

An Anthropological exploration of “Dhemsā” dance in the context of “Chait Parab” among the Paraja of Koraput District, Odisha

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Abstract: “Chait Parab” is a colorful seasonal festival observed by the Paraja tribe inhabiting in the Koraput district of Southern Odisha, reveals the complex relationship between rituals, music, and dance as well as how they are related to tribal identity formation. The current study seeks to explore the cultural implications of the “Chait Parab” festival, with a special focus on the performing tradition of “Dhemsā” dance and its related musical instruments, along with their nomenclature and meanings in the “Desia culture” domain. The article, with the aid of ethnographic research, tries to reveal how the performing rituals during the festival contribute to identity formation and social cohesion. The study also explores the gender aspects that are integral to the festival, with an emphasis on the complementary relationship that exists between the genders in ritual or performative settings, as well as the cultural restrictions that are imposed, especially with respect to the female role in sacred instrumental music. However, at the same time, it critically examines the emerging changes due to modernization, tourism, and the increasing commodification of indigenous culture in the market domain today. The paper also emphasizes the ability of the Paraja community to cope with emerging changes while maintaining continuity with their heritage. The paper also emphasizes the need to develop community-based strategies for preserving culture, including revitalizing traditional institutions like the dormitory system (Dhangdibasa), with the cooperation of communities, government agencies, and NGOs. The paper as a whole presents “Chait Parab” in relation to other discussions in anthropology regarding indigenous culture, performative traditions, and intangible heritage in India. The paper also bears importance in relation to anthropological research on tribal festivals in Eastern India.

Keywords: Chait Parab, Dhemsā dance, folk instruments, Desia culture, Konda Paraja, traditional attire, tribal identity, cultural preservation, performative traditions, modernization in Odisha, Koraput, Southern Odisha

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I. Introduction

The study of intangible cultural heritage has become essential for understanding how local communities and their cultures continue to exist in today's globalized world. The picturesque region of Koraput located in southern Odisha, India, which people, often refer as the 'Kashmir of Odisha' because of its natural beauty serves as an excellent location for this research study, besides the natural beauty, the Koraput region has been recognized as an anthropological research attraction mainly because various tribal communities such as the **Paraja, Gadaba, Desia-Kandha, Bhumia, Pentia, Bhotra, Gond, Amunatya, Didai, Holva, Jatapu** and others, who have preserved their unique traditional culture across generations. Their colorful festive and ritualistic life, like the “Chait Parab”, “Push-Punei” showcase performing art forms like *Dhemsā* and few other folk-tribal dances along with the gorgeous accompanying tribal music, which play a crucial role in enabling social harmony, supporting community ethos, maintaining their distinctive identity and celebrating their deep-rooted bond with nature and supernatural world.

The present paper aims to explore the “Chait Parab” festival, which is celebrated during the spring by these tribal communities, and the performing tradition associated with this festival: the “dhemsā” dance. “Chait Parab” is celebrated during the month of Chaitra (March-April), which is a significant time in the tribal calendar that corresponds to the beginning of the agricultural cycle, the first mango-eating festival, and the beginning of traditional hunting expeditions. This is also a sacred occasion for the worship of gods and ancestors and seeking their blessings for a prosperous future. While the importance of this festival in the agrarian cycle and its ritualistic

significance has been discussed in tribal folkloric traditions, the performing tradition associated with this festival is the *Dhemsā* dance.

Dhemsā is a well-known tribal folk performing tradition which plays a vital role in the ritual life of many indigenous communities in southern Odisha, such as *the Paraja, Gadaba, Desia Kandha, Bhumia, Pentia, Bhotra, and Durua*. *Dhemsā* is not composed of a single style; instead, it is made up of many different styles that are set apart by the way instruments are played, the way rhythms are maintained, the way footwork is made, the way space is arranged, and the way rituals are performed. Each variation is part of a specific ceremony, which shows how the performing community looks at the world and how its society works. Both men and women participate by forming a circle, semi-circle, linear or semi-linear structure, often holding hands or placing arms around each other's shoulders or waist, and move rhythmically to the beat of traditional instruments like *dhola, mohuri, dhumsa, tudubudi*, and *tamak*. The dancers, adorned in colorful traditional attire, move in unison, symbolizing the unity and collective spirit of the concerned tribe.

