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A case study of Orissa's tribal religious customs

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ABSTRACT

From the time of the Mahabharata until the start of British rule, Orissa has a rich cultural history. The social-religious, political evolution of Orissa as well as its surrounding areas is a perfect combination of the north and south's cultural currents. Orissa therefore offered the finest situational circumstances for the blending of the Dravidian and Aryan modes of life. Here, the culture is best understood as a combination of non-tribal and tribal elements, expressed in its religious beliefs and practises, rituals, myths, emotions, folklore, and in Oriyas' daily behaviour, the interface between tribal and non-tribal elements is perhaps more obvious. This article seeks to discover or recognise tribal ancestors in Orissa's society and culture, particularly when it comes to religion.

1. Introduction

Men invented religions. Religious ideas are influenced by psychological wants for the fulfilment, political requirements for establishing position and authority, economic demands for cooperative participation, social needs for solidarity, and cultural goals for greater human knowledge. Since ancient times, these demands have had a significant impact on how different people see religion [1]. Without a doubt, the geographical environment of a nation has a big impact on the forces and circumstances that give origin to culture. The state of Orissa acts as a bridge between northern and southern India, where the mountain range named Vindhyan did not stop prehistoric as well as protohistoric migration. It is dispersed throughout the eastern shore, close to the rough Bay of Bengal waves, and is blessed with the beauty of nature, including pristine beaches, serpentine rivers, breathtaking waterfalls, the verdant Eastern Ghats mountains, lush green forests, adorable wildlife, and vibrant tribal life.

Orissa has a long and rich cultural history that dates back to the Mahabharata and the early days of British rule. The socioreligious political evolution of Orissa and its surrounding areas represents a magnificent synthesis of the north and south's cultural currents. Therefore, Orissa provided the best chance for the situational union of the Dravidian and Aryan systems of life. Here, the culture is best understood as a combination of non-tribal and tribal elements, expressed in its religious beliefs and practises, rituals, myths, emotions, and folklore, and in Oriyas' daily behaviour, the interface between tribal and non-tribal elements is perhaps more obvious. The goal of this essay is to find or identify the origin of tribal in Orissan society as well as culture, especially in the area of religion.

Physical characteristics had a significant historical contribution to Orissa's development. The original tribal

inhabitants of India lived in the Orissan hill regions, where they kept alive many important aspects of human culture due to their sylvan seclusion. In contrast, the river valleys supported the development of more extensive and pervasive civilizations in line with general Indian patterns of various eras. The country of Orissa has been inhabited by several people from prehistoric times. Along the Mahanadi, Brahmani, Burhabalanga, and its tributaries including the Tel, stone age residue have been discovered.

Later on, the inside of Western Orissa, also the river basins in Southern Orissa, as well as the plateau there were all where prehistoric remains were found. Despite the fact that the prehistoric civilizations can't be recognised, It is commonly known that tribes once lived in Orissa such as the Saora or Sabar (referred to as "Suari" by Roman historian Pliny) from the time of the Mahabharat [2]. In Orissa even now, numerous tribes still hold important positions, including the Saora on the highlands, and the Sahara and Sabar in the plains.

2. Tradition of mother goddess and gram devata

The Mother Goddess was revered by the primitive people since very early times. In certain parts of India, the Mother Goddess cult predominated as early as the Harappan period [3]. The Mother Goddesses were revered by the Harappans in both their unique and iconic forms [4]. While the terracotta figures of these Mother Goddesses with a range of sizes and iconographic characteristics serve as iconic representations of them, their uniconic forms are ring stones with a range of sizes and a hole in each of them. Both the museum in Khariar and the museum at Sambalpur University have numerous of these ring stones that have been preserved. They were discovered in several locations in western Orissa, especially in the Kalahandi district [5]. The lithic yonis, which are sculpted with a more



natural appearance and are found in the Maraguda valley and other areas of Kalahandi, appear to show the actual signs of sculptural development over the course of the history of the Mother Goddess religion in various areas of ancient Kalahandi. This is unexpected given that the ring stones were revered as the unicon of the Mother Goddesses and yoni's symbolic depiction. Massive circular stone enclosures were built by the locals in Orissa at a number of sites across their residences. These massive stone circles, or Sindibors, were revered by the tribal peoples as temples to the earth deity Burusung [6]. Vasundharacould be compared to Burusung because in tribal language bur means priceless treasure and sung means storeroom (Earth).

