MINOR RELIGIOUS CULTS IN ORISSA

INTRODUCTION

Religion is the basis of human life. It has been deeply ingrained in the thoughts and activities of man, ever since his very existence on the Earth. It is difficult to define Religion. An attempt to define it in concrete terms may result in restricting its scope. Right from the pre-historic age to the age of modern sciences, it has constantly been a source of inspiration to man, regulating his/her activities. The strength latent in religion is paramount and unchallenging. It has tremendous force which can mould the destiny of an individual, as well as that of a society. It ensures unity and cohesion in a society. It is the basis of solidarity of human society. It urges upon man to look upon life as an opportunity for self realisation. It calls upon to wrest the immortal from the mortal. "God is the universal reality, wisdom and love and we are his children irrespective of race, of religious belief. Within each incarnate soul dwells the god consciousness, which we must seek out and awaken" (Radhakrishnan - 1968:15).

"Whether we descend to the lowest roots of our intellectual growth or ascend to the lofiest heights of modern speculation, every where we find religion as a power that conquers and conquers even those who think that they have conquered it (Maxmuller, 1964:5). The need for religion in modern times is more justified that it had been in any other period of History. Because to-day science and technology have endowed man with such supreme power which, if rightly used can be the source of a comfortable and peaceful living, but if abused, can be the source of chaos and destruction. "The destructive power now in the hands of man has reached such terrifying proportions that we cannot afford to take any risk. World solidarity, Lokasangraha is no more a pious dream. It is an urgent practical necessity. The unity of the world is being shaped through the logic of events, material, economic and political. If it is to endure, it must find psychological unity, spiritual coherence. The world unified as a body is groping for its soul. If mankind is to save itself, it must change the axis of its thought and life. There is throughout the world an increasing spread of materialism mechanical or Marxist (Radhakrishnan, 1968 : 1). So it is through religion that the fragile existence of mankind can obtain its significance and value.
To-day, religion is no longer regarded as inconsistent with science. Aiyengar (1930) refers to the attempt of modern theologians to base religion, on science and also there are scientists who acknowledge the existence of superior power over and above science and scientific laws. This supreme power controls the "nature" and the science. "------------- it goes without saying that any religion that would stand the test of time, must be consistent with science, as otherwise it must perish sometime or other by the discoveries - I would even term them revelations of science" (Aiyengar, 1930:1).

Even Radhakrishnan (1968) feels that the spirit of science is never opposed to that of religion. The spirit of science does not suggest that the ultimate beginning is matter. Even atom can be split. It is the mind of man which can split it, it is thus superior to the atom. The achievements of science are due to the spirit in man. Scientists are great religious people. Because, "their life, being a pursuit of truth implies service of God, who is Truth" (Radhakrishnan 1968 : 10). Science refines religion. It prevents religion from becoming magic or witch-craft, quackery or superstition.

Aiyengar (1930) mentions that important scientific laws established in the 19th century like the law of evolution, the law of conservation of matter, the law of conservation and dissipation of energy and the law of cause and effect, go in perfect tune with religion. For instance, let us take into account the law of cause and effect, according to which there can be no phenomenon without a cause. If we try to trace out the proximate cause of every phenomenon step by step, finally we will arrive at the remote or the prime cause of all things i.e. the "supreme power".

As religion is indispensable for man, its study is essential. Through it man ensures a harmony between the present and the past experience and thereby, can acquire confidence to face the future. "---------- apart from the solid facts and truths, that we may learn from religion, apart from the comfort that we may gain from it, religion as a science, as a study, is the greatest and healthiest exercise that the human mind can have" (Vivekananda, II,65). In the modern times, there has been an increasing interest among scholars towards religion, as a subject of scientific and critical inquiry "This can be ascribed to (a) the rapid progress of scientific knowledge and thought, (b) the deeper intellectual interest in the subject, (c) the widespread tendencies in all parts of the world to reform or reconstruct religion or even to replace it by some body of thought, more "rational" and "scientific" or less
superstitious and (d) the effects of social, political and international events of a sort, which in the past have both influenced and been influenced by religions" (Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics Vol.X, 662).

Religion is a continuous creed. The religion of every culture and civilization in the world has been founded on the values of the preceding stage. So it is essential to trace out the root of religion. In this regard Vivekananda has referred to two theories, which he describes, to have been accepted by modern scholars. One is the spirit theory of religion and the other is the evolution of the idea of the "Infinite". As per the spirit theory, ancestor worship is regarded as the beginning of religious ideas. Man worships his ancestors, because he believes that they are living, even after their dead bodies have been disposed off. A study of the ancient religions of many countries like Egypt, Babylon, China, America etc. reveals that ancestor worship was there at the beginning of their religion. Ancestor worship can be traced among ancient Hindus also. There are some other scholars, who, based on ancient Aryan literature, ascertain that religion originated in nature worship. In ancient times, the stupendous and gigantic forces of nature and its beauties struck the human mind. So, man aspired to study the forces, latent in nature. In the course of such study man began to endow the natural phenomena with personal attributes. Among the Aryan races of Greece, Germany, Scandinavia, etc. nature worship is placed at the root of religion. Vivekananda tries to reconcile these two views by inferring to the presence of common element in them, i.e. in both the cases, man tries to go beyond his senses. The worship of the spirit of ancestors reflects the desire to look into the state of man beyond life. In the worship of nature, there lies the curiosity to explore the tremendous power of nature. (Vivekananda Vol. II).

