



Sacred Celebrations: Exploring Festivals and Ritual Sacrifices among the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha

GAGAN KUMAR BEHERA¹, MADHUSMITA PUJAHARI² AND

SURESH CHANDRA MURMU³

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Burla, Odisha, E-mail: gagankumarbehera93@suniv.ac.in

²Masters Student, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar, Burla, Odisha

³Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, E-mail: smurmu10@gmail.com

Received : 10 March 2025 • Revised : 09 May 2025;

Accepted : 16 May 2025 • Published : 30 December 2025

Abstract: The present study aimed to explore the various festivals and ritual sacrifices observed by the Kutia Kandha tribe of Odisha. Using descriptive research methods, the study gathered responses through observation, interviews, and secondary data from different sources. Festivals among the Kutia Kandha tribe are occasions of great joy, unity, and cultural celebration. They mark important milestones such as harvests, changes in seasons, religious observances, and community gatherings. These festivals provide opportunities for the tribe to come together, reconnect with their heritage, strengthen social bonds, and pass down cultural knowledge to younger generations. Ritual sacrifices hold a significant place in the religious practices of the Kutia Kandha tribe.

Keywords: Dharani Penu, Festivals, Kutia Kandha, Ritual Sacrifice

Introduction

Festivals are a vital aspect of the complex and varied customs of indigenous populations in India. According to Alessandro Falassi (1997:296), “festival commonly means a periodic celebration composed of multiplicity of ritual forms and events, directly or indirectly affecting all members of a community and explicitly or implicitly showing the basic values, the ideology, and the worldview that are shared by community members and are the basis of their social identity”. These sacred celebrations are deeply connected to the occupations of the indigenous groups, such as farming, and they

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Gagan Kumar Behera, Madhusmita Pujahari & Suresh Chandra Murmu (2025). Sacred Celebrations: Exploring Festivals and Ritual Sacrifices among the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha, *Anthropo-Indialogs*, 5: 1-2, pp. 1-19. DOI:10.47509/AI.2025.v05i1-2.01

establish a ritual calendar that guides the community's dietary practices (Ravula, Kasala & Chakraborty, 2022). It is a social phenomenon that occurs in almost every human civilization. Both casual visitors and men of letters have been fascinated by the vibrant diversity and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and artistic qualities, the signs of deep meaning beneath them, its historical roots, and the active participation of the natives. Scholars in fields like comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and folklore have been interested in the description, study, and more recently interpretation of celebrations over the past century. For the tribals, festivals symbolize a 're-dedication of life' and involve numerous religious ceremonies. These occasions are not merely for eating, drinking, and merry-making; they hold profound religious significance for the tribal communities. Since agriculture is the primary occupation of the tribals, their festivals revolve around the soil, sowing, and harvesting (Tirkey, 1998). Since the main occupation of the tribals is agriculture, therefore, the festivals are centered on the soil, the sowing and the harvesting.

These festivals also present the tribals with the opportunity to worship together as a community, thus providing social cohesion and unity to the various members of the community (Fallasi, 1987). Tribal festivals of Odisha consist of unique culture and tradition that has been attracted to many tourists and research scholars across the globe. In sociology, the festival means "a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to religious, historical bonds, and sharing worldview" (Singh, 1982).

Wilson *et.al.* (2017) noted that festivals vary widely in nature and geographic location. Despite these differences, there are five primary themes that tend to attract scholarly attention: the reasons behind planning, supporting, and participating in festivals; the experiences of festival goers; the connection between festivals and their local communities; the financial and socio-cultural effects of festivals; and the administration of festivals. Singhal *et al.*, (2021) pointed that during festivals, tribal people reaffirm their commitments to protecting nature and the environment in front of their deities. These celebrations not only honor nature but also help preserve and pass down their traditions. Peter T. Leeson (2014) argues that human sacrifice serves as a highly effective means of destroying wealth to safeguard property rights. This practice is particularly effective because it provides a clear and public display of wealth destruction. The spectacle of human sacrifice communicates the extent of the sacrifice to a wide audience. According to Raymond Firth (1963) "nearly all religious systems include some form of offering". This practice is part of a broader set of actions where goods or services are transferred from one individual to another, or to a presumed entity, without any immediate or visible reciprocation. Essentially, an offering is a type

of gift. According to Schwartz (2017), sacrifice is a prevalent aspect of human religious thought and behavior. However, it is only in recent years that archaeology has started to focus significantly on this practice.

The Kutia Kandha is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha. The people who lead simple lives participate in preserving the forest and wildlife that surround their house. The social structure is well organized and unified is remarkable. The families are nuclear and patriarchal in nature. The people depend upon shifting cultivation or slash and burn agriculture, is the primary source of food for the tribal communities in the area. It is called *Dangarchaas* by the Kutia Kandha tribe. They worship and believe in nature like many other tribal groups. Their festivals and ritual sacrifices as integral aspects of their cultural, social, and spiritual identity. These practices are deeply rooted in their traditions and play vital roles in maintaining community cohesion, expressing religious beliefs, and fostering a sense of belonging among tribe members.

