

BOON OF ASTRONOMY: RITUALS AND RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN ODISHA FOR A PEACEFUL SOCIETY

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Abstract

Due to the rapid development of Science and technology in 21st century, human life is becoming materially comfortable. But, on the other hand human value system is deteriorating day by day. Negative human qualities and behaviour gives stress and strain to the society. On the Other hand, Rituals, fairs, festivals, etc. are seen observing traditionally basing on astronomy which have been creating harmony and responsible for a peaceful society. Otherwise social unification is too difficult in a state like Odisha where people of many caste, creed, colour, race and religion are living. It is ritual and festival, which brings friendship, equality, cooperation and helps to renew the social bonds. Thus, it strengthens the social solidarity. This study reflects the rejoice of the festivals and fairs of Odisha, which are associated with religious practices and could be successfully included in educational curriculum. The ethos and spirit of creativity of Odisha state can be understood by studying rituals and religious practices of various parts. A variety of rituals are prevalent for making the unification of the society. This rich yet diverse art and religious forms cuts across regional boundaries. Odissan girls and women learn this from traditions and rich Indian culture. Different festivals are seen as a new ray of hope in the society. It has a big significance for different categories of people in community. The festivals are celebrated at a particular fixed time of the day or month which is previously calculated through astronomy. Most of human problems could be minimised through observation of different rituals, religious practices, etc. throughout the year by which social harmony could be possible.

Key Words: Rituals, Fairs, Festivals, Religious Practice, Fasting

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1. Introduction:-

The floral diversity and topographical variety ensure the experience of all the six seasons in Odisha. Summer season is generally from April to end of June. During summer season the climate is generally very hot and dry. In the month of May and first halves of June mercury shoots above 50°C in places like Titilagarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Brajarajnagar. In other areas of Western Odisha, highest day temperature remains between 45°C and 48°C. Rainy season is in the month of July and August, during which, the area experiences moderate rainfall, which varies from 115 to 145 cms from place to place. In winter season, minimum temperature comes down to 4°C in some places. In the last few decades, Odisha has suffered from repeated drought and it is considered the poorest region in India. Cultural similarities are found in different districts of Odisha. Some rituals and religious practices are also similar in these areas. The entire Odisha can be divided into Western and rest of Odisha due to cultural and language difference.

Western Odisha is a territory in the western part of Odisha, also referred as Kosal extending from the Kalahandi district in the south to the Sundargarh and Deogarh in the north, Nuapada and Bargarh district in the west, Athamallik sub-division of Angul and Boudh district in the east. Further districts of Sonapur, Sambalpur and Bolangir in the centre, and Jharsuguda district in the northwest. Likewise, Western Odisha includes the districts of Balangir, Bargarh, Boudh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Sonapur, Sundargarh, and Aathamallik Sub-division of Angul district comprising ten districts and one sub-division of Angul district.

From historical point of view, prior to the fifth century, Dakshin Kosal was one of the several names by which this region was known. It is a vast geographical area, exhibiting a great degree of cultural uniformity in terms of demography and life-style. This geographical area is also recognised by state government of Odisha as the area under Western Odisha Development Council (WODC). The Sonapur, Balangir, Nuapada, and Kalahandi districts of this region are also part of the Kalahandi Balangir Koraput or 'KBK' area, noted for its high death rate from starvation and poverty. People of Western Odisha use Kosali language.

2. Important fairs and festivals:

The people of Odisha rejoice in festivals and fairs, which are associated with religious practices. Most festivals are common to all, but particular places have their own special celebrations, which are seasonal in occurrence. The fairs and festivals observed in Odisha could be categorised under the following heads. Table-1 shows the main fairs and festivals celebrated in Odisha and Table-2 shows the calendar month wise which slightly differ from tribe to tribe, caste to caste and region to region.

