

**Soubhagya Ranjan Padhi**

## **THE RITE-DE-PASSAGE OF DEAD THROUGH GOTAR CEREMONY**

The tribal communities living across the length and breadth of the state of Odisha have enriched the cultural heritage of the state by their cultural diversities. Their rich folk traditions in the form of songs, dance, music, rituals and festivals celebrated round the year add colourful dimensions to their very existence. The amazing conglomeration of traditions, beliefs, happiness, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the religion of tribes have descended from antiquity and have been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every dimension of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion and the beliefs and practices associated with it. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives and solidarity to their social structure. Their belief in supernatural, which regulate human existence in the world, is the basis of observation of many festivals and rituals. The Gadaba is one of the colourful tribes of Odisha. Gotar is a significant ceremony of Gadaba community and vis-à-vis rite of passage signifying an event in Gadab's life indicative of a transition from the stage of unsatisfied evil spirit to another stage of salvation in which the spirit gets peaceful existence. This bring a change in status of Gadaba's life as they believe that spirit of deceased person also leads a life like human being at underworld. Gotar involves with comprehensive rituals when spirit changes their status through a passage from one stage of life to another. The present paper elucidates the splendid ritual practices of Gotar to provide salvation to the spirit.

Religion derives its authority from the supernatural and it functions as an effective agency of social control. In small scale tribal societies, religion is the sole cognitive system and thus shapes the total world view of the people. in modern times though the role of religion is reduced to a little extent, yet it continues to be a strong moral force exercising control over tribal people's behaviour especially in times of social and emotional crises. Functionalists sought the origin of religion in society, rather than in the individual human mind. This perspective considers that social existence of human being determines their social consciousness. It investigates the role of religion in

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keeping the members of the society together and seeks the origin of religion in communal or societal emotion. Religion is viewed as a collective phenomenon for its group or collective activities, which gives religion its specific character and binds people together. It conclusively argues that religious ethics are derived from society and serve to bind the members of society together. The most fundamental function of religion is of solidifying a society which makes it a ubiquitous and undying social institution. Religion, its beliefs and rituals are inseparable part of Gadaba way of life. These are the regular events of Gadaba society followed since generations. Religion for Gadaba tribe is a concrete experience which is associated with their deepest emotions, especially with fear, awe, or reverence. Gadaba society have a wide range institutions connected with religion and a body of special officials, with forms of worship, ceremonies, festivals, rituals, myths, beliefs, sacred elements, and the like. The original purpose of rituals and festivals was to maintain order in society, found in almost every society. It is found in almost every society (Padhi 2014).

### **The Gadaba**

Odisha has a great variety of tribal population. The Constitution (Orissa) Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes<sup>2</sup> Order (Amendment) 1976 enlisted 62 tribal communities and Gadaba tribal community is one of the prominent tribes among them. The Gadaba is one of the primordial tribes of India. They are the speakers of Mundari or Kolarian language. They are seen in adjoining mountainous tracts of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. In Odisha, they are distributed mostly in seven different districts viz. Koraput, Kalahandi, Sundergarh, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj, and Phulbani. However, Koraput, which is designated as a scheduled area<sup>3</sup> has the highest Gadaba population among the districts. They inhabit 3000ft. plateau of Koraput region and are mostly found in the southernmost part of the state in the district of Koraput. In Koraput district, they are found in large concentration in the blocks of Lamtaput, Semiliguda, Potangi, Nandapur and Baipariguda. Gadabas, by nature, are docile, honest, diligent in their work, hospitable and untouched by gluttony, fraud, prevarication and greediness. Their economic poverty is the result of centuries of superstition, domination of upper caste and inaccessibility to the rudiments of basic education and primary healthcare. No precise theory is in existence to prove the origin of Gadaba community. Nevertheless, Gadabas are considered as one of the early settlers of our country. One may trace their origin to the time of Ramayan. It is believed that their ancestors emigrated from the banks of river Godavari and settled in Nandapur, the former capital of the king of Jeypore of the present Koraput district in Odisha. It is also said that the Gadaba had migrated from the Godavari valley to settle eventually in Gadabapada, a village in Lamataput block of Koraput, wherefrom they again migrated to different places of the district in search of land. Another migration theory is also currently suggesting that Gadabas, who once belonged to the Munda group of tribals, were originally

inhabitants of the Bindhya hills. The name 'Gadaba' seems to have been derived from the word '*Gada*', name of a brook in the region. Later, on dislocation of tribal population, Gadabas might have migrated to Visakhapatnam region, and then to Koraput. According to Mitchell, the word Gadaba signifies a person who carries loads on his shoulders. Gadabas were also employed as palanquin bearers in the hills. Thurston and Rangachari say that Gadabas are the primitive tribe of agriculturists, coolies and hunters. They are also employed as palanquin bearers in the hills of the former rulers of Jeypore and thus known as 'Bhoie Gadaba'.