Festivals among the Kutia Kandha tribe are occasions of great joy, unity, and cultural celebration. They mark important milestones such as harvests, changes in seasons, religious observations, and community gatherings. Festivals provide opportunities for the tribe to come together, reconnect with their heritage, strengthen social bonds, and pass down cultural knowledge to younger generations. These events often involve traditional music, dance, storytelling, and feasting, creating a vibrant atmosphere of cultural richness and shared experiences. Ritual sacrifices hold a significant place in Kutia Kandha religious practices. Blood is the most precious substance known to human, sustains life and often symbolizes it. Due to its ultimate value, the simple societies like Kutia Kandha have offered traditionally human and now animal blood to supernatural powers in ritual exchanges, seeking blessings of fertility and prosperity (Islas, 1996). The present study aimed to explore different types of festivals and ritual sacrifices observed among the Kutia Kandha tribe of Odisha.

Methodology

The research on festivals and ritual sacrifices among the Kutia Kandha tribe of Odisha employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to comprehensively understand the cultural, social, and religious dimensions of these practices. In order to analyze the festivals and ritual sacrifices of the Kutia Kandha the researchers have used data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected directly from the Kutia Kandha people of Muthaguda, Tentulipanga, Kenduguda, Sindhipadar and Jamchuan villages of Lanji (Gram panchayat) area. The study used descriptive research methods to acquire responses from people through observation, interview and

secondary data obtained through different platforms.

The primary method involved extensive fieldwork conducted in Kalahandi district. The researchers immersed themselves within the Kutia Kandha community to observe and document festivals and ritual sacrifices firsthand. This involves actively participating in rituals, ceremonies, and communal activities to gain insights into the tribe's cultural practices and social dynamics. Observation notes capture details such as ceremonial procedures, roles of participants, symbolic meanings, and community interactions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants including *Jani* (village priest), *Bahuka* (helper of *Jani*), *Beju/Bejuni* (male/female shamans), elders, and community members. These interviews explore topics such as religious beliefs, traditional practices, historical significance of festivals, role of gender and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Several focus group discussions were organized with different segments of the community, such as women, men, and elders. These discussions facilitated a broader understanding of community perspectives and allowed for the comparison of views across different demographic groups.

For secondary data, historical documents, ethnographic literature, religious texts, government reports, and scholarly articles related to Kutia Kandha culture and rituals are analyzed. The researchers also received informative data through close interaction with the officials of Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA), situated at Lanjigarh block of Kalahandi district, Odisha.

Festivals and Ritual Sacrifices of Kutia Kandha

The Kutia Kandha regard religion as the highest form of worship, with a focus on a multitude of gods, goddesses, spirits of the gods, and other natural objects. They have a strong sense of sincerity, devotion, and duty to their faith. Numerous performances have a connection to either magic, sacrifice, or both. Three things make up the Kutia Kandha religion: rituals, rites, and the worship of gods and spirits. The Kutia Kandha tribe's members have a strong belief in supernatural powers and hold that the soul is part of the supernatural. In every aspect of Kutia life, there is a strong supernaturalism. "The mythological traditions of the tribe are the foundation of the Kutias' religion and current way of life" (Doe, 2020).

In the Kutia Kandha religion *Dharani Penu* is the supreme deity. In all agricultural ceremonies, she is adored and considered with utmost regard. Her seat, known as *Dharni Gudi*, is marked with stones installed in the earth in the middle of every Kutia Kandha village. Forked pillars, known as *munda kuta*, are situated in front of *Dharni Gudi* and are used to bind sacrificed animals for the *Meriah* or *Kedu* festival. Every Kutia village celebrates this event, which is the most significant religious event and once in every

three or five years to honor *Dharni Penu* by sacrificing buffaloes. The cruel custom of *Meriah* (human) sacrifice, which was banned by the British government a century ago, is still practiced today and is represented by this animal sacrifice (Dash, 1994).

The Kutia worship a variety of Gods and spirits, including the *Dharani penu*, *Katia penu*, *Berupenu*, *Sisarangpenu*, and ancestral spirits on various occasions. They celebrate several festivals and seasonal ceremonies all year long to appease their deities. The significant yearly sacred celebrations and ceremonies include *Keduparab*, *Jami parab*, *Jami Jatra*, *Mahaparab*, *Semi parab*, *Danger parab*, etc. Witchcraft and magic are widely practiced. Black magic is always the cause of tragedies and life crisis. In this regard, the most crucial figure for taking corrective measures against the negative consequences of black magic is the shaman. There are male shamans known as *Beju* and female shamans known as *Bejuni* who are specialists in this field. They are respected in Kutia society. The majorities of sacred celebrations have set dates and locations and are held in the honor of certain ideals like safe living, sound health, productive farming, and so forth. The ancestors are revered with the same reverence and awe as Gods and Goddesses.