1. Rituals, 2. Temple festivals, 3. Special festivals, 4. Fairs and Exhibitions, 5. Tribal Festivals

Table-1: Main fairs and festivals observed in Odisha

Sl. No.	Names	Name of fairs/festivals/rituals/fasting/Religious practices
01	Rituals	Akhyaya Trutiya, Ashokashtami, Agniustav, Anla Navami, Bada Osha, Bahudajatra, Basantapanchami, Christmas, Chandanjatra, Chhadakhai, Dhanu Sankranti, Dola Purnima, Deepavali, Devasnana Purnima, Dusserah, Gaja-Laxmi-Puja, Holi, Hera Panchami, Id-ul-fiter, Mahalaya, Id-ul-juha, Jhulan Purnima, Khudurukuni, Janmastami, Kumar Purnima, Makar Sankranti, Magha Saptami, Mahasivaratri, Muhrum, Manabasaguravar, Naga Chaturthi, Netrostav, Nabakalebara, Phagudasami, Prathamastami, Nabajouban, Ramnavami, Rakhi purnima, Rasa Purnima, Raja Sankranti, Ramjan, Sree Panchami, Sree Gundicha rathayatra, Savitri Amabasya, Sitalsasthi, Sudasabrata, Samba Dasami, Mahavisuva Samkranti
02	Temple Festivals	Basanta Panchami, Chitou Amavasya, Chandan Yatra, Devasnana Purnima, Netrostav, Nabkalebara, Naba Jauban Darsan, Rath Yatra
03	Special Festivals	Dhauri Mahatsova, Ekamra Utsav, Folk Dance Festival, Gajapati Festival, Konark Festival, Kalinga Mahotsav, Khandagiri Festival, Konark Dance & Music Festival, Mandei, Malybanta, Parab, Puri Beach Festival, Raja Rani Music Festival, Shreekstra Utsav
04	Fairs & Exhibitions	Ba Bali Yatra, Chandrabhaga Mela, Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Joranda M Mela Kartikeswar puja, Kali Puja, Magha Mela, Makar

		Mela, Olasuni Saraswati Puja, Taratarini Mela, Viswakarma puja
05	Tribal Festivals	Bija Pandu, Chaitra Parva, Kedu Festival, Maghe Parab, Karama Festival, Sume-Gelirak

Table-2: Calendar of rituals, fairs, fasts and festivals in Odisha

Sl. No.	Month	Festivals/Fairs/Rituals
01	Magh (Jan- Feb)	Agniustav, Chandrabhaga Mela, Dhanujatra, Joranda Mela S Makara Sankranti, Magha Saptami (Til saptami), Magha ng Purnami, Pongal, Samba Dasami, Sree Panchami,
02	Phalgun (Feb-Mar)	Dola Purnima, Dola Jatra, Holi, Kumbhasankranti, Maha Sh Sivaratri, Phagudasami
03	Chaitra (Mar-April)	Ashokashtami, Chaiti Mangalabara, Chaitra Parva, Hingula Yatra, Holi, Hindunababarsha arambha(1st solar day), Papamochini Ekadasi, Rama Navami, (Mahastami, Rukuna rathajatra), Ram-Leela, Sitalsasthi
04	Baisakh (Apr-May)	Mahavisuva Samkranti(Panasankranti), Akshaya Trutiya, Chaiti Ghoda Nata, Danda/ Patua Jatra, Hanuman Jayanti, Nrusighachaturdasi
05	Jaistha(May- June)	Budha Jayanti, Chandan Purnima, Chandan Yatra. Debasnananpurnami, Savitri Amabasya, Sital Sasthi, Rukminibibaha,
06	Asadha (June- July)	Bahuda yatra, Bhaijiuntia, Basumati snana(sarba s ekadasi), Herapanchami, Netrostav, Raja Sankranti, Rath Yatra (Gundicha & Bahuda Yatra), Sree Gundicha, Vyaspurnima
07	Sravana (Jul- Aug)	Balabhadra Jayanti, Chitau Amavasya(Chitalagi Amabasya, Saptapuri), Gahma Purnami(Rakhi), Ramajan, Jhulan Yatra, Janmastami, Nandostav
08	Bhadrab (Aug- Sep)	Bali Trutiya, Bhodopuni, Ganesh Chaturthi, Id-ul-fiter, Indro-sab , Khudurukuni, Nuakhai, Shathi Osha, Saptapuri

