

MAKAR FESTIVAL OF MAYURBHANJ: AT A GLANCE

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ABSTRACT

Makara Sankranti is a major harvest festival celebrated in the Mayurbhanj district, after harvest of the paddy crops this festival is observed. "Makar Sankranti" or "Sankrat" in the Mayurbhanj district is one of the major festivals. The day is celebrated with some special mayurbhanj delicacies and sweets such as chanka pitha or gud pitha and some other cakes. The people offer their prayers to the God of Fire and mark the end of the harvesting year. Early in the morning the villagers set fire to the heap of the branches which collected by them. The general caste people prepare makara chaula, uncooked newly harvested rice, banana, for offering to gods and goddesses. The people of Mayurbhanj eat meat or fish during the three days of the festival. People invite friends and relatives (specially their sisters and daughters) to their home for special festival meals. In Mayurbhanj district the tribal population is observe the festival with great joy. Various tribal groups celebrate with traditional dancing, eating their particular dishes and sitting together with the relatives. Makara Mela (Fun fair) is observed different parts of the mayurbhanj district. On the day of Makara Sankranti. People wear new clothes, pray to God, and make offerings of traditional food to ancestors who have died. This day marks the beginning of warmer and longer days compared to the nights, Sankranti marks the termination of winter season and beginning of spring season.

Key words – Mayurbhanj, Makara, Sankranti, Tusu, cock fighting,

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Introduction

This article deals with the people of Mayurbhanj beliefs regarding the super natural, the different level of ritual responsibilities within the village, the organization of ritual activities, the Makar ceremony and its socio economic function, and the participation of the tribes and non-tribes of Mayurbhanj in the rituals. The people of Mayurbhanj believe in supernatural beings which control the natural world open which human are dependent for their subsistence needs. Although generally benevolent towards humans, these beings may cause damage to crops, livestock, or resources, unless their good will is maintained. At each stage of the subsistence cycle, they are placated with offerings. Other super natural agencies which attack human being directly are combated with special curing technique. The Makar ceremony has several economic functions. It synchronized and co-ordinates the economic production, distribution and conception of the different families, this ceremony focuses on specific activities and crops. It is a system of economic redistribution at the inter bandhu (affinal relatives) level as well as at the village level on the basis of inter personal relations. This ceremony gives periodic emphasis to the common interests and inter dependent of the members of the village community.

Method

It is based on seven days field research in the rural areas of Mayurbhanj district. The purpose of the study of the article is to provide systematic account of maker festival, focusing on a village role and participation of different community in this festival. The maker festival selected for the study for two reasons first, the festival had never been systematically studied. Social anthropologist in Orissa has not been studied the village community co-ordination and co-operation in the village. It is a detail study of different category like schedule caste, schedule tribe and general caste, would provide a valuable contribution to anthropological knowledge. The researcher was frequently involved in activities which in his most advantageous light can be described. The data was collected from the individuals available at any given time, generally flexible and informal.

Maker Festival

Maker is the prime festival of Mayurbhanj which celebrated by tribal's and non-tribals. Makar Sankranti means the 1st day of the oriya month of "Magha". The month of Magha corresponds to

January-February. The sun moves from cencer to makar that means sun gradually move from south to north” (www.mayurbhanj.nic.in). This festival is observed continuously for four days in the district of Mayurbhanj. This is also observed in different parts of India, in North India it is called “Lahari”, in South India it is called “Pangal”. On that day Sri Jagannath of puri appears as a “Makar,” which is one appeared among the twelve incarnations. A separate offering is appeared at the temple for him.

