

## **NEEDS AND IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL PRACTICES AMONG TRIBALS' OF WESTERN ODISHA IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract:**

Society without culture has no meaning. Culture is the manifestation of system of activity wherein a man socializes himself through interacting with other human being. The culture and society are interdependent, though the society is spontaneously emerged in the process of social evolution. Culture is the way of life to which men acquire and assimilate the value and mode of behavior to accommodate himself to be the member of existing society. Culture differs from one society to another or one community to another. The liking and disliking of a culture depends upon generation to generation. Today's culture may not be liked by population of next generations'. In the same way tribal culture of western Odisha is not rigid and static rather it is changing with the contemporary society, till then to preserve tribal identity few cultural practices are still pursued from their ancestors.

### **Objectives:**

- i. To understand the nature and extent of cultural performance among tribal of western Odisha.
- ii. To obtain basic ideas on the Influential factors of cultural degradation in tribal society.
- iii. To know tribal's inclination with the cultural practices.

### **Methodology:**

The information described in the following study is collected on the basis of two different sources that are **Primary** and **Secondary Sources**. With regards to Primary source the

information has been supplemented by the grassroots level chief (Mukhia) or Padha raja through direct interaction, since they are looking after of their cultural practices as per their customary law. In the study there are four types tribal's communities' raja (Padha raja) has been taken consideration for direct discussion, they are Oraon, Munda, Kisan and Khadia. In the study area they are numerically dominant tribes. In the same way reference of books, website collection and other literatures are taken into consideration as secondary information.

### **Views on evolution of human society:**

The human society is not made, but emerged spontaneously in the process of social evolution without having any pre-social stage to precede it. This is concerned with the evolution of the state or the sequences of stages through which the modern differentiated state came into existence. The evolutionary writers said kinship and the family were the first social bonds uniting man with man, followed by this village community and tribe developed until it arrive at the advanced forms of social organization as the city and the nation state. The child spontaneously acquires and assimilated the value and modes of behavior of his society through the process of socialization. The socialization is more natural, unconscious and spontaneous than the social control; therefore, socialization is taken for granted.

Tribal society is oldest and aboriginal society in the history of mankind. The tribal society is relatively independent and self-reliant. They have their own way of living. The tribal traditions, practices and customs are good for human being. Basically in all tribal society they have their common local dialect.

### **Concept :**

Every human groups needs to have its uniqueness in identity in human society. The identity could only be preserved through its cultural practices. Among the human group the tribal are culturally rich in the society. The word culture has been derived from Latin word "Cultura". The same word in German is known as "Kultura". Both the terms reflect same meaning. The literal meaning of the same word is sum total of various social practices and traditions. The anthropologist viewed that the society is the only one aspect of culture. The sociologist given their views, culture is the manifestation of system of activity. Therefore, culture could be

referred the creation of interacting man. Therefore, a culture is composed to things not of interacting people. Within the composition of things norms, symbolic, language, technologies, and artifacts, belief (good and bad) and meaning of life and notions of science. Another concept of culture relates to the body of knowledge and techniques and values through which a society directs and expresses its life as an interacting entity. In the same way the word culture is the most general in the vocabulary of anthropologist. The term culture and society are both interrelated but they need to be distinguished from each other. The general meaning of culture is the way of life of people, to which aggregate of individual follow the given way of life.

**Definition:**

There are several definitions defined by different thinkers, some of the definitions are as follows; “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society” Taylor. “A culture is the configuration of learned behavior and results of behavior which component elements are shared and transmitted by the member of a particular society.” Ralph Linto.

In sociology culture is acquired behavior, which are shared by and transmitted among members of society. “Culture is acquired by man as a member of society and persists through tradition”

With regards to the division, the sociologist divided culture into two groups they are material culture that includes such material factors enrich the social life of a man such as trains, cars, radio, tables, chairs and so on, the non-material culture consist of values, traditions, norms, belief, religion, art etc. But according to Wisler clerk following are the universal contents of culture, those are speech, physical qualities such as food habits, arms, commerce and industries, arts, religion and cultural knowledge, and religious belief and norms such as economic behavior treatment of sick etc. family and social organization, property, government, war etc. The culture is something which cannot remain static rather it changes from time to time and place to place as per the changing contemporary society. Sociologist MacIver have pointed out that it is the nature of culture to undergo change. What is liked by the people of particular generation and community may not be liked by the other generation and communities. He also said culture is very wide term which includes many things such as religion, mode of life, norms, social values etc.