Broadly, there are two main types of Gadabas. One is '*Bodo Gadaba*' or '*Bada Gadaba*' and the other is '*Sana Gadaba*'. They are found mainly in the blocks of Lamataput, Semiliguda, Potangi, and Nandapur in Koraput district. They have a dialect of their own called '*Gutab*' or '*Gutob*' (Pfeffer 1999), although they also use the local Oriya language as well. The '*Bada Gadabas*' still speak the tribe's original '*Gutob*' language of the Munda language family, whereas the '*Sana*' and '*Olaro/Ollar*' Gadabas converse in what they call the '*Olaro*' tongue of the Dravidian language family. Most Gadabas can also speak '*Desia*', the Koraput tribal version of Oriya. So, mostly Gadabas are trilingual or bilingual.

Scholars also classify this tribe into five sub-divisions, such as the Bodo Gadaba, the Sano Gadaba, the Parenga Gadaba, the Ollar Gadaba and Kapu Gadaba. Among the sub groups, the Bodo Gadaba group is held superior to all other groups. Thurston and Rangachari (1909) divided the tribe into five section viz. (i) Bodo or Gutob (ii) Parenga (iii) Olar (iv) Kathithiri or Kaththara and (v) Kapu. According to them, the last two sections, which were found to be settled in the plains, originally belong to Bodo (Gutob) section. Ramdas (1931) also reported a number of classes of Gadaba. The names of the four classes found by him also tally with those mentioned by Thurston and Rangachari, but he has specially omitted Kathithiri (Kathathara) from his list, perhaps because, by then, they no longer associated themselves with the Gadaba. Furer-Haimendorf (1943) too has divided Gadaba into three distinct groups. He has excluded the Kathakari (Kathathara) and Kapu, and also the Parenga from being counted as Gadaba. He has instead, included the Dedeng Gadaba of the hills surrounding Salur (Andhra Pradesh) among them. In the similar manner Bell (1945) who wrote the first edition of Koraput District Gazetteer noted three sub-divisions of the Gadaba in the district of Koraput, viz. the Bodo, Sana and Ollar. The Ollar Gadaba was described by him to be a small community, who spoke a Dravidian language, but to all outward appearances they were similar to other Mundari speaking Gadaba. Rao (1965) states about a different type of Gadaba viz. the Khattri (Non-Dravidian speaking) Gadaba who live near Bobbili of Andhra Pradesh adjacent to Koraput district of Orissa. Thus, Nath and Jha (1969) have added another group called Gurram Gadaba in the category of Gadaba community. Majumdar connects

the Gadaba with Munda family. He observes that the “Gadabas of Jeypore, Orissa are the only representative of the Munda speaking people” and they are “now a small occupational group of palanquin bearers, living east of Jagdalpur of Chatishgarh state and whose cultural life may be distinguished from rest of the tribal stock”. He further goes on to write that the Gadabas belong to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family (Somasunderm: 1949). Though the division of Gadaba varies from person to person, on the basis of language they can be clearly divided into two groups: the Ollar Gadaba form the first group being the Dravidian speaking people and the rest form the Mundari speaking group.

According to 2011 census the total population of Gadaba tribe in India was 1,31,883. However Orissa has the highest Gadaba population in the country. The Gadaba population of Orissa constitutes 64.22% of the total Gadaba population of the country (2011). It is followed by Andhra Pradesh (28.87%), Chhattishgarh (6.47%) and Madhya Pradesh (0.44%). Even though Gadaba tribe inhabits only in four states, it has many precious cultural traits and incredible heritage. Orissa has the highest number of Gadaba tribe. They inhabit in most of districts of Orissa. The total population of Gadaba in Orissa was 67,138 during 1991 census went up to 72,982 during 2001 census establishing a growth rate of 8.70 per cent over the decade. According to 2011 Census, the population of Gadaba tribe in Odisha was 84,689 and in Koraput district alone, their population was 68,677. In other words, 81% of Gadabas of the State are found in this district (2011). Their population in the district was 80.23% to the State’s Gadaba population during 2001 Census.

### **Death Rites**

The dead are buried with their feet to the West. On their return from the funeral, the members stop on the way and a fish is boiled and offered to the dead. An egg is smashed and placed on the ground and pieces of mango bark are laid beside it on which the mourners tread. The women also accompany the corpse, and in the meantime the house of the dead is cleaned with cow dung by the children and others left behind. On the first day food is supplied to the members of the deceased family by their relatives and in the evening some cooked rice and vegetables are offered to the dead. Thereafter mourning lasts for nine days. On the last day, a cow or bullock is killed with the blunt head of an axe. Some blood from the animal and some cooked rice are put in leaf-cups and placed on the graveyard for the dead. The sacrificed animal is cooked and eaten at the graveyard. Then they return to the cooking shed and place its jaw bone under a stick supported by two other sticks. Blood and cooked rice are being again offered. The old men and women bath in warm water and all return to the place where the dead man breathed his last. Here they drink and have another meal of rice and beef which is repeated on the following day and the business of committing dead to the ancestors is

complete. Liquor is offered to the ancestors on the feast day (Russell and Hiralal: 1975).