II. Objective:

This research paper seeks to explore the cultural, performative, ecological and bio-social dimensions of the traditional dance and music, during *Chait Parab* within its indigenous context. The specific objectives of this presentation are:

1. **To document and analyze the ceremonial and performative structure of the festival:**
The study aims to document the ritual sequence and organizational structure of *Chait Parab* which will be helpful to interpret the hidden symbols and religious purposes the *Paraja* community practices during this festival.
2. **To investigate the accompanying music and material culture associated with the performance of *Dhemsā* dance.**
The study explores three areas, which include
 - I. documenting local nomenclature of traditional musical instruments, their origin and purposes
 - II. analyzing the musical expressions to discover their hidden symbolic meanings
 - III. studying how performers use their decorative items and traditional costumes to express their cultural heritage during dance performances.
3. **To trace the gender role and generational dynamics involved in the celebration of the festival, through youth dormitory system**
The present study examines how different age groups participate in the festival while assessing how men and women perform their specific festival-related duties and their functions in the event. The study will also focus on how different age groups pass on their cultural knowledge across generations, what is the role of their dormitories and how modernization changed the significant role of this dormitory system.
4. **To investigate the interrelationship between nature, indigenous knowledge systems, and performing traditions during the festival.**
The study aims to assess three elements which are natural environment components, indigenous knowledge systems and performative artforms to show their interrelated functions which express tribal cosmology and heritage.
5. **To assess the impact of modernization and external influences on the continuity of the festival tradition.**
The present paper also examines, how urbanization, cultural shifts, administrative actions and governmental interactions all affect *Chait Parab* and its traditional performance & rituals and also how the religious conversion ultimately affects the continuity of the festival and the interconnected dance performance as well.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

The paper investigates *Chait Parab* through qualitative ethnographic fieldwork which studied *Paraja* villages located in **Koraput** and **Nabarangpur** district of Odisha. The researcher collected data by observing participants and conducting semi-structured interviews with tribal elders and dance performers and youth, thorough focus group discussions regarding the festival and dance traditions. The researcher documented the related dances and other material cultural aspects through audio-visual methods. The researcher also obtained ethical approval by following ethical procedures which required them to obtain informed consent from participants. The researcher conducted thematic analysis of the data to study how tribal folkdance traditions support communal identity among the people and help them preserve their own cultural heritage

V. Results & Discussion

Chait Parab: The festival of welcoming Spring, practicing Hunting & Agriculture

Chait Parab is closely associated with several minor ritual performances, like “*Amba Nuakhia*”(first eating of mango), “*Benta Jatra*” (hunting) and “*Bihan Parab*”(Sowing of seeds) because each observance contributes to both cultural and agricultural aspects of the festival. The article presents a study on how the *Paraja* community conducts their celebrations through a specific sequence of events. The festival begins with the observance of “*Kutumb Basnika*” which serves as a ritual, in which the *Disari* (traditional priest and astrologer) uses an astronomical calendar to find a suitable time for the ceremony and then the villagers sit together with the elders to decide how and when they will start preparation for the festival.

The community proceeds to organize the festive activities only after they have finalised the celebration date. *Chait Parab* rituals begin with *Bihan Puja*(*Seed worship*), which is locally named as *Bhiit Pandoi* and then progress as *Parab Khia to Maddimaoo Niuuta* , *Guddi Parab* and *Benta*(hunting) which includes *Tingri Benta* and *Bada Benta* as its two sections. The male participants play games which demonstrate their competitive spirit and they participate in these games before they start their local contest which they call “*Karuguddu dangnikka*”. The festival contains various rituals which display their distinct cultural and symbolic value to create a complete understanding of its festivities. The community maintains their agricultural ties through farming rituals and their ancestral ties through ancestral offerings which create a bond with their sacred land and ancestral lineages and continuity of spiritual traditions. *Chait Parab* celebrations combine the traditional music and dance elements with the rituals to create a religious celebration which also serves as a communal gathering for people to express their cultural identity and reveal their festive spirit.



