

## Issues in Tribal Educatio in Bastar, Chhattisgarh

**Mrs Uma Ram**

### Introduction

Bastar, a part of Dandakaranya in ancient time, is both a district as also a division in Chhattisgarh. Till 1997, it was a single district division in Madhya Pradesh. Bastar today is a division with five districts namely Bastar, Kanker, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bijapur Tribal population. This is a heavily forested, tribal-dominated area. The entire division is a notified scheduled area. A brief demographic glimpse of the area can be had from the following table:

S.No	Indicator	Kanker	Bastar <sup>1</sup>	Dantewada <sup>2</sup>
1	Area (Sq. Kms)	5,285.01	8,430.44	10,227.46
2	Forest Area (as %)	63.53	84.36	98%
3	Population (2001)	6,51,333	13,02,253	7,19,065
4	Tribal Population (%)	56.36%	70%	66%
5	Major Ethnic Tribes	Raj Gonds, Maria, Muria, Halba	Maria, Muria, Abuhjmaria, Dhurva, Halba, Bhatra	Maria, Halba, Dorla, Dhurva, Gond, Telga
6	Poverty Level (%)	50+	55+	60+
7	Literacy (2001)	73.31%	45.48%	30.01%

<sup>1</sup> Includes present-day Narayanpur district.

<sup>2</sup> Includes present-day Bijapur district

8	Tribal Students at	54,305	1,37,761	81,801
	(a) Primary level			
	(b) Secondary level	20,332	25,329	10,623
	(c) High-school level	7,118	10,331	5,960
	(d) Hr. Sec level	2,596	3,610	2,799

*Source: District-wise Socio-Economic Development Indicators in Chhattisgarh, 2005*

*Directorate of Economic & Statistics, Chhattisgarh*

### **School Education In Bastar: An Overview**

District Primary Education Program (DPEP) has been running in Bastar since 1998. Earlier, school education in Bastar was administered by the Education Department. Later it was selectively shared between Education Department and Tribal Welfare Department. Subsequently it was transferred entirely to the Tribal Welfare Department. Officially, the enrollment status is 100%. However, the credibility of this is dubious because of various factors. The drop-out phenomenon extends to all years of school, but it is very pronounced at the "transition points" that is, when a student completes Primary, Secondary and Hr. Secondary standards and has to move from one school to another. It can be seen that for every 100 tribal students enrolled in Primary School, only 2.62 tribal students make it to the Higher Secondary level in Bastar. For Dantewada and Kanker districts, these figures are 3.42 and 4.78 respectively. How many among these clear the XII Board exam? How many take the trouble to seek admission in a College? A recent survey in Bastar by an NGO indicated that not even 1% of the students enrolling in Standard I eventually enter the portals of the College. The drop-out ratio among girls is much higher than the drop-out ratio among boys. The high drop-out phenomenon has given rise to tragic-comic habit of tribal youth mentioning in a plain-faced manner their academic qualification as 'Eighth-fail' or even 'Fifth-fail'. One of the reasons for the high drop-out is the ill-match between the formal school term(s) and the tribal calendar. For instance, the peak season for NTFP collection and processing in Bastar (January-March) clashes with the time for annual examinations.

Almost all primary schools are co-education schools. Although there are some private schools run by Christian and Hindu organizations, the tribal students' strength in these schools, especially the Christian schools, is very negligible. On the other hand, their strength is almost 100% in Government schools. Mid-day Meal program is run in all Government schools. Around 20% of the tribal students study in boarding schools, locally known as "Ashram Shaala". The show-school in Bastar, especially in the field of tribal education, is the Ramakrishna-Vivekanand School in Narayanpur run by the Ramakrishna Mission. It was set up in the mid-eighties with the object of providing public-school quality education to the tribal children in Abujhmarh. This school has an impressive record, as indicated by the Board-examination results. Mata Rukmani Seva Sanstha (a private organization inspired and guided by the ideals of Vinoba Bhave) runs a number of ashram schools especially for tribal girls in Bastar, Dantewada and Bijapur districts. Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams and Saraswati Shishu Mandir also run several good schools for tribals in Bastar. The state of government schools run by the Tribal Welfare Department in Bastar can be surmised from the following table.