### **The Concept of *Duma***

The spirit of dead ancestors of Gadabas is called '*duma*'. Those *dumas* may either be evil and good types. When a person dies either due to accident, during child birth, killed by wild animals or snake bite, is murdered or commits suicide is considered as abnormal death. Gadaba believes that when people die abnormally, their soul exists as evil *Duma* and wanders in forests, always searching opportunities to harm their fellow men and his family members. If '*dasa*' (tenth day) ritual is not performed for those people with abnormal deaths, then it is believed that instead of rebirth their soul turns to evil *dumas*. All dead remain as '*duma*' (spirit), but not always turn to 'evil *duma*' (evil spirit). For those the '*dasa*' rituals have been performed they turn to be benevolent "*dumas*" and live at grave yard or in other place but do not come to village to harm anyone (Padhi 2011).

### **The '*Gotar*' Ceremony – A Rite - de passages for transition of Spirit**

The Gadabas are afraid of the '*evil duma*'. Every year their family members are worried about those '*evil dumas*'. They offer food and provide sacrifice to satisfy them. The *duma* goes away to other world permanently, when his children/ grandchildren celebrate '*Gotar*', do the sacrifices of buffalo for their '*moksha*' (salvation). Hence, the *dumas* are transferred to the other world through '*Gotar*' ceremony.

Gadaba's worldview possesses a form of thought that influences the conception of their universe. They broadly divide the universe into three categories viz. *Bhitarpur* (inner world or underworld), *Dhartan* (earth) and *Debata Desh* (the place of God i.e. sky). After one's death, his spirit lives in the underworld known as *Bhitarpur*. In every stage of life they have some short of beliefs and practices. According to their worldview they believe that death is caused due to the departure of *Jiv* (unseen power of life) after which the soul undergoes salvation.

Religion includes myths, rituals and rite of passage that symbolically express their religious and spiritual obligation towards welfare of their society. Religious rituals are those thoughts, which are considered as sacred and associated with the fundamental operations of the universe. The Gadaba of all the villages not only show their faith in supernatural powers but also worship their ancestors on several auspicious occasions. They believe that all persons possess the soul called '*Atma*'. When a person dies the soul departs from the body. Unless the funeral rites are performed the soul remains nearby and becomes a ghost (*Duma*) and even after that they remain like that without much change, till they are given farewell gracefully through *Gotar*.

They perform many kinds of rites and rituals during *Gotar* like other rites of passage viz. birth, marriage and death. They perform these in appropriate times with the advice of *Gotaria Dissari* (the priest specializes for *Gotar* rituals). This ceremony is grandly performed by *Dissari*, who is supposed to bring some remedies in order to control the crisis situation and establish order and stability in their society. Thus *Gotar* rituals are observed to seek the blessing and help of God, *duma* and other ancestors. Basically it is treated as a rite of passage through which evil *duma* gets salvation and becomes free from the painful life.

Gadabas have a strong belief that unless and until the spirit gets *Gotar* it roams here and there restlessly. Only after the completion of *Gotar* ceremony by his kin members, the *duma* (spirit) gets peace and enters the *Bhitarpur* (underworld - the land of death) with tranquility.

In *Bhitarpur*, the spirit lives like a human being. In this world, the spirit leads its life as a cultivator<sup>4</sup>. Therefore the relatives of the deceased offer the spirit some agricultural equipment like plough, rice, axe etc., along with some new cloth, ornaments and *pendam* (customary liquor) at the time of *Gotar*. They believe that spirit likes these things and after receiving these things will be very much satisfied in *Bhitarpur*.

In this *Gotar* they sacrifice only buffalo because they believe that buffalo represents the deceased person. So if buffalo is sacrificed, then only *duma* will get salvation and live in *Bhitarpur* with peace. Feeding the dead through *poda* (buffalo) is the most sacred and required ritual which symbolizes rite of passage for Gadaba life.

The Gadaba people express their satisfaction for having the opportunity to perform *Gotar* ceremony. '*Gotar*' is celebrated in memory of dead persons of their family so that the '*dumas*' or dead person's spirits will get salvation. Some Gadaba families celebrate collectively for their dead family members for whom '*dasa*' (tenth day) rituals have not been performed earlier due to some difficulties. The celebration of this ceremony is highly expensive and thus, it is sometimes celebrated jointly by a number of Gadaba families. Ramadas wrote, "every Gadaba has to perform this great ceremony within three or four years after the death of his father. This ceremony is called the *Gotar*. The son or the brother of the dead man, after the corpse has been disposed of, picks up a stone from the place where the dead body has been disposed off and preserves it carefully for the *Gotar* ceremony" (Ramdas, 1931).