This ceremony is observed by the people of Mayurbhanj in the mid of month of January. Before it takes place, the harvest must be completed, and ideally all the family heads should have liquidated their debts. As in the case of the ceremony the date is fixed according to the Oriya calendar. This festival is observed when paddy reaping is almost completed and the mind is free from the lures and anxieties. During this festival everybody has full of paddy and rice, so it is observed happily. “Makar inaugurates a new marriage season; marriage may not be transacted until the ceremony is completed” (Rout, 1967 pp-63). “Maximum area of Mayurbhanj is cultivated by rain fed cultivation. The people harvests crops for a year just are of the festival”(Sahu,2012 pp 36). The relatives those who are working in the other districts or other area of the districts must come to their house to observe this ceremony. Irrespective of tribe and caste and age all partake in religious event. It is believe that the person who lives for one year can only observe this festival. The annual contact labours like grazier, daily workers, blacksmith, barber, washer man complete the contact labour for one year and renew from the day. One month prior to this ceremony, the elder boys of the different hamlets start competition to prepare “Agira.” Wood and branches are collected from the nearly jungle. The hips of branches are erected nearby the river and pond. Some villages the hips are placed from river to the village keeping 20 to 30 meters distance. On the day of Makar the unmarried boys go to the river and pond for bath at early in the morning, before sunrises. After bath they set fire the agira and make warm to the body by that fire. Setting fire one by one they return to the village. In some villages the boys group collect some money for firework. After getting up some boys do firework so that the entire villager would get up and more boys include with them. They also do firework at the time of setting fire at “Agira,” very rare girls are participate in this event.

Before this ceremony the interior and exterior of the each house are cleaned. Earlier during rainy season some walls are washed by rain. Before this ceremony the walls are repaired with mud. The Santali houses are painted with geometric and other designs by the house wife.

Earlier the house hold members are busy with the harvest of paddy. So they are not able to clean all the clothes. Two days before this ceremony the house wives cleans all the clothes of the house. The caste people like Gouda, Amanta, Bagal, Baisya, Bania, Baisnaba, Baur, Bhandari, Chasa, Dhoba, Dom, Ghasi, Gola, Gudia, Hadi, Kamar, Karana, Keuts, Khandayat, Kumbhara, Kurmi(Mohanta) Muchi, Pana, Saunti, Sundhi, Tanti, Teli, Thotari and Ujia observe this ceremony. All the tribes of Mayurbhanj Badhudi, Munda Santal, Bhuyan, Kolho, Ho, Gond, Sounti, Bhumij, Kisan, Kharia, Ladha and Orang also observe this ceremony. The Tribal Communities which are drink handia they prepare handia on this day. Drinking of liquor is part and partial of the tribal life. They used to prepare two type of liquor one is handia and another is mahuli. Handia is prepared from boiled rice and indispensable in religious events and festivals. In any communal gathering handia must be served to all members of the community which is a symbol of social relation and social integration.

The 1st day of the Makar is called "Chauladhua" means soaking of rice. The courtyard and floor of the each house is cleaned by the house wife with cow dung paste. Every house wives prepare rice powder with dhenki (dhenki is a wood log instrument by it paddy is prepare as rice and rice is prepare into powder) cake is prepare with a pan and eaten by all the family members. Til (sesamum) is cleaned and processed for make it confection and consume on the day of maker. The weekly market of Mayurbhanj is very rushed during this ceremony. Each family head purchase dresses and clothes for all family members, different food and materials are also purchased from the nearby market.

The 2nd day of the Makar is called "Baundi" this is the end of the month pus as well as the end of a agricultural year. After complete of reaping the farmer brings paddy bundle from farm to house. At the end of harvest the farmer bring a paddy plant with soil on a day of either Saturday or Tuesday from farm. This ritual event is concerned with Laxmi, came to the house. This soil is kept in the house and use in "baundi". The housewife, with respect to her family, occupied ritual with soil, vermilion, and rice paste. The malevolent spirits, ghosts, and human agencies, which cause major illness and death to individual human beings, can be combated by this ritual for a year.

It is believe that in this night if the fox blow early night it is damage to the crops, blow in mid night in the good for all and blow in late night is moderate good for the next year.

On this day every family prepare fish curry and eat it. Fishing is done by the pond owner and sell in the village. It is believed that the man who does not eat fish on this day will bear as a stork in his next birth. In the night elder member prepare a special cake mix with gud and rice paste, which is very famous in Mayurbhanj. This cake can be prepared only with fresh rice powder. The next day in the maker festival, which is the first day of a year called “Makar Sankranti”. Common boys with some married made member go to the river early in the morning to set fire Agira and take birth. After return from river all members put on new dresses. The village priest prepares Makar rice mix with non boiled rice, banana, coconut, milk, ghee, honey and Akhu and distributed among the villagers. Sweets made of til (Til ladus) are eaten by the family members. Each household head brings meat to the house. So every villager enjoys it with mutton curry, palatable cakes.