In the opinion of Maxmuller (1964) also, the perception of infinite lies at the root of religion. He observes that the senses of man while supplying him with the knowledge of finite things, come in contact with something, that is not finite. "From this permanent contact of the senses with the infinite, sprang the first impulse to religion, the first suspicion of something, existing beyond what the senses could apprehend, beyond what our reason and language could comprehend" (Maxmuller, 1964:374).

From the first dawn of consciousness, man has been trying to pierce further and further into the infinite. Each religion of the world has developed from the perception of the infinite". In course of its evolutionary growth, each religion has viewed the "infinite" in different ways. The various stages of religion of the world conceived by man from the primitive days to the days of modern civilization are nothing but the exploration of the idea of the "infinite".
Thus, the study of religion implies the different manifestations of the idea of "infinite" and the theories attributed to them by theologians. The religion and philosophy of the aboriginal people of the world was quite different from that of the civilized people of subsequent periods. Their religion was a means to obtain material objects. They regarded nature as an abode of evil spirits, who caused diseases and sickness among men and beasts, pests among crops, natural calamities, accidents and ill luck of all sorts, so they needed to be appeased through offerings. Theologians have categorised aboriginal beliefs and practices under certain theories. "Fetishism" is one such theory, according to which material objects are regarded to bear supernatural virtue either in their own right or because of the presence of a spirit. It stands for any sort of materialism in religion. President C.de Brosses, the author of "Du Culte des dieus fetiches" (Paris, 1760) promoted Fetishism to the status of comparative religion. "Until Tylor's animism displaced it, Fetishism stood as the established name for the most primitive type of cult, treated as a stage through which humanity as a whole had passed and regarded as a sort of lower idolatry in which the idol is rather the embodiment than the symbol of the associated spiritual power. "(Encyclopaedia of social Sciences, V-VI : 202). Tylor's (1871) definition of religion as "The belief in spiritual Beings" introduced yet another theory, called "animism" which was applied to the primitive religion. Tylor established the theory that it is the presence of an indwelling spirit of some kind which causes an object to be sacred. He retained the term fetishism as a sub-ordinate department of animism. (Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, V, VI : 202).

"The belief in spiritual beings is one of the oldest inventions of man. We must infer that it dates from Palaeolithic times, and its subsequent world wide distribution and incomparable influence upon human thought and activity are to be paralleled for instance, in the invention of fire. Both are so fundamental in human history that no one has successfully imagined an order of human events in which they do not figure. "(Encyclopaedia of social sciences, I, II : 65). Tylor's (1871) theory of "animism" is based on the presumption that man derived the notion of the separable human soul from such experiences like dreams, shadows, reflections, in water etc. After obtaining the hypothesis of his own soul, man transferred the notion first, to other humans and later to the inanimate world. All the numerous spirits are rooted in one common notion. The spirits who are transferred to the world of the dead are the
'ghosts' those which are transferred to animal, are "animal spirits" and those which are transferred to the world of nature are "nature spirits" (Encyclopaedia of social sciences, I, II).

Animism implies three distinct forms of worship. (i) worship of the soul of men and animals, manifesting itself above all as worship of the dead (Necrolatry), (ii) worship of spiritual beings who are not associated in a permanent way with certain bodies or objects (spiritism), (iii) worship of spiritual beings who direct the permanent or periodically recurring phenomena of nature (naturism). Animism is not only the religion of primitives, but it is the first stage in the evolution which leads to the emergence of the Divine power, the Supreme Agent, who seeks order in nature and the good of humanity (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics I). "As man progressed from the savage to the barbaric and finally to the civilised stage, animism evolved into polytheism and eventually into monotheism. But within these various forms, animism shows an unbroken continuity from first to last into the midst of high modern culture". (Dupre, 1975:45).

Dupre (1975) also tries to ascertain that instead of "animism" animatism should be regarded as the beginning stage of religion. In this regard he refers to the view of R.R. Marett, who postulated a pre-animistic stage, like the one which prevailed in the Polynesian concept of "Mana" a kind of universal power. Certain phenomena, like walking and sleeping, hallucination and dreaming, illness and death, tempted the early man to distinguish between the material body and its life on one hand and the phantom or the second self on the other. By combining life and the phantom, he obtained the conception of the ghost soul. Primitive man applied this concept of ghost soul to the various problems that puzzled him. In this conception the dead who continued to live as ghost souls, became man as and finally turned into deities or supernatural powers. The ideal of the ghost soul was extended to the animals, plants, and even to inanimate objects, such as water stone etc. The ghost soul was regarded as superior to the body. So performance of human and animal sacrifices were started in order to free soul from the body. Marett calls this theory as 'animatism' and describes it as a simpler form than Tyler's theory of "animism".

This brief idea of the religion of the early people may tempt us to feel that, religion in early times emphasised more on action than on ideas. But the action, it implied,
gave solace and provided feeling of security to man so that he could take a bold step forward which paved the way for the evolutionary growth of religious ideas that occurred in the later periods. The simple religion of the early people thus laid the foundation of the religion of the civilized people.

"Religion as conceived to-day may be divided into three parts. (i) a description of the world man lives in especially of its hidden working causes and operative powers usually in the dramatised forms of gods and angels, devils, ghosts and the like with their characteristic dispositions and more or less symbolic biographies, called myths. (ii) on account of the fortunes and destiny of man in this world his origination, pilgrimage and end, his salvation or damnation. (iii) a technique to move and control the operative powers and working causes of the world, so that human purposes may be facilitated both in the daily economy of human life and in eternity "(Encyclopaedia of social sciences III, IV, 618). The first of these parts includes the different branches of theology and cosmology. The second includes ethical systems. The third constitutes the observances of rituals and the devices of address through which the supreme unseen power is worshipped. The relation between these parts are organic in a sense that the presence of one implies that of the other two. Every religion in order to be healthy and sound must constitute all these the constituents.

