



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529
Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Unravelling the Essence of Bhuta Kola in Odisha through a Contextual Reading of Gopinath Mohanty's *Dadi Budha*

Aishwarya Mishra

Lecturer in English,

Lokanath Mohavidyalaya,

Kendrapara, Odisha.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13684056>

Article History: Submitted-24/07/2024, Revised-15/08/2024, Accepted-21/08/2024, Published-31/08/2024.

Abstract:

The Bhuta rituals take place in many regions of Karnataka. The expression 'Bhuta' implies deity or divine being while 'Kola' signifies play. It is a prophecy that invoking the divine beings are believed to recoup serendipity. It is also a means to alleviate local inhabitants from their predicaments. This sort of folk tradition is explored in Gopinath Mohanty's *Dadi Budha* which is translated into English as *The Ancestor* by Arun Kumar Mohanty. The novella narrates the touching history of the Paraja tribe and their rich culture. It highlights the oral tradition that is practised in the village of Lulla. It later chronicles the life of the villagers and how this folk-wisdom is passed to succeeding generations.

Keywords: Kola, tradition, folk, impersonator, kalisi.

Introduction

Bhuta Kola is a formalistic folk dance distinctive of ballads which allude to the performance and virtuousness of the spirits. In the course, this invites the spirits to take control over the impersonator. Later, the Bhuta impersonator sways all night to the rhythm of the beating drums. This ritual can be considered as a type of Shamanism practised in aboriginal societies in which the imitator enters into a series of stupor. In this hypnotic condition the imitator comes in contact with the heavenly spirits, treats the indisposed and guards the dead souls into the realm of immortality. This oral tradition is preserved and passed to successive lineages.

Bhutas are divine beings of anthropomorphic nature hallowed in shrines. The puja ceremonies, mantra and ululations are performed by Brahmins. They have superior powers in

the locale and are honoured in the same manner as kings. Bhuta Kola which is otherwise known as Bhuta Worship is a significant ceremonial folk theatre of Tulunadu. This solemnity is inherent to the life of the inhabitants of Tulu. P. Padmanabha, a scholar, opines that:

Evidently, the etymological meaning of the word encompasses a very wide field and includes several categories which do not correspond to the spirits of the departed souls that are being worshipped in the district. No doubt amongst the Bhutas there are quite a few which are the departed souls of the dead (e.g., Kooti, Channayya, Koddabbu etc.,) especially warriors and those who perished in a violent manner; there are a few which represent the elements (e.g., Maleraya is supposed to be the rain- spirit, walking on fire in the form of burning cinders is also a form of worship) and a few which represent animal species (Nandi (bull), Mahisandaye (buffalo), Panjurli (Pig), Pili (tiger), Naga (cobra) etc. But these categories do not cover all, for there are quite a large number the origins of which cannot be traced to either the souls of a departed man or the elements or any particular animal. The term is much more comprehensive and eludes any precise definition. (Gowda 18)

The Bhutas that are venerated in the region of Tulunadu are numerous. Each Bhuta is dissimilar to others based on their name, symbol, genesis and habitancy. The benefactions that are offered to the Bhutas also vary. Focusing on these conventions, the amount of impact of Bhuta exercised on each tribal group also alters. Some of Bhutas are locally popular while others are regionally well-received.

Rev. A Manner also distinguishes the Bhutas into the following categories, for instance, those created by divinity, others who belong to the human arena, some inhabiting the residence of people and those who dwell in the garden. He further adds other types such as “Family Bhutas, Village Bhutas, Bhutas related to temples, Bhutas worshipped in the form of a bull, horse, pig and many more, Bhutas who reside in stones, shrines, forest, Bhutas who are worshipped by sudra patris, Bhutas worshipped by Brahmin priests, Bhutas worshipped by low caste people.” (Gowda 20)

The worship of Bhuta is closely attached to human society and traditions. The essence of Bhuta worship can be specified into two groups. The first one is presumed as internal facet which comprise the chanting of Paaddanas dancing, decking up in costumes such as Gaggara, make up, presenting dialogue and indulging in feasts. It includes the comprehensive

atmosphere for the staging which is in conjugation with the beating of the drum named as tembare.