Annual Festivals and Rituals Calendar

Month	Month in Odia Language	Festival Name	Local Name	God/ Goddess	WHO Does	Place of Festival
January to February	Magha	Keduparab	Keduparab/ Maria parab	Dharani penu	Jani, Bahuka,	Centre of village
January to February	Magha	Mundakutaparab	Mundakutaparab	Dharani penu	Jani, Beju, Bahuka,	Centre of the village
March to April	Chaitra	Jami Jatra	Jatra Medine	Berupenu/ vairabi	Jani, Bahuka	Starting point of the village
December to January	Pausha	Jami parab	Jami parab	Saru penu	Jani, Bahuka	Cultivating Land
December to January	Pausha	Danger parab	Danger parab	Saru penu	Jani, Bahuka	Foot of the fixed hill
November to December	Margasira	Nuakhai	Semi parab (Nuakhai)	Sisarangpenu	Jani, Bahuka	Starting of the village
December to January	Pausha	Nuakhai	Kudingaparab	Sisarangpenu	Jani, Bahuka,	Starting of the village
January to February	Magha	Nuakhai	Chiad Parab	Sisarangpenu	Jani, Bahuka,	Starting of the village
May to June	Jyeshtha	Nuakhai	Maha Parab	Sisarangpenu	Jani, Bahuka,	Starting of the village
November to December	Margasira	Laxmi puja	Laxmi puja	Laxmi maa	Mother of house	In house
September to October	Ashvina	Dasahara puja	Dasahara puja	Durga, laxmi, Daharanipenu	Jani	Center of the village
October to November	Kartika	Kartika sambaar	Sambaar puja	Lord siva	Head of the house	In House

Kedu Parab

In Kui, which is the language of Kandha tribe, “Kedu” refers, broadly to a big sacred celebration or festival. They engage in socializing, dancing, singing, eating, and drinking in addition to carrying out the rites. Therefore, in tribal life, religious and socio-cultural elements are inseparably linked. One such sacred celebration is called “Kedu,” which is observed by the Kutia Kandha, a sub-tribe of the Kandha tribe. The main reason of this festival is observed in the community is to appease *Dharani Penu*, the soil goddess (Ota & Mohanty, 2015). Previously, a human being was offered for sacrifice, but now-a-days a buffalo is taken as a substitute. Although buffalo are sacrificed at the communal level, at the family level different birds and animals, like pigeons, chickens, goats, etc., are offered in the name of several spirits well known for specific functions. The socio-cultural interaction, friendship between clans and villages, and feeling of oneness among groups are projected in different phases of ritual observance. The festival is observed every three to five years, though this can change depending on the circumstances and the divine’s and spirit’s indications. It appears either on the first Sunday following *Phagun Punei*, which is the full moon day in February and March, or on the following Sunday. On the other hand, the celebration begins on Saturday and ends on Monday.

The traditional leaders, like *Jani* and *Gaintia*, and the people are assembled and decide on an appropriate date for celebration. Payments are gathered from the household members, and planning starts well in advance. Neighboring guests and relatives are invited. The Kutia Kandha people are well dressed with new clothes, and the females beautify themselves with ornaments. The houses are cleaned and painted. The blood relatives arrive with presents, and after that, the drinking of *mahuli* is continued, which helps everyone forget the difficulties and hardships of everyday life. Despite the practice to appease the *Dharani penu* (earth goddess) with blood in order to have a greater crop, all other aspects of the celebration have greater socio-cultural significance.

Mundakuta

Mundakuta is a large log of wood, made up of a *sal* tree, established every 12 to 24 years for the sacrifice of buffalo bull. When the *Jani* feels like there might be some upcoming calamity, he starts the process of establishing *Mundakuta*. In order to do so, the *Jani* of the village and occult practitioners from the nearby villages finds out the perfect tree for the purpose. Then they establish the log in front of a temple of *Dharani Penu* (Earth Deity), after completing the appropriate process.

Process of *Kedu Parab*

1st day: *Magha* (Wednesday)

On the 1st day of the festival, the *Jani* and his companions visit the *Dharani Gudi* (Shrine dedicated to Mother Earth) to clean and purify the area. At first, they tie 3 bamboo sticks behind the temple. Then they chant hymns and light *Deepa* (Indian Candles) & incense sticks, remembering the Goddess. Furthermore, they offer alcohol to purify the soil of the shrine.

2nd day (*Thursday*)

On this day, all the young men of the village gather near the *Dangar* (*Hillside*) to collect wood. All the collected woods are then used to prepare a temporary boundary around the *Dharani Gudi*.

3rd day (*Friday*)

The 3rd day is observed as the day of *Nuakhai*. During this, all the villagers collect *chiadi* fruit. After doing this, a bonfire is prepared near the temple of Goddess *Vairabi*, and all the collected fruits are burned in it. Before doing so, the villagers consume alcohol. The burnt fruits are then offered as the main offering, referred to as *Nua*, to the *Dharani Gudi*. After this, the offered burned fruits are distributed among the villagers. After this, all the villagers join the feast to enjoy the day.

4th day (*Saturday*)

On this day, the elders of the village visit nearby villages with pre-collected money to get a buffalo bull for sacrifice, as rules say that the bull can't be from the village itself. The bull is brought to the village with a procession, comprising various percussions, and tied down to the *Mundakuta*. Following this, alcohol is poured around it for purification purposes. The *Jani* of the village applies vermilion to the bull, lights a *deepa*, and offers prayers. Following this, the married women of the village look after the bull for the rest of the day. During the night, all the males of the village celebrate the occasion with songs & dances and stay awake for the whole night.