**Types of Tribal living in western Odisha:**

There are 62 type of tribal living in thirty districts speak 74 dialects in Odisha. They are so called Scheduled Tribes; in Sundargarh district there are 40 types of tribal inhabits in different locations. There are 8 tribes belong to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group declared by government of India. There are 13 Scheduled Tribes belong to Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups. In western Odisha particularly Sundargarh is tribal dominated district with distinctive cultural identity similarly Kuchinda sub-division of Sambalpur district is observed partial tribal inhabitation. The major tribes inhabits in those districts are Bhuiyan, Gond, Oraon, Munda, Kisan, Khadia, Phari Bhuiyan, Kondh, Binjhia, Bhakta, Santal, Kondh etc.

**Importance of Tribal culture:**

Culture is an identity and it distinguishes a group of man from other. Culture distinguishes human from animals. Preservation of culture is essential for our identity. India is a unity of diversity of culture that is most important feature of Indian society. Tribal culture is one of them which show the unique identity of the tribal population in the nation. The tribal of India are recognized as an original inhabitant of the nation and popularly known as Adivasi (aboriginal), Vana vasi (forest dweller), and Girijan (hill tribe). The tribal culture of India and their practice of traditions pass through almost all of the aspects of Indian culture and civilization. Tribal of India are culturally rich which shows special recognition in Indian society. Many scholars from within and outside of the country are landing for the study of the socio-cultural life of tribal. There are some tribes who are original inhabitant of native or some are migrated from the different parts of the nation. Within the cultural practice the tribal have their own language, belief, custom and tradition, religious faith. Culture is like a living organism, if it looks after properly, then it can grow, multiply and spread otherwise we become responsible for its eternal destruction. We must look after it and make it grows or else we shall have to lose our value when it loses its vitality.

**Tribal economy and culture:**

The livelihood of traditional tribal depends on the forest and land based economy and seasonal cultural practices are linked with these economy. The Non-Timber Forest Produces (NTFP) is the secondary source of livelihood which supplements food during the food scarcity. In case of social, economic and political position they are lower than other communities in terms of

accessing and possession of goods and commodities. Therefore, the importance of the need of livelihood generating activities based on locally available resources is very essential that could provide sustainable development to the tribal community and preserve cultural behaviour. This is what the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken steps to establish organization to take up marketing development activities of NTFP on which they may take few time for their income generation. The establishment of TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited) is an important agency to boost up tribal to increase socio-economic status. The aim of TRIFED is to serve the interest of the tribal community and work for their socio-economic development.

Tribal dialect, ritual practices, belief system, custom and tradition are all important aspect of tribal culture, and placed in unique position in the Indian society and culture. The wide spread of modern technical, professional education as well as impact of western education and culture have changed the traditional cultural practices in urban, semi-urban and industrial social milieu. Besides these, there is an impact of religion that have changed tribal attitude on belief system. The tribal way of life is somehow far different from the traditional way of life in those environments. The cultural identity of tribal is about to be disappeared in the urban, semi-urban and industrial environment. There are other factors too responsible for the changing of tribal culture, the factors are as such; rapid industrialization, urbanization, western education and mega developmental projects and displacement etc.

### **Tribal Cultural Practices:**

The tribal of western Odisha particularly in Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Deogarh districts have unique cultural identity and practices according to the tribe is concerned. Their cultural practices show uniqueness from one another. Following cultures are the commonly performed and observed by the tribes of western Odisha.

#### **A. Tribal Rituals:**

i. **Birth ritual:** it is essential and most important traditions among the tribes of western Odisha. One of village Mukhiya (head) or respective tribe head purify to child with turmeric water, fried

rice and white thread. The process of doing birth ritual differs from tribe to tribe. The chief purpose of doing birth ritual is to make child a member of their own tribe and make relation with any one of their ancestor or present family members or with any relatives.

ii. **Death ritual:** The process of death ritual is different but the uses of essential requirement are more or less similar. The use of turmeric water is used in all cases of ritual observation. The other requirement of death ritual is washing cloths, ash water, mustard oil etc. is all considered as holy water.

iii. **Purification:** In case of inter-tribe or inter-caste marriage the tribal do purify the family members or defaulter as per the tribal tradition. The tribal belief inter-tribe or inter-caste marriage without consent of parent and society is illegal which is believed that it defiles their culture that need to be purified by the respective village Mukhiya or Jati Kalo (raja). They purify all family members as well as the defaulter. In some tribes unless the defaulter family members are not purified, the village people restraint to attend in social ceremonies such as in marriage or any social activities. The purification process of Kisan tribe is something unique and different from other three types of tribes.