Mother Goddesses were highly revered and devoted to by tribes who are non-Aryan such as the Savaras and Pulindas, Proto-Australoid people who lived in the Vindhya as far east as Mahendragiri in Orissa [7]. The eastern mountain Mahendra and the Vindhya were linked to the Savaras and Pulindas, according to the Katha-Sarit-Sagara [8]. The tribal people's cults and beliefs have been covered in post-Vedic literature, and the Vedic scriptures mention them. In "Harivamsa" in the Mahabharata, the worship of the Mother Goddess by Sabaras, Barbarians, and Pulindas is described [9]. The non-Aryan tribes' veneration of these Mother Goddesses is also mentioned in Varangacharita [10]. The Savaras are described in the KalikaPurana as devotees of the mother goddesses. Significantly, the KalikaPurana prohibits Brahmanas from sacrificing their own blood and flesh while allowing other castes to do so. This unmistakably hints at the Mother Goddesses' indigenous nature.

Since the beginning of civilization, the tribals have maintained strong relationships with nearby village populations. Many tribes have converted to Hinduism over time, moving from hunting and gathering to an agricultural state. In the past, the so-called tribals began residing in the established settlements. The tribe gods, on the other hand, often stayed the same. A number of totem deities revered by indigenous peoples have been recognised as deities of the village. The ceremonies or rituals continued and were to be divinely mandated by tribal priests or non-Brahmin priests, even though the local peasant and Hindus did so out of respect for their authority. Grammedevata (goddesses of the village), who were formerly tribal deities, are generally worshipped in the shape of stones positioned beneath trees. Two further village deities with tribal ancestry are Bagdeo (Goddesses of the Tiger) and Bansamata (Goddesses of the Bamboo Groove).

The priests come from all other castes and are not Brahmanas. There are countless names for the local deities, some of which are clear to understand and many of which are obscure even to the locals. The deities worshipped in one town may be utterly unknown in settlements five or six miles away, as they differ almost universally by region. The several goddesses' responsibilities are not clearly defined. There are occasions when there isn't even a permanent shrine; instead, the shrine is regularly just a dilapidated *stone platform* beneath a tree. For each event, a clay sculpture of the goddess is created in places where there isn't a permanent image or insignia. A straightforward stone pillar, like Stambhesvari's, with a metal water jug perched on it, is frequently used to represent the goddess.

Among the Orissan tribes, the practice of worshipping "Gramadevati" is highly revered. Animal sacrifices are made to the tribal gods by members of the local caste as well. The caste people regard tribal sorcerers and deities as immensely powerful beings. These people still have a lot of respect for the two. As "SarnaBurhi" among the Oraon, "Jahira Era" among the Santal and Munda, "ThakuraniMaa" among the Bhuiyan, etc., these *Mother Goddesses* may be found in the tribal community of Orissa. In other instances, it has also been demonstrated that tribes take on the characteristics of certain Hindu goddesses in order to win their favour. The tribes of Hinduized Orissa, such as the Hill Kharia, Bhuiyan, and Bathudi, are notably known for their devotion to Hindu deities like Laxmi, Kali, or Durga. The goddess "Mahamaya" and "Hanuman" (the monkey god) are revered among non-Hindu and ancient tribes for their general well-being and successful forest ventures. Some of the goddesses in tribal Orissa have tribal origins, despite the fact that they are today worshipped under the name of Hindu deities. There aren't many variations between the ceremonies, formless stone sculptures, gifts of sacrificial blood, and intoxicating liquor of the non-tribal and tribal deities, even if they are occasionally worshipped independently in tribally controlled places by their own priests.

