

# INDIAN TRIBAL RITUALS AND FESTIVALS OF LODHAS OF MAYURBHANJ IN ODISHA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT**---The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj of Odisha have distinct rituals and festivals, which are very interesting study for the scholars to study the tribal culture of Eastern India. For the writing of this article, both the primary and secondary sources are used to authenticate the conception of the rituals and festivals of Lodha tribe of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. The main Lodha hamlets are found to be set up in the Suliapada and Morada, C.D. Blocks of the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The people of Lodha tribe perform different types of traditional rituals and festivals, out of which some are found to be changed due to the impact of neighbouring Hindu culture. It is clearly known from the field survey that there is no temple for the place of their worship. The sacred places of the Lodhas are Mandapa, Thana, Xahira or Jaheera, etc. The important annual ritual-festivals observed by the Lodhas are Sitala puja, Chandi puja, Natun Hanri, Dhana muthi, Baram or Garam Puja, Raja parva, Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva, Jathel, Gahma parva, Ganesh puja, Nuakhia parva, Dassehara parva, Lakshmi puja, Bandana puja, Karama Puja, Sikara thakurani puja, Makara parva, Magha puja, Phula puja, etc. The present article is proposed to analyze the prevalent rituals and festivals observed by the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj of Odisha in Eastern India. Methodologically, both the primary and secondary sources have been used by the authors for writing of the present article.

**Keywords**-- Tribal, Rituals, Festivals, Primitive, Lodhas, Mayurbhanj, Odisha, India, This article was presented by the first author in a National Seminar on "Tribal Religions in Odisha: A Study on Changes and Continuity" dated 25.10. 2019

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the completion of India's independence the tribal people of all parts of India have been focused in a different perception. It has been felt by the national government that the tribes of India are to be treated as the specific part and parcel of the traditional Indian civilization (Sarkar, 2008, p.3). Among all the states of India, Odisha has the largest number of Scheduled Tribes. In Odisha like the rituals and festivals of non-tribal communities, the tribal groups particularly, the Lodha tribe / society of Mayurbhanj has also specific rituals and festivals, which require the intellectual discussion. The rituals and festivals of the Lodha society of Mayurbhanj

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are very interesting study to know about the religious systems of one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Odisha in Eastern India. The religious practices found in rituals and festivals (*pujas*) of the Lodha society/tribe of Mayurbhanj are distinct from other tribal communities of Odisha. The socio-religious life of the people of Odisha is found to be considerably influenced by tribal traditions. It is the most important reason that elements of tribal ethnicity and religious rituals have also entered the making of the Jagannatha cult, definitely the most important religious center of the Hindus at Puri (Mahapatra, 1993, p.1). The life of Odishan tribals including Lodhas is one never ending round of music, dance, festivals and myths ( Patnaik, N.R., Cuttack, 2004, p.47) . Considering the characteristics and isolated location, the Lodha tribe was identified by Government as one of the Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha in Eastern India ( Mahapatra, 1993, p.27). With the adoption of the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach since the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, 13 PTGs have been identified in different interior of the state of Odisha (Ota and Mohanty, Vol.I, 2015, p.vi). Primitive Tribal Groups have recently become the most essential as well as complicated issue in our country. Specific depth oriented attention is being paid by the concerned section of the administrative unit to help these people tide over the crisis so far facing conspicuously from time immemorial ( Sarkar, 2008, p.1). Hence, both the Central and State Governments have taken adequate steps to identify the Primitive Tribal Groups in the different parts of the country and implement special schemes and programs for their cultural development. In the 7<sup>th</sup> Five year plan, the Lodha tribe was identified as Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha and this tribe also included in 1985-90 year for their development. For which, Lodha Development Agency has been set up at Morada in Mayurbhanj district for the moral, educational and cultural improvement of Lodhas. From within the total sixty two Scheduled Tribes of Odisha, 13 tribal groups of micro project areas in Odisha have been classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) with an approximate population of 70, 500 as per 2001 census. Lodha tribe is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Odisha. In fact, Lodhas were exclusively a jungle tribe thriving on hunting and food gathering like the Savaras as described in the Hindu *puranas* and epics (Mohanty, Vol. I, 2015, p.671). The name Lodha seems to have been derived from the word 'Ludhaka', which means trapper. The Lodhas of Odisha are mainly found in the dense forest regions of Suliapada and Morada / Murada Blocks of the Mayurbhanj district. Suliapada Block is located in the eastern part of Mayurbhjn District at a distance of 39 kms. from District Head Quarter ( Hota, ed., 2014, p.191). Morada Block is located in the eastern part of Mayurbhanj District at a distance of 26 kms from District Head Quarter ( Hota, ed., 2014, p.206). A few Lodhas are also found to be resided in the Khordha and other Districts of Odisha. The Lodha, one of the identified primitive tribal groups of Odisha, is recognized as the tribal community, whose people claim their ancestry to the Savara tribe of the state ( Ota & Sahoo, , 2010, p.4).The jungle-clad hilly terrains of the Chhotnagpur Plateau running across the Bengal-Jharkhand-Odisha border including Mayurbhanja district in Odisha, Singhbhum District in Jharkhand and Midnapur district in West Bengal form the homeland of Lodhas (Mohanty, Revised Edition; 2004, p. 217).The prevalent rituals and festivals of Lodha tribe clearly reveal their primitive culture, which are very eye-catching as well as curiosity among the scholars to know the tribal religion of Odisha in Eastern India. Really, Indian tribals present a colorful panorama of religious faiths and practices, which is the manifestation of adjustments with their cultural and ecological conditions (Hasnain, 2016, p.89). Tribal religions in India were termed as animism noticed in various Census reports and literature. The religious life of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj in Eastern India is associated with several traditional rituals and festivals. In fact, the cultural life of Lodhas is distinct from other tribal groups of