The third component of religion is its cults. It is psychologically perhaps religion's most important organ. For being essentially a mode of behaviour it is the nucleus out of which both theologies and ethics, are generated and on which they are sustained". (Encyclopaedia of social sciences III, IV, 618).

India offers the widest scope to a scholar interested in the study of religion. "---------- what we can watch and study in India better than anywhere else, is how religious thought and religious languages arise, how they gain force, how they spread changing their forms as they pass from mouth to mouth from mind to mind, yet always retaining some faint contiguity with the spring from which they arose at first" (Maxmuller, 1964:131).

Hinduism, the religion of majority of Indians, bears a number of conspicuous specialities. Unlike other major religions of the world, it has not been founded by any sage at a
given period in history. It is a Sanatana Dharma (Yugadharma or Eternal Religion), which has taken its course through an evolutionary growth. In the process of its growth from the pre-historic age to the modern times, it has covered all theories of religion starting from animism to the highest metaphysical abstractions and thereby, it has acquired the values of all the religious systems of the world. As a code of ethics it is all pervasive, as a system of theology it is vast and as the system of metaphysics it enables us to merge with the ultimate reality" .......... it has adopted much of the fetishism of the Negrotio Aborigines of India, it has stooped to the practice of the various hill tribes and has not scrupled to encourage the adoration of the fish, the boar, the serpent, rocks, stones and trees, it has borrowed ideas from the various cults of the Dravidian races and it may even owe something to Christianity" (Williams, 1951:60).

Speaking of Hinduism Bloom-field (1972:12) mentions "Broad as the ocean and as un-interrupted in its sweep, there lies before us a period of thousands of years of religious thought and practice of the most religious people in the history of the world". He further mentions that the religious history of India began much earlier than the Vedic period. In the pre-historic period Indian religion was similar to the ancient religion of Iran (Persia). Further beyond the common period of the Hindus and the Persians, Bloom-field perceives the common Indo-European period when the Hindus as well as the Persians shared their views with the other members of their stock, i.e. The Hellenes, Italians, Celts, Teutons, and Salvs. In this pre-historic time there existed certain germs of religion which in future, were reflected in the important features of the religion of these people. "The religion of the Veda is indebted to this early time to an extent that is not negligible". (Bloom-field 1972:16). Indian religion is indebted to the Vedas as these lay the foundation of India's religious thought. Vedic religion was based on 'Cult' and 'Sacrifice'. In it, the forces of nature were regarded as actual manifestations either of one deity in different moods or of separate rival deities contending for supremacy. Williams (1951) mentions that the agencies of nature were at first poetically personified, and later, being invested with forms, attributes and individuality, were worshipped as distinct gods. Indra the god of rain and thunder, Agni, the god of fire, Surya, the Sun god constituted the Vedic chief triad of gods. Ushas, the goddess of dawn and Prithvi, the goddess of the Earth were among other prominent deities. Various other deities were regarded as the progeny, resulting from the union of the Earth with the Dyaus (Sky) Bloom-field (1972)
believes that the Vedic theosophical thought was devoid of any idea of transmigration of soul, salvation from birth, old age, decay and death. "That this phase of higher religion belongs to a later time to a different geographical locality and to an economic and social state different from that of the earliest Vedic time, seems exceedingly likely". (Bloom field, 1972 :21)

Starting from the pre-historic period, the Indian religious history is steadily maintaining a process of continuity. Every race in India has preserved the values of the religion of its predecessor. The religious innovations made by every race are only additions to the ones already existing. All through the ages of its continuous growth, Hinduism has been honouring "spirituality" over and above other features. The sense of "spirituality" implied in the Indian culture, stands in contrast to the sense of materialism of the western culture. Ever since the European scholars discovered and appreciated the value of Indian religion, philosophy and culture and translated Indian classics into European languages, Indian culture came to be regarded as most precious of all the cultures of the world.

The scope of Hinduism is very wide. It has room for all classes of men starting from the mystic to the illiterate peasant. Williams (1951) mentions in this regard that the educated Hindus concentrate only on the Jnanamarga, the path of true knowledge, which is implied in the Vedas i.e. "Ekam Eva Advitiya" (there is but one being, no second). Popular Hinduism admits this path to be the highest way of salvation but adds to it two other ways, i.e. The Karma Marga (path of activity) and the Bhakti Marga (Path of love and devotion). The adherence of Karma Marga implies belief in the efficacy of sacrifices and rites, penances and austerities. The adherence of Bhakti Marga demands devotion to personal deities. The Karma Marga and Bhakti Marga, thus imply the worship of external symbols. of all the religions of the east, Hinduism makes the maximum use of symbolism. The images in Hinduism are the symbols of supreme god hood. But no image can be taken for the God in his/her entirety. The image is only a symbol of the supreme god hood, which evokes a sense of the ultimate reality. It develops in the worshipper, a religious spirit and brings the worshipper into intimate contact with the God. "The use and purpose of the symbol is two fold (1) to set forth invisible or audible likeness, what cannot be really or fully expressed to the physical eye or ear or even clearly conceived by the limited faculties of the human mind. (2) The image or symbol serves the purpose also of providing in material and suitable form a convenient object of reverence to
meet the religious need of those whose minds, through darkness and ignorance are unable to grasp the conception of an unseen formless deity" (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, XII:142). In Hinduism thus, all idols, totems, fetishes are symbols. The "vehicles" (Vahanas) of great gods like the Garuda (Monstrous Eagle) of Vishnu, the Nandi (the Bull) of Shiva, are symbols. At the same time the images placed under the sacred tree in every Indian village, are also symbols. In Hinduism the worship of external symbols is regarded as a stepping stone to higher and clearer forms of worship.