S.No	Indicator	Kanker	Bastar <sup>3</sup>	Dantewada <sup>4</sup>
1	Number of teachers per school at			
	(a) Primary Level	2	2	1
	(b) Secondary Level	4	3	7
	(c) High School Level	6	10	6
	(d) Hr. Sec. Level	18	15	7
4	Student-Teacher Ratio at			
	(a) Primary Level	33	39	65
5	(b) Secondary Level	37	40	16

<sup>3</sup> Includes present-day Narayanpur district.

<sup>4</sup> Includes present-day Bijapur district

		29	27	25
6	(c) Hr. Sec. Level	7	7	11

*Source: District-wise Socio-Economic Development Indicators in Chhattisgarh, 2005*

*Directorate of Economic & Statistics, Chhattisgarh*

High absenteeism of teachers in the schools in Bastar is a major challenge in addition to the inadequate number of teachers in the schools. Schools close to towns have more teachers than class-rooms (or even chairs!) in the school, while schools located off the connecting roads that require walking some distance have hardly one teacher.

Likewise, hidden beneath the student-teacher ratio is the fact that even in schools where a teacher has around 40 students to teach, these 40 students belong to various Standards. Consequently, one teacher in one poorly classroom handles 40 students belonging to three or four different standards! How he can run such parallel classes teaching entirely different subjects from entirely different text books, is best left to our imagination. In the single-teacher EGS<sup>5</sup> schools, teachers commonly handled all five standards simultaneously! Now these EGS schools have converted to normal primary schools.

A third point that emerges from the above table is the very impressive teacher-student ratio (7, 7, 11) at the Higher Secondary level. Hidden under this impressive figure is the sad point mentioned earlier that barely 3 out of 100 PS-level students make it to the higher secondary level.

### **Issues In Tribal Education**

The woes that ail tribal education in Bastar are largely those that ail tribal education in other parts of India (maybe the world). The entire process of education in tribal areas inadvertently (or advertently?) aims to supplant the traditional value-system with another system that is almost the opposite of it! This happens in various ways.

<sup>5</sup> EGS=Education Guarantee Scheme. This was a well-intentioned scheme of the Madhya Pradesh Government. Under this scheme, if a parish had 30 primary-level students but no school, and if it demanded a school in its neighborhood, the Government guaranteed opening such a school within 90 days. The scheme, however, required the community to ensure (a) suitable building for the school, and (b) suitable candidate (VIII Pass) to serve as a teacher. EGS schools were later subsumed under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and made into Primary Schools.

Language is a major issue. The tribal child in Bastar has to simultaneously contend with at least three languages: (a) his mother tongue that could be Gondi or Bhatri or Dorli or Dhurvi or Telga or Halbi (b) Halbi, which is the lingua franca in Bastar<sup>6</sup> and (c) Hindi, the official medium of instruction. Add to this English, which is taught from Standard I. With plans being afoot to get Chhattisgarhi included in 8th Schedule of the Constitution as the official language of the State,<sup>7</sup> it is only a matter of time before the child will be saddled with yet another language.<sup>8</sup> None of the local tongues in Bastar has a script of its own. The medium of instruction in schools is Hindi. The Text Books are in Hindi and in Devanagari script. In effect, for the tribal child in Bastar to be instructed in Hindi, it is analogous to a British school-boy in England being taught in French medium! To say the least, the child's mind is baffled, and this state is commonly misjudged as low IQ among tribal students.

The matter is made worse by the prejudice against tribal ways ingrained in the teacher's mind. Most of the teachers are non-tribals. They have their homes in the towns and, given the state of transport system, their commuting between home and school is erratic and takes away much of their time and energy. The Government tried in vain to adopt a system of local employment, but this ran into a legal hurdle.<sup>9</sup> The worst among the teachers simply play truant. The best among the teachers approach their job in a misconceived missionary mode. They believe their mission is to "civilize" the tribal kids and to "wean them from traditional ways" to assimilate them into the "national mainstream". The Government believes in no less, without realizing the terrible ramifications implied in this mission.