5th Day (*Sunday*)

At 3 o' clock in the morning, 3 girls selected by the *Jani* go to the nearby water source to get water in vessels made up of bronze. Then turmeric is added to the water and poured

on the buffalo. Gradually, all the people of the village and nearby villages are invited. All incoming people are welcomed with alcohol, and most of the people consume it, except for people with a pledge. After it is done, the *Jani* starts the rituals by evocating *Dandar Devi*, the local Goddess of the village, and many more deities. During this, the Goddess, possessing the *Bejan*, starts to dance. With this, the ritual gets completed.

Following the rituals, rice is prepared in a large pot. Meanwhile, the people with pledges, who are permitted to wear only *Dhoti* start to dance. During this, the *Jani* starts to throw the hot cooked rice on the people with pledges. Following him, the assistants and *Bej* also start to throw rice at the same individuals. This activity is a test to check the resilience of the people. It is said that cooked rice can't burn the skin of people with strong resilience. So, whoever is not able to withstand the test, doesn't have enough resilience. Following this test, the *Jani* applies vermilion to the buffalo and light the *deepa*. The *bahuka* sacrifice the buffalo, in the name of the Goddess, and the *Jani* applies the blood of the buffalo, who is the only person allowed to do so, on his forehead. The process of sacrifice is completed by noon. Then the buffalo is cooked as a part of the feast. If someone doesn't want to consume the meat then he/she can leave the place of feast. The celebration continues for the whole day. After drinking wine and dancing to heart's content, people start to leave the celebration, thus declaring its end.

Jami Jatra

This festival is observed during the month of *Chaitra* in the Odia calendar. The rules regarding this festival specify that it can be observed from Wednesday to Saturday of a week. It can't be observed on the new moon day. This festival is observed for 8 to 9 days. During this time the devotees visit Goddess *Vairabi*. Furthermore, according to the rituals, the devotees offer soaked black gram (*biri*) and local pigeon peas (*kandula*) to be placed in a basket, which will be under constant observation. Rules say that the *Jami Jatra* will start on the day of the first germination of the pulses offered. *Jami jatra* is also known as the *Jatramedine*. During this time God *Berpenu* is worshipped by the *jani* (local priest), who completes it with an empty stomach. During the festival, people visit the deity with the hope of fulfilling their wishes and offer various locally available animals and birds. For the sacrifice ritual, first, the offered animals and birds are purified using locally brewed alcohol, and then the priest offers them as sacrifices while chanting the *mantra* (religious hymns). If the priest is not available, then the person who offered the animal/bird can also do the ritual. But it has to be a man, as women are not permitted for the sacrificial ritual. After the sacrificial ritual, the

celebration starts. A specific ritual that is performed during the celebration is that the priest walks on a fire-bed. For this, first, the fire-bed is prepared using coal, then a good amount of milk and clarified ghee is added to it. After this, the priest invites the Goddess to possess his body by chanting hymns. Then the possessed priest walks on the prepared fire-bed. Added to this, all the sacrificed animals/birds are cooked for a grand feast organized as a part of the celebration.

Danger Parab

The people of the *Kutia Kandha* observe the *Danger Parab* in the month of *Pausa* of the Odia calendar, after completing the cultivation process in the *Danger*(hillside) region, to offer their sincere thanks to Goddess *Saru penu* and Mother Earth for the good harvest and forgiveness for anything done wrong. One day before the decided day, *Jani* and the head of the village visit nearby places on the hillside where the worshipping will take place. There, they purify the land by employing alcohol, establish a rock, and perform a consecration ritual inviting goddess *Saru penu* by means of sacred hymns dedicated to her. Following this, the sacrifice to be offered is decided. All these rituals on this day are performed by the *Jani* with the help of *Bahuka* and *Beju*.

Procedure

In observing the *Danger Parab*, first, a particular day is decided by the people of the village for the celebration, and all the people gather on that day at a pre-decided place. Turmeric, rice, leaves of the wood apple tree, local wine, a flock, and *siali* leaves are there as a part of the ritual. The *Jani* takes over as the one in charge of the rituals to be performed and *Bahuka* (the helper) and *Beju* helps him in performing them. Following the rituals, the sacrifice is offered to the goddess. At last, a feast is organized for celebration, which involves the cooking of the meat of the sacrifice. All enjoy the feast with the meat and local wine. One thing that can be mentioned here is that nobody is allowed to consume the newly harvested food before the *Danger Puja*. The individuals of the *Kutia Kandha* tribe believe that, by doing so, Goddess *Saru penu* will fulfill their lives with happiness and prosperity.

