



THE NATURE AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KUDMI FAIR AND FESTIVALS IN MAYURBHANJ

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ABSTRACT:- The study explores the festivals and fairs of the Kudumi community, an indigenous group known for its close connection to nature and agriculture. These celebrations, such as Makar Sankranti (Tusu), Chait Parab, Rohini, Sarhul, and Bandana, are not only religious events but also expressions of gratitude, social unity, and respect for the environment. Each festival marks a special moment in the agricultural calendar and involves rituals, music, dance, and storytelling that strengthen community bonds and pass on traditions to younger generations.

Women play an important role in these celebrations by preparing food, leading rituals, and making traditional crafts. Their contribution is key to keeping the culture alive and supporting their families and communities. The fairs held by the Kudumi people are also important, providing spaces for farmers and artisans to share goods, ideas, and skills. These gatherings help preserve traditional knowledge and support the local economy.

The festivals and fairs is studying by shows how the Kudumi community keeps its heritage alive while living in harmony with nature. Their way of life teaches us about sustainability, respect for the land, and the importance of community. In a world where many traditions are fading, it is important to protect and celebrate the cultural practices of indigenous communities like the Kudumi. This study hopes to raise awareness about their rich traditions and the value they add to our shared cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS:

Kudumi Community, Indigenous Festivals, Cultural traditions, Social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

The Kudumi people, an indigenous community, celebrate a variety of festivals and fairs that reflect their deep connection to nature and their cultural heritage. These are an essential part of their lives, rooted in their agricultural practices and symbolizing gratitude, spirituality, and the bond they share with the environment. This project focuses on understanding the significance of these festivals, fairs, their unique traditions, and the role they play in the Kudumi community.

These are vibrant occasions filled with rituals, music, dance, and storytelling. These celebrations are not only tied to seasonal changes and agricultural cycles but also provide opportunities for the community to come together and strengthen their social bonds. Through these practices, the Kudumi people pass down their values, knowledge, and cultural identity to future generations.

This project aims to explore the different aspects of Kudumi festivals and fairs, including their environmental, spiritual, and social importance. By documenting these traditions, the project seeks to enhance understanding and appreciation of the Kudumi culture while emphasizing the need to preserve these practices as part of the world's cultural diversity. The findings will contribute to recognizing the value of indigenous communities and their unique ways of life, encouraging efforts to protect and celebrate their heritage.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, ethnographic approach to understand the festivals and fairs of the Kudumi community. Fieldwork was conducted in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, using participant observation, interviews with elders, women, and community leaders, and focus group discussions. Oral traditions, songs, and rituals were documented to capture cultural expressions. Secondary sources such as books, articles, and reports supported the analysis. Visual documentation through photography and video enriched the understanding of performances and rituals. This comprehensive method highlights the cultural, social, and environmental significance of Kudumi festivals and their role in preserving community identity and heritage.

DIFFERENT FESTIVALS OF KUDUMI COMMUNITY

The Kudumi people are celebrated different festivals. The last day of **Pusha** month called '**Baundi**'. The new year Festivals are celebrated with joy. These festivals are like *Makar Sankranti* or *Tusu Festival*, *Halpunha*, *Kundakhiya*, , *Sarhul* festival or (**Phula bhangini**), *Akshaya Tritiya*, *Rohin*, *Ashadhi*, *Chitau*, *Gamha Purnima*, *Karma*, *Jitua* and *Bandana* festivals are all performed in Village Goddess or Jahira by village headman or Mahto, Naya.

MAKAR FESTIVAL

Makar Festival/Tusu Festival, celebrated on the first day of *Magha*, is a joyful occasion for the Kudumi community. They worship *Tusu Devi*, the goddess of virgin girls, with songs and dances for three to seven days. On *Makar Sankranti*, the villagers celebrate by collecting firewood (**Agi**), preparing *pitha*, and dipping in a swamp or pond to bid farewell to winter. After bathing, they sprinkle holy water around their homes. The *Tusu idol*, created by the youth, is carried in a procession and disposed of in water. The festival ends with feasts and celebrations, bringing happiness to all.

AKHAN/HALPUNHA

The second day of *Magha*, called '*Akhan*' or '*Hal Punha*,' is sacred for the Kudumi caste, an agricultural community. Families clean their homes and consult an astrologer to choose the right time for ploughing. The head of the family plows three times, keeping the *Yogini* in mind. After ploughing, the oxen are brought home, and the housewife offers grain and other items for a new soup. The feet of cow or calves are washed with turmeric water, and cow or calves are marked for good health. It's a day dedicated to agricultural rituals, blessings, and ensuring the well-being of animals.