3. Hindu Gods and Goddesses and traces of tribal features

Lord Shiva and Vishnu, who are the most renowned Hindu deities, exhibit blatant traces of tribal ancestry. The contributions of tribes to traditional dharma are strengthened by the tremendous forest effect of Vishnu's personification as Varaha (a boar) and Narasimha (a lion). In the tribal belt, there are still numerous Shiva and Shakti temples that are frequented by the tribal communities. These two deities are strongly related to tantra and magic. The antagonistic nature of the tribal people and their peculiar deity shapes may be a result of the harsh, unforgiving environment in which they reside. It is commonly known that Durga possesses great power. Like Vishnu in his Varaha and Narasimha incarnations, Shiva had an ugra form. Narasimha is said to have risen from a pillar to fight the demon Hiranyakasipu. Do tribal societies still frequently worship the pillar as a uniconical being today? It is impossible to explain this by attributing the Brahmanas' influence. In Orissa, Narasimha is frequently depicted as the goddess Khambeswari on wooden pillars (Goddess of the pillar). It is stated that Narasimha draws his strength from the shakti and is restricted to the pillar. Tantra also has a significant tribal effect. The tribal people of Orissa frequently worship the female tantric manifestations of Varaha, Narasimha, and Narasimhi.

4. Nature worship

Therefore, whether in the goddess' statue or name or in the ceremonial practices, it is difficult to disregard the tribal elements present in a caste society in the tribally influenced territory. Hindus of all castes and tribes have worshipped the forces of the cosmos for millennia, including the Sun, fire (Savitur, Agni), forest spirits (Vandevi, elephant, lion, eagle), sacred trees (Pipal), plants (Tulsi), river waters, and natural springs. In their own unique ways, the tribes of Orissa revere the Sun, either as the Supreme Being or as a strong deity who

controls their crops. The Sun, fire (Savitur, Agni), woodland spirits (Vandevi, elephant, lion, eagle), sacred trees (Pipal), plants (Tulsi), river waters, and natural springs have all been venerated for millennia by Hindus of all castes and tribes. Each of the tribes of Orissa reveres the Sun in a special way, whether as the Supreme Being or as a strong deity who oversees their harvests. The germination, growth, and decay of plants as well as how they affected people prompted the tribal psyche to worship this deity, as did changes in the weather, daybreaks, and nightfalls. Additionally, they pray to this deity for help with wild game hunting, crop protection, debt relief, and there are other unfavourable aspects of life. As a result, there is a tribal belief that this natural element represents the Dharma or Supreme Power. Mahima Dharma is a significant religious cult in Orissa as a result of this Sun-worship. The fact that the blind poet of the Khonds named BhimaBhoi is Orissa's leader of this religious cult also has a considerable following among the tribal and other underprivileged groups is therefore not surprising. Hinduism gradually adopted this strategy thanks to the caste of Hindus. Throughout it, the Earth Goddess, also known as "Dharani mata," is often worshipped by both tribal and non-tribal people. The caste people see animistic beliefs and environment worship as additional analogous practises, in addition to their reverence of the Sun God as well as the Earth Goddess, which was long believed to be a tribal practice. In numerous tribal cultures that have embraced Hinduism, including Sounti, Bathudi, Hill Kharia, etc., the Earth Goddess is mentioned as Basukimata or Basumata. Generally, the worship of the Mother Goddess or Shakti religion is evaluated as the most admired cult or tradition which was initially propagated by the so-called primitive tribal communities.

5. Patronization of tribal deities

Some examples from the mythical versions of their beginnings serve to highlight the connection prevailing between the early Orissan princely monarchy and the subsequent feudal states. A god of the Saora tribe named Gokarnasvamin who lived atop Mahendragiri mountain was recognised by the Eastern Gangas, who invaded the region south of the mountain sometime before 500 A.D., as the tutelary deity of the family (Ista-Devata). A historical narration of the first interactions between the invading Hindu monarchs and the indigenous tribes has been carried on through the ages. The progenitor of the dynasty, Kamarnava, ascended the Mahendragiri and worshipped Gokarnesvamin after arriving in Kalinga, according to Chodagangadeva's copper plate inscription from Vizagapatnam [11], which dates to the year 1119 AD. He ascended the mountain with the help of Lord Kamarnava's favour, taking control of Kalinga after killing the Sabara tribe's leader, Sabaraditya. In the 12th century, the Gangas changed their capital from Kalinga Nagar to Cuttack, adopting Gokarnasvamin as the main deity of the Saoras.