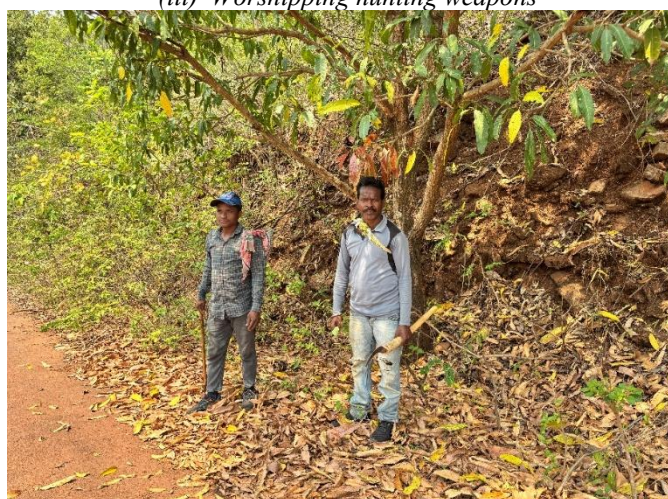
(i) *Bhiit pandoi* (ritual purification ceremony of seeds)



(ii) worshipping the agricultural tools



(iii) Worshipping hunting weapons



(iv) Paraja males while searching for “benta(hunting) in forest

Socio-Cultural Background of the Paraja Tribe:

The *Paraja*, recognized as a traditional Scheduled Tribe, derive their name from the term “*Praja*”, which signifies “common people.” According to a popular folktale within the community, “*Paraja*” and “*Raja*” (king) were two brothers who once competed to climb onto the back of an elephant, an act symbolizing authority and power within the social order. The individual who successfully mounted the elephant was to assume the title of *Raja*, while those who searched for a ladder for the purpose and failed to climb, remained as *Paraja*, representing the common people. This narrative metaphorically reflects their historical position as tenants under feudal authorities in different regions, while also illustrating their strong sense of collective identity and community solidarity.

The *Paraja* community has inherited its linguistic heritage from the Dravidian language family, known as *Parji*. The cultural heritage, such as Dhemsā dance, and folk music like “*Dungdunga Geet*” and “*Todde Geet*”, reflect the unique cultural identity of the *Paraja* community. The geographic distribution of the *Paraja* community is mostly found in the hilly and valley regions of southern Odisha. The largest population of the *Paraja* community is found in the Koraput district, followed by a significant population in Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, and Rayagada districts of Odisha. It has been historically documented that the *Paraja* community migrated from the Bastar region in the erstwhile Madhya Pradesh, hence the *Paraja* community refers themselves as “*Bastaria*.” Other historical and scholarly research has indicated that the *Paraja* community might have also migrated from the Arku region in the state of Andhra Pradesh as a result of which, and the historical roots of the *Paraja* community are still a topic for further research and study.

In the *Paraja* community, the members of the society have been divided into two major subgroups, referred to as “*Bada Paraja*” and “*Sana Paraja*”. There have been various sub-tribes of the community, including the *Pengo*, *Jhodia*, *Chelia*, *Konda*, *Bareng Jhodia*, and many more. The sub-tribes have been linked to the traditional occupation of the members of the community and their mode of organization. The mode of interaction between

the sub-tribes of the community has been governed by certain traditional norms and taboos, especially regarding the mode of eating and marriage alliances, which have been adhered to by the community members.

The primary mode of living of the *Paraja* community has been farming. In this context, the celebration of the “*Chait Parab*” festival during the sacred month of *Chaitra* (March-April) has been the ceremonial beginning of the agricultural season for the community members. During the ritual, the community members have been observed to ritually worship the seeds, agricultural equipment, hunting equipment, and mangoes, which have been a manifestation of their love for the natural resources of the nature.

Dhemsā dance: A traditional tribal folk dance (a product of *desia* culture)

Origin:

Dhemsā dance, an integral part of tribal cultural performances in southern Odisha, has come into existence with the emergence of *Desia* culture in the erstwhile Koraput district. Under this umbrella of “*Desia*” culture, different tribal communities perform *Dhemsā* dance with their own style and flair. This can be seen with respect to certain musical instruments used, rhythmic movement followers, and colorful tribal dresses. This shows the cultural diversity of different tribal communities participating in the larger *Desia* culture. The emergence of *Desia* culture can be seen as a result of interactions between different tribal communities over a period of time, which has come alive vividly in different forms of *Dhemsā* dance, today.