Odisha, which is reflected in their separate rituals and festivals. It is known from the practical field study that at present some changes and continuity are found from the Lodha culture due to impact of Hinduism. The present paper / article aims to highlight the prevalent rituals and festivals of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj of Odisha in Eastern India.

## II. MEHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources have been used in the writing of the present piece of work. The primary data have been collected from *Gazetteers*, literatures, reports, practical observations, hearsay accounts of respondents through the interview methods during the period of experimental field survey, etc. For the collection of data, the present authors have used the qualitative research methods such as field study, personal interview, schedules and taking photographs. The extensive field survey had been undertaken for the collection of detailed information (data) with regard to the rituals and festivals of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj District of Odisha. The collected data regarding the rituals and festivals of Lodhas are based on practical observations and the hearsay accounts of respondents through the interview method. Thus, for the collection of primary data, the empirical method had been basically used by the present scholars. The secondary data used in the current article are *Books, Magazines, Reviews, Journals, Periodicals, Proceedings, Records*, etc. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are critically analyzed and applied in the writing of present article.

## III. DISCCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

### 3.1. Population of Lodhas

The population of Lodha tribe of Odisha is not more numbers unlike the other tribal groups of Odisha. In 1961 Census, 611 persons have been enumerated as Lodha out of which 318 are males and 293 females ( Senapati & Sahu, eds. 1967, p. 125). In 1971 Census, 3891 people were recorded as Lodhas of Mayurbhanj district ( Mahapatra, 1993, pp. 24-25). The total population of the Lodha community in the whole of Odisha as per 1981 Census Report was 5100( male 2597+female-2503). The number of population of the Lodha tribe in Odisha as per 2001 census was 7458 i.e. 3650 M + 3808 F (Ota and Sahoo, 2010, p.4). The main Lodha hamlets are in Suliapada and Morada, C.D. Blocks. Other regions having the populaces are in Baripada , Badasahi, Khunta, Udala, Shamakhunta and Kaptipada C.D. Blocks of Mayurbhanj. The total population of Lodha tribe of Odisha is 9088 as per the Census-2011 (*Population Profile of Scheduled Tribes in Orissa*, p.219). At present, the total population of Lodha tribe may be approximately increased to more than 11, 000.

### 3.2. Areas of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj

On the basis of field study made by the earlier scholars and the present author, the Lodhas are mostly residing in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Really, Mayurbhanja is a tribal dominated district of Odisha. The Mayurbhanj district lies between 21<sup>o</sup> 17' and 22<sup>o</sup> 34' north latitude and between 85<sup>o</sup> 40' and 87<sup>o</sup> 10' east longitude (Senapati & Sahu ,1967,p.2). According to 1961 Census as many as 45 Scheduled Tribes are inhabiting the district of Mayurbhanja. At present 53 Scheduled Tribes are found in the regions of Mayurbhanj district (Karua, 2014, p.1) and the small Lodha tribe is one of them. From the practical field study, it is known that the Lodhas are residing