The outer facet of Bhuta worship includes the reduction or expansion of Bhuta ritual. Bhuta Kola has presented the function and signification of contemporary times in some way preserving its social pertinence. The tendencies of communal, political and juridical structure of Tulunadu are manifested in the framework of Bhuta Kola. The modifications that are effected in Bhuta worship are subject to societal intrusions. The ritualistic manifestations of Bhuta worship can be considered to have originated from Nalike community is popular for the peripatetic custom of moving from one house to another while simultaneously chanting and dancing in the hope of receiving grains.

This technique is observed as a method of purging the bad omen and assuring serendipity to the tribal village. The Bhuta Kola owes its constitution to the dynamics of social strata of the tribal regions. The tribal people nurture the cultural distinctiveness within themselves which is in turn exhibited in the performances of Bhuta worship. The notions of 'Madi-Mailige' or cleanness-contamination, superiority and inferiority corroborate to the inter-communal differentiations and identities.

The Paaddanas are the mournful chanting of Bhuta Kola. These songs sing about the disputes in the society. The conflicts between the different classes of people. It also narrates the social inconsistencies of the past that persist to afflict the contemporary times. The structuring and mobilising of the ritualistic forms are undertaken by numerous communities in a tribal village.

Some of the acts, for instance, shouting blaringly, consuming fire, injuring oneself with a sword, stepping on the embers possess deep meaning and significance. Through the impersonator the collective mouthpiece of the tribal society finds an expression to a certain extent voicing out the despotism in society. Everyone enters a world of illusion. The immanent forces appear to be administering within bounds of the delusive cosmos fabricated between the point of reality.

The Bhuta ceremonies occur with beating of the drums. The aerophones are played by purusa instrumentalists. The persons acting as forum for spirits dance on all sides of the altar. The bhutas include regional heroes or the soul of wild animals residing in the forests. These creatures are glorified and elevated to the position of a deity. They are harmoniously integrated

with the local surrounding. The sakti of these bhutas permeates through the thick woods, stays on the ponds and spreads about the cultivated land and villages.

As a result, the Bhutas emanate from and personify the essence of pious wilderness. In hamlets, the bhuta ceremonies connect people to their natural surroundings. It also legitimises the social stratum of the village. The inhabitants proffer benefactions to the shrines and are awarded with oracles and protection from the Bhuta impersonators. These proceedings reshape the communal, spiritual and ecological situation of the village. The association of the local people with their Bhuta has been important in matters such as decision-making.

This structure of folk culture and oral history is depicted in Gopinath Mohanty's *Dadi Budha* which is translated into English as *The Ancestor*. In the novel, there is an alluring range of mountains that circumnavigate the Lulla village fabricating the mirage of multitudinous vimans. The mountain summits lean towards a dale at the core. The dale is filled with greenery. The river Muran flows through the valley. The Paraja tribe reside in this village.

The observation of Bhuta Kola initiates with the equipment of the Bhuta being gathered at the holy place. This location acts as a platform for jamboree. The impersonator makes ancillary preparations such as applying make-up, costumes and ornaments. The patron summons the spirit to begin his performance. As the impersonator starts dancing, the divine soul permeates the body. The patron and his subordinates surround the Bhuta impersonator.

They make several offerings such as the throat of a chicken is cut or any other animal is sacrificed. Other offerings include parched rice, banana, betel leaf, ghee and nuts. The objections and discernments are conducted orally. The spirit takes the ultimate decision after hearing the sides of both complainant and litigant. Occasionally, the verdict is delivered by the folding of betel leaf and adding up the petals of areca flower.

The chieftain of the village, Ram Muduli summons the panchayat. The main pathway of the hamlet is supported by a reclining banyan tree. All the villagers assemble near the veraman. The veraman is hemmed in stones that are passed in the memory of many villagers. The stone that seems like a spear is positioned in the honor of a male person while a levelled one is planted in the honor of a female person. During the meeting, the villagers get seated on these slabs and witness the dhangdi performances.

The elderly dishari stations himself in the centre. He is immersed in the intoxication of country drink. He possesses a tote bag containing articles such as a greasy pothi, fine particles

of varied colors, an enchanted bone, dagger, spear and a sword. The elderly dishari requests Shyam gurumai to begin his ululations. Shyam gurumai is an adult male who displays long hair. He dresses himself in a saree and a nose pin. Although, he has no specific gender identity, he is gifted with mystical excellence.