### **B. Custom and tradition:**

Marriage is a religious and social bond. It is not only in tribal but found in all human society. Tribal marriage is organized in an unique ways according to their tribe is concerned. There is some similarity in the process of marriage conducted by some tribes. Some of the tribes have the custom of giving bride price that is not considered as a dowry. This is a custom and tradition pursuing from their ancestor, e.g. giving a bullock is found in Khadia, and Munda tribe, seven rupees in Kisan, Cloth in Oraon etc. use of bamboo stick and dry bottle guard (Tumba) is most essential part of tribal marriage. The history of Kisan marriage is completely unique; the bridegroom do not go to bring bride (barat) but in substitute of him arrow and horn of wild buffalo is used, without these the Kisan marriage cannot be possible.

**C. Tribal political organization:**

Each tribe has its own political organization having executive's members, responsible for community conflict resolution, particularly conflict arising between two communities or within the community in case of elopement marriage or love marriage between the boy and girl of different tribes or of same tribe. The executive committees of both tribes assemble along with the villagers and take uniform resolution. Nominal penalty is imposed to the victim family and have their common feast along with the villagers.

**D. Tribal Rights:**

The tribal society follows patrilineal family; the son has right over his father's property. The immovable properties such as land, house all belongs to father goes to his son. The villagers divide immovable properties equally if more than one son is there in a family. They follow their customary law on land right.

**E. Tribal Belief:**

Tribal belief system is somehow unique and different from other communities. They belief on super natural power, dream, witchcraft, Gaon devata or Gaon shri (village God) and they are animism worship super natural power and plants also belief on soul of their ancestor. Once in a year they worship plants (Sarna Puja) within the month of March 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. With regards to religious belief few countable numbers of tribal communities have changed their ancestors' religion and converted into Christianity and Hinduism. The belief system among the converted to other religion, has been changed from traditional belief.

**F. Tribal Festivals:**

The tribal of western Odisha observe limited and countable festivals that have linked with the agriculture and forest produces. The tribal also observe the festival of their cattle or domestic animals. The western Odisha tribal observe cattle festival in the month of November (Kartik month) it may be full moon day (Purnami) or in Amabasya/ Diwali. All domestic animals (cow, bullock, goat, and sheep) are given respect and offer food prepared at home. Besides the cattle festival the tribal observe Kado leta, Karma, Nuakhai, Gumha Puni, Pus puni, Phagun etc. The

village Kalo worship and sacrifices to Gaon shri (village God) before they celebrate above all festivals. Desi liquor (rice beer) is common to use in all festivals. They offer to their ancestors and Dharti mata before they drink and get marry making, because they believe that what they have at present is the gift of their ancestors and Dharti mata. Therefore, the tribal never forget to offer to their ancestors and Dharti mata while they eat during festivals. Apart from festivals the tribal hospitality is another unique culture. They offer water to guest to wash hand and feet. They welcome their guest by washing hand and feet. In the family if the girl or a woman is available then they wash guest's feet and offer water to drink. In case of social ceremony while process of marriage begins the culture of washing hand and feet starts and end with marriage. This is a beautiful culture that prevails among the tribal of western Odisha.

### **G. Factors of cultural change:**

It is understood that, the development brings change in positive or negative, but the change is must in the process of development. The developments along with the advancement of human society steadily leave and give less importance of the traditional culture. The global education system has changed the process of living, thought, belief, and attitude of human being that gives less importance of the traditional belief, thought etc. For example: the concept of purity and impurity of the past culture is no more believed in contemporary situation of globalized world. There is no question of higher and lower, all are given equal treatment as a human being. With regards to the tribal cultural change at present society, there is an impact of modern and western education, industrialization, influence of urban culture and civilization, religion as well as possession of material and non-material culture. The tribals of western Odisha are culturally rich in comparison to the other caste populations that show their unique identity in the state. There is no doubt change in cultural practice is in the process of development of society wherein other side of the coin such as traditional culture remain traditional without practice in a globalized world.

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