CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL FOLK CUSTOMS AND ITS SUB-GENRE

Social folk custom is one of the important fields of folklore. R.M. Dorson rightly observed: 'In between oral literature and material culture lie area of traditional life facing in both direction. One such area we may call social folk custom. Here, the emphasis is on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances.' Social folk customs is also termed as 'Customs and usage' by the English antiquaries. Folk belief is one of the parts of the Social folk custom. Belief constitute a genre while magical and sacred potency may be termed as rituals.

There are four divisions of the social folk custom considered appropriate to cover the subject. They are:

1. folk religion and belief,
2. festivals and celebrations,
3. recreation and games and
4. folk medicine.

3:01: Religion and Belief:

Man from earliest time began to believe in supernatural powers superior to them and began to worship them. The worship propitiated for satisfaction of the supernatural power to acquire their desired things. The fear of the supernatural

213. Ibid.
214. Ibid.
objects make him regular worship of the same. Regular worship of such supernatural objects gave birth to religion. All the religions in the world associated with some supreme power believed to be invincible, omnipotent and omniscient. The Religion may best be defined as belief in and identification with greater force or power. The greater force or power believed to stand to protect the life of an individual if satisfied. When offended results with the opposite reaction. Religion construct the world in and outside; arrange the planets and stars and become cause of the creation, development and evolution.\textsuperscript{215}

The concept of the supernatural power, however, differ from society to society. Most of the ancient groups believe supernatural power to be the ghosts and spirits. Observation of rituals means to satisfy such objects for individual or social benefit.\textsuperscript{216}

The Oriya people in the tea plantation originated from the plains of the present State of Orissa. They have inherited the tradition matching to their old in habitats and following the same in the environment of the plantation also. Abandoned for long period from their original part; they have developed a new pattern of beliefs which is the result of their co-existence with other castes and tribes in the plantation. The changing situation of the entire environment has also some impact on their social folk custom and thus the religion and beliefs.

The Oriya people, originated from the agrarian background of Orissa had natural co-existence with other castes and neighbouring tribes. The religion and belief they practice are of a mixed nature; neither of the great tradition nor from the little tradition. Both have equally dominated in their

\textsuperscript{215} Herskovits, M.J.: Cultural Anthropology, New Delhi, p.268.
\textsuperscript{216} Friedle, John.: Cultural Anthropology, 1974. p 268

- 101 -
beliefs and religion. The classical religion dominated them with their gods, goddesses, rituals and celebrations and at the same time they also widely follow the animism borrowed from their tribal neighbours. Under the existence of both, the Oriya people cannot call themselves purely belongs to the Vedic groups nor could claim to be tribal animistic followers. Some explanation on their religion and belief would clarify their position.

They worship all the gods and goddesses of the classical religion. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, the Trinity is the most popular gods they worship. These three gods worshipped together as trināth and the occasion is called melā by almost all the Oriya people; rich or poor. Shiva-Rarti, Lakshmi-Puja, Saraswati-Puja all are equally felt as their gods and goddesses and worshipped accordingly. There are a few of the tea gardens which have Jagannath temples; images of the trinity Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram is brought from Puri are their most famous gods worshipped together regularly and the Car-festival is observed on the second day of the bright fortnight of the month Asada (June-July) which is the sacred journey of the trinity from the main temple to another shrine called Gundicha Mandir where they live for nine days. The journey is observed with full gaiety participated indiscriminately. Deul-jātrā or the Phagua is celebrated on the full moon of the month Phalgun (February/March) as remembrance of the romantic play of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha. Hence the gay crowd encompasses the streets with the persons with disguising the deities chanting devotional songs in their praise. 'Diwali' is observed in the name of goddess Lakshmi, keep clean and sacred of the house burn oil candle and dedicate and take special care to the family cattle in shed in the name of the deity. During Shive-Ratri occasion both male and female pour water on the 'linga' of the deity in the very early morning. Beside, nowadays the take part in the long walk on to pour water on the 'linga' on any one of
Monday during the month Sawan. They also involved in the Durga-puja and Kāli-pujā celebration in their tea gardens. During the occasion of the *kartik-purnima* some of them prepare to recite the eight 'purans' attended by other people in the area. In other occasion like the Janmastami, Gonesh-puja, Saraswati-puja, Viswakarma-puja etc., are sometime joined by them as they are celebrated publicly. The Deul-jātrā or Phāguwā, Dewāli, Kartika-Purnima, Push-puni or Magh-sangkranti, etc., are observed individually, specially, by the womenfolk.\(^{217}\) The Oriya origin belong to the Eastern part of the present State of Orissa have some relations with the religious ceremonies of the neighboring West Bengal. Among them Manasa-puja, Sitala-puja etc., are observed.

The Oriya origins in the plantation observe a few rituals like *chutriā*, grām-pujā, dongor-pujā, khet-Pujā, nuā-khāi etc. Among these observations, *nuā-khāi* is their family ritual and an occasion to dedicate and satisfy their family tutelary. The other observations are associated with worship of certain supernatural powers; like a number of ghosts and spirits peculiarly attached to them. Such gods and goddesses or spirits are the dongor, kāli-sundri, chābrain, bāburāi, dharam, buḍhimā, gongādi, ghoresoni, pājhrain, bonmoili etc.; all with their special nature and the symbols to identify them during their observations to keep satisfied.\(^{218}\) The Oriya people, however, worship only the family and *kutumb* adopted *deptā* during the occasion of the *chutriā*. The grām-deptā is worshipped during the month of 'Āsāḍā' to keep the line or the village safe from unwanted trouble. This is an occasion to throw out all the wastes from the residential areas.\(^{219}\)