		Amabasya, Viswakarma puja
09	Ashwina (Sep- Oct)	Dusserah, Dutiya Osha, Gajalaxmi-Puja, Garbhana Sankranti, Jahni Osha, Kumar Purnima, Lakhbindha, Moolastami(puajjuntia, khandabasa), Belgaja, Dutibamanosa, Mahalaya, Mahastami(bhaijuntia), Mahanavami, Phuleriosa,
10	Kartika (Oct- Nov)	Aanlanavami Bada Osha, Balijatra, Bichhasankranti, Chhadakhai, Durga-puja, Deepavali, Dhanwantarijayanti, Id-ul-juha, Kedarabrata Kali-puja, Kartikeswar-puja, Nagachaturthi, Panchuka, Rai Damodar Brata, Radhapadarshan, Rasa Purnima
11	Margasir (Nov-Dec)	Bali Yatra, Chhadkhai, Kuralapancahami, Kanjiaanlaosa Mana Basa Gurubara (Last Thursday), Muhrum, Prathamastami (Paruhastami, Kanjiaanlaosa), Sitabibaha,
12	Pousha (Dec- Jan)	Bataosa, Christmas, Dhanu Sankranti(Dhanujatra), Pousapurnima(Chherchera), Shamba Dashami

[N.B. - A slight changes in month wise festivals are seen in malamasa]

2.1 Akshaya Trutiya - In the month of Baisakh (Apr-May) the festival is celebrated on the third day of the bright fortnight in Western Odisha. This is the most auspicious day to start construction of house and buildings, digging of tanks and dug wells. In this day, the construction of the chariots for the Car-Festival/ Ratha Jatra of Lord Jagannath also starts. This is exclusively an agricultural festival. On this day the farmer ceremonially starts sowing seeds in the field, especially paddy. Early in the morning, farmers in their respective homes arrange the materials for the ritual. After taking ablution in a river or tank they wear new clothes and carry the seeds in new baskets, in the field offerings are made to Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth which the farmers do it themselves. Then they sow seeds preserved previously for this purpose only, ceremonially praying the Goddess for a rich bumper crop. In the evening feasts (strictly vegetarian) are arranged in respective homes. In Western Odisha, this festival is called 'Muthi Chhuan'. Eating of green-leaves (Shag) is forbidden for the entire day. It is observed by all farmers irrespective of caste and creed.

2.2 Ashokashtami - The Car Festival of Lord Lingaraj at Bhubaneswar is Ashokashtami which is held in the bright half of 'Chaitra'. The protege of Lord Lingaraj is taken in a chariot from the main temple to Rameswar Temple and return after a four-day stay. There is a puranical account about the origin of the festival. It is said that Lord Ramachandra, inspite of all efforts couldn't kill Ravana as Goddess Kali was protecting him. Then he was advised by 'Bibhisana', the younger brother of Ravana to propitiate the Mother Goddess and win her support. Then Ramachandra prayed the Goddess for long seven days with elaborate rituals and could please her to withdraw support from Ravana. When her favour was withdrawn, it became easy for Ramachandra to kill Ravana through 'Brahmastra', the unfailing weapon. To celebrate this victory he took out Shiva and Durga, in a chariot, out of pleasure and satisfaction. From that day the festival is being observed. As the 'shoka' or sorrow of Ramachandra was removed by the death of Ravana, this day is called 'Ashoka' (devoid of shoka).

2.3 Bahuda Jatra - The return car festival from the (Gundicha) summer temple to the main Jagannath temple is celebrated in the beginning of the month of Shrawana. On 'Ashadha Sukla Dasami', the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Asadha (Jun-Jul), return journey or 'Bahuda Yatra' of the deities commences in the same manner from Gundicha temple to the main temple like Rath Yatra.

2.4 Biswakarma puja - The Hindu mythology crowns 'Lord Vishwakarma' as the presiding deity of Architecture and Engineering. As a mark of reverence, he is still worshipped by the engineering community, industrial houses, artists, craftsmen, and weavers. He is regarded as the supreme worker, the very essence of excellence and quality in craftsmanship. Vishwakarma revealed the sciences of industry to man and is thus the patron god of all the workers and engineers providing them with courage and inspiration. All over the country factories, workshops and manufacturing units are in festive mood. Shop spaces are cleared to make way for the deity.