KUNDAKHIA

On *Baisakha Purnima*, the first day of the *Baisakha* month, the Kudmi caste cleans their homes and celebrates the new harvest. They prepare a mix of freshly harvested grains like wheat, barley, black gram, and fruits such as mango, jackfruit, and honey fruit, which are offered to the goddess during worship. After the worship, all family members consume the *Chhatua* (**a powder mix**) and fruits. The *Chhatua* is typically prepared by the housewife while fasting, marking the beginning of the harvest season with gratitude and devotion.

ROHINI

The Kudumi caste observes *Rohina* Day during the *Jeshto* month, from the 13th to next 7th day of *Jeshto* month that week is called as *Rohini* Week. On these days, the house is cleaned, and the oxen's legs are washed, oiled, and adorned with **sindoor** on their horns. During the festival, various bamboo items like **buruni**, **tuki**, **soop**, and **khanchi** are used. This ritual is part of their agricultural customs, ensuring the oxen are well-cared for and ready for the work ahead, while also marking a period of celebration and devotion.

ROHINI SOIL

On *Rohina* Day, each family sends a housewife to bring "**Rohini soil**" from the fields. After bathing, she carries the soil in a basket, wrapped in a wet cloth, with a small piece of iron inside. Boys form groups, dancing and performing for fun. If anyone laughs or speaks, they must drop the soil, go back, and bring it again. The soil is considered sacred by agricultural people, as both mother and soil hold equal importance. *Rohini soil* is placed on the every room in the house, believed to purify, increase fertility, and promote good health and prosperity. It is believed that snakes do not enter the kudmi people house.

SARUL FESTIVAL

Every village has a village goddess. Mahato is worships the village goddess that place known as '**Jahira**'. In these goddess agriculture related worship. Join by the *Mahato*. *Phula Bhanguni* is the important, festival. In this festival *shal* leaves *Mango*, *honey*, *flowers*, *char* and *kendu* are offer to the village goddess and then after worship these flower and fruits are eating the people of village.

ASHADHI

Ashadhi Puja is a traditional festival in Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj, Odisha, held in **Ashadha** to pray for good rain and a successful harvest. Before planting rice seedlings, people sacrifice hens or goats to the village goddess and pour water at the base of the sacred tree while offering prayers. It's a way for the community to connect with nature and hope for prosperity through good rainfall and farming.

CHITAU AMABASYA (CHITALAGI AMAVASYA)

Chitalagi or *Chitau Amavasya* is a festival celebrated in Mayurbhanj and Kendujhar districts of Odisha, falling on the new moon day of *Sravana* (August). It is an agricultural festival where farmers worship their paddy fields for a good harvest. After a purificatory bath, they offer cakes which called as **Chitou pitha** (**Khapara pitha**), flowers, and milk to the fields. The

festival also involves appeasing evilpowers, particularly snails, which cause harm to farmers working barefoot. The Snails are worshipped as *Gandeisuni*, a female evil power. A farmer's daughter pray to her to avoid injury to their family members while working in the fields

GAMHA PURNIMA

Gamha Purnima, observed on the full moon day of **Shravan** in Odisha, celebrates the sacredness of cows. On this day, cows are beautifully decorated and worshipped with devotion, symbolizing prosperity and divinity in Hindu tradition. Families prepare sweets and share them with neighbors, fostering a spirit of joy and community.

The festival also marks **Raksha Bandhan** or **Rakshya Purnima**, where sisters tie **Rakhis** on their brothers' wrists, symbolizing a bond of love and protection. Brothers, in turn, promise to safeguard their sisters.

NUAKHIA

Nuakhia is an important agricultural festival, which festival observed in all over Odisha but this festivals mainly observed by people of western Odisha. *Nuakhal* is observed to welcome the new rice of the season. These festival observed on *Panchami tithi* (the fifth Day) of the lunare fortnight of the month of *Bhadra* or (August - September). The word '*Nua*' mean '**new**' and '*Khia*' means '**food**', so the name mean the farmers are in Possession of the newly harvested rice. The festival is seen as a new ray of hope. It is a festival for the worship of food grains.