in the Chikitamatia, Barkanda, Godigaon, Jualibhanga, Haldipal Grama Panchayats of Morada Block of Mayurbhanja. They are mainly living in the eight (8) villages of the Morada Block such as Chikitamatia, Ghodabandha, Tiansi, Godigaon Lodha sahi, Handibhanga, Purnachandrapur, Bhadrasole and Samaidihi. The Lodha community people are also found in the Patharanesa, Dhobani, Nekdagunja and Sansasole in the Suliapada Block of the Mayurbhanj District. Some Lodhas are also residing in the Agnikuanri, Ghupada villages of the Khunta Block, Champagarh, Dhanasule and Paunsia villages of Badsahi Block, Besarpani village of Shyamakhuta Block, Chandrapur (Jharana sahi), Khadikasul, Budiadara, Duayrisahi, Balighat, Kashikundala, Baniadara Villages of the Udala Block, Dhanasola, Jatipur, Hatimoda of the Baripada Block. Nedam and Gopal Villages of Kaptipada Block, and a few Lodhas are residing in the Bisoi and Rairangpur Block of the Mayurbhanja District (Mohapatra, 2002, p.1). Some Lodhas are also found to be resided in the Mulising (Bagicha), Gudikhul and Similkhul Village of the Sora Block of the Balasore District of Odisha as said by a Lodha teacher/man named Chhatis Kumar Mallik of Chikitamatia School. A few Lodhas are also found to be resided in the Khordha and Balangir districts of Odisha.

In Odisha, the Lodhas are living with other tribal communities such as the Santala, Munda, Bhumja, Kolha, Mahali, Bathudi, Mankidia, Khadia and other caste groups like Brahmana, Khandayata, Teli, Gudia, Tanti, Dhoba, Mahato, Gauda, etc. Generally, the settlements of Lodha tribe are very close to forests having adequate supply of water throughout the year. It is observed that the Lodhas do not mind living in multi-caste and multi-tribal villages yet they mostly end up setting abode amongst their own in isolation from other communities and tribes (Ota and Sahoo, 2010, pp.5-6). Thus, it is not unusual to see the Lodha hamlets inside dense forests in inaccessible areas. The Lodhas were forest dwellers, but due to persistent deforestation, the Lodhas were hurled out of their customary source of income and dislodged them from their sylvan surroundings (Patnaik, 2005, p. 138).

### ***3.3. Cultural life of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj***

Lodhas are living mainly in the forest regions of the Mayurbhanj and a few places of the Khordha and Balangir districts of Odisha. The cultural life of Lodhas is distinct from other tribal groups of Odisha. Lodhas were primarily forest dwelling tribe and they used to live amidst the dense forest exploiting various forest products and hunting wild animals since their generation (Mohapatra, 2002, p.3). The Lodhas are the low level of technology associated with pre-agricultural cultivation stage (hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation) of economy. They led a happy and peaceful life under the shadow of nature. The Lodhas do believe that their existence and works are measured by mystical beings whose abode is in around them. Tradition, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies together constitute the rituals and festivals of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj. The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj have faith in different gods and goddesses. They also strongly believe in the unseen supernatural world (Mohanty, 2004, p.222). According to Lodhas Sun is the originator and father of Lodha tribe and earth is considered as their mother. The Lodhas also believe in ghost and witch. Really, the religious life of Lodhas is strictly connected with many traditional rituals. *Dehuri* is the priest of the village and he presides over all rituals and festivals held in common by the people of the village (Mohapatra, 2002, pp.39-40). He is considered by villagers as a respected and favorite person. The post of *Dehuri* is hereditary in the Lodha community. If the *Dehuri* is died without any son then an aged person is chosen by the consent of villagers for that post (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.66). The *Chhatia* is also an important religious functionary who assists the *Dehuri* (Ota & Sahoo, 2010, p.21). The 'Istha Devata' of each

Lodha family is worshipped by the head of that family. On the basis of field observation, it is known that the Lodhas certainly worship both tribal deities and also traditional gods and goddesses of Hinduism. The religious life of the Lodhas is closely associated with various rituals and festivals, which have been traditionally observing in their community from the past.

### **3.4. Rituals and Festivals of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj**

In Odisha's tribal societies religious belief and religious system has to be seen in consonance with a system of rituals ( Mahapatra, 1993, p.100). The Lodha community people perceive many magico-religious rituals and festivals throughout the year to propitiate supernatural beings to prevent misfortunes. Some of the festivals are held on some fixed dates while others are observed according to socio-economic convenience. From the field survey, it is known that there is no temple for the place of their worship. The sacred places of the Lodhas are *Mandapa*, *Thana*, *Xahira* or *Jaheera*, etc. as said by some respondents like Mahendra Mallik, Niranjana Mallik, Gaya Mallik, Satrugna Bhakta, Gobardhan Mallik, Jalua Bhakta, Raghunath Bhakta, Lochan Bhakta and Rajendra Nayak of Chikitamatia village of the Morada Block of Mayurbhanj district. *Jaheera* is a sacred grove located in the outskirts of village and the god of *Jaheera* is seated under the oldest sal tree almost at the centre of the site. Horses and elephants made of terracotta are placed inside the *Jaheera*. Elephant is considered as deity and horses represent the vehicle of deity. The *Jaheera* is kept clean always and no garbage is dumped or left behind inside the *Jaheera* (Sarangi, Das and Jena, June & December-2018, pp.44-45). It is a sacred place for which one must enter into in naked feet.