Every year, come July and large-scale campaigns (*Shaala Utsav*) are organized to attract kids to enroll in schools. Apart from publicizing the virtues of formal education through posters, wall-scripting

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<sup>6</sup> Halbi is the tongue of the Halbas. It has close affinities to Marathi. It was the language of the Maratha soldiers who came and settled down in Bastar when Bastar came under the sway of the Peshwa rulers of Nagpur. Bastar has pockets of the major tribes, and the gaps are all filled up by the Halbas. Halbi therefore became the lingua franca of the region. Its status was further strengthened when it was adopted as the court language of Bastar.

<sup>7</sup> The Legislature of Chhattisgarh has already unanimously passed the necessary resolution in this regard. The matter is pending at the Central level.

<sup>8</sup> Speaking on the issue of language for tribal education at a Discussion Group in Raipur recently, Shri.Nand Kumar, Secretary, School Education, Chhattisgarh, shared an experience that reflects how good intentions aim contradictorily toward tribal education. When the proposal for teaching tribal kids in Bastar in their native tongue for the first two years of school was placed before a former Chief Minister, he turned it down arguing that that would further isolate the tribal. He emphasized, instead, the need to initiate them into English from Std I so as to equip them to face the challenges of globalization. The current Chief Minister, with the best of intentions like his predecessor, took an opposite view and insisted that early education should be in the kids' mother-tongue because this will lend a status and respectability to the tribal tongues which in turn will boost the tribal child sense of self-respectability. Needless to add, the tribal kid is caught between various good intentions and suffers in the process!

<sup>9</sup> A similar attempt by the Government of Tamilnadu was challenged in the court. The matter went up to the Supreme Court, which turned down the Government order saying that the Constitution does not provide for "district-wise" reservation.

and radio, loud rallies are organized in the villages and parishes. The teachers and others make rounds for door-to-door calls to motivate children and their parents. A lot of money and energy goes into all this. People in the mainstream are very conscious about educating their children.<sup>10</sup> Why? Because they consider education as an enabling factor, an acquisition that will enable the child later to find a worthy livelihood. Tribal parents love their children no less. Why then are they so lax with regard to sending their children to school regularly? An investigation done in this regard led to a shocking revelation that education as it exists in Bastar is a disabling factor.<sup>i</sup> The indifferent schools produce Tenth-pass or Twelfth-pass upstarts who, often spoilt by the scholarship cash-money given by the Government, pick up expensive vices, give up the traditional activities of the family (like gathering NTFP) and at the same time they are not good enough to succeed in the outside world. Eventually, they just hang around the pan shops. The tribal elders in Bastar are understandably not too enthusiastic about formal school education.

The well-intentioned Government has opened a number of Ashram Shaalas to facilitate tribal education in Bastar. However, these have shown a flip side over the years. Unscrupulous politicians have reportedly tried to draft workers from the tribal hostels. This has led to serious fissures in the traditional forms of leadership in tribal Bastar. The belligerent attitude of the hostel-leaders when they visit their villages is seen as emergence of the dandy culture that is perhaps effective in politics but disastrous to cohesiveness of the tribe and community.

Formal school education and, later, the reservation-ladder that beckons the diligent among the tribal students is leading to what anthropologists term 'de-tribalization'. The system may facilitate temporal triumph of the individual, but this comes at the cost of disintegration of the tribe. The system of reservation of constituencies in the electoral domain is also doing a similar kind of damage.

The content of the syllabus for education in Bastar is not different from what it is in the rest of the State. The need for a more relevant content and syllabus has often been recognized, but effective action in this regard is yet to come. Shri.Digvijay Singh, former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, speaking in Bastar on tribal development felt that the essence of this lies in enabling (through education, capacity building, legislation and facilitation) tribals to realize higher incomes from their traditional lines of economic activity.<sup>ii</sup> He was speaking in the context of Bastar and was referring to non-timber forest produces (NTFP) the processing of which constitute the traditional economic activity

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<sup>10</sup> As a development worker rightly observed, the urgencies of a government servant on being transferred include (a) to find a home, and (b) to find a proper school for his kids.

