

## Understanding of Folk Literature and Culture of Purulia through Bandna Parab and Vadu Parab.

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### Introduction

Purulia, the land of Chhou and Jhumur is now days popularly known as the queen of the Jangalmahal of West Bengal. It is a part of the Chotonagpur plateau. The present geographical location of Purulia is encircled by Hazaribag, Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Bokaro districts of Jharkhand. During the British rule Purulia gained much importance. Earlier it was a part of Manbhum, Bihar. But it was in 1956 that the district of Manbhum was partitioned and Purulia was formed as one of the districts in West Bengal ("Historical Events: Bhasa Andolon"). According to Jaina Bhagavati-Sutra, Purulia existed as early as 5<sup>th</sup> century and was one of the 16 Mahajanapadas of its time. It is also believed that in ancient history Purulia was a part of the country known as Vajra-Bhumi.

Here people still live in the lap of nature. As per 2011 census total population of the district is 2930115, out of which 87.26% are residing in rural areas and 12.74% are in urban areas ("District Profile"). Majority of them speak in their rural language. This agricultural land is culturally rich and very much fertile. The folk tales and stories are the ornaments

of this district. Though here people are divided by caste and religion, they are united by culture. The folk stories constitute and enrich the folk literature of this district in particular and India in general. Here, people are too simple and they have their own mythical stories that constructed their social and cultural life. This is mainly a rural area and the peoples are involved heavily in agriculture. Amidst their hard work, they find pleasure in their folklores and the culture, festivals that they used to practice from ancient times. It impossible to trace the root of their folktales but there is no doubt of the fact that their stories are as rich as their native culture. Folk culture is originally a localized form of culture that illuminates the identity of a group of folk. Researchers and academicians from the later 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century drawn up a notion of “ the folk as relatively untouched by the modern world and of folk culture as precious survivals and relicts from bygone cultures transmitted orally down through the generations.” (Mukherjee and Bhattacharya 157).

There is a proverb that is “ Bangalir Baro mase tero parbon” meaning “ Bangalies have thirteen festivals in twelve months ”. The Purulians also have more than twelve festivals. The census report of 2011 showes that almost 2667 villages of Purulia used to celebrate the indigenous festivals.

But they are unique because their festivals are based on their own mythical stories. They have their own song, manners, and rituals to honor and worship their God. Kurmi dominated Purulia believes in their own folktales. They believe in these stories and used to celebrate and honor the God or Goddess of these stories. The folktales of Vadu, Tusu,

and mythical stories regarding the most popular Bandna Parab affect the life of the people of red soil too much. Nowadays the deity Vadu and Tusu become part of their own family, more clearly the daughter of every Purulian family. Karam geet, Bihar geet (marriage song), Jawa geet, Vadu gan ( song in the honor of Vadu), Ahira gan ( song in the honor of Lord Shiva ), Tusu gan ( song in the honor of Tusu), etc. are part of the folk literature of Purulia . (“Fairs and Festivals : Purulia”). These are composed of the native rural people. They do not need any kind of education for the composition and practice to present those songs. The ability to present these exist in their blood. Through these, they express the love, failure, achievement, sufferings, fortune, misfortune, etc. of their own life. These songs are carried from one generation to another from mouth to mouth. The folk stories of Purulia are mainly about the tales about “Panchakot Raj Bari”, a royal dynasty of Purulia.

It is impossible to understand the folk literature and culture of Purulia without possessing a clear concept about their native traditions, gods, god related myths, lifestyle, and their way of dedication and devotion to nature. People of various casts of Purulia like Kurmi, Dom, Bauri, Suri, Santhal, Chasa all believe in these folklores and mythological stories. Manbhum poet and researcher Kiriti Mahato opines that “the festivals that are the outcome of these myths brought all of them under a single umbrella and it helps a lot to develop the folk literature of Purulia .” It is worthy to mention sayings of W.W Hunter that he makes in his famous book *The Annals of Rural Bengal*

“I have endeavored to delineate the inner life of those distant Asiatic nations over whom a branch of the Anglo-Saxon Family has been called to rule. Separated from us by half a world, their vicissitudes, social necessities, and religious cravings are nevertheless pregnant with interest to all who would contemplate the picturesque yet painful stages, through which lies man's route from barbarism to civilization and assured faith. The grand problems of life are everywhere the same. It is in the solution of them that races differ.”