The villagers think it likely that as gurumai is not either male or female, he owns some seraphic powers. He is also taken over by spirits so he is named as gurumai. It is likely to know that, “every village had its own gurumais. Children offered by parents to the mercy of gods were called gurumais. They were the spirit of gopis. Whatever they might be at other times, in the course of a puja they were nothing but women.” (Mohanty 5)

He situates himself near the dishari. The dishari embellishes the ground and lights an oil lamp. A celibate lad prepares some rice by setting up the fire. The dishari pours the rice on a parched leaf-cup, disperses few bhalia fruits and places a stick on it. He places the leaf-cup on the head of gurumai and chants few mantras.

He latter furnishes with a wooden sword and a spear to gurumai. Shyam gurumai drops down into a hypnotic state as if he is taken over by the kalisi. Shyam gurumai dances to the beats of the drum for over an hour. Several women lift themselves up and dance with their unkempt hair.

The pigeons and cocks are slaughtered nearby and offer to kalisi possessed Shyam gurumai as sacrifice. The gurumai whirls and twirls fermenting the dust across the board. He screams vehemently, “yesterday I shouted so many times during the early hours of the night. I kept on shouting, but you simply did not care to listen to me. I said thrice- I’ll eat, I’ll eat, I’ll eat.” (Mohanty 6)

The dishari drinks country alcohol and sways on the other side. Succeeding, animal sacrifices are performed. The throats of goat and chicken are cut and poured on the face of Shyam gurumai. Later, he transforms to Dadi Budha, the genealogical spirit of the Lulla village.

The gurumai again utters the words of vengeance, “I’m Dadi Budha, your creator, yet you all ignore me. In every village they worship their Dadi Budha. But you don’t worship yours in your village. You’ve never offered me a chicken or a goat, a pigeon or even some water. I roam about miserably on an empty stomach. This is my last warning. I shall wait for three more days. After that I’ll eat and I’ll eat. I’ll eat you up.” (Mohanty 6) Hearing this the villagers bow down and apologise.

They feel relaxed upon realising that Dadi Budha has offered them a time period of three days. The resting drums regain their life and the inhabitants dance to the core. A billy goat is slaughtered and the neck of pigeons and chickens are cut. The blood of these creatures is splattered on the face of the demi-god. The inhabitants offer prayers to the divine spirit.

Concurrently, Shyam gurumai runs to a tiny hillock situated at the centre of the village. The occupants of the village follow him in unison. The humming and beating of drums are heard. Shyam gurumai clasps a date palm tree and falls unconscious. The dishari announces that, “we’ve got the answer. From today Dadi Budha will live here. Never forget to offer your prayers.” (Mohanty 7)

The villagers dance in utter excitement to the beating of the drums. They position the eternal god, Dadi Budha in the date-palm tree by cutting the upper part of the tree. The dishari chants few mantras by facing the tree. He dredges vermilion on the floor and fastens a cane in the nook. The tree is cut to the height of a man. The exterior of the tree is blemished from all sides with hundreds of axes. It is later painted with colours of black, red and white. The cicatrix seems like lesions stuffed with quicklime and turmeric. The head of tree is covered with white linen that gives the appearance of a turban. Dadi Budha sits there as a heedful guardian keeping the daily affairs of the village under his surveillance.

Dadi Budha, the eternal familial spirit is an amiable demi-god of the village of Lulla. He is illustrated through a prehistoric date palm tree of the village. The tree stands for the ethnological and societal legacy of the occupants manifested through their folk tradition. As it is said, “The tribals of Koraput do not call one’s father’s brother, dadi; by it they mean one’s father’s father and his father. Likewise, for them shasura is not one’s wife’s father, but her brother. The languages of the Parajas and the Kondhs blend when the words dadi and budha combine. In the Kondh language, budha means father’s father”. (Mohanty 7)

Dadi Budha is an unspeaking onlooker of the joyfulness and hardships of the villagers. From eerie to immanence, barring none of the dealings of the village is administered by him. He never displays his disdainfulness until he is fuelled. He is silent so anyone can articulate his thoughts and become his spokesman. He watches the toddlers and youth lingering near the grazing land. He stands still on the mound and observes the youth playing and composing lyrics in the dhangda-hall.