When the family members of a deceased person are not able to perform the *Gotar* ceremony immediately, they go on saving a part of their produce every year. At the end of the three or four year, when the members of a Gadaba household accumulate sufficient agricultural produce for the ceremony, they send out invitations to their kith and kin living in village and even in far-off places, to attend the *Gotar* to be performed on a particular day. Among other

terms of food and drinks, the sacrifice of a buffalo is a must. The brothers or relatives of the dead arrange a buffalo for the purpose. Other relatives, with their family members reach the place a day or two before the fixed day to participate in this grand festival.

### **‘Gotar’ Ceremony: A Reflection of Kinship Ties**

*Gotar* is celebrated in many stages according to its traditional norms. In each stage numerous rituals are performed with the cooperation of kin members.

#### **Lundishitlani**

As *Gotar* is a very expensive festival, it is not normally observed by a single household individually. *Gotar* is celebrated in the month of *Magha* (mid-January to mid-February), because during this time Gadaba households have sufficient stock of agricultural crops. However, before a year or so the proposed date of the ceremony is declared by the *Gotaria Dissari* (the priest specializes for *Gotar* rituals). Normally in the month of July or August (of previous year) the villagers organize a meeting for the celebration of *Gotar* through the proper guidance of *Dissari*. Even though this meeting is arranged to declare the tentative date, it is sanctified by *Dissari* through a number of rituals. *Dissari* sacrifices a crab or a pig at the doorstep of the person who has to tie *Kuti Poda* (the chief *Gotar* Buffalo). Once it is done, villagers beat *Gotar* drum, sing and perform *Dhemsā*<sup>5</sup> dance in front of the *Gotar* doer.

*Lundishitlani* is the next important stage. This refers to a sacrifice that precedes the second meeting to discuss the *Gotar*. In the presence of the village elder, the *Dissari* sacrifices one pig, chicken and egg. Several rituals start in the evening and continue up to the dawn. Soon in the morning, a mass meeting organized to prepare various plans for the *Gotar* celebration. Every detail is finalized. Responsibilities are assigned to *Naik* (Head) and *Challan* (Messenger) by the *Dissari* which is final and binding.

#### **Dumabhariba Puja (Bana Bhariba)**

*Gotar* is a welcome ceremony of the *Dumas* (spirits), actually meant for inviting *Dumas* to the village in order to attend *Gotar* ceremony. This initial ritual takes place normally in the month of ‘*Ashwina*’ (October) with the advice of *Gotaria Dissari* (the priest specializes for *Gotar* rituals). This is relevant because in this day the *Dissari* invokes the spirits to the village with reverence and controls the movements of evil spirits. He restricts the evil spirit within a specific area. The most important event of this stage is that, on this day the *Dissari* puts four ‘*bana*’ (flags) in the four directions of the village as a result, the *dumas* from the village neither go out nor the other evil *Dumas* from outside can enter into the village. Along with all spirits, *Dissari* invites

the 'Gagy, who is considered as the supreme among all spiritual being. He also prays 'Hundi Debata' (Village deity) on this occasion. A pig is normally sacrificed in this occasion to satisfy the Gagy and all other spirits for whom Gotar is going to be observed. The role of 'Chorubhai' is very significant because they cooked 'Chorubhat' (sacred rice) which is offered to the spirits at cremation ground in order to purify them for Gotar ceremony. Dissari first gives life to Dumas by chanting mantras and then offers 'Chorubhat' in jackfruit leaf plates. Gadaba believe that only after receiving the 'Chorubhat' spirits can enter into the village (Das and Pradhan: 2009).

The kinsmen continuously beat drum with other music. According to Gadaba, the main purpose of beating of drum is that by listening the drum sound the evil *duma* will run away from village and cannot dare to enter in to the village.

#### **Poda Kina (Purchase of Buffalo)**

In the month of *Magha* (January-February) on an auspicious day, Dissari performs this particular ritual called 'Poda kina' or purchase of buffalo. The Dissari invokes 'Gogy' (Supreme spiritual being), 'Hundi (village deity) and 'Bhim Devta' (The God for rain) and offers sacrifice of one hen and one fowl in the early morning. After satisfying these supernatural powers, the Dissari finds the 'Subha Muhurta' (auspicious time) for the purchase of buffalo. For this ceremony only buffalo is picked as the animal for sacrifice, because buffalo is considered as most useful and powerful animal like human being. Gadaba believe that *Duma* get utmost pleasure only when he gets the blood of buffalo. While choosing buffalo for the *duma*, kinsmen remember the basic nature and physical feature of the dead. They normally choose a buffalo whose physical features are very similar to the physical features of the dead. If the dead was physically weak then a weak and thin buffalo is selected for sacrifice and if the dead was physically strong, then the family members with the help of kinsmen search for a very strong buffalo at nearby villages. While purchasing this buffalo they don't bother for its price.