of the tribes in Bastar. NTFP and tribal agro produces in Bastar are worth over Rs.1000 Crores per annum.<sup>iii</sup> The major NTFP that are traded in large quantities include tamarind, mahua, kosa cocoons, mango, harra, tree-borne oilseeds like tora, karanj, kusum, sal, apart from tendu leaves. The tribals collect these from the forests and after rudimentary processing, bring them to the weekly markets for sale to the traders or their operatives.<sup>11</sup> The tribal in Bastar, who is owner of the produce<sup>iv</sup> gets as low as 20% of the value; the balance 80% passes on to a long chain of middlemen and traders.<sup>v</sup> None of the text books in Bastar have any content regarding the best practices for harvesting and processing NTFP. How damaging this can be can be judged by the case of Kosa. Bastar has two kinds of Kosa: one is cultured in farms and is known as *daba kosa*. Another occurs naturally on *Sal* (*Shorea Robusta*) trees. This second variety, known as *raily kosa* is exclusive to Bastar. An estimated 5 crore cocoons of *raily kosa* are harvested every year. Less than 2% of this is processed within the district. The bulk is removed to small towns in Bihar where yarn is drawn from the cocoons and woven in high-value Bastar Kosa fabric. Why? because the locals reportedly lack the skill to process kosa. Similar is the case in varying degrees in respect of all other NTFP. Over 1000 truck-loads of tendu leaves are transported from Bastar to towns in South India (where around fifty truck-loads of tobacco exist) for use in beedi-rolling. The logical way should have been for fifty trucks of tobacco from these towns to be brought to Bastar to activate the beedi industry locally. The schools, however, continue to neglect the need to impart vocational training to strengthen the traditional lines of economic activity in Bastar. The schools remain a disabling force.

The traditional 'school' of the tribal in Bastar was in the *ghotul*.<sup>12</sup> The best of what is in tribal culture owes to the *ghotul*.<sup>vi</sup> However, under the influence of the new education, the *ghotul* has suffered a systematic disintegration. Today, it is almost defunct (except perhaps in some remote interiors of Bastar where too it is reported to be very irregular).

To conclude, based on the Bastar experience, some suggestions could be made at this point to make tribal education meaningful, creative and livelihood-friendly. These are as follows:

- The Big-brother attitude of educators must end. The approach to tribal education has to be a two-way transaction of give and take, based on an informed appreciation of traditional tribal values and wisdom.

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<sup>11</sup> These operatives are locally called *kochiyas*.

<sup>12</sup> The Village Dormitory, common in many indigenous societies the world over.

- The purpose of tribal education must be (like elsewhere) to (a) impart the '3R's and (b) to refine and lead further the legacy of traditional wisdom (c) to facilitate strengthening of the traditional economic activities.
- Ways and means could be explored to involve *ghotul*-kind of institutions to integrate traditional and new forms of education.
- The content for schools in tribal areas must be different (at least partially) from the general content.
- The panel that has power to design tribal education must include professional anthropologists and also traditional community leaders.
- The school terms and daily timings must be according to the tribal economic calendar.

### References:

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<sup>i</sup> For a fuller discussion of this point, see *Reading Beyond the Alphabet*, Ed. Brij Kothari, Vijay Sherry Chand and Michael Norton (2003) Sage Publications. This book is a collection of papers presented at a Workshop on Lifelong Literacy organized by IIM, Ahmedabad in August 1999. The point here is picked from the opening article by K.S.Ram in this book.

<sup>ii</sup> Vide *The Tamarind Route to Gram Swaraj*, RG Mission, Jagdalpur (2000)

<sup>iii</sup> Vide *Imli Andolan In Bastar*, RG Mission, Jagdalpur (1999). This figure based on the Mandi's official records relates to 1999. At current prices, this is well over Rs.2000 Cr.

<sup>iv</sup> In terms of the Provisions of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, gram sabhas in tribal areas have ownership rights over locally available NTFP.

<sup>v</sup> Vide *Imli Andolan In Bastar*, RG Mission, Jagdalpur (1999).