### **Bandna Parab**

Bandna is one of the most popular festivals of Purulia. It impossible to trace the root of Bandna Parab, but the academicians are agreed that it is too ancient. It started before the intrusion of Aryans. Later the Arya people continued this tradition in imitation of the mainlanders. In the academic spheres various theories are available regarding Bandna Parab. J.G Frazer in his book *Golden Bough* wrote that Ox is the symbol of potency, Godhead and grain. He also added that in many West-Asian countries the folks assume the tail of ox as the symbol of tiny plants. However , another historian named J.Harison in his book *Ancient Art and Rituals* gave different theory regarding this. For him this festival is about eating the meat of ox and the tradition of burying some amoun of ox meat in the corn field. However, from being a part of the country known as Vajra-bhumi to being a part of Jungle Mahals district and then the the folks of Purulia used to celebrate this in honour of their cattles.For Agarwal the relationship between man and animal is ancient. This festival is a kind of solace upon the exploitation that man used to practice

on domestic animals. This festival is historically important as it provides a glimpse of agricultural association of the people from ancient times.

The word 'bandna' comes from the original Bengali word 'bandana' meaning 'worship'. It is celebrated on 'Kartik Omabossya' (new moon) every year in Purulia with pomp and joy. In Purulia 'Bandna Parab' officially starts after the day of Kali Puja but the preparation of it starts just after the Durga Puja. It is the festival Kurmi, Bhumij, Lodha, etc. group of people of Purulia. For Santhal and Munda, this festival is known as 'Saharai'. It is their biggest festival. Though Durga Puja is the largest festival of Bangali, in the case of Purulia role reverses. The rural countryside of Purulia easily beats the glamour of Durga Puja. To them 'Bandna Parab' is not just a festival, it is an emotion.

Bandna parab is an umbrella term as it brings many rituals of Purulians under an umbrella. Purulia is mainly a rural district and the houses of most of the people are made of mud. Due to the heavy rainfall, their house becomes fade. So, as preparation for this festival, they also repair their own houses. They do not have any artificial colors to paint and decorate the walls of their mud houses. So, they look to nature. And arranges red soil, khet mati ( white soil ), and boil these and then paint their wall with the mixture of the collected soils. Color adds new charm and vitality both to the wall and the life of the people. During Bandna parab particularly in the day of Goroya and Gorukhutta they used to draw alpana on the floor of their house, lawns, and even in front of the main door



of their house.



### The myth of Bandna Parab

Years ago God creates man. It is Lord Shiva who is regarded as the kindest and easily pleasurable. According to mythology from the beginning of civilization Lord Shiva takes the responsibility of men and he provides food for them. But with the passage of time, the population increases and he expresses his inability to provide food for everyone. So, he proposes to start agriculture for men. Lord Shiva provides them crops for agriculture. At this time men used to produce crops by their own effort. But soon they find it too hard. So they request Lord Shiva to find another alternative way. Then Lord Shiva provides them a group of cattle for cultivation on one condition that they would take care of them. They would not torture them.

In the beginning, the relation between man and cattle was good. But with the passage of time, it gradually became worse. Soon it reached the zenith. The man used to beat when the cattle failed to fulfill the expectation of man. The cattle find no way but to

raise complain to Lord Shiva to save their skin from the hand of man. Lord Shiva after knowing this became disappointed and decided to pay a visit to the earth on the new moon in the month of Kartik. Narad muni, the singer of heaven informed this news to the inhabitants of the earth. Then the man before omabossya (new moon) start washing and cleaning their house and cowsheds. They wash the cattle and the instruments in the pond and river. They smear oil and vermilion on their horns. They provide them enough food to eat. Man lightens the cowshed through earthen lamp and also arranges entertainment for the cattle. The group of 'ahira' singers entertains the cattle throughout the night.

Lord Shiva finally arrived and observed everything in detail. He became pleased after observing the healthy relationship between man and animal. Therefore, the complaint against Man proved as false. Next year the cattle sent the same complaint, the man again as a clever being followed the same procedure to please Lord Shiva. Thus, Man saved their skin from the curse of Rudra. Thus the tradition begins and even today Purulians used to celebrate it.

### **Different rituals of Bandna Parab**

Tarundev Bhattacharya in his book *Purulia* divides the rituals of Bandna into three parts. These are 'Jagran', 'Chumag', and 'Nachan'. The Santhals divide the rituals of Bandna into five parts. In their tongue, they named these as 'Um', 'Bangaburu', 'Ghuntau', 'Ghuntichenge', and 'Jale'.