KARAM FESTIVAL

The Karam Festival, celebrated in Odisha's Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, honors **Karam Devta**, the god of power, youth, and vitality. Held in **Bhadra** (August–September) on **Shukla Paksha Ekadashi**, it's a time to pray for good work (*Karma*) and a successful harvest.

Before the festival, young girls plant and care for **nine types of seeds**, called **Jawa**, symbolizing growth and life. On the day, villagers cut branches from the *Karam* tree in the jungle, and unmarried women carry them back to the village. The branches are planted in a decorated courtyard, where the priest performs rituals with offerings like grains and liquor, while sharing stories about the festival.

The highlight is *Karam Nacch*, an energetic all-night dance with singing and celebration. The next day, the *Karam* tree branches are immersed in a river, symbolizing renewal and hope for the future.

SONG

"Aj tare Karam raja
Ghare duare
Kal tare Karam raja
Kansh nadi pare"

BANDANA FESTIVAL (THANKS GIVING CEREMONY)

The **Bandana Festival**, celebrated by the Kudumi community, is dedicated to worshipping domestic cattle and agricultural tools. Observed annually in Odisha's Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, it takes place during the **Amavasya** (new moon) of **Kartik** month.

This three-day festival includes: **Gotho Puja** (first day), **Guhali Puja** (second day), **Budhi Bandna** (third day). The festival reflects gratitude for the cattle and tools vital to agriculture, fostering a spirit of reverence and celebration of the agrarian lifestyle.

Jagran, the first day of the *Bandna* festival, begins with washing cattle and cleaning the courtyard. *Dipa* (**Mud lamps**) are lit, and cattle are decorated with oil and **sindoor**. The night features *Dhingwani Bula*, a lively musical event, where villagers sing and dance to protect against evil spirits, ending with celebrations.

JHUMAR DANCE AND MUSIC

Jhumar is a folk dance popular in states like Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal, especially during harvest time and festivals such as *Bandana* and *Karam*. Dancers form a circle, holding hands, swaying, clapping, and sometimes jumping to the rhythm of instruments like the *Madol* and *Dhol*. The name "*Jhumar*" comes from "*Jhoom*," meaning "swaying." There are two main dance types: one is *Nachuni* (**solo**) and the other is *Panta Salia* (**group**).

Jhumar music is sung during events like *Karam* and *Tusu*. The songs vary, with traditional styles like Adivasi *Jhumar* and modern versions.

FAIRS OF THE KUDUMI COMMUNITY

The Kudumi community fairs are lively gatherings that focus on trade, tradition, and socializing. Unlike religious festivals, these fairs are more about connecting, exchanging goods, and celebrating culture. Farmers bring their *harvests*—*grains*, *vegetables*, and *livestock*—while artisans showcase handmade crafts like pottery and textiles. The fairs support the local economy and help preserve traditional skills, with younger generations learning from their elders.

These events offer a chance for learning, as farmers exchange new techniques, and artisans share tips. The fairs also boost the local economy, supporting small businesses and helping families thrive. In this way, the Kudumi fairs are not only a cultural experience but also a vital part of the community's daily life.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE FAIRS AND FESTIVAL

In the Kudumi community, women have a vital role in family life and traditions. They prepare food, ensure rituals are followed, and manage the household, especially during festivals and fairs. During harvest seasons and celebrations like *Bandana* and *Karam*, they also create crafts like textiles and jewelry. Their hard work helps preserve cultural traditions and supports the family's well-being. Women's contributions are essential to the community's success, keeping its spirit alive through dedication and care.

CONCLUSION

The festivals and fairs of the Kudmi community are more than just celebrations; they are a deep reflection of their identity, values, and strong bond with nature. Each festival, like *Makar Sankranti* and the *Bandana* festival, carries rich traditions rooted in agriculture and spirituality. These events bring families and neighbors together, strengthening bonds and creating a sense of belonging. Through music, dance, and storytelling, the Kudmi people pass down their cultural heritage to younger generations, ensuring these traditions live on. As we move forward, it's important to recognize how these festivals promote ecological awareness and sustainable practices. The Kudumi community shows how cultural traditions can align with nature, offering valuable lessons on resilience and sustainability. In today's rapidly changing world, where local customs are often at risk, it's crucial to preserve these celebrations. By supporting efforts to keep these traditions alive, we honor the Kudumi people's heritage and enrich our shared cultural history, celebrating the beauty of diversity and our connection to the world around us.

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