Meaning of the term “Dhemsā”:

The origin and meaning of the term *Dhemsā* have been a subject of discussion for various scholars who try to trace back its linguistic and historical origins. According to researchers Rajendra Padhi(2009), Satya Narayan Rath and Saimen Bidika(2022), “the term ‘*Dhemsā*’ could have been derived from a term in a local dialect called *Bhumia*, ‘*Daensaasha*,’ which means ‘let us jump.’ Here ‘*Daensa*’ means ‘jumping’ and ‘*Asha*’ means ‘to come.’ The energetic and rhythmic movements of the dance make its essential characteristic.” However, some researchers also suggest that *Dhemsā* bears a close resemblance to the *Chhau* dance tradition of Mayurbhanj. In particular, a connection is established between the percussion instruments used in both *Dhemsā* and *Chhau* dance traditions. In *Chhau* dance performances, for instance, a prominent role is given to the use of the *dhumsā* drum. In *Dhemsā* dance performances, however, the *tamak* drum is used to produce a resonant ‘*Dhum-Dhum*’ sound, which could have been a possible reason for its name. According to a Western scholar named **Walter Compman**, *Dhemsā* is a tradition that predates written history.

Variations in the types of *Dhemsā* practiced by various communities:

According to the empirical perspective through fieldwork, the footwork and movement patterns in “*Dhemsā*” dance of various tribes are likely to be linked to the associations with their spiritual beliefs about the “*Devatas*” (god/goddess) worshipped by each tribe. These associations are expressed through the physical movements of the dancer’s body, the rhythms (*tala*) of their footwork and body, and other patterns of the dancer’s movements. Over time, these ritualistic expressions have been copied by various communities in their “*Dhemsā*” dance performances, resulting in multiple styles of the dance being performed by the different tribes. The “*Mahuri*”, a traditional blowing instrument, is a significant component of these differences. The “*Mahuri*” establishes the rhythmic framework (how many beats) and performance style for the dancer’s movements, and affects how they perform the different rituals. The concept of “*Paar*” defines how to maintain the coordination between the *swara* (melody), *laya* (tempo), and *tala* (beats), and serves to maintain the individual expressive styles of the dancers from the different tribes to their shared *Dhemsā* cultural heritage. These types are:

1. *Anta jhulani*
2. *Bagh Dhemsā*
3. *Bali Dhemsā*
4. *Baarkodi / Baatkodi Dhemsā*
5. *Bami Kundani Dhemsā*
6. *Banjarani Dhemsā*
7. *Bhajiphula Dhemsā*
8. *Bhandani Dhemsā*
9. *Bhumia Jali Dhemsā*
10. *Chhattisgarhi Dhemsā*
11. *Chhinglaani Dhemsā*
12. *Chooti Dhemsā*
13. *Daal Kholā Dhemsā*
14. *Dalo Samar Dhemsā*
15. *Doudani Dhemsā* (Running-like dance)
16. *Eksegundari Dhemsā*
17. *Gahuda Dhemsā*

18. *Giriliaa Dhemsas*
19. *Godibetani Dhemsas* (Stone collection dance)
20. *Gunduri / Usku Dhemsas*
21. *Hindani Dhemsas* (Walk-like dance)
22. *Jhadamali Dhemsas*
23. *Jindiri Dhemsas*
24. *Joudaani Dhemsas*
25. *Kanaphula Dhemsas*
26. *Karapani Dhemsas*
27. *Kattimarani Dhemsas*
28. *Khamunia Dhemsas*
29. *Kindri Bali Dhemsas*
30. *Kundaa Dhemsas* (Bending down, face downward)
31. *Lachkani Dhemsas*
32. *Lahuramara Dhemsas*
33. *Lejabali Dhemsas*
34. *Mandia Lachkani / Mandia Moda Dhemsas*
35. *Natikarri Dhemsas*
36. *Palani Dhemsas*
37. *Patar Tola Dhemsas*
38. *Pila Jhulani Dhemsas* (Nabarangpur)
39. *Piraaliya Dhemsas*
40. *Rinhodi Dhemsas* (Young girls’ dance of Paraja tribe)
41. *Saainlodi Dhemsas*
42. *Sarabali Dhemsas*
43. *Sira Dhemsas* (Possession dance of Shamans)
44. *Tinikonja Dhemsas*

Accompanying instruments:

The *Paraja* community considers the “*Dungdunga*” or “*Toinla*” a primary and distinctive musical instrument, integral to both music and dance performances, Specific in the *Rinhodi Dhemsas* dance of *Paraja* community. The Empirical observations reveal a nuanced categorization in the use of musical instruments within the community, influenced by cultural and social norms. For instance, the *Bada Paraja* subgroup, which abstains from consuming beef, avoids playing instruments crafted from cowhide due to dietary and cultural prohibitions. In contrast, other *Sana Paraja* subgroups (*pengo paraja*), with the notable exception of the “*Mahuri*,” all instruments are traditionally played by male community members. The use of the “*Mahuri*”, a blowing instrument, is believed to have been introduced into *Paraja* and followings are the local names and corresponding *Konda Paraja* terms for the instruments used in the *Dhemsas* dance.