Tribal Community prepare country liquor handia and enjoy it with meat and boisterous music, dance, drums and tuneful voice of the song. In same village Santal Community Practice typical event. In the afternoon at 2 P.M. the villager start a event call “Bheja Bindha” (Shooting arrow). Some of the villager beat the drum and move from door to door. Some house hold head offer them handia. In the mean time the messenger of the village erect a banana trunk as a target of the arrow shooting competition. The entire male villager allowed participating in this event. The village read man start the event. Each shooter marked on their own arrow so that they can identify their own arrow. At the same time every shooter start to shoot from a 200 meter distance if they are not able to shoot the banana trunk then the team more forward 10 meters. Like this they can shoot 3 times only. If they are unable to touch the target this was postponed for the next day morning. Who shoot the target is declare by the head after identify his arrow. He is considering the best Archery of the year. A red towel is tied on his head and the head man carries him on his shoulder to his house. In the mean time Santal women gathered there and dance there. It is believe that once Santal were depending on hunting. So from Makar they start trying of shooting. It is one type of practice of aim. The day following Makar is called Akhani. Some old men gather in the mid of the village early in the morning. They gather around the fire and instrument is kept in that fire to pierce on belly. This is called “chadu.” In the morning the head of the family plough for a while in own farm as it is considered auspicious. This event is perform by every farmer regard less of castes and tribes. For this occasion of maker a special “monkey dance “called” as Gagia Gadi is performed. Gadi means monkey and gadia means dance. The

tribal folks adorning their bodies in many forms roam door to door asking for paddy, rice, food and cakes, which becomes quite enjoyable.

Tusu Festival/Fair

Tusu festival is another event of the maker festival. Before maker festival a female figure (idol) of tusu is prepared. To make the tusu to attractive the unmarried girls decorated the figure and move from door to door on the day following the makar. "The deity worshiped with offering crops and flowers and on maker Sankranti the worshipers go to the nearby river in a procession carrying the deity for immersion" (Mohanta, 2011). It is believe that Tusumini (another orthodox hindu) was the princess of a princely state During the Mugal period. The Muslim rulers were forcefully marry the beautiful hindu girls. The Mugal Empire try to marry by capture Tusumini. She came to know but couldn't escape from the ruler. Finally she jumped into the river sacrifice herself to save her dignity. Her self-sacrifice later on became a symbol of preservation of chastity and this took the shape of the festival. The event was held on the day of maker. So the state people, the Mohanta (kurmi) community practice tusu immersion (drown) ceremony from that day to keep memorized Tusumini. Now this festival is famous as Tusumini (tusu fair). The tusu fair is continued for end of January. The tusu is immersion (drown) any day after maker. During this ceremony sport of the local areas is attached with it. Kurmi community participate more in this Tusu fair. The area like Bahalda, Binjua, Hatbadra, Halda, Rairangpur and Pandupani organize sports for their entertainment.

Kukuda Uda

The tribal villages organize cock fighting in the various villages. The tribal and non tribal enjoy the cock fighting and play baiting. In the afternoon there is a ceremony held in the out slut of the village on a ground. All male and children of either sex assemble. The female members reach there at last. The village priest erect a red flag and perform a purifications rites, sacrificing a chicken and through it to the front side where all male assembled. One who catches it he takes the lion's share of that chicken. The village priest take a pot of water and sprinkle over all members, pray for the well-being of the community and pray for the protection from the dangerous forces.

Conclusion

During this ceremony ancestor, local village god and goddess, the deity of locality are worshiped. These beings are generally benevolent towards human, but may exercise a harmful effect on crops, livestock, or resources if dissatisfied. The spirits and certain types of ghost, which are malevolent and attack humans. The contact labours get their remuneration in return for their service. During the ceremony offering are made to the deities and ancestors and prayer said for family well-being and prosperity. The ritual event of this ceremony is co-ordinate and synchronies economic production, distribution, and consumption within the village as well as the Bandhu villages. This is the time when interpersonal bonds and in the case of Tribal dancing, group relations between different community and different villages are given emphasis. Visitors participate in the festivities which are associated with the ceremonies.

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