\(^{217}\) op cit., Govt. of Orissa, (1982), pp.188-189
\(^{218}\) Informant-Sri Bati Mahanandia (70) on 18.4 1998.
\(^{219}\) Sri Mahanandia
Social folk custom also concern with the religious ceremonies of their social as well as in the family environment. The most popular festival for the tea garden Oriya people is the Durga-Puja which they rarely celebrate at individual or social initiative. A few tea gardens observe it collectively participated by the whole population of the area and special initiative by the Bengali bābu employees. The Oriya people are not directly associated with the rituals but provide their support in the celebration. Due to the participation in the celebration indiscriminately of caste and tribes the occasion becomes festivity. The ritual of the worship is however performed by hired brahmin with his associates selected by him. The other festivity can be seen in the Kali-puja celebration in a tea garden which is also similar to the Durga-puja celebration. Not only the Oriya people but the whole population in the tea garden participate indirectly and enjoy the festivity. The holi festival is enjoyed by all the Hindu population including the Oriya people in the tea garden. But at the family level, only the families of sound economic condition made some special arrangement with dedications. Others simply enjoy the colour indiscriminately.220 There are however, some taboo, they follow in relation to playing abir that only the in-laws, cousins and people of matrilineal family are allowed to participate. The seniors and respected people are adored by applying abir on their foot with full respect. On Diwali the Oriya people illuminate their courtyards by lights but according to their economic capabilities. If cattle are available in the house, they are dedicated as goddess Lakshmi. They hardly arrange special edibles for this occasion. Cheap crackers are exploded and if they have few coins in hand, they play juwā (gamble) Gambling and exploding crackers are not compulsory but they do this

220. Nowadays most of them limit themselves in the family rituals as observed in the field.
under the influence of their neighbour. They sometimes participate in *Sahrāi*.  

*Trināth-melā*: ‘Trinath-mela’ is a family worship for the betterment of the family. The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar are dedicated in this worship. Though the trinity is of Vedic origin and popular Hindu gods no Brahmin by caste is invited to perform the ritual. Abstinence from the previous day, fasting during the day is necessary for the family as well as the person invited to perform the ritual. During the evening before dusk the ritual is performed in very simple manner, with a coconut, a three-sided earthen lamp, three shares of beetle-nut and *ganja* is sufficient for the dedication. The person invited to perform the ritual recites the *trināth-mahimā* from the book written in Oriya and the family and people attending the occasion listen to it with full dedication. The recitation takes one and half to two hours and after the completion small *prashād* is prepared out of the dedicated edibles i.e. coconut, banana, *chewrā*, sugarcane, milk etc. and equally distributed among the attendants. The person invited for the ritual is given a share of the raw materials to take home and after his farewell the family prepare vegetarian food and takes it peacefully.  

They Oriya people bow their head before the gods and goddesses they hardly arrange for worshipping them in their households. During the public celebration of such gods or goddesses, they simply burn a scented stick or offer earthen lamp as dedication. During the Shiva-ratri many of them offer their water and other materials in the nearby temple; bring a share of the dedicated materials and use them in their home as *prashāds*. Women are more serious than the men in this

221. op.cit., Bora, 2006, p.83  
222 op cit., Kurmi, (Ed) 2001, p.121
dedication. From the last decade *bol-bom* is celebrated on any one Monday of the month of ‘Sawan’ (July/August). People walk a long distance carrying water from a river and dedicate it in a far away famous temple.\(^{223}\) Very few of the women worship *Manasha* and *Santoshima*, which are the influences of their neighbouring people or the influence of the films.\(^{224}\) The Oriya origin of the Tinsukia district are not known to be worshipping these *devi*.

*Nuwā-Khāi*: Worship of the family tutelary gods is more prominent among the tea garden Oriya people of the Tinsukia district. Almost every house has the *piddor* in the interior of their house where the first harvested crop of the season is dedicated. In this *piddor* they worship their deceased fathers and mothers, other unmarried but untimely died members and the deceased children. They also worship the village god *Dongor* outside the house. All these dedications are made with foods and the edibles favourite to the deceased member and kept complete privacy.\(^{225}\)

*Chutriā*: The social occasion of the Oriya people in the district of Tinsukia is the *Chutriā*, which is celebrated on the last day of the month of *Choit*. Every *kutumb* consists of several families of a single clan; accepts a powerful *devi* or *deptā* which comes on to the *diari* of that *kutumb*. The *deptā* on the *diāri* is worshipped collectively in a given spot in one corner outside the *line* or village. The *dhāngrā-mājhi* arrange traditional music with some ritual and the *deptā* comes on the *diāri*; dances with the rhythm of the music; swings on the

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\(^{223}\) *Bol-bom* is carrying water from sacred river to pour on the Sviva-linga. Brahmaputra river is believed to be one of the sacred rivers and people collect water for the Shiva temple in Tinsukia.  

\(^{224}\) loc.cit., Das&Mahapatra.  

\(^{225}\) Informant: Mahanandia. (70)
thorned bed; walks on the burning charcoal; asks the worshipers about their trouble and advices what to do for peace and prosperity in the family. After visiting every house of the *kutumb* the *deptā* retreats to come for the next year. But in trouble he can be invited by the *diāri* on a certain day for some moment.\(^{226}\) The Oriya people of the Tinsukia district, as originated from the Western parts of the present State of Orissa do not practice to learn to become such god’s man but the eastern people, who name the *diari* as *dehri* has the learning process and the learners are called *kalshi*.\(^{227}\)

*Ratha-Jātrā*: *Ratha-Jātrā* or the car-festival of Lord Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra, which takes place during the month of ‘Āsāḍā’ (June/July), is a religious celebrated publicly. This is the occasion of pretending the trinity’s visit to their *mausimā* Gandhehi’s house. As the idols are brought out for the public, all join in this religious festival to see and touch the idol. Simply touching the *rath* is believed to wash all the sins of a person.\(^{228}\)

The Kondhria Oriya, while observe the *kartik purnimā* the Oriya people observe *makara-sankranti*, *ushā-vrat* etc. taking bath early in the morning to offer water to the Sun-god. The *kartik-purnimā* observation is also family or individual concerned but the elaborate rituals invite all the people around.\(^{229}\)

The Oriya women dedicate water on the basil plant every morning believing to be goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of