Table – I
Accompanying instrument in *Dhemsas* dance among the *Konda paraja*

SI No.	INSTRUMENT NAME	DESIA LANGUAGE	KONDA PAROJA LANGUAGE
1.	Small drum	Tudubuddi	<i>Kiriddi</i>
2.	Bass drum	Dhamp	<i>Dhaap\ dhaapu</i>
3.	Kettle drum	Tamak	<i>Tudumu</i>
4.	one-string fiddle	Dungudunga	<i>Toinla</i>
5.	Indian Oboe (wind instrument)	Mahuri	<i>Mayyiri</i>
6.	Flute (wind instrument)	Bainshi	<i>Piridi</i>



Jodia paraja (old lady) playing Dungdunnga

Traditional attire:

The traditional attire worn by the “Paraja” tribe during “Dhemsas” performances is distinguished by its aesthetic appeal and cultural specificity which creates a distinct appearance when compared to the costumes used by other tribal communities who also perform “Dhemsas” dance tradition. The performance gains visual appeal through these special dress elements which function as vital signs of cultural identity. The Paraja community uses their traditional clothing to display their cultural identity and showcase the various ways people practice Dhemsas cultural traditions. The section focuses on the study of Dhangiri female dancers who display their traditional female dancer garments and their local names which community members use to identify these items.

Table-II
Attire and it’s local nomenclatures:

Adornments	Local terms
Hair clip	<i>Sipna</i>
Bindi (Forehead dot)	<i>Baatu</i>
Eye kajal	<i>Kattiga</i>
Ear ring	<i>Nangul (Desia) , Paggda</i>
Upper ear rings	<i>Baweli</i>
Nose ring(Middle)	<i>Kami</i>
Neck ring (Silver)	<i>Gaggda</i>
Necklace (Gold)	<i>Bangarang puushe</i>
Long neck lace	<i>Dabbumalli, damiki</i>
Bangles	<i>Gassku</i>
Anklet	<i>Paating</i>
Toe ring	<i>Bathku</i>
Ring	<i>Wetori</i>
Hair bun (Khosa)	<i>Muulla</i>



Paraja ladies in their traditional attire

Chait parab in association with Dhemsas:

The Dhemsas dance is an important aspect of tribal festivals and is a key part of the culture of the tribe. It is particularly present at many different forms of Dhemsas during the Chait Festival which celebrates hunting, farming and the seasonal enjoyment of mangoes. These rites are performed by the *Paraja* tribe. There are many different forms of Dhemsas; however, the *Sainlodi* Dhemsas has a very special place in the many forms of Dhemsas. The word "*Sainlodi*" comes from the word *Sain*, meaning "friends", therefore the *Sainlodi* form of dance is an invitation to your friends to come and dance with you. The *Sainlodi* Dhemsas is performed together by men and women and is most commonly performed at the end of a successful hunting expedition called *Bada Benta*. When the hunting expedition is successful, the joyful feeling of success and the group's success is presented through the dynamic and vigorous movements of the *Sainlodi* Dhemsas, thus reinforcing the bonds of social unity in the tribe through the celebration of their collective success.



Sainlodi dhemsas

In the tradition of *Dhemsas*, specific foot movements such as *Antajhulani*, *Khedani*, *Khundani* and *Bassigatnika* serves as transitional steps between different segments of the dance. These movements are tied to the *laya* or rhythm—locally referred to as *Paar*—as played by the *Mahuria*. The synchronization between the footwork and the rhythmic patterns enhances the dynamism and continuity of the performance.