The main important annual ritual-festivals celebrated by the Lodhas are *Sitala puja* and *Chandi puja* in the month of *Baishak* (April-May), *Natun Hanri* i.e. the *annual sradha* ceremony and ancestor worship in *Chaitra*, *Dhana muthi* (April-May), *Manas Puja* (Seed / Paddy sowing ritual), *Baram* or *Garam Puja*, *Raja parva* in June (*Jaistha*), *Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva* (June-July), *Jathel*, *Gahma parva* (August), *Ganesh puja* in August/September (*Bhadra*), *Nuakhia parva* (August-September), *Dassehara parva* (September-October), *Lakshmi puja* in October (*Kartik*), *Bandana puja* (October-November), *Karama Puja*, *Sikara thakurani puja* (November-December), *Makara parva* (January), *Magha puja* (January-February), *Phula puja* (February-March), etc. are observed by the Lodhas (Mohanty, 2004, p.222). The above rituals and festivals of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj are described below.

#### **3.4.1. Sitala Puja**

*Sitala puja* is found observed by Lodhas to propitiate the spirits so that no calamities take place in the village and no ghosts and spirits attack them ( Patnaik, 2005, p.143). The Lodhas observe the *Sitala* festival in the months of *Chaitra*, *Baishak* and *Magh* and this *puja* is celebrated at once, twice or thrice throughout the year. In this *puja*, goat and cocks are sacrificed by the Lodhas (Mohapatra, 2002, p.22). The whole Lodha people participate in the *Sitala puja*. The *Sitala puja* is celebrated on Tuesday and Saturday of the month of April. *Sitala*, the village deity is considered to be the chief deity and worshipped very carefully, because of her unlimited power (Ota & Sahoo, 2010, p.21). Goddess *Sitala* is being worshipped to save people from epidemic (Patnaik, 2005, p.143). *Sitala* is worshipped more than once in a year. Sometimes, She is worshipped as the Goddess of epidemics. Whenever there is outbreak of epidemics like cholera, small pox, etc. then the Lodhas worship goddess *Sitala* with a special

sacrifice (Ota & Sahoo, 2010, p.21). In this puja, Changu dance is performed by the girls of Lodha community of Mayurbhanj.

#### **3.4.2. Natunhanri**

The Natunhanri, the annual forefather worship ceremony is accomplished by Lodhas in *Chaitra masa* i.e. April-May month (Mohapatra, 2018, p. 87). All Lodha families of Mayurbhanj worship their own ancestors in the month of *Chaitra*. The Lodhas believe in the souls of their ancestors, who reside in the north-east corner (*isana thana*) of their houses. Therefore, they do worship their ancestral spirits in his own houses / huts. All types of homely *pujas* are being celebrated in the *isana thana* of each house of Lodha families. Food and drink are offered to the ancestors at the time of annual *sradha* ceremony.

#### **3.4.3. Dhana muthi festival**

The people of Lodha community observe *Dhana muthi* festival in the month of April-May. This festival is celebrated only one day before the paddy sowing in the field (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.42). In this *puja* Vasumati, Dharma Devata , Surya Devata and goddess Kali are found to be worshipped by the head of the Lodha family (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.42). Some of offerings like non-boiled rice, vermilion, sal leaves, basil leaves (*tulasi patra*) and cow dung are used for the performance of this ritual (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.42). Each Lodha man does this *dhana muthi puja* in his own corn field before the sowing of paddy in the field. In this festival, the head of the Lodha family also satisfies the neighbours by giving them *handia*.