Jami Parab

The *Kutia Kandha* celebrates *Jami parab* in the month of *Pausa* (December to January). To thank the local deity for a good harvest and a fulfilling life, *Jami Parab* is celebrated

after the cultivation of land is finished. This festival is observed by the people from the Kutia Kandha tribal community, who majorly depend on the cultivation of paddy crops. In this tribe, the families who own land cultivate their land, but people who are not privileged enough cultivate in the *Danger* (hill area). After the harvesting of crops is completed by the family, the crops are gathered at a commonplace. After this, the family lights *deepa* (Indian candle) and shows reverence to their *siri* (ancestors), for the good harvest. Following this, the family visits their cultivating land along with the *jani* (local priest) to worship Goddess *Dangar Devi*, Goddesses *sarupenu*, and other Gods by lighting *deepa*. In this process of worshipping, a sacrifice is offered to show gratefulness. In most cases, the sacrifice is a goat, hen, or duck. Before sacrifice, the priest applies sandal vermilion to the deities. The sacrifice is executed by the *Bahuka* (helper of *jani*) or head of the family. The ritual is concluded with a feast, in which the meat of the sacrificed animal/bird is cooked along with other foods.

Nuakhai

The Kutia Kandhas observe the *Nuakhai* festival four times a year on different occasions. These are as follows: first is the *semi* in the month of *Margashira*, then *Kudinga* in the month of *Pausa*, then *Chiadi Fruit* in the month of *Magha*, and last is *Maha* the month of *Jyestha* in the Odia calendar. God *Sisarang Penu* is worshipped during these times, to whom food is first offered as *Nua*, and only after it do the people take food.

Procedure

Some days before the observations, all the villagers decide on a particular date and time. Days before the decided day, all the women of the village visit the temple situated at one end and clean the whole premise of the temple. *Jani*, *Bahuka*, *Beju*, and some elders of the village visit the temple and purify the land by means of alcohol. Then they perform a consecration ceremony on a rock. The *Jani* chant sacred hymns and offers prayers to God *Sisaranga Penu* and several other deities, along with offering them turmeric and incense. On the day of the main celebration, all the villagers, wearing new clothes, gather near the temple with rice, turmeric, incense, vermilion, leaves of the wood apple tree, and local wine. Along with these, different offerings are there depending on the day.

For *Semi Nuakhai*, it's *semi*-roasted in clarified butter; for *Nuadhana Nuakhai*, it is rice made from freshly harvested paddy crops; for *Chiad Nuakhai*, it is roasted *Chiadi* fruit; and for *Ambo (mango) Nuakhai*, it's ripe mangoes. First, *Bahuka* prepares fire to

roast the *semi* in clarified butter. After the roasting, *Jani* starts the main rituals of the day by offering prayers to the deities. Then *Jani* offers the roasted *Semi* a set of three apple wood leaves: one for the *Sisaranga Penu*, one for the *Dharani Penu*, and one for *Siri* or *Duma*. After the completion of all the rituals, all villagers receive the offered *Semi* and celebrate the day with wine.

Gat Puja

Gat Puja can only be observed by someone who has taken *Manasika* (a pledge taken by a person in exchange for getting a wish fulfilled), after fulfillment of his/her wishes. On this occasion, the person who has taken the *Manasika* establishes a *Mundakuta* (a small pole with which the sacrificial animal/bird gets tied) with the help of the *Jani* and some other occult practitioners. On this occasion, worshipping can only be done by the family, whose member has taken a pledge. Everyone remembers God by chanting hymns. The sacrifice is done in the name of the revered God, only by a male of the house. If there is no male member in the family, then the *Jani* will offer the sacrifice.

Religious Functionaries in the Kutia Kandha Society

Jani

The priest of the village is called 'Jani' who performs most of the worship to different deities of the villagers. He is respected, as the head of the village and his opinions are honoured by other leaders and villagers. He worships the deities and conducts all communal rituals like *Kedu Puja*, *Danagr Puja*, *Jami parab*, *Taku Puja* etc. Every festival the priest observes fasting on the day. He appeals to the deities to obtain their blessings and mercy for the well-being of the village people. He observes fasting and abstinence before conducting a ritual. He also plays an important role in the name-giving ceremony, death rituals and marriage ceremony of the Kutia Kandha. In their community the post of *jani* is not hereditary. They believe that the *Dharani penu* comes in dream and teach the mantra to a person after the dream the person becomes the priest, after the death of person the ritual is repeated again.

Beju/Bejuni

Beju and *Bejuni*, the male and female shamans respectively, are highly esteemed magico-religious practitioners within their society. These distinguished figures perform divination by entering trances and reciting verses to identify the supernatural

beings causing maladies, diseases, and deaths. They work to expel the evil spirits responsible for human suffering. It is common for a village to have multiple *Beju* or *Bejunis*.

In order to obtain favor and support for their occult acts, they have adopted several spirits that they frequently worship. They are able to communicate with spirits and deities who are thought to be the cause of human troubles. They induce a trance through divination, prayer, offerings, oblation, and other rites in order to establish this communication. They interact with the appropriate spirits while in a trance to communicate people's issues and their remedies. Through the rice supplication, which is an essential component of shamanic ceremonies, they prescribe medicines. To please supernatural powers, they advise and occasionally insist on performing rituals and offering animal sacrifices (Mohanty & Mohanty, 2009).