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226. Informant: Mahanandia.
227. Informant: Sri Krishna Nayak (58) 7.5.2007
228. Bora, Devendranath: Devabhumi Bharat, Morigaon, 1983. p. 64
229. Such recitation of ‘purans’ have been attended in Baghjan T E., Beesakopie T.E. etc., but nowadays the practice of reciting these ‘purans’ are disappearing as most of the present people do not know Oriya.
wealth and prosperity. They observe household taboos to satisfy goddess Lakshmi. Their men, those who are literate in Oriya recite lakshmi-puran and they hear it with full dedication. They also recite mangala-tusti but never dare to prepare for the worship as it costs much and beyond their economic range. During the kartik-purnima all the eighteen purans are recited publicly every eighteenth day before the kartik-purnima. If situation does not support at least few of them is recite on the purnima day. Likewise the Oriya listeners recite purans related to Sri Krishna, Ram, Sita, Shiva-Parvati, etc. during the phauga disguising themselves in various costumes, roaming from house to house playing holi. The famous pālā-nṛitya played during the holi which is perhaps the origin of the bhāwnā in Assam. Recitation of the events of the purans by the leader followed by his disciples, the music, and the costume all resembles the Bhawna of Vaishnavite Namghar in Assam. The only difference is that Bhawna is strictly played inside the Namghar while palla can be played anywhere and at any time.

3:01:1: Marriage and its different genre:

The tea garden Oriyas, mostly belong to the castes of the lower strata in their previous State follow non-Vedic rituals during marriage. The only few whose forefathers were from the eastern parts follow Vedic rituals in their marriage ceremony. The western and north-western people mainly comprised of the Kondria, Sanlia, Dongorlia, Sambalpuria, etc. follow non-Vedic rituals. They call themselves Hindu; but are ignorant of most of the Vedic rites. They appoint their own people to perform the rituals of the priest. The people belong to the western parts.
have their own priest to perform the rituals. The influence of the tribal people like Gonds, Kondhs, and Sabars over their religion and beliefs is quite distinct. The few differences among these three main classes predominant in the western-regions are to be carefully observed for their identification. Because, Oriya by origin they have no difference in complexion and behavior. The first distinction may be observed in their linguistic differences though, intelligible to all among them. This linguistic difference is the only way to identify their region wise distribution in their previous land. The marriage rituals of few differences could be traced if carefully observed.

There are some differences in observing the rituals. In marriage all have impact of the tribal ritual of worship of the useful trees. They install āam-jām-mohul branches on the marriage alter.

Encircling seven times by the bride and bride groom centering the branches with the main pole is seems to be Vedic adoption, but they do not make sacred fire by the Brahmins. The oath taking by the fathers of the bride and the bride groom are by touching of the branches; and not by sacrifice of ghee, madhu etc. on the fire. The sacred earthen candle in the four corners of the branches and a rukhābāti of five mouths in the middle near the main pole with the branches, indicate worship of tree instead of fire. Throwing rice on the bride and bride groom and on the people present is a common performance among all of these castes. Use of pan, rice-ladu, cow dung lāḍu etc. for mu-juwā is also common. Use of bhājā-pithā at groom's house when allowing entrance after marriage is also

233. Informant: Sri Rajaram Tanti, 65, (In Assam mohul is absent so it is replaced by other branches of tree useful for fruits like 'khejur').
common. Custom of taking the bride to the groom’s house for marriage, or taking *pon* (bride price) is also common practice). The use of vermillion is not practiced before. Instead, turmeric paste mixed with mustered oil is used most. Other practices from betrothal to *āath-mangalā* are common with those of the high castes also.

The ‘Kotkiā’ people install bow and arrow with the main pole of at the centre with the branches when the westerners use plough and *juwali*, instead. They stealthily collect water in unequal number of ponds, ghats of river or wells which differ in case of the ‘dongorlias’; whose women goes to collect water some way but not stealthily, but with *bājā-gāzā*. If river, well or pond are not near, collect water from individual houses to fill-up the pot. The water they call is *jhuruwā-pāni*. The ‘dongorliā’ perform the *binki-mārā* dance with music in which a person from the groom’s family attach a cock on his waist and dances. During his dance others try to detach the cock from him for make a feast; tried by most of the young men in the group, thus leading the cock into a number of pieces. This ritual is not observed by the other classes. Like wise, the Kotkias use *supāri* as indication of the days for the marriage; which they split and accompanied by turmeric mixed rice and *pan*, gives individual families as symbol of invitation. The Kondhria and Sanlia on the other hand, use the *babei* making knots to indicate the days. The Sanlia bride and bride groom throw rice on each other before sitting for marriage, which among

236 Informant: Sri Nayak on 7.5.2007.
237 Informant: Sri Subhas Bagh, 42 on 8.7.2007.
others is absent. Both are allowed to sit on a single seat, touching each other by keeping the bride on the left of the groom. One of the rituals during the marriage is to play cowri by the two under the moðo or to detach coin or cowri from the blocked hand of the bride by the groom, are symbols of testing the knowledge and physical strength of the groom which takes place in front of the gathering.\textsuperscript{238} Testing of knowledge and physical fitness of the groom is observed by almost all the castes and tribes in different manner. The ‘kondh’ groom shoots arrows through the shoulder of his bride targeting to a certain article to prove his expertise in shooting.\textsuperscript{239} During the pānigādhā performance the Kotkias from Anugul district, plough and juwali are used to stand the groom on it, and water is poured from his head top.\textsuperscript{240}

\textbf{Āath-mangalā:} The marriage ceremony ends with the āath-mangalā observation. On the eight day of the marriage the groom with his bride and accompanied with he attendant boy comes to the bride’s house to pull out the main pole of the moðo with the branches and other materials. He takes the branches of āam, jām and khejur with other materials and immerses them in the river while the chief pole kept in the house for use in other observations. The bride washes the clothes used in the marriage dirt by turmeric color with her attendant girl. All this activities must complete before noon. The Dongorlia, Gangpuria etc. return immediately after light food when the Kotkia, Kondhria and Sanlia etc., may stay to meet

\textsuperscript{238} Informant: Sri Sri Nayak on 7 5 2007
\textsuperscript{239} Informant: Sri Udey Nayak, 68 on 8.7.2007
\textsuperscript{240} Informant: Sri Nayak, 58 on 7.5.2007.