In Hinduism, the theology and ethics remains the same all over the country. But so far as the aspect of 'cult' is concerned, there exists a good deal of difference. Under the banner of an underlying unity, there have developed bewildering variety of castes and sub-castes, sects and sub-sects and their own cults. Referring to the variety in Indian Society, Behura (1948:15) mentions that "------- in Indian Society, there are Shastrachara or textual, deshachara or regional and lokachara or folk models of Indian civilization and the deshachara and lokachara are the variants of Indian Dharmashastra. The variants represent different levels (lower, middle and upper) of systematisation of Indian civilization and as such, the problem of mutual influence of these levels of Indian civilization has become the focus of analysis. "In view of the specific cults associated with the three levels of Indian Society, i.e. upper, middle and lower, we can categorise them into elite, peasant and folk cults. The Elite cult is sanctioned by the holy scriptures but the peasant cult is based on the oral tradition carried on by the peasant society whereas the tribal cult perpetuates the primitive culture of the country.

The functional difference between the Elite cult and the tribal cult is distinguishing. The Elite cult, being the replica of the holy scriptures of Hinduism, honours its cardinal features. In Hinduism the deity manifests through an inconographic image which is placed in a temple and is daily worshipped by a Brahmin priest, through the performance of sodasa upachara or Sixteen services. These services are (1) avahana or invitation, (2) asana or offering of seat, (3)arghya or offering of clean water, (4) padya or washing of the feet of the deity symbolically, (5) achamana or offering of water for cleaning mouth, (6)Madhuparka or offering of light refreshment, (7) Snana or symbolic bath through rituals, (8) Vastra or offering of cloth, (9) Upavita or offering of sacred thread, (10) gandha or offering of sandal paste, (11) pushpa or offering of flower, (12) dhupa or offering of incense, (13) deepa or
offering of lamp, (14) *naivedya* or offering of meal, (15) *Vandana* or paying of obeisance, (16) *Visarjana* or farewell. The last three services ensure the arrival of the deity in the image after which only the devotees are allowed for audience. (Behura, 1984:29).

In tribal religion, the deity appears through a human medium, like the priest/shaman/shamanin/ who may be possessed by the deity whenever needed. Such a man, possessed by the deity, is directly approached by the devotees and also he communicates with the deity directly (Behura, 1984). "Tribal shrines may be completely empty ———— or else contain uniconical symbols, wooden posts, earthen posts, or elementary symbols like stones and trees". (Eschmann, 1978:81).

The peasant cult, which can be regarded as the popular cult or the cult of the majority of the people in India, goes in between the Elite cult and the tribal cult. The peasant cult neither entirely conforms to the elite cult nor does it entirely conform to the tribal cult, but it contains the elements of both the elite and tribal cults. The Brahmana caste groups in the villages follow religious practices, that are sanctioned by the regional religious texts which are a variant of the original sanskritic texts. But the practices of the non Brahman caste groups, who out number the Brahmans do not necessarily conform to the regional texts (Behura, 1984). The popular cult can include in it the worship of anything and everything on earth, like the worship of spirits of animals, plants etc. There exists a continuous process to make additions and to enlarge the existing comprehensive pantheon. Referring to the religion of the villages (Das, 1953:47) mention that these people can not rise above their daily necessities, their worldly feeling and ambitions. If they are poor, they desire to be rich. If they are childless, they desire for children. If they go for a hunting they desire for all success. Who will fulfill their desires? Who will redress their innumerable grievances? Who will help them in danger and save them from disease and degradation, whom will they approach for consultation in a complicated situation? Who will fill their hearts with hope when they are disappointed? Who will protect them against the cruel enemy, deadly snakes and savage beasts? So they created certain gods as off-springs of their daily necessities. He further mentions that most of these gods have no temple not even a shed against rain and sun. They are installed on the road side on the bank of some river or pond, under some shady tree or in the open field, many of them are not represented by any anthropomorphic image but are symbolised by moulds of clay.
or blocks of stones or branchless trees. But the villagers treat them as equally powerful and virtuous as the vedic and Puranic Gods. This does not mean that Brahmanical gods are not at all worshipped in the villages. But in one and the same village there can be temples for Brahmanical gods with Brahmin priests and local shrines with non-Brahmin priests. Thus we find in one and the same village both animistic and metaphysical sides of worship. In one case god is an object of selfish fear of hope or a means to gain wealth, children etc. in the other case worship is bereft of all these minor purposes" (Das, 1953:42).

In fact in every civilization of the world, there exist two distinctive types of cults, one being adhered by the Elite and other by the 'Folk' Red field refers to these cults as 'great tradition' and 'little tradition'. "In a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflected few and there is a 'little tradition' of the largely unreflected many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples, the 'little tradition' works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in the village communities", (Redfield:1956:69)

Thus the 'great tradition' thrives on the works of the philosophers and theologians, but the 'little tradition' thrives on belief and practices of the masses. The 'great tradition' is recognised by the validity of the texts in which it is contained but the little tradition is sanctioned by the unchallenging faith in it, professed by the masses. Both are interdependent. One cannot survive without the other. Like 'theory' and 'practice' thought and action, the great and little traditions are complementary to each other. The 'little tradition' derives inspiration from the 'great tradition' and the 'great tradition' flourishes on the vast range of practices conducted by the little tradition. So these two traditions constitute the two edifices on which every civilization of the world rests. Sinha (Singer, 1972) interprets Redfield's concept of great and little tradition by classifying Hinduism into primitive Hinduism, peasant Hinduism and urban Hinduism. In his interpretation, primitive Hinduism represents the little tradition, the Urban Hinduism represents the great tradition, whereas the peasant Hinduism is the mixture of both.