<sup>vi</sup> See *The Muria And Their Ghotul* by Verrier Elwin (OUP)

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**PART – V**

**Pages from the History**

### **Pages from the History**

(This is the extracts from the well known book “ Meet My People “ written by the great folklorist Devendra Satyarthi during 1931. The book was released in 1941 in Lahore with a foreward by noted writer Mulak Raj Anand.. He had extensive tour to many parts of India and had collected three million songs across the country. His visit to Orissa is presented here to introduce the readers that how folklore of Orissa was collected during pre-independent period to search for a National identity cutting across the language, religion and castes and venturing for unity in diversity.

**( Editor)**

### **HOMAGE TO ORISSA**

**Devendra Satyarthi**

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SINGING across the centuries, Orissa, or Utkal, as the Oriya-speaking people call their homeland, can claim to have a long tradition of folk-poetry. So much of it is concerned with the earth that one feels like listening to the soft whispers of Mother Earth.

At Puri, where I began my Orissa tour in 1931, an Oriya friend said, " Very little Oriya folk-poetry has been recorded so far. You will have to go to village huts and rice fields, if you must listen to the singing voice of the Oriya people. You won't find even the slightest mention of the crash of the biggest of our kingdoms in the peasant songs, but so far as the emotions of the heart are concerned, you will find an excellent record."

I came down to Cuttuck, and visited the surrounding villages to gather peasant songs, all sharply etched on the mind of Orissa that I saw all around. I visited some of the States as well, enriching my collection, and marked how the half-starved peasant had been facing hunger and poverty.

I found some rare stuff, and it was really astonishing that the Oriya peasant, even while facing starvation, rejoiced in the kingdom of the heart, and derived peace and a sort of detachment.

We hear the singing voice of the people and see them busy in household work. Finding their companionship in trees and birds, hills and streams, they make a living poetry of nature. Words, as simple as the daily speech, have the morning freshness. Occasionally, one feels that the song must have been composed by nature herself.

The villager earned a difficult livelihood, but his cultural training has been such that he did not lack in appreciation of life in its loveliest aspects. Amidst the grinding poverty runs the wonder of nature with the brilliancy of lighting. Maybe, the flash of joy is brief, but, for the same reason, it is all the more precious. The conception of beauty in the human form and the consolation of the human personality have always touched the mind of the villager, even when his t nigger for

bread is grim.

There is very little bitterness. No great fuss is made about domestic problems. But the variety of human personality, drawn with accuracy, passes before us. The village flirt, the

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conceited lover, the hard-working housewife, the new bride under the folds of the bridal sari, the guest seeking hospitality, the old man with a bit of advice to the younger ones you find such stuff.

The four-line piece with a common refrain is generally sung as a song by young girls. The first line forms a background, an image taken from nature or home life ; sometime it directly deals with the following comment. The refrain may be jamo dali lo, i.e., O branch of the jamun tree.

327 At the doorway lies a round stone.  
Your back received beating like a stone,  
You look clever.

O branch of the jamun tree.

328 The bamboo with four branches,

My four brothers wear ear-rings and bracelets.  
They work in the Cuttuck durbar,  
O branch of thzjamun tree.

321) Rub your bangle, rub your finger-ring,  
All know, including your neighbour!).  
Why do you feel shy now ?

branch ofthejamun tree.

330 On the road goes a chariot.

I have been with you for twelve years.  
You didn't get me a nose-ring.

O branch of the jamun tree.

331 O firefly,

Don't be sad that you are nothing,  
There is light at your back.

branch of the jamun tree.

332 Water below the boundary-line,  
You may frighten, I don't fear,

I shall wear a flower on my hair-knot.  
O branch of the jamun tree.

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333 The betel-nut is cut into pieces.

Give up the State service, my love,  
My royal forehead is paining.  
O branch of the jamun tree.

334: Stone-bits on the new road,  
Our Raja has a white mare,  
She runs towards the battle-field.  
O branch of the jamun tree.

Everyone shouts, rupee, rupee, rupee.  
I could not buy beauty for silver,  
I have lost all means.  
O branch of thejamun tree.

330 Water of the new tank.

You gave me in a big house, mother,

They give me even the kerandi fish after counting.

O branch of the jamun tree.