But most of the practitioners of Bandna divide the rituals into six parts. It starts with Tel Dewa and then follows Ghawa, Omabashya, Goroiya, Gorukhuta, and Buri Bandna. The brief discussion of these different parts is following

**1. Tel Dewa:** Bandna parab starts with the ceremony of 'tel dewa'. It is on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight in the month of Kartik as per the Bengali calendar. This night the farmers smear mustard oil and vermilion in the horns of cows, buffaloes, goats, and ships. They regard cow not only as an animal but much more than that. For them, the cow is their 'Go Mata'. They lighten the cow shade by diwa and provide them enough grass so that they can eat throughout the night. This day the family of the farmer also makes 'pithe' for themselves from the powder of rice. The family members of the farmers also smear mustard oil on their feet as they believed that unless they smear oil their dead ancestors will come to summon them.

**2. Ghawa:** Ghawa comes after the day of 'tel dewa', i.e, the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the dark fortnight of Kartik. During this day farmer clears the surroundings of his house and clears the instruments of agriculture and gathers them in front of his, in the local tongue 'tulshi mancha '. During the night again the farmer smears mustard oil and vermilion in the horns of the cattle.

**3. Omabossya:** It is the busiest day. The farmer works from the morning till night to arrange the ingredients for the cattle. He believes that Lord Shiva will come to his house to see the cattle. On this day the farmer with his children takes the cattle to the nearby pond or river to wash them. During this time the woman clears the cattle shade. After



their return, the woman went to the pond with a new tuki(bamboo pot) carrying new rice in it. She returns home in a wet dress and brings wet rice in the new tuki. Then she put the rice in the sunlight on the roof to dry. In the afternoon through ' dheki', she with the help of other members makes rice dust from those rice.



In the evening the boys and unmarried girls went to the beginning of the village to make fire with jute sticks. They make heavy fire with the help of damaged bamboo baskets, logs, etc. They make fire probably to save the village from wild animals on the darkest night of the year. It is true that even today wild animals exist in the rural villages of Purulia and they fear none but the fire. In the local tongue, this fire-making ceremony is known as 'injoy-pinjoy'. After returning from the place of 'injoy-pinjoy' the young members of the family illuminate the rice powder made Diwa on Sal pata and put these on each door of their house including the gowal (cowshed).

Then the woman prepares pithe (cake made of rice ). The senior member of the family worship Lord Shiva in front of the ' tulshi mancha' and again smears oil and vermilion in the horns of the cattle and waits for the arrival of jhangar dal (a group of musicians).

Jhangar dal arrives with singing ahira song in their mouth. They used to sing it in chorus. Through their song, they introduce themselves as the disciple of Lord Shiva. The exact number of these songs are impossible to count. These are not documented in books. These are carried by mouth to mouth from generation after generation. Through these songs,

they praise both 'Go Mata' and the owner of the cattle. Through their songs, they compare 'Go Maa' to Devi Laxmi. The night is sleepless as throughout the night 'jhangar dal' enters into the house of the farmers. They provide them, cake, biri, rice, etc. for their presentation.

In the morning all the 'jhangar dal' gathers and used to buy 'Hariya' (a kind of local alcohol) and enjoy 'Hariya' with cake. Then with the children of the village, they celebrate the 'le - haggi' ceremony. It is a kind of thanksgiving ceremony for those families who provides them money, cake, etc. last night.

**4. Goroya Puja / Goyal Puja:** It is celebrated on the very first day of the light fortnight in the month of Kartik. In the early morning, the young member of the family used to go to the pond to collect flowers for gowal puja. In the afternoon the gowal puja is done in the cowshed. It is worthy to mention that in local tongue cowshed is known as gowal. Here they used to worship 'Goroya Gosai'. The farmer himself is the priest for this puja. No external brahmin is needed. There is no special 'mantra'. The farmer worships the gosai thakur of the gowal in his own words. Then he makes a cake in the gowal and sacrifices cock in the gowal puja to the Gosai thakur.

The most interesting part of this special day is the 'chowk dewa' (paintings) of women. They collect the ingredients to make the mixture for painting from nature. It attracts the attention of all. Here both women and unmarried girls used to participate. Here the women through their five fingers used to draw paintings on the floor. In the local tongue,



they used to call it 'Chwak'.