Similar to the Pulinda as well as Sabara tribes of their mountainous hinterland, the Sailodbhava dynasty of Kangoda in the north of the Mahendramountain embraced Gokarnsvara as their tutelary deity and connected their ancestry to them. The feudatory rulers of Ranpur and subsequently DakshinaToshali worshipped the tribal deity Maninagasvari (the lady of the Jewel serpent). The royal sponsorship of Goddess Stambhesvari, who is still revered in many regions of

Orissa, is another illustration of the ceremonial link between Hinduized rajas and tribal deities. Around the year 500 AD, King Tushtikara ruled over a primarily tribal area south of Sonepur, is the first recorded monarch to have supported her. The Sulki dynasty, which ruled in Kodalakamandala (the Dhenkanal-Talcher-Angul regions) between the sixth and eighth centuries, venerated Stambhesvari as the tutelary god. The Saulika tribe most likely included the Sulkis. Therefore, it is pretty clear that the Sulki dynasty's monarchs recognised and they worshipped as their tutelary deity the well-known indigenous divinity of their own region. Stambhesvari was also revered as the tutelary god by the Bhanja dynasty, who reigned over the Khinjali Mandala, a tribal region in the Sonepur-Boud region, in the ninth and tenth centuries. Some of the feudal lords of Orissa were descended from tribes, and they worshipped tribal deities who were eventually regarded as state deities. It is appropriate to mention the thatrajas of Bissan Cuttack here. The main strategy employed by these thatrajas (of Bissan Cuttack) to try and legitimise their directive among a populace that was primarily of tribal ancestry was the worship of various local deities. The goddess "Markama," sometimes referred to as the "gramadevata" of Bissam Cuttack, whom the thatrajas chose as their tutelary deity, stands in for the most significant among them. A number of major temples in Bissam Cuttack honour the goddesses Thakurani, Bhairva, Durga, and Niamraja (a DongriaKondh deity), indicating the region has a strong "Sakti" and Tantric religious tendency [12]. Regardless of the thatraja's initial motivations, the tribal god Niamraja eventually received a home outside the confines of his tribe and joined the pantheon of deities revered in Bissamcuttack.

6. Magical practices and ancestor worship

A few additional tribal elements can be seen in the cultural practises of the caste people in rural Orissa in addition to the tribal elements already present there, such as the worship of the village Mother Goddess (Gramadevati), the ritual of animal sacrifice, the worship of cosmic bodies like the Sun and Moon, the worship of the Earth Goddess, etc. The magical activities that are part of daily life, spirit possession, ancestor worship, and the veneration of all beneficial natural objects are a few of the noteworthy aspects of tribal religions. In tribal Orissa, people firmly associate the majority of physical afflictions—from minor illnesses to serious ones—with the fury of their gods or goddesses. People sometimes seek the assistance of their shaman or sorcerer instead of going to the hospital because they are thought to have a stronger connection to the realm of spirits or deities, both good and bad. The tribal doctors first determine the disease-causing spirit or deity using a traditional diagnostic technique, such as by looking at oil, water, or sticks. The god's troubled spirit must subsequently be calmed by making an animal sacrifice and administering alcohol as medicine.

Tribal people consistently believe that they can speak with supernatural beings directly through a shaman or diviner throughout nearly every ritual. With this method, the spirit is frequently called upon through a human medium to provide information on current or impending pain or well-being. The diviner is said to occasionally send messages from the spirits to warn people about their wrongdoings, whether they occurred in the family or village. Thus, among the indigenous people,

possessing spirits is a fairly common practise. Along with the earlier technique, this one is also fairly common in rural Orissa. The diviner is referred to as Kalisi by the caste people in Oriya. A kalisi is a person who occasionally assumes the aspect of a god and speaks inspired oracles. During the possession stage, the Kalisi starts to trample while flaunting wild hair and speaks the whims and commands of the gods. This activity is carried out in emergency situations (such as natural disasters) in order to understand the effects and solutions. Another crucial component of tribal religion is ancestor worship, which is also, though less formally, practised by the local caste population. For the benefit of all lineage members, the tribe members first worship their ancestors in practically all rites. Along with many gods and goddesses, the tribal people worship a variety of useful natural objects. They revere each hill, forest, stream, and river as well, believing that these natural features are the residences of numerous good and malevolent deities.