The fields of wheat and ragi looked green at a distance. The gardens where vegetables are planted are surrounded by fences made from offshoots. Dadi Budha’s offsprings loiter and

play in the fields during the evening. He takes a nap in between these happenings. A large number of people walk past the shrine of Dadi Budha and visit the market on Friday. Some recumbent themselves near the deity while others watch indifferently. Dadi Budha gazed silently at them, “as he did not have a mouth; he was a god.” (Mohanty 9)

He stands wordlessly in the sweltering heat of the month of Baisakh and the ceaseless cloudburst of Jyeshtha. He remains valiant to the chilly breeze of Kartik. He is unaffected by any external stimuli. A hillock of termite rises beside the shrine of Dadi Budha. Seeing this, the villagers do not try to damage it. They are of the opinion that Dadi Budha stands lonely so he has asked for another divine spirit to accompany him. The local folk name the mound as Hunka Budha. Both Dadi and Hunka Budha shower their blessings on the village. Any woman who is infertile and ailing comes to the mound regularly and prays for the betterment of her life.

It has been planned that Ram Muduli’s sole child, Thenga Jani will take his father’s position as chieftain of the village. This is will take place with due permission of the revenue officer. The young ladies of the village desire to marry Thenga Jani so as to become the daughter-in-law of the chieftain’s family. When Thenga sings songs such as Suan Phoola or Champabati, every other girl would warble in response.

Occasionally, Thenga stops and thinks that whom he should marry. The young girls’ whirl around the fire during the night. Thenga and his companions gaze at them. He sometimes feels to take one of them near the hillock of Dadi Budha. He is at his brimming youth. When he thinks of taking one of them, the thought of another girl strikes him. Thenga’s mind burns steadily but “despite all this no particular girl could occupy his heart. He laughed, played, jumped but always stopped at the threshold.” (Mohanty 11)

Now and then, Ram Muduli pays a visit to the shrine of Dadi Budha. He asks the benign spirit to find a suitable match for his son. He repeatedly utters, “Dadi Budha, last year, five of my cows died, let it not happen this year. I’ll offer you chickens and pigeons. I shall offer you wine. Please do not let this happen again; or else I shall die.”(Mohanty 13)

At other times, Hari Jani would also come and plead in front of Dadi Budha to organise the marriage of his daughter with Thenga. For which he shall put up, “a bullock and a tin of cooked wine” in return. Dadi Budha is venerated to the core by the villagers. All are hopeful that Dadi Budha would someday fulfil their desire. The desiccated flowers lay all around near the shrine of Dadi Budha. Numerous chickens are slaughtered to the fore.

The villagers also beg that the police should not pay a visit for inspection. They also pray that the inspector may fall in any awkward situation that would refrain his coming to the village. They utter the words, "let us not return empty-handed tonight. You alone are our well-wisher. Who else is there to listen to our prayers?" They bow in front of the hillock and return home with a burgeoning hope.

In this imaginary world of Lulla village, Dadi Budha as the Bhuta utilises a human who is distinctively dressed and is isolated from the material world. A medium is established between the cosmos of the Bhuta and the physical realm. The Bhuta dressed in vibrant attire is appeased with adequate oblation. This credence has led to the development of culture of the tribal land. It has also renewed the rituals and ceremonies of the people.

These code of beliefs and traditions have been observed continually corroborating to the oral history of Bhuta practice. Rev. A.C. Burnell presents a report on Bhuta Kola conducted in the residence of Dumappa in the Mangalore district. He accounts that the culture of Bhuta has been kept unharmed since numerous decades.

Hinged on the territorial potential, Bhutas are categorised into following groups. Bhutas belonging to Siime or Naadu, Maagare, Graame, Uuru, Guttu, Kutumba. The category of Bhutas of Siime or Naadu are regarded as Royal or Arasu Bhutas. The other class of Bhutas are inferior to Bhutas of Siime. They also show respect to this category of Bhuta. The administrative powers are vested on the Bhutas of Siime.

The supreme ruler of Siime is regarded as Innuuraala Arasu or the ruler of thousand men. The king's throne is named as Saaviraala Patta. In certain places the Panjurli Bhuta is viewed as Saaviraala Panjurli. The westerners especially the missionaries such as A.C. Burnell, R.C. Temple, M.J. Walhouse and Rev. A. Manner have examined the Paaddnas that are otherwise named as oral epics associated with the Bhuta idolization as utterances of ancient religious practices. The illustration of Bhuta as a 'demon' is an assertion by the indigenous population. They worship and honour the demon instead of God and assume the 'Bhuta' as a liberator of their tribe. There is a confluence of place, time and surrounding in a way leading to the creation of a transcendental sphere.