#### **Selection of Buffalo**

Dissari first makes the selection of the main Gotar doer i.e. the family which is ready for the main celebration and purchase of 'Kuti Poda' (the chief buffalo). A small ritual is conducted for this occasion. Dissari chants several mantras (hymn) to do the puja for a coin and a piece of rope. He suggests the main Gotar doer to take that coin with him, so that he can get the *kuti poda* with a cheaper price. It is also believed that the piece of sacred rope given by priest will protect the buffalo and no evil spirit can do any harm until the rope is tied around the neck of the buffalo. Once the 'kuti poda' is purchased, the kinsmen start buying other buffalos. Before going to purchase of buffalo they sacrifice a hen in the name of their ancestor. The purchase of buffalo is made



according to the structure and sex of the deceased person for whom the Gotar ceremony is being organized. After the purchase of all buffalos every kinsmen is invited for a collective rituals near *Hundi* (village deity). All *Gotar* doers jointly sacrifice a fowl for *Hundi*<sup>6</sup> in the presence of *Charubhai* (the kin members who can eat the *Chorubhat*) *Panjia Bhai* ( the guests from outside with the same clan) and other villagers pray her for the welfare of the village.

### ***Subha Dia* (Foundation Day)**

This is the ritual through which the actual day of celebration is confirmed by the priest. After the purchase of buffalos is over, *Dissari* intimates all the *Gotar* doer to gathered at *Sadar* (the meeting place) to observe the ritual called *subhadia* (foundation day). Generally it is observed one week before the actual *Gotar* day. The *Chorubhai* and mother's brother of '*kuti doer*' (who does the main sacrifice) is called by the *Dissari* to village *Sadar*. All villagers accompany him by playing music and dancing. *Dissari* sacrifices hen's egg in the name of '*Hundi Devta*' and offers rice and *pendam* (customary liquor prepared from rice) to her. *Dhems*a dance by the village kinsmen performed there and *Dissari* plants a *Simili Munda*s (Silk cotton branch) nearby *Sadar* to worship ancestors. After that two other *Simili Munda*s are posted, one at *Gotar dien* or *Ghara Gotar Munda* in front of house and another at outskirts of the village which is known as '*Pada Gotar Munda*'. These '*Simili Munda*s' are posted in order to give rest for ancestors (*Simili Munda* posted at *Gotar dien*) for village deity (*Simili Munda* posted at *Sadar*) and for the *dumas* (*Simili Munda* posted at *Pada Gotar Munda* at the village outskirts) for whom *Gotar* ceremony has been planned. On this day every *Gotar* doer cooks *Chorubhat* or the sacred rice and offers it to ancestors, spirit and village deity (Das and Pradhan: 2009).

### **Gatamela or Jogarna**

After seven days of the foundation day the actual *Gotar* ceremony starts. All the guests have been invited earlier. The first day of *Gotar* is popularly called *Gatamela* or *Jogarna* (no sleeping day). Normally every guest comes with their own buffalo and gives them to the *kuti Gotar* doer (chief *Gotar* doer) to keep it in his custody. The chief doer family ties them with his own animals to special posts prepared for this purpose called '*Gatamunda*' or '*Gotar Munda*'. The guests are served rice, chicken and *pendam*. All these blood relatives along with the villagers move to the '*Nggom Munda*' which is regarded as the donor family's own stone place. The priest accompanied the crowd with the music party only in the night time because this is the right time for worship of *duma*. At the *Nggom Munda* of *Kuti Gotar* doer, the priest offers rice, sacrifices hen to the ancestors and worship them with respect. *Chorubhai* brings two big stones with the help of villagers. Priest does a ritual to for '*Biren devta*' and then *Chorubhai* and *Panjabhai* erect those two big

stones with the help of villagers. One placed horizontally (*'Silbiren'*) and the other, vertically (*Sanserbiren*). The whole structure of stone, one placed vertically and other horizontally just looks like a chair and it is believed that the *duma* will sit on it and bless the villagers. After the *Gotar* ceremony is over, this stone structure remains there forever in the memory of the dead. Once this structure is made, *Dissari* and the most aged person in the village sits on it, takes bath and drinks *pendam* on it. They bless all villagers and wish for the success of the *Gotar parab* (Gotar festival). No young person is allowed to sit on it because it is only meant for the most respectable persons of the village. After the *Dissari* and the oldest person of the village, only *Panjiabhai* can sit on this. Once this ceremony is over, the villagers anoint the buffalo for ceremonial bath, put vermilion on his head, tie garland around its neck and finally handover the buffalo to the priest. After this all the buffalo brought for the *Gotar* are decorated by the villagers after their sacred bath. *Dissari* feeds the uncooked rice to the *Kuti poda* and then the *Chorubhai* feeds the *Chorubhata*. During this period the aged women sing several *Gotar* songs in the memory of the dead. In all those songs they praise the deceased person by remembering his good deeds.