337 The bangle touched the elbow.  
No justice left at Gumma village,  
Brother exploits sister.  
O branch of the jamun tree.

The refrain may be Mo Ramo re, i.e., O my Rama, Lo Koili, i.e., O kail, or still different. The singer, addressing the branch of the jamun tree, the god of her heart, or even the little bird, comments on her life.

Marriage-songs are many. The mother, soothing the weeping bride, who feels sad and dejected while bidding adieu to her parents' home, addresses in a soft tone. In some of these songs even the bride opens her heart.

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338 Selecting a good house.

Your father gave you in marriage, my golden daughter.

Father-in-law and mother-in-law are alive,

Theirs is a zamindari,

They are in State service.

You will have no trouble, my golden daughter,

Our son-in-law controls the affairs,

He carries a business in rice,

Everything will be in your hands, my golden daughter.

339 Don't weep, don't weep, I say, my golden daughter,  
After eight days we shall know your news,  
Your aunt with her sari wiped out your tears,  
Why are you so much dejected ?

340 O koily my silken swing on the sandal tree,  
With tears I sat on it, O hoiL

O koil, the gold comb I have at mother-in-law's,

The sandal oil I left back at my mother's home, O koil.

O koil, the honey at my mother's home was so sweet,  
My childhood days I passed in joy, O koil.

O koil, has my mother no memory of mine ?  
Is her soft heart a stone now, O koil ?

O koily I am a fish out of water.

Shall I not once see my mother, O koil ?

There is a four-line pattern sung in the fields while the day's work goes on. It is also adapted to a dance with a variance of the rhythm and the time.

341 The branch of the kakharu looks lovely,  
When will the flower blossom ?

Looking towards the fair-faced one my years are passing,  
When will she be kind to me ?

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342 The bird of this side of the stream  
Flew across,  
The dark-faced girl  
Got one pice from me.

343 The drum is torn, the drummer is dumb,  
The one-eyed dancing girl is dancing ;  
The Raja is deaf, the minister is foolish,  
He follows as he likes.

344 The lower leaf drops,  
The upper leaf laughs,  
The middle one says,  
My day draws nearer.

345 The shining white stick.

How do you get the beating ?  
O God, I shall die,  
My bones are crushed.

There are other songs sung by the carters as they drive the bullocks. The reference to the bullock-cart forms a special note.

346 The bullock-cart makes the creaking noise  
By the side of the Bentu tank,  
The cartman's face looks pale,  
He longs to see the fair-faced woman.

The ploughman has his own high-pitched, long-drawn tune. He talks to the bullocks and likes to share his feelings with them in a mood of confession. He knows his limitations, yet he declares that he is no less than Ban Mali, or Krishna, in his humble vocation, while he dreams of a plough made of gold and yoke of silver,

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347 Tiny, tiny, the black bullock's eyes,  
Put your feet nicely, O black one,  
Fine sand will rise before us.

348 Go on, go on, O bullock, do not brood over,

After a while you will be free,

You will get green grass and cold water.

349 I haven't yoked the bullocks in the company of ploughmen,

I haven't taken lesson at a school,  
What song shall I sing, O ploughman,  
I am ploughing with the old bullocks.

350 Red, red, son of the cow is red,  
More red is the god of Dharma.

The god of Dharma is true for the four Yugas,  
He drove his chariot in the dry sand.  
Take the chariot across, O charioteer,  
Let the night be passed in Lanka.

For the gold plough the silver yoke,  
The bullock made of diamonds and gems  
Ban Mali himself is the ploughman.

Certain Oriya folk-songs are known for the sense of humour and irony. Sometimes, the singer shows a remarkable craftsmanship, singing extempore banking upon stock phrases and idioms.

352 You came to see me, dear, you did well.  
No place have I for you to sit ;  
The way you came, dear,  
The same way you may go.

A drop of water I would offer you, dear,  
The earthen pitcher is broken ;  
Don't sit, go away hastily, dear,  
How long will you keep standing ?

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I would give you apeerha, dear,  
You would rest for a while ;  
Some child took it away, dear,  
I had only one.