(Previously they were taken to the river where the bride keeps a ring inside the sand and the groom had to find out. This ritual is called ‘mundi-luka’ performance)
those relatives who have missed the marriage ceremony. There is no restriction among the Kondhria of staying few days at father-in-law's house by the groom or to leave his bride for few days if he returns.\textsuperscript{241}

The bride's father arrange for a feast for the arrival of his son-in-law with his daughter on the day of the āāth-mangalā; invites the jhākor, the dhāngrā-mājhī with the people in the kutumb, the near relatives and those who helped with cash and kind during the marriage.\textsuperscript{242}

\textbf{3:01:2: Death rituals:}

It is believed among the Oriya people and most of the tribes, originated from the present State of Orissa; that a person's soul becomes nowhere after his death; so, it is his relatives' responsibility to offer him a place where the soul can live peacefully. Keeping the spirit of the deceased in the house with proper respects helps flourish of the family with children, wealth and honor.\textsuperscript{243}

This kind of folk beliefs have wide range of practice among most of the tribes and castes in India. Even the people of the higher strata believe of the tutelary to be worshipped this way or that in thir families. The chhāhir-ānā performance is more distinct among the people who do not follow or partly follow the Vedic rites. The place at the interior of the house which is prepared for the spirit as pindo or piṭhā, which other people give by the bank of a sacred river and thus pitor or piddor worship at least once a year is a common practice.

\textsuperscript{241} Informant: Sri Nayak, 68 & Sri Nayak., 58.
\textsuperscript{242} Informant: Sri Nayak.68
\textsuperscript{243} Informant: Sri Tanti, 63 on 30.8.2004.
among all the Indian people. The main feature of the piddor worship among the Oriya people in the plantation is that they never allow the spirit of their ancestors live outside; though sometime they observe the pindo-dān for the salvation of the soul of the dead.244

The ‘tin-diniā’ performance: On the third day of the dead the tin-diniā performance is observed, as the family felt to be chhutuk since the burial of the dead all the activities in this performance done by the matrilineal person or the members in the kutumb. The objective of this performance is to initiate the persons in the family to prepare thei own food giving them to take the taste of fish, bitter, oil, etc., Some of them like the people from the western part, specially, the people of the higher strata are not allowed to take these items until the main function of the dosā or dos-diniā performed. They are however, allowed to cook their own food without the taste of such things.245

The dosā or ghāt-uthā: On the tenth day of the dead kutumb help the family to clean themselves by shaving, cutting of the nails etc. and taking of bath. The jhākor who plays the role of a pujāri dedicate some fruits, flower with earthen lamp to all God and Goddesses and other spirits around to bless the family. The person observing the brat, have to keep few more rituals since the day of the death and to be pleasure from his tenth day sorrow. After the cleaning and blessing is over the family offers a meal to the invitees.246

244. Informant: Smt Nijra Tanti 58, on 6.2.2003.
246. op.cit., Kurmi(Ed) 2001, p.133.
The 'chhāhir-ānā' ritual: The chhāhir-ānā or invitation of the spirit into the house is observed by almost all the tribes and castes of the Oriya origin in the plantation of Assam. The overall performance of this ritual is similar and very little difference found in the observance. The performance is observed during the midnight by all the people in sound environment. The western people like the Kotkia, Sundorgorhia, Gangpuria etc., perform this ceremony a little elaborately arranging the most favourite edibles of the dead. The persons involved are also received with light feast. Among them, during the evening hour a pit is dug in front of the courtyard of the house into which an egg; beetle-nut and pan and pānc-sikā are placed. Then the persons who were the carrier of the dead are given with chicken curry, a piece of pitha made of rice and some native wine to eat. They eat the food and wash their hand and mouth on the pit. The wastes of the edibles are also placed into the pit and are buried when the jhākor chant some mantra. This event is called khonda-kāāt. The feast usually offered after the chhāhir-ānā event to the people. The family members participated in the feast has to save a little share from their own shares before they take. The members saving the shares should be five in number. This performance is absent among the Oriya people of the Eastern part.247

The main performance which is common to all takes place at midnight when people are slept and there is no noise of any kind outside. The persons who are engaged for the performance take the share mean for the dead, attached it with sādā-chunā beetle-nut and pan bidi or the articles the dead was habituated to take in his life; are carried to a nearer spot where the dead is buried to invite his soul. They make some arrangement there and offer the edibles to the soul and request it to come to live

247. ibid
with the family. During the offering the family members call the dead with the name they were calling him. As the situation is quiet due to the midnight when everyone is slept and no sound is heard; any sound heard is believed to be the indication of the soul accepting the dedication. They respond the sound and one of the persons present begin to beat a tin or something else to make counter sound much lighter than the usual and starts returning towards the house of the family believing that the spirit is following the sound. Other people with him also follow him.\textsuperscript{248}

The family, in the house put out all the lamps in the house and makes invisible darkness. The persons on their arrival ask permission to enter the house and after getting permission they all get into with making a big sound out of the tin or of the door thus informing indirectly that the soul or spirit has entered the house. The women in the family keep some rice powder or wheat powder making it plain on the top on the doorstep or at the interior and wait. After the sign of entrance an earthen lamp is lit and the powder is examined whether the entry of the spirit made any signs or not. Very often sign of the legging of human, cow, dog, cat, pig, bird etc. are seen on the plain powder and believed that the spirit has come to live with them. In future the place is used for dedication of the tutelary\textsuperscript{249}

The \textit{chhāhir-ānā} or \textit{chhāhir-dhukuwā} performance is however, differ from caste to caste. The Kondhria, Sanliia and Dongorliia originated from Bolangir and Sambalpur districts follow similar practice with little differences of individual origin.\textsuperscript{*} But the method has some specific differences with the

\textsuperscript{248} ibid. p.134.
\textsuperscript{249} ibid.
people of other areas. This is due to the areas where they live are under the influence of the neighbouring castes and tribes.  

The Kondhrias call it jee-dhukuā. They confirm the day of the performance by the deptā, invited by the diari who only on Tuesday evening of the krishna-pakhya can call the depta on him by following some individual observances.

