of their own contexts.

Dom Sanskruti (Odia)

By Gopinath Bag

Parla, Published by Premadhar Sethia, 2009, Print, Pages 153, Rs. 100

Reviewed by Sanjaya Kumar Bag

ERLC Bhubaneswar

In this book, Gopinath Bag deals with the culture, folk literature, and language of the *Dom* community in reference to Kalahandi district. The *Dom* is a community who are not only inhabited in Kalahandi but in other parts of West Odisha as well as Odisha, and all over the India. They have their own language, culture, and social structure. But scholars have little knowledge about the culture and language of the *Dom* community, no research has been done by any anthropologist and folklorist or linguist till the date, so this book is a pioneer work of that kind. Gopinath has discussed briefly about their origin, as well as their house pattern, social structure, rite de passage, language, folk literature, festivals, and Gods and Goddesses of the *Dom* community in this book.

In the first chapter he has discussed about Kalahandi district where the *Dom* are a major community among all the community of scheduled caste. He has tried to trace the origin of the word '*Dom*' from various sources in the second chapter, but did not give any footnote or reference to the account. He also briefly discussed about the traditional profession of the *Doms*, that this community particularly do the weaving, performing music, and bamboo works. In the third chapter he has discussed about the house patterns, food habits, some traditional utensils, technique of preservation of food grains, as well as their traditional attires, and ornaments.

In the fourth chapter the social structure of *Dom* community has been discussed. Gopinath sums up the family configuration, and the different *Bāsh* (kith and kin). He succinctly mentioned about the different surname but did not attempt to through lights about their origin and how they are known like that. He also discussed briefly about the social structure and relationships as well as different ritualized friendship of two individual within the community i. e. *BAliphula*, *GajAmūga*, *MālAlok*, *BAplok* etc., but failed to mention about some relationship with individual of other community i.e. *SākAr*. The rite de passage has been discussed fifth, eight and ninth chapter. He extensively

discussed about the rite rituals related to birth, marriage, and death that different from other community. Apart from this *Kanabari* (pre-nuptial rituals for girl child), and the rituals of *Karam* (first menstruation), *Maskia* (menstruation) also discussed in seventh chapter.

A tenth and the eleventh chapter deal with festivals as well as God and Goddesses of the *Dom* community, though the festivals are observed all over the *West Odisha*, and not restricted to this community only. Like festivals in this chapter Bag has discussed about different folk Gods and Goddesses that they are also worshiped by whole in *West Odisha*. In the twelfth chapter Bag has discussed about musical instruments that played by this community in various social occasions i.e. marriage, death, *Puja* and other festivals and fairs. He has given a brief account of different musical instruments that are, *Singh Baja*, *Mahuri*, *Nisan*, *Tasa*, and *Dhol*. The last two chapters deal with language and folk literature of this community. The language of the *Dom* community is known as *Dom KathA* (i.e. Bhasa or Language). It is a different language that from the spoken language forms of *West Odisha* and lesser known to scholar as well as getting highly extinct from the community. So, Bag has done a praiseworthy work. Though his analysis is not in the linguistics point of view but follows traditional grammar. He traces the time period and root of the language with *CharyA Geetika*. In the fourteenth chapter he has discussed about folk literature. He has briefly mentioned about folk tales, folk songs, folk says, and folk beliefs. Apart from this he has also talk about some folk medicine and witchcrafts that administered by the people of this community.

Birthia, the genealogist of the *Dom* community has been not discussed in this book; I do not know why Gopinath did so, as he himself belongs to this community and must be well known about the tradition. Bag also did not talk about about *Palia*, a traditional performance of music and dance that is almost extinct.

After all, Gopinath Bag has done a pioneer work, there is no scholar has done any research on the *Dom* community. As I have informed that only one book came out entitled as *Dom Bashara Lokaukti* by Khetrabashi Manseth, is a taxonomical work on folk says only. So, this book would be very informative to a great extent for scholar of anthropology, folklore, culture, as well as for linguist and sociologist.