Bahuka

Among Kutia Kandha tribe, there is a helper of *Jani* called *Bahuka*. He is with the *jani* in every festival. He assists the *jani* in preparing and conducting religious and ceremonial activities. This includes setting up ritual place, arranging offerings and ensuring all ritual items are in place. The sacrifice of the festival is done by *Bahuka*. The roles played by priests (*Jani*), *jani's* assistant (*Bahuka*), and head men (*Gaintia*), rituals followed during celebrations and festivals, farming and hunting techniques, village orientation, and pest management techniques—the guidelines for cohabitation have been established by antiquated laws, and their legitimacy is accepted without question.

Worship of Hindu Deities

The Kutia Kandha people worship nature and are connected to it, but over time, Kutia Kandha culture may integrate. In every festival, they worship their supreme goddess, *Dharani penu*, for the good fortune of the village and for the development worship other deities like *Katia penu*, *Sisarangpenu*, and *Berupenu*. During this time, the people also come into contact with the influence of the Hindu religion, so they celebrate *Kartika Sambaar*, *Laxmi puja*, and *Dasahara*. Some villages have created Hindu temples at the beginning or end of the village and celebrate their own festivals, like *semi-parab* and *maha-parab* in Vairavi temple. Most of the Kutia Kandha people in their homes had photos of Hindu deities like Lord Siva and Maa Laxmi. But the ritual and customs traditions haven't changed.

Some Hindu deities worshiped by Kutia Kandha

<i>Name of the deities</i>	<i>Time of worship</i>	<i>Worship by</i>	<i>Offering and sacrifice</i>	<i>Place of worship</i>	<i>Nature of worship</i>
Maa Durga	<i>Ashvina</i> (September to October)	Jani, Bahuka	Duck, chicken, goat	Starting of the village	For protection and wellbeing
Lord Siva	<i>Kartika</i> (October to November)	Family	Coconut, banana	House	For health
Maa Laxmi	<i>Margasira</i> (November to December)	Women of the family	Cake (Pitha), coconut,	House	For wealth

Dasahara puja

Every year on the day of *Ashthami* in the month of *Ashvina* (September to October), the Kutia Kandha people celebrate the Dasahara puja. In the day, the people worshiped the Durga maa and the *Dharani penu* as a celebration of happiness, wealth, and the protection of the community. Starting at the village, there is a fixed place where the worship is done. For the Dasahara puja *arua*, rice, vermilion, *deepa*, and sacrifice animals or birds (goat, sheep, chicken, and duck) are required. On the day of puja, community members gather in that place, and *Jani* performs the puja, and *Bahuka* sacrifices animals or birds. At the end, all members of the community take part in feast, drink, and enjoy the celebration.

Kartik Sambaar

Every Monday during the *Kartik* month of the Odia calendar, the families of the Kutia Kandha tribal group worship Lord Shiva. On this day, after taking a bath and changing into clean clothes, the father and mother of the family worship Lord Shiva by presenting him with coconut, bananas, and *deepa*. This festival, like Laxmi Puja, does not involve any sacrifice rituals, and no meat consumption is allowed on this occasion. This is a family occasion rather than village level rituals.

Laxmi Puja

The Kutia Kandhas observe the Laxmi puja on Thursdays in the *Margashira* month of the Odia calendar. The females of the household usually take part in this *puja*. The preparation starts a day before the actual *Puja* i.e. on Wednesday. On that day the

females of the household clean the house and apply cow dung to the veranda, both to purify the home. On the next day, they wake up at 3 AM in the morning to prepare cake (*pitha*). After getting this done, the worshipping process takes place, where the prepared *pitha* with coconut and bananas are offered to Goddess Laxmi, along with Mother Earth and the main deity of the family. One thing that differentiates this occasion from others is that, on this occasion, there is no sacrificial ritual.

Roles, Responsibilities and Participation in Rituals

Participation of young generation

In the Kutia Kandha community, every festival is a celebration of unity. In this regard, the young generation actively participates in every festival, including every festival, including various aspects of festivals such as traditional dance, song, rituals, and ceremonies. The generation helps with every aspect of the festival, like decorating the village or community and adorning the area with natural materials like flowers and leaves. In every celebration, young men gather for the distribution of work, like marketing the materials for puja, collecting wood, and creating a temporary boundary in the place of puja. A young member of the community actively participates in traditional dance and music performances during festivals and enjoys every festival. In the ritual of sacrifice, younger generations actively participate and help the elders.

Role of women

In every Kutia Kandha festival, women play a significant role in the village or community. The women are actively participating in the festival and cleaning the house. Before the *Dharani puja*, the women gather and clean with the cow dung around the *Dharani Gudi*, which is decorated with flowers, leaves, red mud (*Laal Mati*), etc. On the day of celebration, all women in the community prepare food and beverages for the rituals. During the festival, women are involved in many rituals, like singing traditional songs and performing dances, that are an integral part of religious ceremonies. Girls participate in the festival, learning traditional songs, dances, and rituals from the elder women in the community. At the feast, the women gather and drink alcohol. The celebration creates a sense of unity and belonging among the participants. The girls do not drink on every occasion; they just dance, sing songs, and celebrate with joy.