On the basis of spread Srinivas (1965) has classified Hinduism into 'All India Hinduism' 'Peninsular Hinduism' 'Regional Hinduism' and purely local Hinduism. The first
category is spread over the entire country and is sanskritic in character and the other categories are spread over comparatively smaller areas in descending order.

But it is not possible to cut the great and little traditions into clean cut segments. In India, since time immemorial, there has been an interaction between the two. Redfield (1956) has also mentioned that, in India, the two traditions are interdependent. They have long affected each other and still continue to do so. According to Srinivas (1965) Sanskritised worship of river, mountains, trees etc. and their subsequent assimilation in the Hindu mythology, enables the assimilation of rites and beliefs of the lower castes and communities remaining outside Hinduism. All India Hinduism is Sanskritic and it spreads in two ways i.e. by extension of sanskritic or textual deities and rituals to other outlying groups and also by greater Sanskritization of rituals and beliefs of groups inside Hinduism. The worship of river Ganga is a feature of Sanskritic Hinduism but it lies at the root of the veneration attributed to rivers in their concerned localities. Srinivas (1965) also feels that the alround improvement in communications, newspapers, radio, films and books have led to greater sanskritization of Hinduism. The greatness of Sanskrit literature, in which the Indian Philosophy, the epics, the Puranas are written, helps in the process of Sanskritization. The mythology of sanskritic Hinduism is very vast, which includes the epics, i.e. the Mahabharat and 'the Ramayan', the 'Puranas' 'Upapuranas' etc. The system of public reading of 'Puranas' and 'epics is very popular in India which helps in the spread of Hinduism because such reading enables the laiti to become familiar with the ideas and deities of sanskritic Hinduism. The 'Puranas' also encourage the process of assimilation of local myths and legends into the main stream of Hinduism of all India significance. The pantheistic bias in Hinduism which implies the doctrine that everything in the universe is animated by god and that all the various deities are the representations of the same Brahma makes the process of absorption easier.

Eschmann (1978) refers to it as the concept of inclusivism in Hinduism and calls the process of gradual incorporation of folk religions into Hinduism as Hinduization. She mentions that the incorporation of aboriginal cults has been occurring from a very early time but it became prominent in the post Buddhist times. Hinduization became frequent in medieval times, because of two reasons. The rising Bhakti cult, emphasizing the omnipresence of the
divine, brought a new religious impetus, secondly the institution of temples which prospered with royal patronage became agents of Hinduization.

Hinduization occurs in both ways. Tribal elements are incorporated into Hinduism and also features of Hinduism are integrated into tribal cults. "The canonised all India Hindu Tradition is a circle being composed by the segments of the regional traditions which are represented by ellipses. The regional traditions again are composed of the segments the several ellipses representing the sub-regional traditions which are again interlocked with several popular and tribal traditions and so on". (Eschmann, 1978:84).

Hinduization becomes possible when a tribal community lives in close proximity with the Hindu community, as in a village, the tribal groups constantly live together with caste Hindus. In such circumstances a village cult assumes the status of temple cult of sub-regional standard. The process of Hinduization further continues. The main stages of Hinduization are tribal cults, tribal cults with elements of Hinduization. Hindu village cults, temples of sub-regional importance, great temples of regional importance. (Escheman, 1978). At times, tribal cults are incorporated directly into a temple without passing through the intermediate stages.

If we take into account the picture of the religion of Tribal India as per the census of India, 1961, (Garg, 1992:126) the outcome of the process of Hinduization on the tribal religion can better be judged. As the census goes, a nine-tenths, i.e. the majority of the tribals are Hindu by religion, one-twelfth profess Christianity, and a very negligible percentage believe in Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism, Zorastrianism, and about 4.19 percent have a district tribal religion of their own. The interaction between the tribals and neighbouring Hindus has not only resulted in Hinduizing the tribes but also has enlarged the scope of Hinduism.

In the process of Hinduisation it is difficult to trace out the origin of cults. It is difficult to ascertain whether a certain cult originates from the codified Hinduism of the national level or from the village cult of the local level. In this piece of research, two features of Minor Religious cults, i.e. the 'Cult of Tree' and the 'Cult of Earth' have been taken up to point out their prevalence in the tribal, folk and classical levels, so as to prove that religion in India is not stagnant but it is fluid. It is plastic. The minor cults, taken up here, are not minor
in a sense that they are confined to a small locality or they are adhered to by a limited number of devotees. Rather, they are spread all over the country and are open to all the people. These cults can be termed as minor because these are associated with folk deities. The devotees of these deities can belong to any religion, caste or creed. They can worship deities occasionally or annually or whenever they feel necessary. The minor cults are not like the religious cults of the type which are confined to a group of people, who adhere to a particular religious order. In such religious cults, the gods, the rituals, the beliefs are to be strictly followed by the adherents and as such, there is no scope for religious intercourse. But the minor cults develop around minor deities, no doubt but these deities are regarded as the representatives of the same Brahma. So intercourse with the minor cults is quite natural. As the minor cults are associated with regional, sub-regional and local cults, they may be categorized, under the 'little tradition' but they are not completely alien to the classical cults, which belong to the great tradition. So the interaction between the great tradition and the little tradition which has been persistently going on in Indian Society can be visualised, if we take into account some aspects of the 'Minor Religious Cults'.