**5. Goru Khuta / Buri Bandana:** This is the most awaited, most charming, and most interesting ritual.

It used to be held on the second day of the light fortnight of Kartik. Buri Bandna is less popular what is popular is the name 'goru khutta' that is the act of

irritating a cow that is roped to a pole through music, ahira song, and the long skin of cow or buffalo. During 'Gorukhuta' they say peculiar song in the English translation that

is



"Oh Cowboy...

Which bull is pretty jolly?

Which one is mad?

Which one is just a nursling?

Drools in his mom's garment.

Oh, Cowboy...

The red bull is pretty jolly

The white one is mad!

The black one is just a nursling

Drools in his mom's garment."

Before the actual event of gorukhuta takes place the woman wearing a new saree with a diwa in a new 'kula' used to go to the neighboring houses to adore and worship the cattle.

**Bandna parab as the Jamai - Sasthi of Purulia:** Though the soil of Purulia is red, hard, and infertile the hearts of Purulians are too soft. It is proved again and again. They show it through their behavior, gesture, and culture. These folks celebrate 'Jamai Sasthi' in their way. It is a part of their grand celebration of Bandna Parab. The newly wedded couple used to come to the parental house of the girl. The parents of the girl honor their 'Jamai'.

### Vadu :

The folk stories regarding the identity of Vadu too controversial and interesting. But there is no doubt of the fact that Purulians still believe in the myth and folk stories regarding Vadu. This festival is generally celebrated with pomp and joy in the month of Bhadsa as per bengali calendar. About this festival R.P Dutta's observation very important that he made about 139 years ago. Regarding the worship of Vadu he wrote "The worship is a purely aboriginal one, and the goddess Bhadu is not recognised by the Hindus, not has she yet obtained any Hindu worshippers (Ray 12)." She might have obtained hindu disciple at a later period. The festival is purely agricultural and it is very much associated with the history of Panchakot Raj dynasty.



### Mythological Origin of Vadu

Once upon a time, Devi Durga expressed her desire to pay a visit to the Jagannath temple of Puri, Odisha to Lord Shiva. But Lord Shiva did not allow her. So, She became angry and secretly left his husband's house and came to the earth in the disguise of a girl. That time Panchakot Raj Jatalegaruda, the worshiper of Durga was in his hunt. He found the girl crying in the middle of the forest alone. He went to her and felt petty on her. He brought her to the royal palace and adopted her as his daughter. He gave her the name 'Vadu'. Gradually she was growing up on the campus of the royal palace and became a devotee of Lord Shiva. The girl was known for her large heart and kindness. When she came into maturity, the king decided to get her married but she did not agree to get married.

On the other side, the condition of 'Kailas' became tumult. Lord Shiva repents for his decision. His condition was too painful. All the Gods became disappointed. So, they decided to bring back Devi Durga in 'Kailas' anyhow. They gave the responsibility on Narad's shoulder. Narad came to know about the existence of Devi Durga. He came to the palace of Panchakot in the disguise of an old singer and pleased the court of the king through his song. It allowed him to entertain 'Vadu' through his song. He came to her and through his song he narrated the painful condition of Lord Shiva. He also reminded her about her actual identity. He informed the ardent appeal of the Gods about her return.

Finally, she agreed and told her to find a way for her return. She also told Narad that she did not want to hurt the king of Panchakot.

Narad made a plan. He approached Lord Vishakarma to build a palace beside the river Subarnarekha. It was wonderful. All the folks of the kingdom started to visit there. Vadu also demanded the king to pay a visit there. Though there was some hesitation about the permission in the king's mind as he loves her too much, he gave them permission. Vadu, with thousands of attendants, started her journey. On the way, they faced a violent storm raised by Indra Dev. The attendants became scared and left Vadu to find a secure place to save their life. In the meantime, Vadu jumped to the river Subarnarekha. No one witnessed it. After the weather became calm, they started to search Vadu but they failed to find her. They returned to the palace and narrated the incident in front of the king. The king and queen became mournful. Their pain was too much to bear by the folk.

Devi Durga observed it and she decided to come to him to solace. Devi Durga along with Lord Shiva arrived in the palace of Jatalegarura and told them the actual story and the real identity of their adopted daughter Vadu. The king and queen became too happy. They decided to immortalize Vadu. So, they started Vadu Puja throughout the month of Vadra in the royal palace. The news got viral among the villagers of the kingdom. They also started Vadu Puja in imitation of the king. Thus started the Vadu festival in then Manbhum and continuing.