Restrictions in Festival and Ritual Sacrifice

There are certain rules and restrictions during festival and rituals that followed by the Kutia Kandha community to preserve the cultural integrity of the ceremonies and ensure that they carried out according to traditional practice. The restriction helps to preserve the culture, protect their sacred place and maintain the custom in Kutia Kandha communities which have been discussed below:

- Only the member of the Kutia Kandha tribe is allowed to take part in their rituals.
- In the time of festival, none of the member of community or relative of *Jani* is allowed to touch the sacred object. The ritual object brought out only during the festival.
- There is the taboo inflicted on women. They are not allowed to touch the sacrificial food and participate in the festival during mensuration cycle and also the restriction same to the member of the family. Even they do not allow them to come in the rituals.
- In the time of death, the family member also restricted to came in rituals places and participate.

Ritual Sacrifices

<i>Name of the God/ Goddesses</i>	<i>Nature/ Presiding Over</i>	<i>Worship Time</i>	<i>Reason of Worship</i>	<i>Offering and Sacrifice</i>	<i>Place of Sacrifice</i>
Dharani penu (keduparab)	Jani, Bahuka	Magha	Good fortune, wellbeing of community	Buffalo	Center of the village
Katia penu	Jani, Bahuka	Magha	Happiness	Chicken, got	Center of the village
Saru penu (Danger Parab)	Jani, Bahuka	Pausha	For good cultivation	Got, chicken, pigeon	Danger
Saru penu (Jami parab)	Jani, Bahuka	Pausha	For good cultivation	Got, chicken, pigeon	Cultivating land
Berupenu (Jatramedine)	Jani, Bahuka	Chaitra	Health and growth	Got, chicken	Starting and center of the village
Sisarangpenu (Chiad Parab)	Jani, Bahuka	Magha	Celebrate new fruit and offer to deities	Chicken, pigeon	Starting of the village
Sisarangpenu (Maha parab)	Jani, Bahuka	Jyeshtha	Celebrate new fruit and offer to deities	Chicken, pigeon	Starting of the village
Sisarangpenu (Semi parab)	Jani, Bahuka	Margasira	Celebrate new fruit and offer to deities	Chicken, pigeon	Starting of the village
Sisarangpenu (Kudingaparab)	Jani, Bahuka	Pausha	Celebrate new cultivation and offer to deities	Chicken, pigeon	Starting of the village
Durga maa (Dasahara)	Jani, Bahuka	Ashvina	To wellbeing of community	Duck, chicken, pigeon	Center of the village
Estha devi (Gat parab)	Head of the house	Any season	Family health and prosperity	Got, chicken, pigeon	House

Conclusion

The festival and ritual sacrifices observed by the Kutia Kandha tribe offer valuable insights into the cultural, social, and religious dynamics within their community. These practices serve as intricate threads weaving together the fabric of their identity, beliefs, and communal bonds. The Kutia Kandha's religious practices reflect a deep-rooted connection to their natural surroundings and ancestral traditions. The worship of various gods, goddesses, and spirits demonstrates their reverence for the elements of nature and their belief in the supernatural forces that govern their lives. The rituals associated with each deity, performed by the *Jani* and assisted by *Babhuka*, signify a symbiotic relationship between the spiritual and the earthly realms. The festivals and sacrifices serve as pivotal moments for communal cohesion and social interaction. These events bring together villagers from different households, forging bonds of kinship, friendship, and solidarity. The participation of both young and old members underscores the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices and the shared responsibility towards upholding tradition.

Additionally, the rituals surrounding festival preparations, such as cleaning, decorating, and feasting, highlight the role of women as custodians of domestic rituals and guardians of cultural heritage. While men often take on roles involving sacrifice and religious leadership, women contribute significantly to the ceremonial aspects and communal festivities, reinforcing their integral role within the community's social fabric. The imposition of restrictions and taboos underscores the community's efforts to maintain the sanctity and integrity of their rituals. These regulations serve as mechanisms for preserving cultural identity, protecting sacred spaces, and ensuring adherence to traditional customs. The transformation of festivals and ritual practices among the Kutia Kandha tribe reflects a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernization. Through observing these changes, one can discern broader patterns of cultural adaptation and resilience within indigenous communities.

The evolution of dance, music, and song illustrates the Kutia Kandha tribe's ability to adapt to external influences while preserving essential elements of their cultural identity. The incorporation of new instruments and rhythms alongside traditional forms of expression reflects a process of cultural hybridity, where ancient rituals intertwine with contemporary artistic expressions. The integration of Hindu deities into Kutia Kandha religious practices highlights the complexities of cultural contact and syncretism. While maintaining reverence for nature and their indigenous pantheon, the Kutia Kandha have embraced aspects of Hinduism, demonstrating a fluidity of belief systems shaped by historical encounters and social dynamics. The changes in

dress patterns and ornamentation underscore shifts in social norms and values within the Kutia Kandha community. The declining significance of traditional attire among the younger generation reflects broader trends of globalization and modernization, where external influences challenge established cultural practices. The transformation of ritual sacrifice from human to animal offerings encapsulates the negotiation between tradition and external pressures. Legal restrictions, changing ethical attitudes, and interventions by governmental and non-governmental organizations have reshaped religious practices, signaling a shift towards more humane forms of worship while preserving cultural continuity.