I would give you oil, dear,

You would rub on your body ;

Some chilli is mixed in it,

Your eyes will burn in case you use it.

I would give you utensils, dear,

Not even a brass pot in the house ;

I would have brought one from a neighbour,

My leg got crippled.

We would talk of joy and sorrow,  
Dear, I have got fever ;  
Do not sit beside a sick person, dear,  
Make haste to go back home.

I would give you money to spend, dear,

I have nothing with me ;

I really feel, dear,

I should curse my luck.

Had you been here yesterday, dear,

I had prepared sweet cakes ;

For life-time you would have remembered, dear,

They were so sweet.

It is my bad luck, dear,  
It didn't happen that way ;  
Who will know my heart's pain,  
All that I feel, dear ?

It is getting late, go back, dear,  
Your residence is far away ;  
Come some day again, dear,  
Stay with me,

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After some days, dear,  
My son will come to invite you ;  
Don't take it ill, dear,  
Hurry up to go.

My house must have always, dear,  
Persons staying as guests ;  
Last month I had to spend, dear,  
One maund of extra rice.

How will you go on foot, dear,

Tell me, how will you go back ?

If I had a bullock-cart I would offer you, dear,

I am not such a miser.

I shall give you a spinning-wheel,  
It is lying broken ;

Have it repaired and send it back, dear,  
Through a person coming this side.

Last year during the Dot Purnima, dear,  
At your residence, dear,  
The comforts I had, dear,  
All I remember.

It will not be over if I go on, dear,  
All your love ;

It will be night, day is no more,  
How long will I tell ?

The voice of the Oriya woman is heard in the entire range  
of these songs. Her greatest wish is that she should at least  
get one son, for in the absence of one, it will be impossible  
for her to enter the doorway of heaven.

353 O kharkhari flower, I worship you,

Any goddess may keep me under her protection,  
The rice is seven-year-old.

Let the son of my lap sleep in the folds of my sari,  
While I die, send me to heaven,

Sometimes at the pitch of her voice, she addresses her husband, when he thoroughly disappoints her.

354 Hell with you, O man with burnt face,  
No more will I stay in your house ;  
At daytime I will beg some rice,  
At daytime I will eat,

With my hands I will cook and eat and get fat,  
In the open will I sleep.

But the husband may still seek her companionship, while he invites her attention to his plan to leave for Burma, where he will work hard to make a good living.

355 Come, O diamond girl,  
We will leave for Rangoon.

Rice and vegetable curry,  
What more will I say ?

Tea leaves in that country,

You can save money and keep in your hands.

Trunks and boxes in that country,

Rupees you can keep one row above the other.

Come, O diamond girl,  
We will leave for Rangoon.

And ultimately the quarrel between husband and wife may end in the Song of the Stomach. It is a free confession of one's disappointments in the daily struggle of life.

355 For this stomach,

For this stomach I left for Bengal,  
For this stomach I had all struggle.  
For this stomach I pounded rice,

180 MEET MY PEOPLE

For this stomach I reaped the paddy.

For this stomach I worked on a shop.

For this stomach I received cane-beating on my back,

For this stomach I went on dancing

For this stomach I took to spinning,

For this stomach I find abuses on my lips,

For this stomach I met Tarn Raj.

For this stomach.

Some of the songs deal with the seasonal outlook and the influence of every month of the year on the mine! of the singer is depicted in the Ear a Mail songs. The Chait Parva songs breathe the air of the spring festival, it may be merely a love song with a little twist, or it may be symbolic of the new sap rising in the trees ; the whole month of Chaita is spent in singing and dancing,

young men and maidens, ever eager to take up opposite sides, sing in competition. Every Chait Parva song draws upon nature ; it strikes the passions and emotions of both the singers and The listeners.

Oriya folk-songs are an integral part of Oriya culture. Many songs deal with images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, as they passed their days in the forest. Some move round Radha and Krishna.

Surely, whenever one happens to listen to an Oriya folk-song, and, thereby gets a useful hint of the people's musical tradition, one's heart jumps with joy, saying, ' Sing, Orissa, sing, dear ? '

(Courtesy: Project Gutenberg, Germany)



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