3:01:3: Birth Rites:

Few religious beliefs are also associated with the birth and puberty rites of the Oriya people originated from the tea gardens of Assam. Birth of a child considered as reincarnation of the family tutelary in the house. They immediately begin to observe the infant of any of its resemblance with any of the ancestors. If any of such resemblance found, the name of the ancestor is given to the baby and respected as such. Beside the birth ritual the family also observes religious performances for the betterment of the child in future. The religious performance generally, the trināth-melā, when observing assure to complete at least five melā. Other performances may be the general kirtan in the family participated by the neighbours. Sometime they invite the diari to see if any evil spirit is on the way of the baby.

250 Observed in the field on 27.8.2004.
3:01:4: Puberty Rites:

On attaining puberty of a girl the rituals increases according to the hour, direction, place of the first menstruation etc., which is confirmed by the diari, the depta on him. The first menstruation takes place during the evening hour; on the khat or in such a lane of inauspicious mean are felt to be inauspicious to the girl also. Generally, small particles of different metals, colour, special items are the oblations to remove the bad omen. The girl is felt inauspicious to attend any f the religios rituals until she gets a social bath. The beliefs are widely followed by all the Oriya people. The Oriya people, who are converted to Christianity, do not observe this ritual and allow their girl to move any where if she has no trouble doing it. They specially observe the birth ceremony of a child with taking sacrament in the church as advised by the priest.253

3:02: Festivals and Celebrations:

The external expression of social behaviour is called festivals. A series of performances of music, plays, feasts or honour to a historical events, birth or death of a hero or god are enacted by a community. The recurring moments of special significance is called festival.254 Festivals are the occasions through which beliefs; rituals etc. of the ancient community survive. They may be the ritual of days grow longer; to expel winter; to appease goddess of the field, forests and hills, specially to promote fertility and safe life. Generally, a festival is based on rite, and the rite is based on certain belief or myth.

254. op cit., Dorson (Ed) 1972, p.159
Association of rite and myth develop festival. Festivals may be classified in the following ways:

1. Seasonal Festival
2. Calendar Festival
3. Limited Participatory Festival and
4. Sacramental Festival

The Oriya people of the tea garden are of tribal and non tribal character. It is difficult to separate them from this synthesis. If it is assumed that they are one of the parts of the Vedic people it will be impossible to separate their tribal character to prove it. Sometime it leads to confusion that they were originally tribes but sanskritized in deep as it is impossible at present to classify them. Thus, the festivals of these people bear the character of both tribes and sanskritized form.

1. Seasonal festivals: Seasonal festivals are the nuwā-khāi, phāguwā, fishing, hunting, Karam-puja, etc. which is celebrated both at family and social level. Nuwā-khāi, for the Kondhriā Oriya is a family festival to enjoy the new seed with the tutelary gods and none allowed participating except the person with the family. The girls at home are not allowed to take the meat of the dedicated fowl in the interiors. They are allowed only parts of outside dedication. The Dongorlia and Sanlia Oriyas also follow this ritual. But the Oriya people originated from the district of Sundergarh, Aungul, Puri etc. let others participate on this occasion. Nowadays, collective nuwā-khāi is organized in some tea gardens for the collective feasts only but

256. op.cit., Das&Mahapatra (1979), pp.10-11
they never comprise with their family ritual.\textsuperscript{258} \textit{Phāguwā}, though associated with religion is celebrated as a social festival; few taboos like \textit{ābir} applying only on the maternal but on the foot of the respected person but not on the elder brother or sister by his younger brother’s bride or younger sister’s groom.\textsuperscript{259}

\textit{Karam-parav}, fishing, hunting, etc. are the festivals of the tribes like \textit{Oraon}, \textit{Munda}, and \textit{Kharia} etc., who are living in the tea garden. These festivals are however, participated by all in the tea garden. Karam-puja, sometimes observed by individual families is participated in its \textit{jhumoir-ākhdā} indiscriminately.\textsuperscript{260} \textit{Karam-parav} can be celebrated on any day after the month of \textit{Bhādo}. This festival has no relation with the Oriya people. But in Hatiati T.E. and Bojoloni T.E., both in Dibrugarh district, found two Oriya families observing the ritual. The general Karam festival celebrated by others in the line or village or publicly is equally participated by the Oriya people of all sections.\textsuperscript{261} Group fishing and hunting in a river or a \textit{beel} or pond takes place during the month of \textit{Phāguwā} and certain rituals are followed which are clear instances that they are borrowed from tribal people. The Oriya people originated from the eastern part of the present State of Orissa take part in hunting and fishing festivals. The western participate only in fishing as I have observed.\textsuperscript{262}

2. Calendar Festival: Calendar festivals are the \textit{Chutriyā}, \textit{Rath-jātrā}, \textit{Phāguwā}, \textit{Push-puni}, \textit{Ushā-parav} etc. In the environment of the plantation, they also observe Durga Puja,

\textsuperscript{258} Informant: Sri Ranjit Tanti (65) on 23.3.2006.
\textsuperscript{259} op.cit, Kurmi (ed) 2001. p.95
\textsuperscript{260} ibid , p.163.
\textsuperscript{261} Informant: Sri Giridhar Nanda (55) on 12.1.2006.
\textsuperscript{262} Informant: Sri Nanda on 12.1.2006. (a cotnext was attended by the informant in Baghjan T.E. few years back).
Kali puja, Dewali, Independence Day, Republic Day as calendar festival. But the later celebrated in the plantation environment participate indirectly but enjoy the festivity equally with others. Chutriā, Rath-Jātrā, Phāguwā, Push-Puni, Grām-Pujā, Ushā-Parav etc. are celebrated at family and social level with little difference as influence of their regional origin. Chutria by the Kotkia, Anugul, Sundargarhia, etc. celebrate more elaborately than the people of Kolahandi, Bolangir and Sambalpur. This festival is socially celebrated during the dark day of the month of Asada. Ratha-Jātrā falls on the brightest day of the month of Asada and celebrated publicly. But in Assam very few such celebrations is observed. The few which are celebrated are participated not only by the Oriya people but also other castes and tribes in Assam. Grām-Puja is also celebrated during the month of Asada but it is restricted participatory. The males in the line or village only participate the rituals outside the line or village and whatever dedicated, they are either loose opened or buried in the spot and nothing must be brought home. Push-Puni is celebrated in less festivity and are participated by young boys only to driven the insects, mosquitoes, etc. from the villages or lines. In this festival, the young boys consume the edibles outside the village or line and nothing is brought back to home. This festival is more popular among the Oriya people, originated from the Eastern areas.