The festival and ritual sacrifices of the Kutia Kandha tribe reflect a complex tapestry of religious beliefs, social organization, and cultural practices. These traditions not only provide a glimpse into their spiritual worldview but also serve as vital expressions of collective identity, solidarity, and continuity across generations. The changing patterns of festivals and ritual sacrifice among the Kutia Kandha tribe provide valuable insights into the adaptive capacity of indigenous cultures in the face of socio-economic and ideological transformations. As these communities navigate the complexities of modernity, there is a delicate balance between preserving ancestral heritage and embracing contemporary realities, reflecting the enduring resilience of human cultural diversity.

Kutia Kandha festival and sacrifice are unique as the culture in the area many festivals are observed and every festival has different rituals, different celebration, different symbolic meaning and so on. As a researcher I highlighted how various kinds of cultural norms, value traditional are followed by the people. The procedure for celebrating the festivals is incredible different in every ritual. The whole community works in unity in celebration of togetherness. Every ritual and practice show their identity. They are mostly depending on *danger* for cultivation so most of the festival of Kutia Kandha after harvesting most of the festival are on agriculture. People are connected with the *Danger* depend their life in it. In every festival Kutia Kandha people are remember worship their ancestor. The earth goddesses are the mother for them the people believe that the *Dhanani penu* create them and blessed with the life. The important festival of Kutia Kandha has *Keduparab* means a big celebration they sacrifice buffalo. The festivals are *Jami parab*, *Danger parab*, *Jami Jatra*, *Nuakhai*, they celebrate *nuakhia* 4 times in the year. In every festival of Kutia Kandha they sacrifice the animal and birds like chicken, got, duck, pigeon. Also influence of Hindu culture they celebrate *Dasahara*, *Kartika sombaar*, *gurubarapuja* (Laxmi puja) etc.

Dance, music, feast and drink are integral part of the Kutia Kandha life in every festival and celebration they consume alcohol and as a purity they use alcohol in every

festival. After finish every festival the people have feast and drink together shown their connection and social value. Time changed and modernization has made its influence in tribal society. People are getting civilized day by day and their dressing patterns, life style changed little bit. Contact with Hindu peoples has led the Kutia Kandha to adapt Hindu deities in their pantheon and dance and song also modified by modernization from the British period human sacrifice has changed, and so on. From the above discussion one can conclude by saying that the traditional Kutia Kandha festivals and ritual sacrifice has profound significance upon the social and religious life of the practitioners. The festivals teach the people valuable socio-ethical values related to respect for the elders, respect for the land and to live their religion through their practical day-to-day lives. The festivals and ritual sacrifice, demanding the active participation of every individual and every family has significance for social cohesion and unity. Community festivals provides the people occasions to worship together as a community with a specific ethnicity and religious identity and binds them together into a single moral community. Moreover, they play an important role in the preservation of the traditional religious specialists and functionaries as well as the traditional art forms such as dances, dresses, musical instruments and players, and crafts.

References

- Doe, J. (2020). Religion and Mythology in the Kutia Kandha Tribe. *Journal of Anthropological Studies*, 15(3), 45-60.
- Dash, J. K. (1994). *Tribal Society and Culture: Change and Continuity*. Commonwealth Publishers.
- Falassi, Alessandro (1997). Festival. In Thomas A. Green (eds.) *FOLKLORE: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music and Art*. B, Santa Barbara, California.
- Falassi, A. (1987). *Festival: Definition and Morphology*. In Falassi, A., Ed., Time
- Firth, R. (1963). Offering and sacrifice: problems of organization. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 93(1), 12-24.
- Islas, M. D. (1996). "The blood speaks" – Maya ritual sacrifices. University of Arisona.
- Leeson, P. T. (2014). *Human sacrifice*. *Review of Behavioral Economics*, 1(1–2), 137-165.
- Mohanty, B. B. & Mohanty, S. C. (2009) *Tribal customs and Traditions: An Anthropological study of Bonda Kutia Kandha&LanjiaSaora Tribes of Odisha*, Vol(I); SC & ST Research and Training Institute Bhubaneswar, Orissa, Orissa Government Press, Cuttack.
- Ota, A.B., & Mohanty, S.C. (2015). *Particularly vulnerable tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Odishavolume 1 (Ethnography)*: Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes Research and Training Institute.

- Ravula, P., Kasala, K., & Chakraborty, A. (2022). Farming, festivals, and food cultures among indigenous communities in Telangana, India. *Folk Life*, 60(2), 115–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04308778.2022.2113715>
- Schwartz, G. M. (2017). The archaeological study of sacrifice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 46, 223-240.
- Singh, A. K. (1982). *Tribal Festivals of Bihar* (Vol. 5). Concept Publishing Company.
- Singhal, V., Ghosa, J. and Bhat, S.S. (2021). Role of religious beliefs of tribal communities from Jharkhand (india) in biodiversity conversation. *Journal of Environmental planning and Management*, 64(13),2277-2299.
- Tirkey, C. A. B. (1998). *Religion/Primal Religions*. Delhi: ISPCK, 194-198.
- Wilson, J., Arshed, N., Shaw, E., & Pret, T. (2017). *Expanding the domain of festival research: A review and research agenda*. *International journal of management reviews*, 19(2).