In this project a comparative study of the prevalence of the "Tree Cult" and the "Earth cult" in the classical popular and tribal levels, has been taken up. Anthropological and other comparative methods of inquiry are regarded as the most conspicuous feature of modern research, as it breaks down racial, social, intellectual, territorial and psychological boundaries and brings into relation all classes and races of men and all types of organic life. "As a popular, simple and interesting inquiry, it has familiarized many people with the miscellanies of folklore and religion. It illustrates popular beliefs and practices and reveals a remarkable resemblance among the people all the world over. (Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics X. : 664).

'The cult of tree' and the 'cult of Earth' exist with local variations, throughout the country of India. In this work these two cults are studied in the context of Orissa. Orissa has a geographical area of 1,55,707 sq.km. out of which about 30% is covered by forest. There are fifty one thousand villages and one hundred and twenty four towns. Orissa can boast of a vast range of tribal population, who belong to sixty two tribal communities. 22% of the total population of Orissa consists of the tribals prominent among them are the Kandha, Santala, Oraon, Saora, Bhuyan, Koya, Gadaba, Paraja, Juanga, Gond, Ho etc. They live
mostly in the forest and hilly regions of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Phulbani, Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada and Nowrangpur districts (Encyclopaedia of India V).

Specific cultural and religious activities are associated with all these tribes. But for slight variations, the religion of the tribals of Orissa is based on the same principles and is motivated by the same ideas. The Sun God, Mother Earth, presiding deities, nature spirits and ancestral spirits constitute the pantheon of the tribals of Orissa. Behura and Mishra (1990) mention that the religious activities of the tribals are motivated only by the desire to obtain more crops or natural resources or to avoid sickness. They are devoid of any idea of Heaven and Hell and the relative consequences of moral and immoral acts, committed during lifetime. After death the soul is merged in the rank of the ancestral spirits. The belief in re-incarnation and transmigration of soul into various forms of life, like trees, birds, animals etc. prevails. But the form of re-incarnation is not determined by the ethical action committed during life time. Behura and Mishra (1990:40) further mention that the religion of Orissan tribes is an admixture of life-crisis rites, cyclic group rites, ancestral and totemic rites. Observance of taboos and practices of occultism in various forms. The tribal rites do not imply daily weekly and monthly performances. Their rituals are mostly seasonal and annual. Moreover, the observance of the rituals is made both in the community level and the domestic level but the former proceeds the latter.

The popular religion of Orissa has also evolved around certain specific principles. In the Orissan villages agriculture is the chief occupation. So the society here, is basically peasant society, which maintains its own culture and at the same time, is linked up with the culture of the towns, and that of the tribals. The gods and goddesses, worshipped in the villages are innumerable. Every village in Orissa has its local presiding deity, who remains at the centre of the religious activities of the village. Entire village life is regulated by the village deity. Activities like community worship, seasonal festivals, marriages, special propitiatory ceremonies to ward off diseases and other social get-togethers like village assemblies. Community feasts etc. are performed in the shrines of the village deities. The village deities (Gramadevati) are usually represented by a piece of shapeless stone, smeared with vermilion and surrounded by several smaller pieces of stones which represent her children. In some villages the trunk of a tree is just smeared with vermilion and worshipped,
even carved images are also placed in some villages. The Gramadevati of each village assumes a specific name. Dash (1983) mentions that the Gramadevatis are usually worshipped by non-Brahmin priests. They hold small rent free grants called "Mafi Grama Devati" they also receive daily doles from the rich men of the village and weekly doles from the people of the village. It is the belief of the villagers that the Gramadevatis protect them against every odd, both natural and manmade. Whenever epidemic breaks out the villagers raise necessary funds to propitiate the deity with the cooling bath and offerings. There is a male or female medium called 'Kalesi' through whom the goddess communicates with the people. Dash (1983) also mentions that certain village goddesses are regarded as "Parama Vaishnavis" or devotees of Vishnu, so animal sacrifices are not allowed before them. Besides, the cultural tradition of the Orissan villages is based on certain beliefs which go down from generation to generation. The fairs and festivals associated with such beliefs are as numerous as the months in a year. Every festival has a speciality of its own. Elaborate rituals are prescribed for each festival. But these festivals do not necessarily demand the services of Brahmin priest. There are some festivals known as the 'Oshas' (religious fasts) which play a significant role in the life of the Orissan villages. Some specific features are attached to the Oshas. These are observed at the domestic level. The rites are performed by the women members of the family. So services of Brahmin priests and chanting of hymns are not necessary. The deities worshipped in the Oshas are usually of indigenous origin.

Thus, the folklore and oral traditions have been attributed proper significance in the Orissan religion. But the Great Tradition here, is not devoid of its place of proper veneration. Gods and goddesses mentioned in the holy scriptures are worshipped in the innumerable temples of Orissa, where rituals and services are performed in accordance with the classical cult of India. But the cardinal feature of Orissan religion is the age old interaction that is going on between the classical and folk cults. Orissan religion thrives and flourishes on such interaction. "Orissa is an excellent example of this interdependence of various levels of Hinduism and even of the influence of the tribal and folk cults on the ideological and political developments" (Kulke, 1983).