#### **3.4.4. Baram or Garam Puja**

Baram or Garam is worshipped by Lodhas in once throughout a year. As per the tradition of Lodha community, 'Baram' or 'Garam' is worshipped as forest deity and tutelary deity (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86). At the time of *puja*, cocks and goats are sacrificed accordingly the local tradition (Mohapatra , 2002, p.22). The place of Baram or Garam is located out side the village. *Thana* or *mandapa*, *jaheera* are surrounded by different trees such as *Sal*, *Asan*, etc. (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86). In the place of *Thana*, horses made of stones and burnt clay are preserved for the sanctity of the side. All the surrounded trees of *Thana/Jaheera* are not cut down by the Lodhas as per the tradition (Mohapatra , 2002, p.22). The land of *Thana* is demarcated at the time of establishment of village of the Lodha community (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86).

#### **3.4.5. Raja parva**

The Raja parva is particularly observed by Lodhas in the month of June (*Jaistha*) like non-tribal people of coastal belt of Odisha. In this parva Isha Devata, dead old man and old women are worshipped by the head of each Lodha family. Sal leaf plates (*dana*), earthen pot and rope are used at the time of *puja* (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.42). In *Raja parva*, cakes are made in memory of their ancestors by worshipping ropes. This *parva* is observed for the time of three days in which period plough is strictly prohibited. Like other people, the Lodhas also conceive that mother goddess (*Vasumata*) is in pregnant at that time. All the Lodha boys and girls play by swinging in a swing with traditional songs (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.42). In these three days, all the young boys and girls stop their

works and entertain among themselves. It seems that observation of *Raja parva* by Lodhas is an impact of Hindu culture of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India.

#### **3.4.6. Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva**

The *Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva* is also community festival, which is observed by Lodhas in the month of June-July (*Ashadha*) of each year. On the first day of the new moon of *Ashadha*, *Chitau parva (puja)* is celebrated by the Lodhas in night like the Hindu people of Odisha (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). This *puja* is observed in the sacred place i.e. *Jaheera / xahira* in memory of village gods and goddesses. Ancestors are also worshipped by Lodhas in *Ashadhi puja* (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). This *puja* is performed by both head of family and village Dehury. In this *puja* non-boiled rice, cock, eggs, sal leaves, and rope (*rasi*) are offered to deities for worship. *Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva* is commonly observed by Lodhas to satisfy village deities for rain water (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). In *Ashadhi puja-Chitau parva*, the young Lodha boys and girls perform the *karam* dance with get together in the whole night (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). The *madala* is beaten by Lodhas at the time of *karam* dance. At the time of *Ashadhi puja*, all the Lodhas are strictly prohibited to go the field.

#### **3.4.7. Jathel**

The Lodhas celebrate *Jathel puja* in the month of *Shrabana* (July-August). This ritual is performed to protect the cattle from different diseases (Mohapatra, 2018, p.87).

#### **3.4.8. Gahma parva**

The *Gahma parva* is observed by Lodhas in the full moon day of the month of *Shrabana* (August) of each year. In this *puja*, the ancestors are worshipped by Lodhas (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). The head of each Lodha family performs the *Gahma parva* with separate / individual mode of worship. Sal leaves; *handia* and *rasi* are used for the purpose of this *Puja* (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43). In the *Gahma parva*, both the young boys and girls of Lodha community nicely perform *Karam* dance throughout the night (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.43).

#### **3.4.9. Nuakhia parva**

The *Nuakhia parva* is celebrated by Lodhas in the month of *Bhadrab* (August-September) of each year. In this *parva*, the family 'Istha Devata' is worshipped by the head of that family (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). This festival is celebrated by the individual households under the strict guidance. The first harvest eating ceremony is celebrated before commencing the collection of paddy from the field. In this *parva*, non-boiled rice prepared from new harvesting paddy, new flattened rice (*chuda*), molasses, sal leaves and *rasi* are worshipped as offerings to family deity (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). The head of the family wear new cloth (*dhoti* and drapery) and worship the family deity with above offerings, then all the family members jointly take the offerings, which are offered to the deity (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). In this *parva*, all the young Lodha boys and girls perform traditional song-dance by beating *madala*. There is a strong tradition among the Lodha community that nobody can take the new harvesting paddy before the observation of *Nuakhia parva*.

#### **3.4.10. Dassehara parva**

The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj observe the *Dassehara parva / puja* in the month of September-October of each year like the non-tribal people of Odisha. The *Dassehara parva / puja* is generally observed during 3<sup>rd</sup> Lunar day to till 10<sup>th</sup> Lunar day of the month of *Ashwina* (October) for the period of 7 days. Goddess Durga is worshipped by the head of Lodha family and it is also commonly celebrated by the Lodhas (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). In this *puja* non-boiled rice, pumpkin, gourd, vermilion, *rasi*, *sal* leaves, etc. are used for the purpose of worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). Alms are begged from each house of Lodha community for the purpose of worship of goddess Durga. This *puja* is generally performed at the centre of Lodha village (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). In this *puja* Male Lodhas dressed with goddess Durga perform dance in the village road. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Lunar day, both Lodha boys and girls wearing with new dresses are entertained with each other by taking *handia* (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.44). Some of Lodha men of Chikitamatia opine that *Dassehara parva* is performed by us in the modern period due to impact of Hinduism on Lodha culture.