Through the *Gotar* songs one can observe that in Gadaba community the dead is represented in the form of buffalos. So they pay their reverence, admire and pray buffalo during the *Gotar*. By doing this they wish for the *moksha* (salvation) of the deceased person's soul and at the same time request the spirit to bless the family and all kinship members. They believe in the sacredness of this festival so do not allow the other community members (neighboring Scheduled castes) to feed the buffalo. In a Gadaba village they have many '*Kulas*' [clans like Mundagadia, Bileipadia, Hanjaria, Ayal, Kadam, etc with their respective phratry viz. *Machha* (Fish), *Naga* (Cobra), *Bagha* (Tiger), *Hanuman* (Monkey), *Surya* (Sun) etc.]. For every *Kula* they have their separate '*Nggom Munda*', where they tie their buffalo. However, they rob oil and wash the body of all buffalos along with *Kuti* Buffalo. After giving bath to all buffalos, everyday they feed them properly with rice and *pendam* drink.

***Pakhana Buha* (Day of Carrying the piece of Stone) or *Jagarana* (No sleep Day)**

The day before the *Gotar* is celebrated in a grand way, a community feast is arranged by the *Gotar* doers. All the relatives, *panjiabhai* from nearby villages participate in this feast and co-operate for the final preparation of *Gotar*. *Pakhana* means stone. *Dissari* selects the place from which *panjiabhai* have to pick a big piece of stone and carry it to the *Sadar*. In the morning of this day all *panjiabhai* (guests from other villages) reach that place with drums, ropes and poles. *Dissari* worships the *biren debta* with sacrifice of an egg. After the performance of the required rituals for this by the *Dissari*, *panjiabhai* carry that stone piece with the help of the poles and rope. They also carry two

pairs of stones, two *simili* branches, rice, *pendam* etc. and move towards the village *Sadar*. Villagers accompany the procession by continuously beating the drum and playing music. Generally one of the elder male members of the village leads the procession. At the entrance of the village all the villagers welcome the guests by beating the drum and singing the songs. This is also regarded as a welcome ceremony to the guests. The village women jokingly beat the *panjabhai* color their face with mud and dust which *panjabahi* also reciprocate. Some other women perform *Dhemsā* dance by wearing the traditional Gadaba *Kerang*<sup>7</sup> sari and welcome the guests to the village (Padhi 2011). With all these dancing, singing and music, the entire atmosphere becomes very enchanting and captivates the guests. The entire process is done to strengthen the relationship in Gadaba community. One pair of stone along with the bigger one is fixed at *Sadar*<sup>8</sup> (for the memory of village head) and the other pair of stone is fixed at *Pada Gotar Munda* (for sitting arrangement of deceased). *Dissari* worships the stone by offering flower, rice with the help of chanting *mantras*. He also sacrifices a hen there. Young people dig the hole and helps for the fixing of the stones. The *Gotar* doer sacrifices a cow and a sumptuous feast with plenty of intoxicating drinks is given to all the villagers and the guests who have come for the occasion. Singing, dancing, music and drinking *pendam* (customary liquor) continues for the whole night. Therefore, this day is called as 'No sleep day or *jagarana*' (Das and Pradhan, 2009).

### ***Jurday* (day of tearing into pieces) or Gotar day**

This is the main day of celebration. From the early morning before the sunrise a buffalo is sacrificed at the outskirts of the village in the name of *Rau debta* (Sun God). So this *poda* or buffalo is called *Raupoda*. The priest sacrifices the buffalo with axe facing towards east. Soon after rush towards the buffalo with axe, knife or any other cutting instruments and try to tear out the *Raupoda* tongue. At least everybody tries to get a piece of flesh of that buffalo. Who gets a piece of flesh feels very lucky and stocks it inside their belt or pocket. The powerful persons mainly try to tear the tongue or piece of a tongue of that buffalo because it is believed that tongue is very useful for making medicine. They also believe that piece of the tongue of *Raupoda* can save them from the evil *Duma*. Some of them bury it in their agricultural lands in order to increase the fertility and productivity of the land. The remaining part of the body of the *Raupoda* is equally distributed among *Chorubhai* and *Panjabhai*.

Everybody takes bath after the sacrifice of *Raupoda* and prepare ceremonial food in the early morning. They anoint their buffalo with *karanja tel* (one type of oil) and turmeric paste and then give bath to the buffalo. After their ceremonial bath buffalos are decorated with traditional *Kerang Sari*, other colorful cloths, garland with some ornaments and other usable elements. Primarily they believe that in the underworld also *duma* lives like a human

being and require some useful commodity and food. If those things are not given to them (through buffalo as their representative) then *duma* will be annoyed and may cause several harm or diseases for the villagers.