Celebration of the Independence Day, Republic Day etc. are nowadays, losing its festivity and the holiday they get out of those two occasions, they use for their personal life. Durga puja, Kali Puja etc. are organized publicly in some of the tea gardens in which the Oriya people, as worker contribute their

263. Informant: Sri Joton Tanti (50) on 15.4.2005
264. Informant: Sri Suresh Das (58) on 9.7.2008
265. op.cit., Kurmi (Ed), 2001, p.93.
266. ibid., p.97.
part; do not participate in the celebration directly but enjoy the festivity. As they are not directly involved in this festival they use the holiday for their family purposes. Phāgųṣa is celebrated at group level where dance, street-play, etc. create festivity which is enjoyed by all. Dewali for them is only a day of lighting and burning of crackers. In the plantation situation the males engage in gambling during this occasion and feel the festivity through it as they believe that both gain and loss is fortune for the year.

3. Limited participatory festival: Festival gets the meaning if it becomes open participatory. The Oriya people have very limited festivals of restricted participatory. A few observations of the marriage rituals, the birth rites and the puberty rites, etc., have some occasions to be called festivals enjoyed by the females only. In these occasions the females sometime sings and dances at the interiors of the house and if a male comes they stop. Similarly, if a girl gets puberty the males of the matrilineal family make some jokes and the situation becomes festivity for the time being. They are the occasions taking place all of a sudden associated with time and place. There are, however, some social rituals participated only by the males. The Gram-puja, Push-puni, etc., are purely restricted participatory. Other special occasions in the marriage, chutriā, etc. are participated only by the males but not restricted participatory. Among the Dongorlia Oriya people the binkimārā performance participated only by the males though the females are not prohibited to observe. The bride and bridegroom playing of the mundi-luklukāni, observed by the people around but cannot

267. ibid., p. 113.
268 Informant: Sri Dipen Tanti (35)13.11.2002
269. loc.cit., Kurmi (Ed)
participate. Playing of the musical instruments sometime becomes occasion of festivity but for the male only.\textsuperscript{270}

4. Sacramental festivals: Religious rituals dominate in the marriage, birth, puberty rites and death; they are associated with gathering of people with feasts, dance and music. The situation gets festivity due to the cheerful occasion in them. Death, generally an occasion of sorrow but during the day of morā-kāām, the relatives and neighbors try to ease the situation by arranging feast with delicacies and sometime even with music and dance. This is only to divert the sorrowful mind of the close relative of the dead from their remembrance.\textsuperscript{271} The gathering, the arrangement of feasts therefore become festivity. This however, takes place when the dead is cremated but if buried the festivity lessens. The caste Hindus generally the situation gets festive due to the dosha and doha rituals formally observed. The tribal Oriya or the people of lower strata arrange it in limited manner so the festivity is missed. The Christians among the Oriya people gather on the burial occasion and on the tin-diniā (tiloni) and morā-kāj occasions. During these occasions, they only pray for the dead and for peace in the house. They also arrange feast on the morā-kāj day which gets festive due to the participation of all the members in the society. In relation to the puberty the whole situation becomes enjoyable for the Oriya people as they regard puberty as the initiation of a girl as a woman. The puberty ceremony takes place on the ceremonial bathing day of the girl which is associated with few rituals. The whole matter is restricted participatory and only the females are allowed to participate.\textsuperscript{272} It is compared with the marriage ceremony and

\textsuperscript{270} Informants: Sri Bijoy Nayak (35) on 30.1.2006
\textsuperscript{271} Informant: Sri Karamsing Bhakta (62) on 15.1.2006
\textsuperscript{272} Informant: Smt Hemo Nayak (58) on 23.3 2003.
the rituals resembles with it. Females enjoy the whole period till the ceremonial bath. Men can participate after the bath in the social feast offered by the girl's family. During the occasion music, songs and dance are performed like marriage. The Christian Oriyas do not observe the puberty rites or arrange feast for the occasion.\textsuperscript{273}

Birth of a child in an Oriya family is an occasion of joy and they try to enjoy it. Since birth of a child, and up to the \textit{sasthi} the woman in the family directly involved with the whole matters and the rituals associated. On the \textit{sasthi} on twenty-first day complete cleaning of the baby, mother and the house is done and feast is offered to the \textit{kutumb}. The feast is participated by both men and women with joy and gaiety; presents are offered to the mother and baby. Sometime, the \textit{namakaran} occasion is observed ritually, light feast is offered to the invitee on this occasion. Thus the occasion gets festivity according to the process of its celebration which the poor hardly get.\textsuperscript{274}

3:03: \textbf{Recreation and Games:}

Play is the most natural and sometime spontaneous expression of people of all ages. According to Robert A. George, "play is a form of expressive behavior common among all human beings and manifested overtly in all culture. Like art, language and religion, play is a complex phenomenon that cannot be defined succinctly. Several characteristics, however, can readily be isolated."\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{273} Informant: Smt Kamela Kujur (59) on 12.7.2007
\textsuperscript{274} op. cit., Kurmi(Ed) 2001, pp129-130.
\textsuperscript{275} op cit., Dorson 1972. p.171
Play refreshes one from fatigue, provides satisfaction and relaxes the mind from general tensions. It however does not directly satisfy biological needs associated with survival or produce wealth or goods. It can contribute substantially to physical, social and psychological growth and development of a person.\textsuperscript{276}

Pastimes are termed as non-game recreation as it does not involve competition between two or groups with explicit or implicit rules, specified the kind and interaction permissible to the players who are familiar about them before the action begins. It determines the winner and loser. All the games outdoor or indoor, minor or major involve this character.\textsuperscript{277}

Games are associated with situation, weather and knowledge. In Indian situation major games like hockey, football, cricket, etc.; minor games like basket ball, volley ball, tennis, badminton, etc. and many other indoor games played by both boys and girls, men and women. Major games in Indian condition are hardly played by females. But most of the indoor games involve them as most of the outdoors is associated to the males only. Ancient games like hunting, fishing, horse-riding, elephant-race, chariot-race, buffalo-race, oxen-race, donkey-race, etc. were played by men only, sometime involve females of the royal families. The modern outdoor games like football, hockey, kabaddi, khokho, etc. involve all but these games are yet to be widely popular among the rural Indian people.\textsuperscript{278}

Traditionally, the rural Indian people are agrarian in character and most of their time passes producing something.