#### **3.4.11. Bandana Puja**

The *Bandana Puja* is observed by Lodhas in the month of *Kartik* (Mohapatra, 2019, p. 88). It is celebrated on the day of full moon of *Kartik*. The 'Istha Devata' is worshipped by the head of each family of Lodha village. In this *puja* non-boiled rice, vermilion, resin, *pancha barni*, incense, lamp, etc. are used for worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.45). This *puja* is observed for the purpose of worship of 'Istha Devata' by lighting the lamp.

#### **3.4.12. Karama Puja**

The Karama festival is observed in the month of "Ashwina" or "Kartika" (September-October) and the auspicious day is fixed by "Dehuri", the priest of the Lodha village. A "Karama Bough" is planted on the altar in the middle of the village (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86). This *puja* is particularly celebrated by the individual family not by common mass. In some villages, the Lodha women observe this *puja* as *Karama* or *Daliosha*.

#### **3.4.13. Sikara thakurani puja**

The *Sikara thakurani puja* is celebrated by Lodhas in the morning of any day of the *Margasira* (November-December). Hunting god / goddess is worshipped by the village Dehury and head of the Lodha house / family (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.45). In this *puja*, cock, non-boiled rice, resin, *pancha barni*, incense, etc. are used for the purpose of worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.45). At first the village Dehury worships the hunting goddess and then the head of each Lodha house does same worship, because hunting was the main occupation of Lodha community (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.45). This *puja* is performed by Lodhas to satisfy the hunting goddess for the success of their traditional hunting.

#### **3.4.14. Makara Festival**

Makara festival is observed by the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj in the month of December-January (*Pausa masa*) on the day of "Sankranti". In this festival, 'Istha Devata' and Hunting God /Goddess are found to be worshipped by the People of Lodha tribe like other tribes of Mayurbhanj district. On the day of 'Makara', household deities are worshipped by the head of each Lodha family with pomp and great enthusiasm. On this festival, Dehury also worships the village deity. In this *puja*, the non-boiled rice, sal leaves, siali leaves, vermilion, incense, *pancha barni*, etc. are used for the purpose of worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.45). The Makara festival is greatest enjoyed



by the Lodhas with mutton curry, palatable cakes, country liquor (*handia*) and energetic music, dance and drums (Mohapatra, 2018, p. 87). In this festival, members of each Lodha family arrange the traditional dance and songs by drinking *handia* for its celebration. Most of the Lodhas also wear new dresses and enjoy themselves with taking *handia* and other delicious food. The *Makara melas* are arranged in the different places of Mayurbhanj. People of all communities including Lodha tribe of Mayurbhanj go the sites of *Makara mela*. On the occasion of Makara festival, Monkey Dance is done in some of the sites of Mayurbhanj region. Among the different festivals, Makara is considered as most famous festival among the whole tribal communities of Mayurbhanj.

#### **3.4.15. Magha puja**

The Magha *puja* is observed by Lodhas in the month of January-February (*Magha*) of each year (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.46). This *puja* is celebrated after the new moon of the month of 'Magha'. In the *puja* 'Istha Devata' is worshipped by both the village *Dehury* and head of the Lodha family. In this *puja*, the non-boiled rice, vermilion, *sal* leaves, incense, *pancha barni*, etc. are used for the purpose of worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.46). Head of each Lodha family worships the 'Istha Devata' in house and the same way village *Dehury* also worships 'Istha Devata' under the *Sal* tree nearby the village. All the Lodha men are strictly prohibited to enter into the jungle before the *Magha puja*.

#### **3.4.16. Phula puja**

The *phula puja* is observed by Lodhas in the month of *Falguna* (February-March) of each year. It is celebrated on the Full Moon day of the month of *Falguna* (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.46). In this *puja*, Istha Devata is worshipped by head of the family and village *dehury* of Lodha community. In the *puja*, the non-boiled rice, vermilion, *sal* leaves, *sal* flower, incense, resin, *pancha barni*, etc. are used for the purpose of worship (Mohanty, ed., 2009, p.46). In the evening, the young Lodha boys and girls perform traditional dance and song by drinking *handia* for the celebration of this *puja*.