The Lord sitting on the back of his bahana (elephant), holds in his four hands, a water-pot, the Vedas, a noose and craftsman's tools. Rituals are followed by the distribution of 'prasad'. The yearly feast is cooked, where the workmen and the owners lunch together. Throughout the day colorful kites are flown. The sky fills up with all shades and colors. Workers at many places make resolutions to perform better from this auspicious day. One of the important festivals of Odisha, Vishwakarma Puja is marked with usual gaiety. All the industrial places, shops that engage small or heavy machineries and owners vehicles aptly summon the Lord Vishwakarma,

thanking him for his grace and seeking his blessing in smooth running of their machineries. Pandals come up in busy streets and Prasads are distributed to the devotees.

2.5 Chitau Amavasya - Celebrated on the new moon day of the month of Shravana (Jul-Aug), in which special rice cake 'chitau' is offered to Lord Jagannath, as well as to the paddy fields i.e. to Gendeisuni, goddess of snails and oysters. These creatures being attracted by the cakes begin to cruise inside mud from all sides of the paddy fields, helping for bio-tilling of the fields.

This is celebrated on the new moon day of the lunar month of Saravan (Jul-Aug). A special type of rice cake called 'chitau' is offered to Lord Jagannath at the temple. This cake is prepared and eaten with relish in almost every household. Gendeisuni, the goddess of snails and oysters is duly worshipped. These creatures are offered cakes and requested not to bruise the feet of farmers when they go to remove weeds from the fields.

In Western Odisha areas this festival is known as 'Harali Kans'. People of the areas believe it to be a day of the witch, 'Tandei' who moves in the dark to suck the blood of the children. To save children from her wrath mothers draw peculiar designs below the naval zone of the children with a Kalara stick before the night falls. As they believe that would scare away witch, a common variety of rice-cake Chakuli Pitha is offered to the witch to be appeased and thereafter the cake is taken by all.

2.6 Chaitra - The Chaitra Parba and Chaitra Mela is observed during each Tuesday of the month of Chaitra (Mar-Apr). The main attraction of Chait Yatra is performance of Ram-Lila during this period. It starts on birthday of Lord Ramachandra i.e. Rama-Navami Tithi. It means, it begins on Chaitra Sukla Navami Tithi i.e. ninth day of bright fortnight in the Hindu month of Chaitra and ends on Purnima i.e. full-moon day of Chaitra. Thus, it continues for seven days. Popularity of Ram-Leela in a tribal dominated area during Chait Yatra reveals influence of Hindu culture and tradition. Chait Yatra is not performed purely for public entertainment. One finds a myth-ritual performance relationship in this form of folk Yatra. This gives us an idea that, folk worship and cult of Rama are associated with ritualistic theatre form. Its basic function is religious and the event is normally festival and fair organised by the village community to propitiate Lord Rama, Lord Laxmana and Goddess Sita. The subject matter is normally from the Indian mythology like the Ramayana. The incidents narrated or sung are from the lives of Rama, Laxmana, Sita, Hanuman and such other deities. Though, this is not a historical or social theme, it affects the

social life very much. However, people of Western Odisha think that it began some three to four hundred years back.

2.7 Chandrabhaga Mela - The Chandrabhaga fair begins on the seventh day of the bright fortnight in Magha (Jan-Feb) for seven days, at the mouth of sacred Chandrabhaga River near the famous temple of Konark. This sacred site reminds the myth of Shamba, son of Lord Krishna in Mahabharata era, cured of leprosy by Lord Surya (Sun God). It is believed that who ever takes a dip in Chandrabhaga is cured of leprosy and childlessness.

2.8 Chaiti Ghoda Nata - This is the most important festival of the fishermen of Odisha, held from the full moon day of the month of Baishakha (Apr-May). As per Kaibarta Purana, the supreme god slept on the banyan leaf floating in the sea, created a man to hold the rudder firmly to keep the leafy-bed steady. The man was swallowed by a large fish, by which the leaf bed swerved. The god captured the fish angrily and brought the man out who became the 1st fisherman, being the enemy of fish. As desired by god, his descendant fishermen are to earn their livelihood by catching fish, Vishwakarma built a boat under divine order and the 1st Kaibarta become the presiding deity and his descendants are fisherman/ boatman. The goddess Basuli is made up of well-decorated horse-head out of wood with trunk built of bamboo pieces, colored and decorated with garlands of red flowers. A man enters through a hole in the trunk and holds his head giving the appearance, as if he is riding a horse holding the reins, he dances with the horse to the beat of drum singing folk songs.

