



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.2. 2.,2015

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

**KHUDURKUNI OSHA AND BHAIJUNTIA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THESE TWO
FESTIVALS**

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ABSTRACT



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The term folklore implies the traditional beliefs, practices, customs, stories, jokes, songs of people, handed down orally or behaviorally from individual to individual in a particular geographical region is known as folklore. It is conceived as a mirror which reflects dominant values, beliefs and ethos of a cultural group. The subject matter of folklore broadly consists of oral literature and cultural practices. It can also be considered as a social and cultural necessity which is used by the people. Festivals play a major role in folklore studies and they are an important part of our cultural heritage. Festivals are observed with great fervor by the people of Orissa as they form an integral part of the social lives of these people. The festivals are related to the strong beliefs in the powers of the divine Gods and Goddesses and are traditionally well maintained by the people during the festivals. My paper aims at putting a thrust on making a comparative analysis on the rituals and customs based on two famous festivals of Orissa, The Khudurkuni Osha and The Bhaijuntia. Both of these festivals are based on single theme which is keeping fasts by the sisters for the well being of their brothers. The girls worship Maa Durga on this day. I would like to discuss on the following topics during the course of my presentation:

- Concept of folklore
- Festivals and Folklore
- Women as central figure in festivals
- Concept of Khudurkuni Osha
- Concept of Bhaijuntia
- Comparative Analysis of the Two Festivals
- Conclusion

Keywords: Folklore, Festivals, Khudurkuni Osha, Bhaijuntia, tradition, customs

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INTRODUCTION

Folklore means the folktales pertaining to different religious beliefs, supernatural incidents and traditions which are usually circulated within a socio-religious group and may vary from culture to culture. . They are mainly oral in nature and are carried forward outside institutional channels. India being a huge country, it has different ethnic, linguistic and social groups in it. So, it is difficult to brand Indian Folklore as a homogeneous unit rather it can be called as an assimilation of different stories and tales which have evolved from the religious and cultural beliefs of different sects and communities of India. These folklores usually harp on moral values and are often supernatural in nature. These Indian folklore and epics legitimize the existing customs and ritual of Indian society.

Festivals and Folklore:

No ancient civilizations can boast of literature without folklore. There are many kinds of folklore depending on its content such as festival songs, work songs, marriage songs etc. Festival and religious songs are usually accompanied by a suitable dance form. Festivals play relevant role in the folklore culture of India. They constitute an integral part of their social life and relate to their strong beliefs in the power of supernatural elements and community togetherness. It gives us a platform to exhibit the traditions existing in the states during these fairs and festivals. Sometimes festivals are occasions that mark the change of seasons relating to harvest of crops while some festivals are observed to commemorate a local deity, innumerable folk traditions and spirits are manifested by ways of observing vrats and fasts by the Hindus in Orissa.

Concept of Khudurkuni Osha:

Khudurkuni Osha is observed in Odisha on the Sundays in the month of Bhadrab(August or September). It is also known as Khudarankuni. 'Khudurukuni' means one who is very eager for khuda or rice. Goddess Mangala or (Durga Maa) is worshipped on every Sunday throughout the month. Osha rituals are based on the legend of a young girl named Taapoi. This festival is observed with certain rituals. Khude Bhaja or Khuda(remanants of rice) , which is fried left out particles of rice, are offered to Goddess Durga.. Other offerings that are made to the Goddess are are Kantiali Kakudi (a type of Cucumber), Lia (fried paddy), Ukuda (fried paddy sweetened by molasses) and coconut. It is said that the young girl Taapoi survived on Khuda after her brothers left. She was given nothing else to eat. After early morning bath, unmarried women and girls collect flower and worship Goddess Durga by making small mounts of clay. In some regions, the place where the paddy is pounded in a village is cleaned and smeared with cow dung. Alpana or Jhoti designs are drawn on the floor. An image of the Goddess is installed and the pujas and rituals begin in the evening. After the pujas and rituals ,episodes from the life of Taapoi is read out by the girls The first episode narrates the story of Goddess Durga defeating Demon Mahishasura. The second Taapoi episode narrated is the story of the young girl Taapoi who was mistreated by her sisters-in-laws when her sailor brothers were away. After the rituals are over, the girls melodiously narrate the incident of 'Taapoi', that is now obtainable in print. Previously, this was passed down by verbal tradition. The 1st incident 'Malasri' describes the assassination of the devil by (Goddess Durga). It is believed, that ('Mahisasura'), the dreadful demon became terrible by receiving an advantage from Lord Brahma, the originator of this universe. All the Gods and the humankind got frightened. Mahisasura became so influential that even the divinities could not slay him. All the divinities bestowed and moved to appeal the Divinity of supremacy to slay the devil. Goddess Durga accorded and acquiring the figure of good-looking women went to (Vindhya Mountain) to make people believe that she was meditating. Mahisasura was out on animal hunting, observed the good-looking women and right away offered to tie the knot with her. The women answered that the person who has the ability to defeat her in a fight will only be eligible for being her life partner. Mahisasura being so positive of his supremacy soon decided to fight. A ferocious fight ensued amid them. Goddess Durga inserted a spade in to the chest of Mahishasura and thus killed him. Thus, Goddess Durga saved the universe from the atrocity and fear of the devil. As a result it is said that, all the girls who adore Goddess Durga, she would grant and protects them from all the evil forces.The 2nd incident of ('Taapoi') is a renowned version of the anguish ness and achievement of a sea trader girl also known as 'Sadhab'.This also rings a bell ,of the maritime glory enjoyed by the sea traders in the ancient period when Orissa was one of the