THE KANDHAS AND KANDHAMAL

By Raghu Nath Rath

Publisher: Amadeus Press, Bhubaneswar.

Price: Rs. 750/-

Reviewed by Dr. CHITRASEN PASAYAT

The Kandhas and Kandhamal by Raghu Nath Rath is based on the life and culture of Kandhas mainly found in Kandhamal, Ganjam and Kalahandi districts of Orissa IS A revealing one. Among the sixty two notified tribal communities in Orissa, the Kandhas with more than fourteen lakhs population are the largest tribal community in the state. Scholars have classified them mainly into three sub-groups namely, Dongria, Kutia and Desia. The author, though not a skilled scholar in any research institute or trained in any educational institution, through his conscientious studies has tried to present a comprehensive picture of Kandha tribe of Orissa. Viewed in this perspective, the endeavour of Sri Rath is admirable.

The book contains seventeen chapters. First one is 'Introduction' and the last one is 'Reference'. The remaining fifteen chapters cover various facets of Kandha life and culture. Second chapter deals with the origin and nomenclature of the Kandhas. The author has gone through census report, Kui language and grammar, oral tradition, ancient literature like the Mahabharata, Amar Kosha etc., and comes to the conclusion that, the word Kandha is derived from Kangod, a country between Kalinga and Odra existed since first century AD to eighth century AD. Third chapter is on the development and culture change among the Kandhas. In this chapter, the author has discussed the social, political and religious changes and the effect of economic growth as well, and believes that, the suggestions prescribed by V. Elwin are ignored at the time of implementation of various developmental activities in tribal areas,. 'Developmental work has deculturised them. So, programmes may be drafted in such a manner that, tribals will come to the mainstream without doing any harm to their colourful heritage'.

Fourth chapter covers the Kandha culture of Kalahandi in Orissa. The author has studied the youth dormitories called 'dhangra basa' and 'dhangri basa', marriage, birth and death rituals, dance and festivals like 'Toki parab', 'Bhima biha' and 'dhap dance'. The author has noticed tribal displacement from their native land in the plea of development. He has also observed that, tribal people are deprived of their age-old forest rights. The author is of the opinion that, 'we must first understand their mental state and then without cultural attack we can impose industrial and developmental activities keeping in mind that it will not be a burden for them and they could come to the mainstream'.

In the fifth chapter, the author has studied the Kandha crafts of Tumudibandha, a block situated on the south-western part of the Kandhamal district. He has classified the craft objects used by the 'Desia Kandhas' into nine categories like 1. Wood works, 2. Bamboo works, 3. Iron implements, 4. Materials from forest products, 5. Jewellery, 6. Earthen wares, 7. Metal articles, 8. Stone works and 9. Textiles and observed that, the culture of this area is influenced by the people of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts and believes that, 'the Kandhas are on the cross road of rapid change due to Christianity, modernization and cultural assimilation with neighbouring civilized folk and are using more modern accessories day by day according to their financial stability. Hence, some crafts industries are partly or completely diminished from the Kandha society now-a-days'.

Sixth chapter is on education of tribal children in Kandhamal district. The author uncovers the large scale drop out of tribal students and slow progress of literacy rate and suggests twelve recommendations for improvement of the situation. For example, study books ought to be prepared in tribal language up to upper primary level. Teachers from the same tribe and from the nearby villages, if possible, from the same village ought to be appointed. Training to the non-tribal teachers on the tribal culture and language ought to be imparted.

In the seventh chapter, the author has studied Desia Kandha myths and legends and feels that, myths, legends and tales richly prevalent among the Kandhas could enable the researchers to understand correctly the socio-economic, religious and morals of these people but unfortunately, these are vanishing speedily due to modernization and globalization. 'Unless we record all of them we will lose a great treasure of folklore'. In the eighth chapter, the author has studied the Kui riddles and opined that, every riddle has some cultural background or context. In the ninth chapter, the author has presented an account of Horn dance (Kraha Enda) of Kandhas, prevalent in Baliguda sub-division of Kandhamal district. This dance reflects not only the heroic nature but

also the hunting culture of the Kandha people. Tribal art of Ganjam district is dealt in the tenth chapter of the book. Pre-historic archaeology of undivided Phulbani is covered in the eleventh chapter which throws interesting information. The author believes that, many lithic remains can be discovered in the Rahul and Salunki river valleys, which may throw new light on the lithic culture of the undivided Phulbani district.