2.9 Chandan Jatra - The fair is celebrated for 21st days in the month of Jaistha (May-Jun) in which smaller replica of Lord Jagannath, after being smeared with sandal wood paste (chandan), is taken to the sacred tank (Chandan-Pokhari) for boating, to provide cool comfort/ relief from the hot summer. This is celebrated in all the places, where there is Jagannath temple, the main centre being Puri, with lot of merry-making and rejoices by the congregated pilgrims.

2.10 Chhadakhai - In the sacred month of Karthika (Oct-Nov), many forego their non-vegetarian diet, as part of sacred ritual. All relish non-vegetarian dishes to their heart's content, on the day after the full moon, the day of release from the religious taboo.

2.11 Dola Jatra & Kumbhasankranti – The Jatra begins with Dola-Purnima in the full moon day of Phalgun (Feb-Mar). The Radha-Krishna idols from the temples are taken for journey to important centers of congregation (Melana). With holi (sprinkling of red abir powder), chanting bhajan/ kirtan, the devotees in procession, carry the idols in the Vimanas to the site of the fair.

The deities visit many villages on outing and receive homage by offerings from the devotees. In the fair, chanting of spiritual songs and recitation of Bhagavata are usually organized. This ceremony inaugurates the use of green mango, berries, mahul and palash flowers, all jungle fruits, flowers are offered to the deities. The festival 'Shiva's Great Night' falls on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Phalgun and is observed by devotees all over the country. Devotees keep fast and perform puja throughout the night and keep a vigil to witness the sacred lamp on the temple top. The devotees observe strict religious discipline by abstaining from food for the day and keep themselves awake the whole night. 'Shiva Linga' is worshipped with 'vilwa' leaves throughout the night with chanting of the 'Panchakshyara Mantra' – 'Om! Namah Shivay'. The next morning, they take their bath and after worshipping Shiva again break their fasts.

2.12 Danda Jatra and Dandanata - Dandanata is performed in the month of Vaishaka (Apr-May) in the fair Danda Jatra. The dance is celebrated through song and physical gesture before the pole representing Lord Shiva, moving from village to village for performance. The devotees called 'Bhokta' in a 'Danda' party, with the leader 'Pata Bhokta' lead life of abstinence for twentyone days prior to the festival, by rolling on the hot sand in mid-day sun of summer, dance and sing praying for the welfare of house. If someone is childless or poor or suffering from diseases, they vow to become Bhokta next year, if his miseries are removed. The physical sufferings are aimed to please Lord Shiva, like walking on fire, piercing body with sharp nails, piercing the tongue or walking on sharp sword edge, apart from fasting and abstinence. Danda Jatra is found in whole of Odisha, with Jhamu Jatra i.e. walking on a trench of fire or Uda Jatra i.e. devotees hooked in the backmuscles swung high by a pole round a pivot.

2.13 Deepabali - Deepavali is celebrated for one day unlike two/three days by people of north and western India. Firecrackers and lighting of lamps are common things. Some people also worship goddess Kali. Tarpana is done in the early morning of deepavali. Speciality of this day is people in this day do payaa Shraaddha in the dusk or sunset time. One can see people showing lamps and fire to sky to say goodbye to their forefathers who all came during mahalaya amavasya. A lot of Pithas are prepared and offered to gods and forefathers.

2.14 Dhanujatra & Dhanu Sankranti - Dhanu Yatra relating to the episode of Lord Krishna's visit to Mathura is colourfully observed at Bargarh, a western Odisha District. Observed for eleven days preceding Pausha Poornima - the full moon day of Pausha (Dec-Jan), this is the spectacular Dhanuyatra of Bargarh in the western part of Odisha. Dhanuyatra is the theatrical

presentation of Krishna Leela of Devaki with Vashudev till the death of Kansa as described in the scriptures. The entire episode is reenacted.