major port that enjoyed trading with Sumatra,Java,Bali etc. The Sadhab community of Orissa was a wealthy community, which had trade-connections with numerous countries.

According to the fable, The prosperous Sadhaba Family had 7 brothers and Taapoi who was the only sister and the youngest amongst all. Apparently, they conferred all their affection and love on her generously. All her needs and demands were fulfilled by the brothers happily. Once when Tapoi was playing, with her friends amid a winnow, which was made from strips out of bamboo.,there was a Brahmin neighbor of this family who was unhappy with Tapoi, she scolded her. Tapoi was very hurt and she asked for a winnow made up of gold from her brothers. Her demand was fulfilled and then she asked for a golden Moon. As soon as the brothers started making the moon, eventually in the middle of the process, their father died and as soon as the moon was completed, their mother also died. As a result, the financial condition of the family was very bad; the brothers had to move out and start earning they sailed out of the state, giving strict instructions to their respective wives about looking after Tapoi.

As soon as the brothers left the country, the Brahmin neighbor started speaking ill about Tapoi to the wives that she was the only reason for their entangled state. Soon everything changed as Tapoi was in distress because of her sister in laws. She turned in to a poor girl from a princess as she was given Khuda to eat, torned clothes and was told to take care of (goats) in the bushy jungle. In spite of intolerable torment, she passed the time tolerantly for her beloved brothers to come back. The youngest (sister-in-law) was cordial to Tapoi, but could not save her from their torture.

All along these days, she did not leave her prayers.Tapoi was a great believer of Goddess Durga. She used to offer Khuda to Goddess and prayed with her whole heart for the safety of her brothers. Her genuine and religious prayer capitulated fruit and Tapoi's brothers came back safely. In the night they all came back from the voyage and were resting in the boat .They heard a sniffing voice of a girl and were curious to know, To their dismay it was their beloved sister who was sobbing.Tappoi was very happy as soon as she saw her brothers.Tappoi narrated everything to her seven brothers and were guilty about everything. They asked Tappoi to slay their noses as punishment but everything got restored and they lived happily ever after. Therefore there is a belief that the ritual is observed by women for the safe return of their relatives (brothers) who venture into the sea.

These two episodes depict two different strata. One story depicts the ferocious Durga sweeps of evil from this world and the other one depicts young Taapoi who bears all the grudges and became successful. The deities of Goddess Durga are then plunged in lakes and rivers, marking the end of one of the important festival.

Concept of Bhai Juintia:

Bhai juintia is a festival that is widely followed mostly in the region of Western Orissa only ranging between Sambalpur, Bolangir, Bhawanipatna and Bargarh districts of Orissa.. Bhaijuintia festival is celebrated on the Mahastami Day of Durga Puja. It is a total fasting (no meal or even water) is undertaken by women for the whole day and night to seek Goddess Durga's blessing for the long life of their bhais (brothers). Young girls who are 7 to eight years old observe this fast with full enthusiasm. If Rakshya Bandhan is a day for sisters in north India, sisters in KOSAL (western Orissa) observe Bhai Juintia on the auspicious day of Ashwina Sukla Pakhya Astami today. Bhai Juintia is being celebrated across western Odisha with much enthusiasm.