### Peeping into the domain of Folklore to understand the identity of Vadu

The stories of Vadu are mainly Kashipur centric. At that time Kashipur was the headquarter of 'Panchakot Raj', a royal family that ruled Manbhum. There are many stories regarding Vadu. But the most acceptable among them is that Vadu was the adopted daughter of Raja Nilmani Lal Singh Deo. One day during his reign he went hunting but he found nothing to hunt. He became disappointed. During his return to the palace, he saw a girl alone crying in the forest. He went there and asked the girl about her identity. But she told nothing. She was too beautiful. Her beauty and innocence compelled the King to adopt her. After their return to the palace, through a grand ceremony, the King gave her the name 'Vadraboti'. She was too intelligent and popular among the people of the Kingdom. But the sudden and premature death of the girl made both the king and common folk disappointed. They mourn for the girl for a month. It was the time of 'Vadra' as per the local calendar. King Nilmani Lal Singh Deo decided to immortalize 'Bhadraboti' so he started to worship her adopted girl throughout the 'Badra' (name of a month as per Bengali calendar). The common folks started to imitate the King. The 'Vadu Puja' started in Purulia.

Another opinion regarding the 'Vadu Parab' is that 'Bhadreswari or Bhadraboti' was the only daughter of King Nilmani Singh Deo. She was not less than a deity in her look. Her beauty and sill became the reason for King's disappointment as he found it too hard to find a suitable groom for her beloved daughter. The King failed to arrange her marriage. So, she died as a damsel. The king to console him as well as the commoners of

his kingdom started 'Vadu Parab'. They celebrated this only to keep her alive through their culture.



Another legend tells that 'Vadu Rani or Vadrabati' was the sister of Panchakot Raj Garuda Narayan. She was a devotee of Lord Krishna. She always remained busy with Lord Krishna and used to sing-song to worship Lord Krishna. The temple was located at 'Panchakot Pahar'. The attendants of 'Vadu Rani or Vadrabati' could not tolerate her as she loved to remain alone and did not allow them to enter in her life. She took her last breath because of the conspiracy of her attendants. Some argued that she committed suicide. This folk tale is too controversial. Because there is no link between 'Vadu' and Lord Krishna.

People also believe that 'Vadu Parab' is the celebration of the victory of Panchakot Raj over the Kingdom of Chatna. The time period was the month of 'Vadra'. To celebrate this historic victory the King decided to start 'Vadu Parab' throughout the month. This story is also controversial as there is no specific year and the name of King in the record.

Thus, in the kingdom of Panchakot started 'Vadu Parab'. These stories seem to be imaginary but these are not completely imaginary. The celebration of Vadu affects the culture of the kingdom of Panchakot now Purulia a lot. It is visible in the society of



Purulia. Nowadays Vadu no more a deity, she becomes a part of the daily life of the people of Purulia and moreover, she becomes a member of their family. They celebrate this festival every year in the month of Vadra.

**Vadu Parab in 21st century :**



Even today Vadu Parab is widely celebrated with pomp and show. It is mainly woman-centric. Though generally in the festivals of Purulia are both man and woman used to play an equal role. Vadu

Parab is an exception. There is no particular mantra for Vadu puja. Women worship Vadu in their way through songs that they compose for Vadu. They consider Vadu as a 'sokhi' cum deity. The unmarried girls used to bring the idol of Vadu on the very first day of Vadra. From the very first day of Vadra to the end of the month the unmarried girls and married women used to gather together and sing songs. As it is celebrated throughout the month and song is the only medium to worship Vadu, so there exists many 'Vadu geet' (Vadu song). Through these songs, they express their inner feeling, their desire, and longings. Everyday used to draw various kinds of 'alpana' to decorate the floor where they establish Vadu. The girls in the early morning after their bath used to come to Vadu in wet dress and worship her.

The night of Vadra Sankranti (last night of Vadra) is sleepless for them. They offer various kinds of sweets to Vadu. During the night the girls used to dance and sing. They also mourn as Vadu will leave them in the morning.

**Conclusion :**

Modern dramatists and poets discover that the spirit of life exists within folk literature. They use folk stories and songs in their works to make them more realistic. Poets and dramatists like Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Kshirod Prasad Ghosh for the first time used folk stories and songs in their works. It is true that there is no other source than folk stories for a better understanding of the true picture of society. Out of these folk stories, folk literature takes its shape where folk rituals and cultures of commoners play an important role. These festivals bring the mass close to one another and provide them the opportunity to share love, peace, and harmony that is too important even in the twenty-first century.

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