The town of Bargarh becomes Mathura, the river Jira becomes Yamuna, and village Ambapalli on other bank of river becomes Gopa. A mango grove there serves as 'Vrindaban' and a pond, as lake 'Kalindi'. A gorgeously decorated stage is erected in the heart of Bargarh to serve as the Durbar of Kansa. An elephant is engaged for the royal transport. The origins of the Dhanu yatra at Bargarh are unclear, but it has been organized since 1948 annually. This festival is celebrated on the 1st day of the month of Pousha (Dec-Jan), the month of plenty after the harvest. This is a festival of rejoicing with special sweets of 'Dhanu-Maun'.

2.15 Garbhana Sankranti - This festival is celebrated on the 1st day of the month of Karthika (Oct-Nov), when the paddy is ripening. This is compared to pregnancy i.e. 'Garbhana' of rice plants, Goddess of wealth and fertility, Laxmi is worshipped in the paddy fields, with the prayer for a huge harvest. Garbhana Sankranti is a festival, unique to Odisha, and is celebrated on the first day of the solar month of Kartika, on the same day as Mahashtami. This day is like a day of milestone achievement for farmers. Rice plants are now with ears of corn in their womb. This is compared to pregnancy of a woman and hence the name 'Garbhana' (meaning pregnant). These pregnant rice plants represent Lakshmi the Goddess of Wealth and fertility and are worshipped with offerings in the paddy fields. It is believed that a huge quantity of corn would be harvested as a result of this display of respect to the paddy crops. The practice is also believed to lessen the effect of famine or flood on the agricultural field and the crops are protected from pests and insects. Dhana (Wheat grains) and Kara Branches (a medicinal plant with anti insecticidal properties) are offered in worship and taken to the agricultural field for plantation. Different kinds of dishes are prepared to satisfy the Goddess Laxmi. All the members of the family take meals to their heart's content believing that they will thus always be supplied with dainty dishes. Also known as Tula Sankranti, this is an important festival of Odisha.

2.16 Gamhapuni - This festival is celebrated as a merry festival of 'Gamha Punei', on the full moon day of the lunar month of Saravan (Jul-Aug) and is especially auspicious to agriculturists. On this day, cattle, especially plough cattle, are colorfully decorated and given special offering and are worshipped as 'Go-Lakshmi'. Bullocks are the most important animals for an agriculturist in West Odisha. When ploughing the field with bullocks is over the farmers venerate them for the service they have rendered. Along with the cattle the God of agriculture 'Baladeva' is also

worshipped. This day is said to be the birth day of Baladeva. The spiritual scriptures testify that 'Balarama' invented the plough and showed the people all methods of farming.

Therefore, bullock is his vehicle and the plough, his weapon. He has been also taken in as an incarnation of Vishnu in Holy Scriptures. It is for this reason this festival is also known as 'Baladeva Jayanti' in some areas. On this day the cattle shed is cleaned and neatly plastered and sketches of bullocks, bullock carts, ploughs and other agricultural implements are drawn on the walls. Bullocks are bathed and decorated with flowers and sandal-paste. Their horns are oiled. The rituals of worship take place in the cattle-shed itself for which Brahmins are not needed. A piece of new cloth is placed on the back of the bullocks and is fed with rice-cakes and pulses.

2.17 Ganeshpuja - Ganesh Chaturthi Observed in most parts on bhadrapada Shukla chaturthi. The day following chaturthi, called Nuakhai in western Odisha as people partake in eating newly harvested paddy. State government declares two day holiday across the state.

2.18 Gajalaxmi Puja - This day is also observed as the birthday of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth. Therefore, many citizens worship the Goddess at their homes and keep themselves awake by playing Pasha (Chess), and other indoor games. Significantly it suggests that those who wish to obtain prosperity should always be watchful at night. It is for this reason the owl, a bird that sleeps in the day and comes out only at night.

2.19 Janmastami - It is observed throughout Odisha and is said to be the Birthday of Lord Krishna which falls in the eighth day of the dark half month of Bhadrab (Aug- Sep). The birthday of Lord Krishna, the eighth personification of Lord Vishnu, is distinguished as Janmashtami. Of all the divine incarnations of the God, Sri Krishna is the most adored. The purpose of taking this avatar or incarnation was, as explained in the 'Bhagavat Geeta', the annihilation of evil and the establishment of truth and virtue. As such, from his infancy onwards Krishna destroyed numerous demons (suggestive of evil forces) who were harassing the Gods and men alike.

