

Folk Beliefs and Festivals of Rayagada District

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ABSTRACT

Rayagada district is established as a major region of South Odisha. People of all religions have settled in this region. Earlier, only tribals or Kandhas lived here. But now people of many castes or communities are living here. Rayagada district is the main abode of tribals or Kandhas. The way in which worship is done in his policies and the deep faith in religion and justice among the people of that region can be seen in the festival. His folk beliefs are discussed along with the annual festivals of the people of different communities living in Rayagada district. People's faith never ends. It is related to the attitudes and beliefs of the people who have read it from generation to generation.

KEYWORDS: tribals, Folk gods, People believe, festivals, kondh

INTRODUCTION

The largest tribal group in Rayagada district is Kandha, second is Soura, third is Jatapu, then Dharua and finally Jatapu Dora. The Kandhas living in this district are divided into many groups such as: - Zodia Parja, Pengu Parja, Pareng Parja, Kandha Parja etc. They have their own gotra saints. As common Gotra saints, they recognize snakes, turtles, bears, dogs, monkeys, goats, bulls, cows, lizards, birds, peacocks and vultures as their predecessors. Killing or disrespecting these creatures is prohibited by law. Not only that, they seem to accept certain trees and trees as gotra saints. These trees are not cut.

The tribal philosophy of life seems to be governed by three elements. They are the relationship between man and nature, man and man and man and god or spirit. God's creation in the eyes of nature. Tribals recognize the interrelationship between man, nature and divine forces. The life philosophy of the tribals of Rayagada district is dynamic with this thought and consciousness. They admit of three types of presence. For example:- (a) Spirits of benefic or benevolent deities (b) Deities who are angry but satisfied with prayers of praise (c) Inauspicious deities or spirits who are satisfied only by sacrifices. They believe that gods and spirits are watching all the actions of

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humans from above. A man who commits a bad deed is punished by the gods or spirits for his deed. It is because of this belief that tribals perform various rituals and sacrifices for the satisfaction of the deity in order to get rid of diseases, prosperity of cattle, good rains, good crops, many children.

Their religion is born from the belief of the tribal people. It has been associated with various secular worship methods for ages. The Sun, the Moon in the sky, the Dharani on the ground and the ghost after the person's death, they take them and offer prayers. In the religion of the tribals, the sun is the worshiped deity, the base of all the living world and the world of trees. Tribals have a long-standing tradition of offering animal sacrifices to appease the goddess Dharani, who presides over the world of animals and trees.

At the root of the festivals that exist in the Utkal society at present, attempts have been made to establish the deities of different religions. It is too much to do. The festival can be mainly divided into four parts. Eg: worldly, Classical, Regional and Agricultural.

WORLDLY

It is believed that the religion of the tribal community is associated with this festival. Most of the tribal festivals are generally agricultural based. They make a living by cultivating crops in the hills of Dungan. They have not been exposed to the light of civilized society enough, so they have stuck to the traditional customs. People's beliefs have created self-righteousness in their minds. Therefore, the popular belief is their god. Their goodness in the eyes of God. Therefore, they believe that worship is the only means for the creation of this deity. Therefore, during various festivals, they vibrate the heavens by playing different instruments and start worshiping their worldly deity, Jani, Bej/Bejuni, instead of the village deity. This pujacharana is very characteristic of the various castes of the tribal community.

"Kandha" is a tribal community of Rayagada district. A folk deity is established by them at the head of each Kandha village or in the middle of the village. The name of this deity is "Jhankiri". At that place they offer various animals, birds, sacrifices, sometimes they pray to cure the disease of a particular person and sometimes they worship the deity to produce good crops in their fields. Their deity worshiper Pejuni/Bejuni plays the main role during this puja worship. Bejuni also offers chermuli which is immediately worshiped to the deity to cure the disease from the sick person's body. Roots are the main cause of disease cure, although Kandhas believe that their folk god is the main cause of disease cure.

Another secular deity worshiped by the Kandha community was 'Surya'. While the sun is included in the classical deities, it is recognized as a folk deity worshiped by the tribes at the primary level. During Jagannath's Pahili Bhog ie after 3 am in the morning after the sunset of Mars and then Sun Puja is held. It cannot be denied that this tradition of Sun worship was later sanctioned by the scriptures. This tradition is still prevalent in Kandha society.