#### **3.4.17. Impact of Hinduism on Lodha Society**

India is the home of the followers of all the major religions of the world. This religious pluralism has added to the rich and colourful mosaic of cultural pluralism (Hasnain, 2016, p.323). Tribals of India are not too monolithic in terms of religious aspects. More than 95% of the tribal people of Eastern India (Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal) are Hinduized (Hasnain, 2016, p.323). As a result of the impact of Hinduism and cultural contact with the Hindus, the tribes of northern Odisha adopted Hindu customs, traditions, beliefs, gods and goddesses, festivals and rituals (Hasnain, 2016, p.325). In the Lodha society of Mayurbhanj of Odisha, all the conceptions of Hindu cultures are found to be prevailed at present. The Lodhas claim that Lord Nila Madhava (Jagannatha) is their family deity, because Lord Nila Madhava was initially worshipped by the Lodha-Savaras (Mohapatra, 2018, p.88). Therefore, the influence of Vaishnavism is found to be prevailed on the religious beliefs of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj as well as Odisha (Mohapatra, 2018, p.88). The Vaishnava Gosains (Brahmanas) are participating in the *Makara parva* and *gahmapurnima* and they distribute sacred thread and *rakhis* to the Lodhas as well as other tribal people of Mayurbhanj ( Mohapatra , 2002, pp.21-22). As per the interview made with some Lodha men of Chikitimatia, both the Ganesha *puja* and Saraswati Puja are also found to be observed by the young people of Lodha tribe. *Tulasi*

*chaunra* is found in front of the houses of Lodhas in many places (Mohapatra, 2018, p.88). The Lodha women observe many festivals for the well-being of their sons, daughters and husbands (Mohapatra, 2002, p.22). Some of the *pujas* performed by the Lodha women are *Prathamastami*, *Lakshmi puja* in the month of *Margasira* (November), etc. Besides the above, the Lodhas also worship Sun, mother earth as *Bhumi devata*, “Basuri Thakurani”, etc. Lodhas including all the tribal communities of Odisha consider the Mother Earth as the Supreme Deity (Patnaik, 2004, Delhi, p.278). The Bhuyan clan of the Lodha tribe believes in Hindu goddesses like Kali and ‘Kichakeshwari’. The tribal people of Odisha including the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj believe that all Gods dwell in nature all around them. They live on earth, in the water and in the sky ( Hunter, Vol.II, p.92 and Patnaik, 2004, Delhi, p.277).

Different types of local dances are appropriately arranged as per the tradition of Lodha community with slightly change. In fact, the tribal society of Odisha could not remain free from the impact of the various new forces as a consequence of the establishment of the British administration in the tribal areas (Patnaik, N.R., 2004, Cuttack, p.49). The Lodhas are blended with other faiths of non-tribal neighbors and the erstwhile the British rulers. The impact of Hinduism has been felt for several centuries whereas Christianity is the modern force, century old (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.265). Here, the present author has also drawn the notice of some changes in rituals and festivals of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj of Odisha in Eastern India. The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj district particularly in the Morada and Suliapada Blocks opine that they are influenced by the neighbouring Hindu community of Odisha (Mohapatra, 2018, p.89). The impact of Hinduism is seen on the diverse beliefs and rituals prevalent among the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj. Now a day, the Lodhas worship Hindu gods and goddesses like the neighboring Hindu community of Mayurbhanj. Although, the Lodhas have no specific type of temples, but they observe various festivals of the Hindu gods and goddesses in their own houses (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86). It can be certainly said that the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj are also influenced by some festivals of Hinduism (Mohapatra, 2018, p.86). Now, broadly speaking, the tribal India is particularly by religion a Hindu. It is well known that Hinduism is a product of many cultures. Every kind of religious acts, from the sacrifice of Vedic Aryans to the rituals of primitive people, can be observed in the main body of Hindu religion ( Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p.237). The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj are mostly influenced by the religious tradition and practices of the Hindu community. Like all societies the tribal societies of Odisha are also changing. Changing under the impact of new economic and political forces exposed to new forms of culture and life style (Mahapatra, 1993, p.11). The rituals and festivals are found to have been a part and parcel of the religious life of the people of Lodha tribe as well as all the tribal communities of Odisha (Patnaik, 2004, Delhi, p.285). At the end of any worship Lodhas of Mayurbhanj eagerly wait for feast, drink and dance. This finally takes the shape of a festival ( Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985, p. 261). The festivals of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj are the part of their sacred performances. The people of Lodha tribe are generally fond of their tradition, for which they perform the traditional rituals and observe old festivals with great enthusiasm (Mohanty, ed. 2009, p.75). Dehury, the village priest of the Lodha community performed all the common traditional rituals and festivals as it is also found prevalent till today. One of the negative features of the impact of Hinduism on Lodha society is the replacement of simple tribal rituals by complicated Hindu rituals, which require money.