The numerical strength of the tribal population in Orissa, has mainly enhanced the chances of assimilation, under different social and political situations, tribals have been influencing religion of Orissa. Whenever a tribal deity received the patronage of a royal king, the interaction became more prominent. "The best known example, perhaps from all over India of the rise of an indigenous former tribal deity to the level of a state deity (rastradevata) of a
medieval empire is certainly the Puri Lord Jagannath but by far not the only example from Orissa" (Kulke, 1983). Kulke (1983) mentions that there are many instances specially in the Hindu tribal frontier area of Orissa, where a former tribal or folk deity assumed the status of *Ista devata* or tutelary deity of a king. This process started in Orissa from the early days of state formation and continued till the 19th century. Kulke (1983) points out some reasons that as per the records of royal genealogy or (*Rajavansavali*) it is evident that many kings had ascended from the tribes and as such had to maintain continuous interaction between the court and its surrounding tribals in order to extend and consolidate their kingdom. In the former princely states, recognition of tribal deities as *Ista devatas* and the royal patronage rendered to them was a royal policy to win the loyalty of the tribal population. *Bhattarika* of Baramba, *Maninageswari* of Rampur, *Charchika* of Banki, are some instances of deities who ascended from the status of tribal deities to that of *Ista devatas*.

Thus Orissan religion presents a perfect example of the co-existence of the three basic cults of Hinduism. The minor religious cults in Orissa are not an exception to this order. In this piece of research, an attempt has been made to visualise the existence of the classical popular, and tribal elements in the 'cult of tree' and the 'cult of earth' the first chapter of the work deals with the following factors (i) origin of the Tree cult, (ii) certain reasons for which sanctity has been attributed to trees, (iii) The prevalence of 'Tree Cult' at the three levels of classical, popular and tribal traditions, (iv) A list of trees having a national appeal and their association with the Brahmanical gods (v) A list of trees having popular appeal and deified in the villages of Orissa and the fairs and festivals with which they are associated, (vi) A list of trees deified at the tribal level and worshipped by the tribals of Orissa in their fairs and festivals. At the end of the chapter a list of trees has been given which demonstrates the co-existence of classical gods, popular deities as well as tribal spirits.

In the second chapter, trees have been viewed under the status of temples. In this regard also the classical popular and tribal elements are focussed. A list of trees as temples of the tribals, then, trees as temples of Orissan villages and certain trees of Orissa as the temples of Brahmanical gods have been dealt with.
Chapter III deals with the cults which have been derived from the 'Tree Cult'. In this regard the worship of wooden posts and of wooden images have been taken. The worship of wooden posts has been projected as a replica of tribal element and the worship of wooden images has been treated as the aryansed form of the wooden posts whereas the popular aspect of the worship of posts in temples has also been dealt with.

Chapter IV deals with the cult of Earth. The following aspects of the worship of Earth has been dealt with in the chapter, (i) Mention of the worship of mother Earth in the classical literature, (ii) worship of Earth in the popular religion of Orissa. (iii) Earth worship, as prevalent in the tribal religion of Orissa. The project ends with a chapter on conclusion.

**METHODOLOGY**

It is a heuristic study, the main purpose of which is to explore and find out facts empirically through field work. First hand informations have been collected through observation and interviews and secondary information has been collected from the documents and published literature available. For the field study, the researcher had prepared schedule for collection of information and pointed data. Of course, she didn't look into the schedule in the presence of informers. It was for her guidance.

**Interview :**

In the first phase of field work, the researcher located key informers whom she interviewed. During the second phase of her field work, she resorted to individual informant interviews, mostly, because, she realised that she could locate certain key informants, on account of their age, experience, association with the shrine/monastery, their reliability etc. She didn't rest at that. As it is required in any social science research, she verified the information already collected from some other reliable informants. The researcher/investigator also took recourse to group interviews, where she put questions to the collectivity and the information forth-came from some of the informants. Occasionally such statements were also corrected by other knowledgeable informants present over there in the course of such interviews. Group interviews though generally not penetrative, were certainly revealing.
Observation:

Since, this is an empirical piece of research, the researcher time and again visited a number of shrines, monasteries, temples, village deities etc. The researcher/investigator made it a point to collect information through observation without any interference in the reality situation. Religious antiquities, observance of rituals, celebration of festivities, offering of oblations, conduct of daily rites, vital offerings by devotees, and such other episodes and incidents on different occasions during a ritual calendar year, were observed from the viewpoint of the requirements of this piece of research. At the initial stage, the researcher didn't disclose her identity and observed phenomena as a normal devotee, but since the requirements of research are academic the researcher gradually established familiarity with the priests, management personnel, and local leaders for collection of more proving and in-depth data. The researcher made herself acceptable to the priests and shrine management and people. Consequently they furnished necessary information without hesitation. Through personal contact the researcher not only collected folk tales, legends, myths relating to the shrine/temple/deities, from the priests and local informants, but she also succeeded in getting some published literature and also unpublished manuscript to use in the thesis from the temple/shrine management. The literal information went a long way in corroborating the oral information collected from informants.

Universe of study:

The following places were visited by the researcher during the course of her research.