The sisters observe a total fast on this day wishing for long life and success of their brothers. In the evening, they visit the Juintia worship place and Durga deity. All the markets in the western region of the state were crowded on the Ashtami day, with sisters buying the needful items for today's puja.On this day both married and unmarried sisters pray for long life and well-being of their brothers, by fasting the whole day without water known as Nirjala Upabasa.Their fast continues till next morning, on the Nabami. A group of sisters dressed up in new attire, gather at an open space in their localities and worship Goddess Durga decorated with mango leaves, wild plants and flowers. Earlier in the day, bunches of duba (108 strands of green grass) wrapped up with freshly plucked sal leaf are prepared for each brother and the Goddess. Each bundle consists of 108 unbroken rice (non-boiled rice) also and tied up with a colourful juintia (sacred thread). The girls also collect flowers like the red mandara flower, lotus etc.Then they offer all the bundles along with

prasad like jugar (made of puffed rice), a typical item made from Lia in the shape of a temple. puri (made of flour) and tikhri (made of mung dal) and varieties of fruits to the Goddess. They get up early on the wee hours of Nabami, they take their bath and offer worship and while returning, collect Duba Chhuan, which they offer to their brothers. In KOSAL (western Orissa), with the commencement of Durga Puja, every house is crowded with sisters and brothers, who arrive to observe the Bhai Juntia which is an annual occasion for a family get-together. The main function, Juintia Puja is held in the evening,. This festival is observed with all its rituals, irrespective of caste and class. In the wee hours of next day i.e Nabami, the sisters take a holy dip in a nearby tank or river and perform ritual near the water body by offering slices of cucumbers and chopped kathi (short sal sticks used for brushing teeth). Back home, boys wear new dresses and made to sit on a asan or mat and a lamp is lighted. Sisters break their fast after touching her brother with the duba bunch from head to toe and presenting him prasad and gifts. However poor the brother might be, he gives new attire to his sisters according to his financial capacity. It is an occasion where all the married girls look forward to visit their parents home to celebrate this festival. For married sisters, their brothers are generally assigned the duty to invite them to their parents' house to celebrate Bhai Juintia and Dussehra.

Comparative Analysis of these two festivals:

As we all know that Khudurkuni Osha is celebrated in the coastal regions of Orissa ranging from Balasore to Cuttack to Dhenkanal to Jajpur to Puri districts where as bhajuintia is celebrated in the Western regions ranging from Sambalpur to Bolangir to Bhawanipatna to Bargarh districts in Orissa. Khudurkuni Osha is celebrated on every Sundays of Bhadrava month which falls in September where as Bhajuintia is celebrated on the MahaAshtami day in the month of Ashwina or October. The only similarity between both of these festivals is that they are celebrated to seek blessings of Maa Durga. As Durga Maa is the main goddess who is worshipped in many forms be it Tarini, Mangala, Samaleswari, Kali etc in many festivals like Nuakhai, Durga Ashtami, Mangala Osha which falls on the Tuesdays of the months of Chaitra and Ashwina. Khudurkuni Osha is observed by un- married girls only whereas Bhajuintia is performed by both married as well as unmarried women. Apart from this Bhai juintia is celebrated by women of all caste and creed where as Khudurkuni Osha is generally not celebrated by women belonging to Brahmin caste.

Conclusion

Foreign influence and modern culture have crept in to our society which has diluted the sentiments associated with these festivals and they are no longer celebrated with the customs and rituals. These festivals speak about the love, respect and social behaviour of the people which needs to be maintained else these festivals would go to the pages of our history.

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Deepanjali Mishra is currently working as an Assistant Professor at the School of Humanities, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. She has completed her PhD in English Literature from Utkal University, Bhubaneswar . She has over ten years of teaching in reputed technical institutions, research experience and her specialized areas are Sociolinguistics and Feminism and Culture Studies. She has presented research papers in India and abroad in various International and National conferences.