Antajhulani dhemsas by the paraja elders



Bassigatnika movement which helps to maintain the pelvic health of the ladies

A significant variation of *Dhemsas* performed during the celebration of Chait Parab is **Sirra Dhemsas**, which is closely associated with trance and spirit possession. This form of dance is usually performed by the *Sirra* or *Gurumai*, who function as the ritual specialists, shamans, or spiritual mediums within the community. In some cases, ordinary participants may also enter into a trance state and perform the dance when they are believed to be possessed by a deity. Unlike other forms of *Dhemsas* that emphasize communal celebration and social bonding, *Sirra Dhemsas* holds a deeply ritualistic and spiritual character.

Sirra Dhemsas is most prominently enacted during the ritual known as **Tingri Benta**, a sacred offering made to the deity at *Nishani Munda*, a revered ritual spot within the village landscape. This ceremony takes place before the community undertakes the major collective hunting expedition known as **Bada Benta**. The ritual is performed to seek divine blessings, protection, and success for the hunters before they enter the forest. Through this ceremonial act, the community symbolically negotiates with the supernatural realm to ensure safety, prosperity, and well-being.

A distinctive feature of **Sirra Dhemsas** lies in its close association between music, rhythm, and spiritual invocation. Each deity is believed to be connected with a particular **Paar**, or rhythmic pattern, which is performed by the instrumentalists using traditional percussion instruments. When these specific rhythmic sequences are played, they are believed to invoke or attract the presence of the corresponding deity. Individuals who enter into a trance state respond to these rhythms through particular bodily movements and gestures that symbolically represent the manifestation of the deity's power.

Thus, **Sirra Dhemsas** transcends the boundaries of dance as a mere cultural performance. It serves as a medium of spiritual communication between the human and supernatural realms, reinforcing the community's cosmological beliefs and ritual practices. At the same time, it strengthens collective identity and communal

solidarity, as the entire village participates—either directly or indirectly—in invoking divine protection before undertaking an activity as significant and potentially dangerous as the communal hunt.



Sirra Dhemsas by the possessed individuals

In the performance of *Dhemsas*, the dance line is usually arranged as a continuous chain with two guiding dancers positioned at the front and the rear of the formation. The dancer at the front initiates and directs the movement of the line, while the dancer at the end ensures coordination and continuity. When the leading dancer at the front becomes fatigued, the dancer at the rear seamlessly advances to the front position and assumes the role of guiding the line. While leading, she brings in subtle variations in dance steps based on the changing rhythmic patterns of the accompanying music, and the rest of the dancers follow these changes together.

Locally, the leading dancer is called **Battkadhani** in the Desia language, and she plays a key role in guiding the flow of the dance. The **Battkadhani** usually carries a bundle of peacock feathers called **Majurmutta** in Desia. In the *Konda Paraja* language, these feathers are known as **Mirlipuri**. This symbolic prop is used to signal directional changes and coordinate the movement of the dancers within the line. The use of such objects helps coordination and improves the visual aesthetics of the performance.

Within the *Dhemsas* formation, dancers occupy specific positions that are identified through locally recognized terminologies. These terms correspond to their placement and functional roles within the dance structure.

Table-III

In English	In local terms (Desia)	Paraja’s term
The lead dancer (at first position of the line)	Battkadhani , jhalaau	Nakishha \ aagdi
Middle dancers	Daauni	Naddmi / maajei
Last one dancer in the line	Jhalimarani	Wenka

The community shows their love for each other through dance during Chait Parab which brings them together as one family to share their happiness. The *Dhemsas* dance at this festival demonstrates how tribal people live their life through both their sacred and everyday activities. Some dance forms are performed during religious ceremonies while others function as traditional social activities that communities use to celebrate their daily lives. Besides these dances, one of the most notable forms performed during the hunting season is the “**Maweti Nach.**” This dance takes place after the hunters return with their catch from the forest. While the women eagerly await, the hunters arrive, dancing in celebration of a fruitful hunt. In their local language, this form is called “**Maweti**”

Nach." During this event, the hunters enthusiastically chant a traditional phrase to command the dancers and instrumentalist to begin the dance with the vibrant rhythm, as

"Bijhode Raddu Saraaakinatle, rippamuddu kuddunade sardaakinatle,"

(after successfully done the hunting expedition the male chants this to begin the dance)

Following this chant, the *Dhangras* (youthful male members of the community) perform the hunting dance, embodying the spirit of communal unity. This exemplifies how the integration of *Chait Parab* and dance constitutes an inseparable and intrinsic aspect of tribal cultural life.