The Kandha community worships the Sun as a worldly deity. In the same way, the Moon is given the status of a worldly deity. In their belief the moon is named 'Lenju Penu'. On the first Saturday of the month of Pusha, this 'Lenju Penu' is worshiped as often as possible. Before Pujajid, the barik of that village gathers the people of the village and organizes a meeting. Together, the crowd joins hands in front of the moon and pleads - "O Jahan deity, give good light to our village this year, so that the dhangda dhangdis of our village can sing well and dance with joy." After saying this, Barik and his wife are the first to start dancing. The other dhangda dhangdis of the village join in on the dance song of the two of them,

and it is assumed that they are of marriageable age. By worshiping 'Lenju Penu', Dhangda Dhangdis believe that their married life will be full of smiles.

CLASSICAL

The Kandhas believe deeply in their folk gods. Similarly, they have complete faith in ghosts and ghosts. If a member of any family falls under the influence of a demon, then in the name of the demon-possessed person, a chick is worshiped in the village chain. There, the dedicated chickens are left far away from the village. By doing this, it is believed that the chicken pee leaves the body of the ghost that has entered the person's body. In some other Kandha villages, with this custom, a live piglet is dug up and buried to drive out the evil spirits.

REGIONAL

Various folk deities are established in Kandha villages. They are called by different names. Their names are Manikeswari, Brahmin deity, Hadkhai, Endapenu, Kangapenu etc. respectively. These deities do not appear to be worshiped on specific twelve or tithi days. When danger strikes, this folk deity is worshiped to prevent it. During the puja, animals or birds are sacrificed according to the mind.

Besides this, another folk deity of the Kandhas is 'Nach Deity'. At the beginning of the rainy season, some people of a village take some soil from the place of Jankiri deity and keep it in two kullas. They consider this soil as 'enda penu' and hold it on the heads of two women. The two women who carry this Enda Penu on their heads are called Pejuni. The people of the village go from one Kandha village to another Kandha village with Pejuni. They spend the night in the village where evening falls. That night they talked about how the crops were doing in that village. If the villagers say that the crop is good, then they return to their village after handing over Enda Penu to the hands of the villagers. Taking this endapenu, the villagers go to another Kandha village along with the Pejuni of that village. This puja lasts for seven days, fourteen days or twenty one days. Not only this, the Kandhas of the two villages perform puja once a year at the Sindhi places of the two places. Rice is taken from every house in the village and worship is done there. The purpose of their worship is that there should never be any conflict between the two villages.

AGRICULTURE BASED

After Chaitra Amavasya three days from Wednesday or from Sunday to three days the Kandhas observe Bihanbuna festival. Some people also call this festival as seed festival. This festival is celebrated for three days in every Kandha village.

The pejuni jani worships the seed that the saithi has planted earlier on that day and determines which person in the village will be the first to sow the seed. After seeing the auspicious day and sowing the seed, the others start sowing. Maa Lakshmi is the goddess of crops in their belief. If you worship him, the crops will not be affected by diseases. There will be good rains and crops will also be produced. The song composed by the folk poet in praise of the goddess Maa Lakshmi is sung by both men and women in the middle of the village through the handi instrument. The Kandha community also celebrates the 'Nangili' festival before sowing the seeds by worshiping the Queen of Kuliba (Lakshmi). In their belief, the deity of 'Nangili' festival is Lakshmi. It is a regional festival. Apart from Lakshmi Puja, another festival of Kandha community is 'Chhatra Festival'. This Chhatra festival is celebrated on the day of Chaitra Purnima. It is also known as Chait festival. On Chitra Purnima day, people gather in the village and organize a meeting. This puja is organized under the direction of the village chief 'Nayak' who acts as the president in that meeting. On any one day of the month of Chaitra, three or five long bamboos are brought as per the instructions of the village chief. At the top of that bamboo is placed white pearls and it is worshipped. A statutory arrangement is also made so that no one can know who will give money to buy the bamboo which is planted in front of this bamboo. For this, a pond is built in the middle of the village. Sand is spread at some distance of the pond. The person who wants to throw money in the pond has to stand on the sand and throw the money. If more than three people put money in that pot, then no more white corn is bought with that money. Wine is bought and drunk with the pennies lying in that tank. By following this custom, they believe that this ox sacrifice will avert the bad omens for the village this year. It is a popular belief in their society that by performing this puja, peace will be established in the village.