\textsuperscript{276} ibid.
\textsuperscript{277} ibid., p.174
\textsuperscript{278} op.cit., Tasa (Ed), 2003. p.18.
In between their work they find out pastime and games of short period so that it should not hamper their work. So they organize competition in fishing, hunting, arrow-shooting, etc. which involve competition and in the name of time-pass produces something. These games involve production for the whole family or a group that participate in them. There are some plays which are associated with fertility, religious ritual and to match with the nature. Most of the children plays are associated production. They are played indoors and sometime in the secured areas.

The Oriya people being one of the races of the Indian associated with all of the above nature of play. In the plantation situation, the nature of their play or pass-time, however, got a big change. In this situation they had to find out new pass time or games to be involved. The new situation compelled them to leave their traditional pastime and involve a new kind of games adjustable to the plantation situations.

Hunting is a game for most of the tribal people. They enjoy involving with certain ritual at the beginning and after involve also their families. Every success indicated on their forearm by burning spot. On return from hunting the housewife washes their legs and respectfully adore to the entrance. In the plantation situation, the majority tribal populated line practice with participation of the minority of the Oriya people. The Kondho of the Oriya people are more interested to participate. The preys are equally distributed among the participants before leaving for home.

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279. ibid.
280 ibid.
281. Informant: Sri Nanda (58) on 15.1.2007
Fishing involves direct participation of all the inhabitants of the line including the Oriya people, specially the males. They play mud; make jokes etc. enjoying fishing in group. It does not require a systematic, pre-planned or experienced player rather more enjoy is affected according to more expertise on catching fish which is like winning of a game.\(^{282}\)

During their work, specially, in plucking the leaves or the female involved \(hāāt-bāchchā\) work they make jokes, chat among each other and equally enjoy when working in the paddy field.\(^{283}\)

Sacramental plays during the marriage involve the bride and bridegroom which is observed and enjoyed by others. Generally, finger-ring, coins, \(cowri\), etc. are used in this game.* Among the Oriyas of Aungul district bride keeps some coin in her closed hand and the groom has to bring it out forcing to open the closed fingers. If he is unable the bride gets prize. Others enjoy the whole activities. The \(ek-sāir-khel\) which is like the chess is played by the adults. \(Khāpri-bhāngā\) play (preparing of a rectangular or circular diagram on the earth) is played by both boys and girls. \(Chor-khel, kābādi, chhāgli-bāgli, bilāi-puchu, luk-lukāni\), etc. are played by teenagers. Marble, arrow shooting, finding stone, etc. are for young boys. Rope pulling, \(chāntā, bitu, ghar-ghorā, jhulnā, bhāt-bhātri, chhenā-chhenā\), etc. are for young girls. \(Kāthi-khel, bokā-khel, phāguwā\), climbing tree or pole, play with the pole and knives, etc. are specially meant for the teenage boys. They are the symbol of their future capacity to deal with the environments. In other words they are training of the young to match the society.

282. loc.cit., Dorson.
283 Informant: Smt Hemo Nayak (63) on 8.7.2007
in future. The most favourite games among the Oriya young men are the khuti-bāḍi, bāḍi-ghichā, pole-dance, danda-nāāch, etc. A number of gambling plays are also seen among both the males and females. Dobol, sula-gutiā, marble-guti, play-card, dice, etc. are such plays. Plays involving gambling are seen specially, during the dewali occasion. Dice play which is also a gambling play attracts the males in the tea garden during Durga-puja, Kali-puja and Dewali. Regular gambler plays it in every payment and Sunday markets, sometime to gain and sometime to loss. The cock-fight, favourite among the adult males takes place one or twice in the selected akhda during the off seasons (December to February) which is gambling of cocks.

3:04: Folk Medicine:

Societies since ancient times developed system of the different diseases they face in their day to day life. The knowledge of such practice traditionally evolves adopting new methods in the course of time. Since the early people wondered and worshipped the nature they derived their treatment system also from the nature. It may be the herbs, particles of other things or the supernatural powers like ghosts and spirits. In the course of time they began to believe that the supernatural power is responsible for their diseases and the cure lies in them. This belief led to witchcraft and shamanic tradition. The whole method of treatment may bed divided into three major categories: the herbal, supernatural and the treatment by other particles.

284 loc.cit., Tasa (Ed)
286. Informant: Sri Mahanandia.
287. op.cit., Dorson (Ed) 1972, p.192.
The Oriya people in the plantation of Assam are one of the earliest people of the country bearing the general tradition of medicine like others. But, there is some difference regarding household treatment system they practice. Belief of supernatural power predominates among them as they are less known about the herbal medicines. This is due to their places of origin were dry regions surrounding the southern portion of the Chhotanagpur plateau. These areas are not only dry and hilly but too hot to grow plants. The situation led them to depend more upon the devi and deptā and the witchcraft. They began to adopt certain devi or depta to keep their family and the society healthy, saving from the attack of the evil spirits. Belief in the spirits and witchcraft led to treatment barriers from the evils as tābiz, māndli, stone, and blood-sacrifice.288

The magico-religious treatment system involves belief in supernatural powers. Among the Oriya people systematic following of this process is socially accepted and practiced even in the environment of the tea plantation also. The people of a certain area socially organize themselves into a kutumb which is responsible to evolve the clan tradition. The clan tradition is nothing but adoption and regularization of a beneficial spirit to whom once in a year formally invied and offered oblation to save the society from evil effects. The evil effects include all kind of disease, natural calamities, family disturbances, production of crops etc. This spirit comes on he socially accepted diāri, and talks, guides, shows his supernatural power through him. When a family invites him in trouble the diāri is to be informed and the day should be dark night of Tuesday and during the times pf falling of the dusk. The spirit comes to the diāri on his semi-conscious condition, talks to the family, identifies the cause of the illness, advises