Gadabas cook rice and offer it to the ancestors in the cremation ground and then every Gotar doer in this day goes to the *Pada Gotar Munda* with their buffalo. Dissari first sacrifices a chicken and an egg at *Neggo Munda*, and then takes the *Kuti poda* to the *Pada Gtar Munda*. *Panjabhai* takes other buffalos and follow *Dissari*. They tie all the buffalos in the *simili* post made earlier. Some years back the *panjabhai* were dancing in front of buffalos by holding sword but now that practice has been stopped. In modern times celebration of *Gotar* has reduced significantly. But if it is celebrated now the *panjabhai* dance, jump and run in this day by just holding a stick in their hand. *Dissari* worships the *Gogy devta* with a sacrifice of hen. He instructs the Gotar doer and *panjabhai* to take all ornaments, cloth and decorative from the buffalo. The Gadaba women start lamentation. *Dissari* chant several *mantras* and take his sharp axe strikes the *Kuti* buffalo first. He gives stroke at buffalo's stomach with axe. Then the mob rushes to the *Kuti* buffalo and strike in its body with their axe. Each of these animals is fed with one or two rupees coin, mixed with bran. Both men and women present on the spot, drink *pendam* (intoxicated drink) and hold sharpened axes in their hands. The object is to pull out the coins which the animal has been fed. The chasers wound the animal with the axes, pull out its flesh and try to pull out the entrails. Every one secures in his lap whatever flesh he could get. The men and women howl in excitement. The person who could extract the coins from the bowels of an animal is considered to be fortunate and it is believed that he would reap good crops that year. They try to tear out the entrails of the buffalo with bare hands. After getting the entrails some wear it in their neck and do wild dance. Some other take it to their agricultural land and bury it there with a believe that by doing this the fertility of the soil and productivity of land will abundant. Priest makes small pieces of flesh to the remaining parts of the buffalo's body and gives a piece to every family who participated in the Gotar. *Panjabhai* sacrifices other buffalos as well and the flesh is used for the grand party in the evening. Next day also another feast arranged for all the participants. However, this day is also called as *kadamara* (Mod bath) day. All the relatives and guests take a mud bath in the village and later wash their body in warm water provided by unmarried girls of the village. Finally the guests receive some gifts like rice, *pendam*, chicken etc., from the *Gotar* doer's house and leave the village with great pleasure.

### **Changes in Beliefs regarding festivals, Gotar Rituals and Supernatural Beings**

Every generation has its own consequences, which are reconstructed out of the changed environment. There is more fluidity in structure and

formation of social realities. Certain old categories seem inadequate to capture or predict social behaviour and gone through changes. The culture is static; yet dynamic. It changes in course of time. Accordingly, the forces of social change have affected the practice of some of the Gadaba rituals and customs which are observed on the occasion of birth, marriage, death and other festivals. The Gadabas have been largely influenced by the neighboring caste Hindus. They consider the Hindu ritual practices as parts of a dominant culture. Their assimilation and integration with the Hindu religion has changed many of their traditional religious practices. Like all other aspects of social and cultural life, changes in religious beliefs and rituals among the Gadaba have been widely noticed. In recent days certain festivals like *Bag Puja*, *Kida Biru Puja*, *Bandapan* and *Mandia Puja* including *Gotar*, are losing their importance among the Gadabas of Koraput district (Padhi, 2011).

Though *Gotar* ceremony is celebrated by *Gutob* Gadabas, the type of handling the buffalo to recover coins from the rectum is no more in existence. In the present days it has been observed that this ceremony has almost stopped in Gadaba society. Some Gadabas opine that the high cost of buffalo, influence of Hindu religion, restriction imposed by the government for animal sacrifice and bloody fighting among tribals during the celebration are the main factors that have affected the *Gotar* ceremony in Gadaba society. They are also gradually realizing the extent of cruelty involved in killing of animals in the name of rituals. Spread of education and contact with other educated mass has enabled them to realize it. With the declining trend of such practice, the worship of ancestor's spirit in thrust and ceremony also lost its importance. These days they mostly worship their ancestors inside their houses on different auspicious occasions. On the whole, death ritual is performed in the same way as it was done before except some ritual changes. Elaborate and expensive rituals connected with the annual festivals and life-cycle of an individual are no more observed with their usual solemnity and splendor.

### **Conclusion**

*Gotar* ceremony is a rite-de-passage indicating a transition from one stage to another stage of life. All the customary rituals during *Gotar* are considered as significant elements that provide salvation to human beings and help to enter in to a different world of their life. As it is a very expensive festival they spend much of their savings for the observation of *Gotar*. Nevertheless, it is attached with social prestige and obligation of the young generation to show respect for their ancestors.