Negotiating Gender role in participation:

The *Paraja* society maintains its egalitarian structure because men and women work together to accomplish their daily for which they share their work responsibilities very systematically. The *Chait Parab* festival shows different gender relationships because people have the ability to choose their culturally prescribed options. Women can join their husbands on hunting trips until they reach the forest border because their physical body do not permit them to hunt. Women help to create the ceremony's emotional and social components through their welcoming behaviors which show the community's shared work to honor the hunters returning home.

But the other hand, *Dhemsā* dance permits everyone to participate because dancers have the freedom to create their own dance lines which can include between 5 to 500 people. Musicians who play musical instruments create one specific exception to this rule. The *Paraja* community believes that the *tamak* and *dhol* instruments serve as vessels that carry "*Paraja dumma*" the spirits of their deceased ancestors. The instruments hold sacred value which makes it more difficult to enforce traditional bans that prohibit women from playing these instruments during their menstrual or pregnancy periods. The *Paraja* community shows how ritual purity and ancestral veneration together with gendered cultural practices define their societal structure.

Contemporary Challenges:

The traditional hunting festival *Chait Parab* which the *Paraja* tribe celebrates has experienced significant changes due to modern developments and the growing impact of tourist activities. The community has experienced both advantages and difficulties because of such developments. Public interest in the *Dhemsā* dance and its rituals has grown through increased tourism which has helped protect tribal cultural heritage. Government-sponsored cultural program and tourism initiatives have created platforms through which these traditions are presented to broader audiences, thereby enhancing awareness and appreciation of the community's rich intangible cultural heritage.

The growing presence of external observers has also changed the way certain rituals are performed. The performances change their original form through their process of adaptation which creates new challenges to visitors who want to see authentic ritual practices. Young people start to develop their modern values through consumer culture and media exposure which causes them to view traditional customs and rituals as outdated practices that no longer hold value in today's society.

The rising trend of festival tourism has started to generate more commercial activities. The community members at *Chait Parab* celebrations now ask festival visitors for money at all public locations like roads and pathways. This development shows how communities rely on tourism for their economic needs while external factors create changes in their traditional cultural practices. The uncontrolled tourist influx will create environmental damage and disturb all sacred areas and ecologically important sites which exist throughout the village landscape. The existing situation requires a compatible tourism approach which combines economic growth with protection of *Chait Parab* tradition's authentic cultural elements and its ecological preservation and ritual traditions as well.

VI. Conclusion:

Chait Parab maintains its role as an essential cultural element that connects the *Paraja* people of Odisha to their ancestral heritage. The festival shows indigenous belief systems through its spiritual devotion and seasonal cycles while demonstrating the community's shared values and social bonds and their cultural understanding of the world. The event operates as a vital moment that strengthens social unity while reinforcing community ties and passing down cultural practices from one generation to another. The musical performance of *Todee Geet* and the *Dhemsā* dance's participatory elements show how artistic expressions function together with both religious customs and daily social activities.

The cultural framework of this society enables us to study how women behave which helps us understand how men and women interact with each other. The festival requires women to perform music and dance and participate in rituals while their cultural obligations and social standards determine their festival attendance. The tribal societies present a complex system of gender responsibilities through their combination of active participation and their limitations which society determines. The *Paraja* community shows their spiritual

connection to their ancestral heritage through their practice of preserving sacred musical instruments and their dedication to ancestral traditions.

The world has changed because of modernization and tourism and media exposure which has created both new possibilities and different challenges for society. Tribal cultural traditions have gained more public attention because of increased visibility which has created new economic opportunities that benefit the community. The festival experiences changes in its meaning and execution because of these outside factors. The new tourist practice of asking for money together with outside people performing sacred rituals demonstrates how external interaction and commercialization will change the festival's original purpose and cultural value.

The situation needs government and non-governmental organizations to provide their essential assistance. The organizations must fulfill their duty to present tribal culture as more than a public display. The organizations need to help local communities establish their own methods of cultural heritage preservation and interpretation through their own cultural perspectives. The *Paraja* people demonstrate their ability to adapt and create through their ongoing development of Chait Parab which responds to changing social conditions. The *Dhemsā* dance functions as the main component of this changing tradition because it shows the active cultural energy and shared community identity of the festival.

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