Creation myths are found in folklore of every group of people around the world. Twelfth chapter is on such a subject i.e., the origin of the Bhanja dynasty who ruled the hill tracts of middle Orissa for a long period of about 1500 years from the fourth century AD to the mid-twentieth century. The author has studied the tribal legends and suggests the tribal origin of Bhanjas. He discusses the tribal elements traced within the Bhanjas and arrives at a conclusion that, the Bhanja dynasty has evolved from the Kandha tribe and in course of time, the Bhanjas have kshatriyaised themselves by fabricating legendary accounts and mythological personages.

In the thirteenth chapter, the author discusses about two deities namely Pattakhanda and Baral Devi of Kandhamal district. These deities have tribal roots and they have elevated to the status of regional fame and are being patronized by the local chiefs and worshipped by both the tribal and non-tribal people. This has helped the tribal chiefs to subdue the tribal subjects and to gain control over them. In the fourteenth chapter the author discusses the Jianakata plates of Nettabhanjadeva and in the fifteenth chapter, he discusses about Sandi Sabar, a little known tribal lady freedom fighter.

Moreover, the book has a broad canvas ranging from the origin of the Kandhas, their traditional socio-economic and political life, religious beliefs, art and craft, music and dance, myths and legends. Certainly, common readers and scholars will find this book informative, useful and readable.

Tribal Folk Tales from Orissa

Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture

Bhubaneswar, Orissa, Pp52, 2009.

Reviewed by Pramod Kumar Das

Tribal Folk Tales from Orissa is a small collection of tales which sufficiently throws light on Orissan tribal tradition trying to uncover the hidden treasure in a linguistic and social context with the help of oral tradition. This volume being compiled by Dr. Paramanand Patel and translated by Dr. Anand Mahanad presents those old legends that mostly have their origin in Orissa, one of the south-eastern pockets of India. The present collection of tales edited by Professor K. K. Mohanty offers the readers an insight into the culture of tribal people indicating their customs, traditions, manners, habits, rites, games, apparels, ornaments, myths and morals, religion and popular beliefs. The folk tales contained in this volume are, infact, a vital element in a living community reflecting the peculiar culture of that particular community.

The tales presented in this volume are fascinating and the readers will probably relish an enthralling experience while going through these pieces. These oral narratives

reflect the peculiar stage of the development of the human mind which is a projection of the established beliefs and tradition. It is undoubtedly a good reflection of the social developments of Orissan tribals in a particular period of time. The day-to-day life of the tribal people finds its full expression in these folk tales. This collection reflects the daily chores, tears and joys of the various tribes residing in Orissa.

The Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture, Bhubaneswar has to be congratulated for taking an initiative of publishing a compilation of thirty folk tales of different Orissan tribes. It is apt here to mention that the translator has taken a painstaking effort and maintained a reasonable negation between the source text and target text in order to retain the thematic concerns of the original version. It can be modestly claimed that this volume will be of great help towards Indian literature in general and tribal literature in particular. It will undoubtedly serve as a source for the preservation of tribal culture to a great extent. The documentation of these tales is unquestionably a great contribution towards Indian culture of folk tales.

The greatest strength of the book lies in its English translation and the informative introduction which will not only offer a wider readership but also act as a powerful element for knowing other tribal culture, particularly the Orissan tribal in this context.

Pramod Kumar Das is a PhD scholar in English Literature at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He translates Oriya literary pieces into English and vice-versa. He can be contacted at **pramodkdas11@gmail.com**.



The End