The ceremony is intended to bring together all the members descended from one ancestor (Das Connel: 1999).The gifts and exchange which takes place among the Gadaba families during *Gotar* ceremony reflect their close social relationship. Through this ceremony they strengthen their solidarity, so *Gotar* has its implication for cementing the socio-economic bond among

them. Gotar also symbolizes co-operation and kinship fraternity in Gadaba community. In Robert Merton's perspective Gotar festival's latent function is manifested through the cognizance of village solidarity. In fact, it is one type of unanticipated consequence, which is functional for their entire system. In Durkheim's framework, one can observe that people in this simple society, go for rite of passage rituals. During this occasion they just sing together, do *Dhemsā* dance together, glorify their customary idea together, but at the same time, this form of coming together enthusiastically promote a sense of unity and solidarity among the members of Gadaba society. Actions have both intended and unintended consequences, sociological analysis is required to uncover the unintended consequences; indeed, to some this is the very essence of sociology. Peter Burger (1963) has called this "debunking" or looking beyond stated intentions to real effects.

An analysis of customs and practices of Gadabas reveal that there have been some changes in their cultural life. But the core rituals are observed either at household level or in the community. Nevertheless, they are passing through a transitional phase in the field of festivals and celebration of rituals. Modernization has brought the formation of new identities and reconstructed meaning of religiosity. The influence of other religious practices is now evident in them. Though assimilation has taken place, they have not yet totally abandoned the old religious customs and traditions.

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#### NOTES

1. Article -342 of Indian constitution declares tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which are deemed to be for the purposes of the Constitution the scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory. In pursuance of these provisions the list of Scheduled Tribes are notified for each State or Union Territory and are valid only within the jurisdiction of that State or Union Territory and not outside. This constitutional article says that only those communities who have been declared as such by President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.
2. The Scheduled areas in the state of Orissa originally were specified by the Scheduled Areas (Part A States) Order, 1950 (Constitution Order, 9) dated 23.1.1950 and the Scheduled Areas (Part B States) Order, 1950, (Constitution Order, 26) dated 7.12.1950 and have been specified as above by the Scheduled Areas (States of Bihar Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa) Order, 1977, (Constitution Order, 109) dated 31.12.1977 after rescinding the Orders cited earlier in so far as they related to the State of Orissa.

3. Gadaba tribe mainly considered as cultivators. Agriculture is the dominant source of livelihood for majority of Gadaba household. They are famous for their traditional indigenous techniques of paddy cultivation.
4. They are known for their *Dhemsā* dance, which is performed by women wearing their famous *Kerang Sari*. The main folk play musical instruments while women dance. Their musical instruments consist of big drums, *Tal Mudibaja*, *Madal*, Flutes, *Tamak* and *Mahuri*. They compose their own songs befitting different occasions and sing these songs while dancing. Sometimes they form a ring by joining hands all-round and with a long hop spring towards the centre and then hop back to the full extent of their arms, while they at the same time keep circling round and round. At other times, the women dance singly or in pairs, their hands resting on each other's wrists. In every festival, Gadabas love to dance. During festivals the women and cheery maidens wear *Kerang sari* reaching half way to the knee, great rings on their neck, rings on their fingers, brass bell on their toes, heavy brass bangles on hand and various necklaces in their neck and perform *Dhemsā* dance with music, while dancing they sing but usually when they are exhausted after dancing a lot they wish to sing. They sing melodious songs either in *Gutob* or *Ollar* language. These songs and dances bring integration among them in the field, forest and village.
5. Close to *Sadar*, the shrine of the *Hundi*, the village deity is located. In this place one can find a heap of stones forming a dome-like structure called *hundi* that represent the sacred village shrine. Gadaba people believe that the *Thakurani* (village deity) dwells in this place. Sometimes either the stone or an iron rod is worshipped in the name of *Thakurani*. A sacrosanct vessel containing soils from three distinct market places and sands from river is also placed in the center of the *hundi*. Soil of different market places symbolizes wealth and good luck where as sand from river indicates vastness, harmony, tolerance and all other espousal capacity.
6. The women use to wear long strip of cloth commonly known as '*Kerang*' (prepared from *Kerang* fiber) tied round the waist and second piece of cloth is worn across the breast. But however due to the impact of modernization, in recent days Gadaba women have started using the normal cloth of general people (non-tribal women).
7. *Sadar*, or seat of village council, is central to every Gadaba village. The *Sadar* is located at the center of the village under the shadow of a *jadi*, pipal or banyan tree. *Sadar* is a platform-like structure with both flat and erect stone slabs. *Sadar* is just like a stone lounge usually raised one to three feet above the ground. Large slabs of large horizontal and vertical stones are placed irregularly in a rough circle. The *Sadar* is dedicated to Mother Earth, which is a female deity and an important agent of prosperity. Normally, the large outer circle provides smooth seating arrangements. Though *Sadar* is a sacred symbol yet it is used for several social, cultural, political and ceremonial purposes. Various disputes are settled down and important decisions are taken here by elder members of Gadaba community. It is here that they assemble to discuss social, political or religious issues.

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