288. loc.cit., Das&Mahapatra.
what to do or not to do and leaves. The whole occasion hardly
takes half an hour.289

They believe in three kinds of spirits i.e. the spirits
driendly and beneficial to human; the spirits harming people and
the neutral one. The kutumb adopt one or two from the
beneficial spirits from among many who is sufficiently powerful
to check the society from the attack of the evil ones. The evil
spirits try to influence over the people to get oblation and if not
offered do evils. The neutral one lives outside the dwelling
areas; harms a man if he does some wrong to him or if the man
is a noble one helps him in troubles. The diāri who is also the
shaman plays the role of medicine-man in the society. He treats
a person through his own experience or by the guide of the
spirit on him. He however, follows strict abstentions to acquire
the power.290 The Eastern Oriya people, including Aungul,
Sundergarh, Puri etc. name him as dehri who not only practice
the ritual himself but teaches the disciples kalshi. Among the
tribe Oriyas, witchcraft is practiced widely. Elwin has rightly
observed, "The Konds are the greatest of magicvians and their
women are the worst of witches."291

Belief in supernatural powers responsible for the ills; the
Oriya people not only accepted oblation for satisfaction of
different spirits but began to believe in different kinds of tābīzs
of metals and parts of animals and plants. One such tābiz is
called māndlī of copper made out of the moustache or nails of
tiger which is fastened on arms, waist or neck. If such māndlī is
on the body no evil spirit can harm a person. Such māndlī are
also covered with certain herbs which are felt sacred such as

289. Informant: Sri Mahanandia.
290. Informant: Mahanandia.
291 op.cit., Das&Mahapatra. (1979), pp 88-89
the roots of basil, *pippal*, or the *bos* to keep away from being *chhutuk*. Going to the burial ground or to an unholy woman is avoided; or it is believed that the metal will automatically disappear. If one has to go to such places one has to keep the *māndli* under the pillow or on a place of worship but not at the place of the tutelary gods.\footnote{loc.cit., Kurmi (Ed)}

The Oriya women, specially the old women through their experience and observation of the more older women of the past knows the minimum treatment system in household condition; specially for the younger and infants. They keep reserve certain materials like bone, oil, nail, wastes of different types of beasts and birds, leaves, roots, fruits, seeds, etc. and old *ghew*, sugarcane, pumpkin, powder of medicinal plants, oil of the dolphin and birds for immediate use at home during disease. They use as primary treatment are the mustard oil, garlic, mustard seeds, castor oil and seeds, *til* oil, oil of the fowl etc. For the muscles problem garlic boiled mustard oil is used. For infants they use mustard seeds mixed with garlic; frying it with the oil and applying it on the neck of the baby. On breathing problem, they give a round paste of mustard oil mixed soot on the head of the baby. They frequently use turmeric paste mixed with mustard oil for both baby and his mother from the very moment of the birth till the *sasthi*. Vegetables like *mungā* (sajina) are served to the pregnant woman until she gets dry. A pulse called *kolod* served to increase breast milk.\footnote{Informant: Smt Nayak.63} The baby is washed and massaged three times a day; puffed through its mouth to bring out the coughs through noses. If the baby after birth does not take breath; they hold the baby upside down hanging and the baby begins to take breath and cry. The tender bone of the neck of a baby sometime displaces and it

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{loc.cit., Kurmi (Ed)}
\footnote{Informant: Smt Nayak.63}
\end{footnotes}
cannot suck milk. The *dhāi-buḍhi* in that case, made some mild massage on the tender neck and the baby begins to suck. This way if small boy or girl suffer from muscle aches, they are lied on the floor on its stomach, put their leg on their waist and pull the hand and leg of opposite sides in such a way that the displaced muscles gets placed. The massage of mustard oil by the old woman is the immediate cure of body ache, fever and flu.\textsuperscript{294} A number of persons also massage with *sus* oil to remove paralysis; castor oil for displaced bone; sometime turpentine and kerosene oil is also used to remove pain from displaced vein. Bone is also replaced using *gath-joda* herbs by experts.\textsuperscript{295} Women also do some minor cut-out of the sceptics on the children. Turmeric paste is used to remove pain; *phul-hābi* with lime to stop blood, tobacco with coconut oil to avoid effect of the leaches is their day to day business during their work in the plantation. Bee and wasp stung are cured with immediate applying of cow dung paste. The tea garden hospital in far away and their primary treatment to these minor ailments they know very well. The Oriya people learnt it from other companions in the tea garden atmosphere because; in their present state such herbs are not found. Their immediate treatment was met with turmeric, *jāḍā* (castor), mustard oil and seeds, garlic and the different parts of animals and fowls they keep reserve in their houses.\textsuperscript{296}

The roaming charmer, though it be from any caste or tribe assures to remove poison of any kind of from the affected part of the body by his charm. Snake-bite or other poison rooted on the body are tried to remove. Even the body affected by snake-

\textsuperscript{294} Informant: Smt Nijra Tanti (58) on 3.7.2006
\textsuperscript{295} Informant: Sri Parmeswar Satnami (63) on 12.6.2005. The informer himself is famous for this treatment.
\textsuperscript{296} Informant; Smt Tanti (58)
bite is not buried but floated on the river in the hope that such charmer will find it and treat it to cure the body. These are the mix nature of medicine. They use most of the herbs which are learnt from their neighbouring castes or tribes.

As said earlier the Oriya people did not know herbal medicine as the places of their origin lack the greenery. Specially, the Oriya people of the Tinsukia district most of who originated from the western regions of the present State of Orissa. They are more laid towards the megico-religious medicines and the household materials which come to their hand immediately are the primary way of treatment. For the major disease they had to depend on their tutelary gods or the adopted spirits of the kutumbs.
*Modoi* system ploughing

A kitchen of the tea garden community

A traditional reception of a guest
'Dopta' walking on burning coal

"Badia" for distribution

Tattoo on the leg of a woman

Alekha Mahima Dhama shrine