Later, as an ally of the 'Pandavas', He brought about in the attention of truth and justice, the war of 'Kurukshetra' to destroy the wicked 'Kauravas' and restore legitimate rights to the honest and truthful Pandavas. It was from this battlefield that he delivered his Message to the suffering humanity, which has come down to us as the most sacred book 'Geeta'. All his Leelas have been elaborately described in the 'Bhagavata', Mahabharata, 'HariJanma' and many other religious texts. The birthday of the Lord is, therefore, celebrated as one of the greatest of all

Hindu festivals in all houses. Lord Krishna was born at mid-night when the moon entered the house of 'Vrisabha' at the constellation of the star 'Rohini' on the eighth day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrab. Therefore, it became customary to observe fasting up to mid-night till the exact hour of birth. When the fixed hour comes conches are blown, gongs are sounded, slogans involving the God are given which heralds the birth of Krishna. After this 'Bhog' (food offering) is offered to the deity and the fast is broken. The next day is observed as 'Nandotshaba' as a reminiscence of the festival that was held by 'Nanda Raja', to celebrate the birth and arrival of Krishna. The young boys sing songs related to Krishna's sport and dance to the beats of resonant sticks.

2.20 Kumarpuni - This festival is celebrated on the full moon day of the lunar month of Ashwina (Sep-Oct), bring untold pleasure to the unmarried boys and girls. The worship of moon God is held at home as Janha Mamu (Moon, the maternal uncle) brings them various delicacies and new clothes. Early in the morning the girls after their purificatory bath wear new garments and make food-offerings to the Sun. They observe fasting for the day. In the evening when the moon rises they again make food offerings of a special variety and take it after the rituals are over. It is a festival of rejoicing for the girls. All of them sing and dance. The songs are of special nature. They also play a kind of game known as 'Puchi'. They also indulge in other varieties of country-games.

Table-3: Places with corresponding Presiding deities

Serial No.	Name of the place	Presiding Deity
01	Patnagarh	Maa Pataneswari
02	Junagarh	Maa Lankeswari
03	Raj Khariar	Maa Samalai
04	Dharamgarh	Maa Bhandargharian
05	Chiplima	Maa Ghanteswari
06	Titilagarh	Maa Ghantasini
07	Kumudipadar	Maa Kosaleswari
08	Chandarpur	Maa Chandrahasini
09	Banei	Maa Kuanridevi
10	Athamallik	Maa Maheshwari

11	Boudh	Maa Bhairavi
12	Ullunda	Maa Metakani
13	Sundergarh	Maa Samaleswari
14	Sonepur	Maa samalai
15	Kalahandi	Maa Manikeswari
16	Bolangir	Maa Samalai

3. Conclusion:-

In Odisha, there is a saying-‘Bara masare tera yatra’- means more than thirteen festivals in a year. Like Indian society, Odisha composed of a society with people of a number of professions. But main occupation is agriculture. So, agriculture related festivals have been observing since time immemorial. Nuakhai is such a festival. It is the festival of splendor and fun. It has a special significance for West Odishan people. In fact, it is a festival of thanks giving for a good harvest. Nua or new rice is offered to the deities as a mark of gratitude for a bumper harvest, good rain and a favorable farming weather. Nuakhai is a tradition that has cultivated noble virtues of tolerance, acceptance, sacrifice, trust, affection, understanding, and social responsibilities since a long time. Some deities in different parts of Odisha treated as presiding deities (Table-3). In these places a number of fairs and festivals are organised corresponding to those deities. Chhatar yatra of Kalahandi, Khandabasa of Junagarh, Pahur yatra of Bolangir, Sulia yatra of Khairguda are some of the famous yatras. But every yatras are observed which are partly or totally submitted to the local deities. All these fairs and festivals brings pious relationships in between various stages of human evolution – infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. And also men and women learns to share love, affection, tolerance, responsibility, hardworking, etc. from these fairs and festivals. In the existing society with much stress and strain could be minimized with the observation of these practices giving due weightage.

5. References:

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