1) Bhuinpur 8) Jagannath Temple, Puri
2) Dingara 9) Manikagoda, Khurda
3) Ogalapada 10) Samantarapur, Bhubaneswar
4) Ganganagar, Bhubaneswar 11) Banapur, Khurda
5) Saheednagar, Bhubaneswar 12) Raghunath Temple, Odagaon
6) Panchama, Berhampur 13) Kakatpur
7) Siddha Bakula Monastery, Puri 14) Benupada Monastery, Delang
8) Jagannath Temple, Puri
9) Manikagoda, Khurda
10) Samantarapur, Bhubaneswar
11) Banapur, Khurda
12) Raghunath Temple, Odagaon
13) Kakatpur
14) Benupada Monastery, Delang
15) Kaipadar, Khurda.
DETAILS OF THE PLACES

(1) **Bhuinpur**
Bhuinpur is a village in the sub-division and district of Khurda. It is situated in the Tahsil and Block of Begunia. Begunia is situated in the latitude of 20°-12'-10" North and longitude of 85°-27'-56" East. Bhuinpur is at a distance of about 5 kms. by road from the Block Head Quarters of Begunia.

(2) **Dingara**
Dingara is a village in the sub-division and district of Khurda. It is situated in the Tahsil and block of Begunia and is at a distance of about 7 Kms. by road from the Block Head Quarters.

(3) **Ogalapada**
Ogalapada is a village in the Tahsil of Jatni, in the sub-division of Bhubaneswar and in the district of Khurda. It is at a distance of about 21 Kms. from the sub-divisional Head Quarters of Bhubaneswar towards west.

(4) **Ganganagara**
Ganganagara is in the town and sub-divisional Head Quarters of Bhubaneswar in the district of Khurda. It is at a distance of about 3 Kms. of road from Bhubaneswar railwaystation towards south-east.

(5) **Saheednagar**
Saheednagar is in the town and sub-divisional Head Quarters of Bhubaneswar, in the district of Khurda. It is at a distance of about 4 Kms. from Bhubaneswar Railway Station towards north.

(6) **Panchama**
Panchama is a village in the sub-division of Berhampur in the district of Ganjam. It is at a distance of about 10 Kms. by road from the sub-divisional Head Quarters of Berhampur towards south. Berhampur is the chief town of the Ganjam district and is situated in the latitude of 19°-20' north and the longitude of 84°-50' east.
(7) **Siddha Bakula Matha (Monastery)**

Mathas are monastic houses, originally founded with the object of feeding travellers, beggars, ascetics of giving religious instructions to disciples and of encouraging a religious life. There are over seventy mathas and monasteries in Puri town. The Siddha Bakula Monastery is one of them. It is at a distance of about 3 Kms. by road from the Puri railway station towards south-west. It is situated inside *Kshetra* or the sacred tract surrounding the Jagannath temple.

(8) **Jagannath Temple, Puri**

The Jagannath temple is in the Puri town, which is the Head Quarters of the district of Puri and is situated on the shore of Bay of Bengal in 19°-48' north latitude and 85°-49' east longitude. The Jagannath temple and its surrounding area extending over 10 kms. is regarded as the Kshetra or the holy precincts or sacred tract. This sacred tract, extending from the Lokanath temple on the west to the Beleswara Temple on the east and from the *Swargadwara* or gate of heaven on the south to the Matia stream on the north east, resembles in shape, a conch shell navel or *Sankha navi*. In the centre of this sacred tract lies the Jagannath temple. The town is dominated by this great temple.

(9) **Manikagoda**

Manikagoda is a village in the sub-division and district of Khurda and in the Tahasil and Block of Bolagada. Bolagada is situated at the latitude of 20°-10'-29" North and longitude of 85°-10'-5" East. This village is at a distance of about 5 Kms. by road from the Block Head Quarters of Bolagada.

(10) **Samantarapur**

Samantarapur is in the town and sub-divisional Head Quarters of Bhubaneswar, in the district of Khurda. It is at a distance of about 5 Kms. by road from Bhubaneswar railway station towards south-east.
(11) **Banapur**
Banapur is in the sub-division and district of Khurda and in the block of Banapur. It is situated in the latitude of 19°-46'-33" North and the longitude of 85°-10'-33" East.

(12) **Odagaon**
Odagaon is in the sub-division and district of Nayagarh. It is at a distance of about 20 kms. by road from the sub-divisional Head Quarters towards west. The Head Quarters of Nayagarh is situated at the latitude of 20°-8' North and the longitude of 85°-6' East.

(13) **Kakatapur**
Kakatapur is in the sub-division and district of Puri and in the Tahsil of Kakatpur. It is at a distance of about 80 Kms. from the sub-divisional Head Quarters of Puri towards north east.

(14) **Delanga**
Delang is in the sub-division and district of Puri, in the Tahsil of Pipili and in the Block of Delang. It is at a distance of about 35 Kms. by road from the sub-divisional Head Quarters of Puri towards North-west.

(15) **Kaipadara**
Kaipadara is a village in the sub-division and district of Khurda. It is situated on the Ganjam-Cuttack road about 8 Kms. to the South-West of Khurda.

**TIME FRAME**
I began my field work in June, 1993 and paid my first visit to places mentioned from No.1 to No.8. I paid my second visit in February'94, third visit in December'94 and prepared final report in December,1995. Thus after a study of 2 years and 6 months, I prepared the final report.
I paid my first visit to the places, mentioned from No.9 to No. 13, in October, 1993. My second visit was in June'94, the third visit was in June'95 and I prepared the final report in March'96. Thus, I prepared my final report after a study of 2 years and 5 months.

I paid my first visit to the places mentioned in No.14 and 15 in December, 1993. My second visit was in Oct.'94, third visit was in Oct.'95 and I prepared the final report in June'96. Thus after a study of 2 years and 5 months, I prepared my final report. The total period takes for field work and preparation of final report was 3 years.