The veneration of Bhuta as a semblance of folk culture of coastal Karnataka is visualised as a compound and ingenious combination of oral histories and dramatic executions. These histories are supported by the idea that they comprise both the belief system and illustrative utterances of folk creeds hammering out the terrors and plans of expiation and

conciliation. The enthusiasm and emancipation of oral histories fuse with the bleak formality of the conventional fashion of worship.

There is an ardent collusive folk-art structure of melodious and ocular types blend with popular sect and pious beliefs. Nevertheless, these descriptions originate from the fossilised social stratum conjoined with the sufferings they cause. They have fabricated a form of art based on the oral historical facts and their ceremonial presentations. This form of art is vulnerable to the folk tradition of Tulunadu in a way exhibiting the historical underpinnings to the fore.

The worship of Bhutas serve as an additional narrative to the archives of Tulunadu. There are various phases of Bhuta worship. Each phase is exceptional and acts as a benefaction to the seraphic powers. Although, the nucleus remains unchanged, the various types of Bhutas are touched by cultural and social forces. As stated by, P. Padmanabha, “The most common features are the invoking of the Bhuta and its impersonation by a professional functionary, the offerings of food and drinks (including animal sacrifice at certain places), the bringing together of the various functional castes of the village, the absence of caste feelings and prejudices, the divine guidance sought by the local leaders for the welfare of the villagers and the solutions sought by the votaries themselves in respect of their personal problems”.(pg 35 structure and dynamics)

The region of Tulunadu has endeavoured to set afloat a vital historical convention of academic research on oral histories of local enthusiasts. It is noteworthy that the local scholars of Tulunadu are students of Kannada literature. They are outrageously absorbed in the artistic taste of oral literary tradition of Tulunadu. There is the use of an extensive lexicon and choice of words supported by touching scenic beauty. The oral histories are sterling in nature depicting the marvellous style in which it depicts the rustic world of Tulunadu.

The imitators of Bhuta abide by the specified manners of dramatic presentations. The screeches, supercilious addresses to the landlord or audience, the muttering of maledictions, the twirling of torch or thrusting oneself create intense theatrical outcome. The entire dramaturgical presentation in this exceptional domain momentarily alters the balance between the autocrat and the enslaved. But the aforesaid alteration is imputed to an auspicious occasion fabricated for the cause.

It is fascinating to take note of the fact that many businessmen and industrialists provide fundings for the worship of Bhuta. The shrines of Bhuta are being reconstructed exhibiting

brand-new aesthetic patterns. Other facilities like piped water and terraces have been constructed. The method of addressing the villagers, contemporary songs, flashlights as well as jewellery made up of gold and silver have added up to the hue of conventional ceremony.

In the village there is a Sthana of Bhuta which is regarded as a place where the Bhuta. The totem is made to inhabit a location especially the centre of the village such as the hillock in the Lulla village where Dadi Budha rests. The local folk venerate the daiva by offering flowers and other delicacies. Not only in Tulu regions but also in the Lulla village of Koraput district regard the Bhuta with extreme admiration. The villagers place the Bhuta on a high pedestal. He acts as a sole guardian and protector of the local people.

If any kind of dispute occurs in the village the impersonator of Bhuta provides his judgement. It attracts the people of all divisions of the society. It has immediate association with the physical and psychical satisfaction of local people. It has also assisted in treating several diseases. These sort of practices are prevalent in Thailand. In Thailand, numerous shelters have been built for the spirits so that they can have proper access to the land. The spirits help in business and agricultural matters. They protect the natural environment and secure harvest in abundance.

Conclusion

The heritage of Bhuta worship has remained lively in the contemporary times. It has engrossed in the societal transformations which later secures its spirited powers. The foremost criteria that is evident in Bhuta Kola is the establishment of balance with ecology. The ritual alters the failure of crop yield. It allows the tribal societies to keep their cultural identities unimpaired even in an epoch of advancement in technology.

Works Cited:

Chopra, Sayar. Singh. (2016). Tribal Identity Concerns in Literature: A Critical Study of Gopinath Mohanty's *The Ancestor*. *IJR*, 3(5), 81-85. *IJR*, 81-85.

Gowda, K. Chinnappa. (2005). *The Mask and the Message*. Mangalagangothri: Madipu Prakashana.

Mohanty, Gopinath. (1999). *The Ancestor*. Trans. Arun Kumar Mohanty. Sahitya Akademi.

Mohapatra, Ajit Kumar. (2020). Depiction of Tribal Life in Gopinath Mohanty's *The Ancestor*. *IJELS*, 5 (6), 12-16.