Durga Puja is another secular puja observed by the Kandha community at the beginning of the spring season. The deity of that worship is 'Tangi Penu'. They believe that Tangi Pei loves the flowers that bloom in spring. They say that the Palasha flower is very dear to Goddess Tangi in the eyes of the Kandha community. Therefore, on the first Sunday of the spring season, this flower is picked from the forest and offered to Tangi Penu. A peculiarity of this puja is that sacrifice is prohibited in this puja. It is customary only to sprinkle leaves and pour milk at the base of a lazy tree. The Palash tree is worshiped as Durga and the Kandhas also worship the Meel tree. The festival celebrated by worshiping this tree is called 'Eripi Festival'. If any of the elders of the

village or the village Nayak, Dishari, Pejuni falls ill for any reason, then a week after the disease attacks them, they take a pot of water and go to the root of the beel tree. They cut the pot full of water at the root of the beel tree. Abusing the tree, he says, "The headman of our village has contracted a disease after drinking wine made from the bee flowers of your tree. Please cure him. Otherwise, we will kill him." After saying this, the people return to the village. Beel trees are not touched until the disease is cured.

At the head of the village, the Suras make all the Gudi (temples). In these idols made of wood are worshiped and meditated. In the village temple, all the villagers gather together and worship. If we look at the Vedic mentality of the Vedic period, we can know that they also worshiped the land and nature like the tribals. In the Vedas there are hymns and eulogies about the Sun, Maitreya, Varuna, Air, Fire and Earth. The verses composed by the Russian mantra seers for the welfare of the society have a strange similarity with the tribal mantras. Its forms can be found in Bali Parva songs in Meriya songs and hymns in 'Sita Kanya' wedding mantras. Here are the agricultural based songs of tribals of Rayagada district viz:-

Songs sang in the agricultural fields

In the dust, by the roadside
In dung heaps
The wild trees come up:
But they never truly look beautiful
Without the flowers.
I had cooked very good
Banana curry
Deliciously done
For my dewar
Why did he not
Relish it?

Here women cook food at home and send or take it to the fields for the men folk.

(Sitakant Mahapatra : The Awakened Wind, 1983)

[2]
Where are you, my lady of the house;
Bring me a lota of water.
The lady of the house has
Gone to her mother—
And who will give you a lota of water?

After a day's work in the fields, the farmer wants to freshen up.

(Sitakant Mahapatra : The Awakened Wind, 1983)

Songs collected from field

Karma Song-1

Garagaram malu makhan cheon
Papan makhan nay checn papan
Makhan.....
Mannenu chundiya, keteranu
Tiliyan....
Daurdanu nuyan tawanu kirimdi
Ant dunnu...
Sajwan tantar Nu Nathran
Daudanu....
Nuyan, Bijay papa nidananta
Kida, mala biti pae.

Meaning

Here the daughter tells her mother stop eating bitter peels and chapatti. Mother is telling her daughter, this year there is famine, so there will be no cake. Still the daughter is not responding she explains how she managed to make the cake.

Song-2

Karam ta chaligalean
Nahiyardesar, karna ta chaligalen
Nahiyardesara, nakherechelaen
Karamagalaeen, konbhaiya
Upsana kone bhej piyas
Chalaji karma kosebayege
Chote bhiya upasana bale

Bhaye piyasa chote bhaiya
Upasa bale bhaiyapiyasa
Chalache karam kaseba

Meaning

Karma has gone and people are making a gathering there, where they planted the karama branch. Both the Younger and elder brother remained in fasting (without eating and drinking), while looking after the karma.

CONCLUSION -

Tribal festivals are held throughout the year in Rayagada. From this, a form of tribal religious belief and Vedic religious belief can be seen, a beautiful introduction to the religious consciousness and life

philosophy of the tribal people can be found. In this respect, Rayagada district has been associated with the life traditions of tribals. Some of the festivals started with the tribal communities and gradually they have gained recognition as public festivals. The goddess worshiped by the tribals since ancient times is now considered as the village goddess. In order to make one's life happy, sweet and joyful, it is a traditional practice in the tribal society of Rayagada district to celebrate various festivals throughout the year.

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