7. Life cycle rituals

Tribes and castes are very similar in terms of life cycle rituals. Although it is believed that tribal components must have affected Aryan culture in Orissa with regard to life cycle or crisis rituals, the majority of agricultural rituals and a few other calendric festivals are said to have been borrowed by the tribals from caste societies or Aryan culture [13]. In these rites, major life milestones include birth, sexual maturation, marriage, and death. Transitioning from one particular social position to another, changing from one social status to another, and finally being fully assimilated into a new or higher social status are the three key steps of every life cycle or crisis ritual. All tribal communities follow a specific period of impurity during childbirth, which differs from tribe to tribe. In their daily lives and interactions with other family members, the members of the family respect various taboos. All cultures observe ritual seclusion or pollution, taboos and reintegration into community or purification ceremonies. All three important ceremonies are carried out in a similar manner by Hindus of all castes, notwithstanding some minor differences. Nevertheless, several Hinduized tribes, including the Gond, Savara, RajkuliBhuiyan, DeshiaKondh, Bhumij, and Bathudi, have also modelled their ideas of cleanliness and impurity after those of the Brahmins.

8. Aryanised tribal Goddesses

When examining the tribal elements in Orissa's religious traditions, it is important to note the existence of Aryanised tribal goddesses in various regions of the state, including Stambhesvari, Bankesvari, Gharani, Kuresuni, Hingulai, MajhiPendrani, Kandhuni, Vyaghra devi, Bhandaragharani, BudhiThakurani, Narayani, etc. Before the advent of Brahmanical ideas to the centre of Kalinga, the native tribes of Orissa worshipped a number of local deities. Later conquerors who had interbred with the tribes embraced and worshipped these deities over time in an effort to gain the locals' trust and get their assistance for their colonies. Gradually, these gods underwent Hinduization or Aryanization, changing from powerful nomadic cults to varied Brahmanic cults that were revered by both Aryans and non-Aryans in society. This change was brought about by the invaders, who splintered into

numerous ruling dynasties and ruled over the tribes after creating their own kingdoms. They Aryanized, worshipped, patronised, and subscribed to the theological concepts of their gods and goddesses in order to keep the tribal members happy. As a result, the Hindu religion evolved into a synthesis of several religions that represented the ideals of various tribes at various points in time. Brahmanas, who defined and formalised the obligations of the tribes, have played a crucial part in the patronising of the tribal gods and aryanization processes. This is also discussed in the "Shanti Parva" of the "Mahabharata." They are expected to live as "recluses in the forest... and serve their lord..., dig wells, offer water to the thirsty travellers, give away beds and other suitable things to Brahmanas," according to the Mahabharata. The tribals were in touch with the Brahmanas, who had moved into forest regions thanks to rent-free land concessions, and with whose assistance they had been able to develop their holdings. As peace between the Brahmanas and the forest tribes gradually grew, so did the interplay of their various cultures. Mother Goddesses revered by non-Aryan tribes even made their way into the Brahmanical pantheon. They eventually were Aryanized and changed into the Shakti Cult. Horrible customs involving human sacrifice point to the Goddesses' indigenous origins. The Yupas, or sacrifice stakes, in front of these deities' temples are evidence of this custom. None of these Mother-worshipping Goddesses has a male companion. This demonstrates their indigenous ancestry by demonstrating their genesis in a matriarchal society [14].

Similar to how Siva was worshipped as a post or pillar, it appears that ancient tree-worship gave rise to the devotion of Shakti or the Mother Goddess. Siva is referred to as "sthanu," which is Sanskrit for "branchless trunk," in early Orissan inscriptions. The Mukhalingam Ksetra Mahatmya, a later literary work that is a section of the Skanda Purana, has anecdotal evidence that some of the main religious cults were connected to primordial tree-worship.