#### **3.4.18. Offerings for Worship**

The Lodhas offer different types of offerings to their ancestors and gods and goddesses for their appeasement. The offering items of Lodhas are non-boiled rice, banana, milk, popcorn (*ukhuda*), *ladus*, *handia* (rice beer), wine, and blood collected from the body of sacrificed animal like goat or cock (Mohapatra, 2002, p.23 and Mohapatra, 2018, p.89). In the *Visuba sankranti*, *pana*, wine, *handia* with cock, *bidi* are offered in the *ishana thana* for the satisfaction of the souls of their ancestral spirits (Mohapatra, 2002, p.2). Some Lodha families offer cake for the purpose of worship.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

We come to know that the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj of Odisha have been observing different types of traditional rituals and festivals along with some Hindu rituals and festivals of neighbouring community. Most of the customary rituals and festivals are also found in continuation and a few Hindu rituals and festivals appear to be adopted by the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj. Goddess Sitala, the village deity is considered to be the chief deity and she is worshipped to save people from epidemic. As per the tradition of Lodha society/community, Baram or Garam is worshipped as forest deity and tutelary deity. The place of Baram or Garam is located out side the village. *Thana* or *mandapa*, *jahira* (*jaheera*) are surrounded by different trees such as *Sal*, *Asan*, etc. The Natunhanri ceremony is observed by Lodhas in April-May of each year. Members of each Lodha family worship own ancestors for the satisfaction of their souls. Makara is the chief festival of Lodha community as well as all the tribal people of Mayurbhanj. The Lodhas celebrate *Jathel puja* in the month of *Shrabana*. In the *Bandana Puja* the 'Istha Devata' is worshipped by the head of each Lodha family. In the *Sikara thakurani puja*, hunting goddess is worshipped by the village *Dehury* and head of each Lodha house / family. This *puja* is performed by Lodhas to satisfy the hunting goddess for the success of their traditional hunting. The Karama festival is particularly celebrated by the individual Lodha family not by common mass. In some villages, the Lodha women observe this *puja* as *Karama* or *Daliosha*. The *Nuakhia parva* is celebrated by Lodhas as first harvest eating ceremony, which is celebrated before commencing the collection of paddy from the field. The Lodhas of Mayurbhanj observe the *Dassehara parva / puja* in the month of September-October of each year like the non-tribal people of Odisha. The *Dassehara parva / puja* is commonly celebrated by the Lodhas at the centre of Lodha village. In this *puja* alms are begged from each house of Lodha community for the purpose of worship of goddess Durga. The *Bandana Puja* is observed by Lodhas for the purpose of worship of 'Istha Devata' by lighting the lamp. In the common worship, the villagers of Lodha society generally observe their rituals and festivals at the place of *Jahira* where the village priest (*Dehury*) performs. Besides the above *pujas* /festivals, the Lodhas also observe the *Ganesha puja*, *Agira puja*, *Gamha parava*, *Manas Puja*, *Sanimela*, *Saraswati puja*, *Kartika puja*, *Lakshmi puja*, etc. of Hinduism. It can be said that Hinduism had considerable influence on the religious life of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. Most of the Lodhas are influenced by the Vaishnavism. All the traditional rituals and festivals of Lodhas of Myurbhanj discussed in the facts are observed mainly with a view to appease different deities, spirits, and ghosts for their peace and prosperity. In fact, the prevalent rituals and festivals are the part and parcel of the religious life of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj. On the whole, the rituals and festivals of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj occupy an important place in the religious history of the Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha in Eastern India.

## V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are extremely obliged to Prof. H.K. Satapathy, Dr. P.K. Routray, Prof. N.R. Pattnaik, Prof. P.K. Nayak, Prof. R.K. Meher, Prof. J.K. Mishra, Prof. N.C. Dash, Prof. Harihar Panda and Prof. Byomakesh Tripathy for their encouragement and valuable suggestions in course of the preparation of this article.

We express my profound reverence to **Prof. Achyuta Samanta**, the Honorable Founder of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences and other authorities of KISS, who encouraged us for the writing of this article.

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25. This paper (article) was presented by the first author (R. Mohapatra) in a National Seminar on "Tribal Religions in Odisha: A Study on Changes and Continuity" dated 25.10. 2019 held at KISS Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.