It is understandable why Siva was worshipped as a stambha or khamba, which is a log of wood or a post. In actuality, the custom of honouring the Mother Goddess as a stambha or post has survived the millennia and is being practised today. The Mother Goddess, also known as Khambesvari or Kandhuni, is immensely revered throughout many regions of Orissa, especially among the tribal communities. She is occasionally worshipped as a stone pillar or a log of wood. After carefully examining many of the Mother Goddess images in that area, critically analysing Aryastave, and studying the engraving of Orissa from the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, we have come to the conclusion that the origin of Saktism in Orissa is indicated by a fusion of primitive tree worship, protohistoric Yoni worship, and worship of the Upanisadic concept of Uma. During the process of becoming Aryan, the Savaras and Pulindas, who lived in Orissa's hills and forests, were affected by the Brahmanical religion of Hinduism and associated their sacred tree with the worship of the Brahmanical Mother Goddess Uma. In Orissa, this led to the flourishing of the Stambhesvari religion. Khambesvari was provided in a Sanskritized form by the Sanskrit panditas who were in charge of adapting these indigenous peoples' deities to Aryan civilization. According to the Terasinga copperplate, Stambhesvari, also known as

Bhagavati, was worshipped in the fourth and fifth century AD by a local ruler by the name of Tustikara. The deity Stambhesvari is first mentioned in this manuscript in Orissa. Even though the Mother Goddess of the Aryans was revered in her anthropomorphic form, Stambhesvari's religion continued to have a powerful hold on the people of Orissa. As was already said, Orissa's royal dynasties all prayed to and adored the Deity Stambhesvari as their own personal goddess due to the Stambesvari religion's extreme popularity there. The Bhanjas of Khinjali Mandala, the Tungas of Yamagarta-Mandala, and the Sulkis of Kodalaka Mandala were fervent followers of Stambhesvari. As a result of the Stambhesvari cult's expansion and development in Orissa, numerous locations—including Aska and Suruda in the Ganjam district, Tel Valley in the Kalahandi district, Gopal Prasad near Talcher in the Dhenkanal district, contemporary Suvarnapur, and Boud—became Stambhesvari cult centres. The Goddess is highly venerated by the villagers here, whether she appears as a stone or wooden pillar.

The tiger goddess Vyaghradevi, the guardian deity of the Bhanjas of Ghumsar in south Orissa, may have similar tribal origin tales. She was reputedly the Savara and Ghumsar Khond deity. The well-known Tara-Tarini deity may be viewed on the Rushikuluya riverbed close to Purusottampur. A priest who is not a Brahmin worships at the shrine, which is situated in tribal territory. The process of aryanization is thought to have caused the deities to change from a tribal kind to a "Shakti" worship. These gods lack any iconographic characteristics [15]. The deities' initial manifestations were made of stones that eventually underwent anthropomorphization. The temples were afterwards constructed over the open area where the goddesses were worshipped beneath the dense woods. The temples of these goddesses are typically situated in remote locations since it is stated that the tribe members used to appease the gods by giving human or animal sacrifices. Also, non-Brahmins serve as these deities' priests. They are a part of the tribal groups. Male priests refer to themselves as "Sudra Muni," "Muni," "Jani," "Mali," "Dehuri," "Devata," "Raula," and "Suara," while female priests go by the names "Janiani," "Nalian," and so on. In Orissa, there are several cases of this kind. A tribal priest also worships the goddess Mahuri Kalua at Kanika on the Kerandimala hill, which has been the deity of the Mahuri Raj dynasty since the 18th century. It is also stated that the BudhiThakurani, the patron deity of Berhampur, was originally a tribal goddess who eventually became a part of Hinduism. Only in the first part of the twenty-first century did Bhariav baba Hinduize the revered goddess Chandi in the well-known pilgrimage site Chandikhol in the unbroken Cuttack District. The indigenous Sabaras used to worship the goddess before then. A Koli priest who is not a Brahmin has also offered sacrifices to the revered deity "Brahmani" at Belaguntha. It is also said that the Goddesses Tarini of Ghatagaon in the Kenjhar area are descended from indigenous tribes. At the case of Marjakeshari, another well-known Orissan god, a similar tale of tribal origin is told in the Nrusinghanath temple in western Orissa. It goes without saying that numerous of these tribal gods must have been converted to Hinduism by Aryans in various parts of the state.

9. Tribal origin of Jagannath Cult

Along with the aforementioned aryanized tribal deities, the Jagannath cult in Puri is the most well-known example of this kind. Jagannath's tribal roots are clear, despite the deity's current inseparability from the high Hindu worldview and importance to Orissa's regional identity. Academics have talked about the Jagannath cult's tribal origins. Nobody has been able to refute the close connection that the Savaras or the tribal people have had with the Jagannath cult since its start, despite the fact that experts have advanced several explanations and counterarguments to support their own beliefs of the genesis of the cult. Even academics have admitted that the Jagannath religion is influenced by tribal beliefs. The Puri temple traditions, the SkandaPurana's PurusottamaMahatmya, Sarala Das's Mahabharata's MusaliParo and Vanaparva, Sisu Krishna Das's DeulaTola, and NilambaraDas's DeulaTola all make reference to Lord Jagannath's Savara or tribal ancestry.

The stories of the kings and nobles' honest effort and dedication in elevating the status of this primary god to this tribal temple enhance Orissa's mythology and oral traditions. The Lord's tribal heritage has been made clear by the stories, temple customs, and terminology. The Puri temple's "tribal-looking" and crude representations of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra [16]. The pillar that represents Stambhesvari is likewise rudimentary, and on sometimes, a very rough carving of Nrusimha (an aspect of Jagannath) is seen there. All the parallels between the ceremony of the tribal deity Stambhesvari and the PuriNavakalevara rite compel us to hypothesise that Jagannath, the Hindu god, and the tribal deity are quite similar. The Sabaras have a special place in Puri's daily devotion of Lord Jagannath. Even today, a subset of the deity's servants, known as "Daitas," assert that they are of tribal descent. This claim has been confirmed and backed up by several scholarly studies. The Daitas take up the devotion instead of the Brahmanas at the Anavasara [17] (illness of the deities) ceremonial of the deities. The Vedic rites and sacrifices are suspended at this time. At the start of the Car festival, the Daitas also have significant duties to perform. The deities are worshipped throughout this time according to tribal traditions rather than Vedic ones. Even the gods are decked out in Sabara garb. The terminology used in temples shows a very strong impact from Dravidian languages. According to rumours, Dravidian terms or phrases from the Tamil language are frequently employed in temples. These words include Tera, Bidia, TelengaMerada (Navi-kata Mandap), Lanka, TeingiSamprada (One group of Maharis), Mudala Kota, Koili, etc.

Some academics believe that the widely used terms associated with the Jagannath religion, such as Daru and Kudua, all originate from the Saora language. Thus, tradition and current customs make it very obvious that Lord Jagannath is of tribal descent. Such instances of high tribal-Hindu ties occur in Orissa [18]. The most revered Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar, known as the Badus, is a class of tribal priests who are the only ones permitted to bathe and decorate the Lingaraj. There are several significant tribal gods and goddesses in the state.

All of the major deities in the Indic traditions have ties to certain tribes, hence the tribal people have significantly contributed to the cultural history and religious practices of

Orissa. The Adivasi people, according to the British, is outside the bounds of traditional Hindu cultures. Even a quick look at the spiritual-cultural milieu reveals a major symbiotic interaction between tribes and non-tribal people, despite the fact that it is widely documented in ancient literature and inscriptions. Although they initially seem to run parallel to each other, the tribal culture is deeply intertwined with mainstream Hindu culture. As a result, it might be reasonable to acknowledge tribal dharma as an essential aspect of traditional Sanatana dharma. Despite the fact that the tribal people's contribution to our cultural and spiritual inheritance is still largely underappreciated, both aristocratic castes and tribal people have typically honoured and maintained our local practices. Hindu dharma may have elements of a tribal nature, making tribal society the cornerstone and core of our Hindu civilisation and culture.

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