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Documenting the Divine: Tales of Traditional Knowledge Systems Associated with the Ancient Temples and Folk Deities in Terai Region of Cooch Behar and Other Parts of Bengal

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Abstract: Generally, traditional cultural expressions associated with people's beliefs and values, oral myths and legends, often broadly and collectively referred to as "intangible cultural heritage", are of literary, artistic and musical importance in the lives of us Indians. Oral traditions, myths and legends have always been an integral part of the lives of Indians. These have for generations not only conveyed our most cherished values but also contributed in a very major way towards the extension of our worlds by maintaining the ecological balance and facilitating cultural syncretism. Tribal people and local communities around the districts of West Bengal especially Cooch Behar in North Bengal, have developed an enormous wealth of traditional knowledge. There is a growing interest in documenting such traditional knowledge. This short research therefore aims to compile certain oral myths, cultural beliefs and values in the Terai region of Cooch Behar and other parts of Bengal as part of the Indian knowledge system which calls for preservation and documentation. In this research, I intend to document and analyze how these legendary traditions, cultural beliefs and values of tribal people relating to their animistic faith, the myth of Bara Debi Mandir, the Baneshwar myth, the Kamteswari Mandir myth, the Burir Pat Mandir myth, Natai Chandi myth, Mangalchandi myth etc in Cooch Behar and other parts of Bengal are important for containing simple values of ancient wisdom for a harmonized life and living. Clearing of forests for resorts, rail lines through forest corridors, contamination of waterbodies by tourists and industrialists, animal-human conflicts have all destroyed the ecological harmony of the region. Yet the myths tell us stories of harmony, peace and talk to us about ancient words of wisdom. Therefore, incorporating these beliefs and myths in modern day conservation strategies can help in better conservation of our environment. My



intention in this research would be to document these tales and analyze these oral narratives for what they have to offer as archival knowledge system to a world of urbanity.

Keywords: Bengal, Cooch Behar, folk culture, oral myths, traditional knowledge

Introduction

“A people that can feel no pride in the past, in this history and literature loses the mainstay of its national character.”-Max Muller.

Unlike the Western culture and traditions which are primarily deemed uniform as in their essay “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” of the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer put it “Culture(Western) today is infecting everything with sameness...Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together”, the indigenous culture and traditions of India are largely diverse in form and nature. Bengal with special accompaniment to the terai region of Cooch Behar has traditionally been the abode of indigenous or traditional knowledge in India. Indigenous culture of India is primarily based on the oral tradition, where orality represents the rustic inheritance of West Bengal, which was once a part of the Greater Bengal. So far the term folk culture is concerned, ‘folk‘ means ‘lok‘ or the people in general. It is in the famous quote by Frank Boas: “Folklore is a mirror of Culture, people’s autographical ethnography” lies the extension of modern folk culture (Dey 2012). Traditional knowledge is thus developed, maintained and nurtured mainly by the uneducated common people of rural Bengal. The origin of indigenous culture is deeply embedded in the religion, festival, myths, education, health, emotion, love, marriage, entertainment, loneliness and in a wide range of human sentiments. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, influx of urbanization, globalization and westernization have forced Bengal folk culture i.e traditional knowledge oeuvre to confront a tremendous challenge in the recent times.

Indigenous culture may be defined as the “collective heritage” of institutions, customs, skills, dress, and way of life of a small, stable, closely knit, usually rural community. Tradition controls indigenous culture and resistance to change is strong. The home-made and hand-made dominate in tools, music, story and ritual. Houses are constructed with a purpose. Indigenous culture develops as a result of particular



physical, social and economic characteristics experienced by the group. As indigenous culture displays major variations from place to place, the device of culture region is a useful starting point for the study of traditional knowledge in many parts of India. Indigenous culture refers to a culture traditionally practiced by a small, homogeneous, rural group living in relative isolation from other groups. Historically, handed down through oral tradition, it demonstrates the "old ways" over novelty and relates to a sense of community. Indigenous culture is quite often imbued with a sense of place. If elements of an indigenous culture are copied by, or moved to, a foreign locale, they will still carry strong connotations of their original place of creation (Banerjee 2018).

The narratives, myths and legends that make these oral traditions encompass a wide variety of categories from stories of creation, human heroes, folk tales, paintings, living legends, dialects, historical narrations, kinship, local beliefs, etc. Throughout history especially in India, societies have relied heavily on stories, histories and lessons to maintain a historical record and sustain their cultures and identities (Chaudhary 2017). According to soviet researchers, 'Folklore' is and leads to 'Wisdom of the people' (Das 2012). There is a wealth of information available which could reveal many aspects of a country's tradition. It is a truism that "India is a country where the elements of folklore exist in abundance in form of folk knowledge science and technology, folk performing art and non performing art, folk practices, folk literature" (Roy 2015). Many people have stories to tell and are just waiting to be asked. According to scholars Renee Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod, oral traditions are "the means by which knowledge is reproduced, preserved and conveyed from generation to generation. Oral traditions form the foundation of Aboriginal societies, connecting the speaker and listener in communal experience and uniting past and present in memory" (Barma 2014).

Banesvar Śiva Temple Myth

One of the most important Śiva temples in Cooch Behar district on the basis of popularity is the Banesvar Śiva temple, located 10 km away from Cooch Behar town in the middle of Cooch Behar-Alipurduar high road at Banesvar Village. The name of the provenance is also Banesvar, christened after the name of the sacred temple at the site. From the account of Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed it is to be known that the famous Puranic giant Banasur installed the Śiva linga by his name and Khen king



Nilambar erected this temple. Kalikapurana, Yoginitantra and Lingapurana also mentioned the name of Baneshwar Śiva. But according to H.N. Chowdhury, the present temple of Baneshwar was built by Koch King Maharaja Pran Narayan (1625-1665 C.E.) approximately in 1665 C.E. The present temple has been renovated from time to time (Lama & Acharjee 2018).

As Mythology goes, Banasur, the King of Asura, a Shaibite, wanted to build a Shiva Temple at Patal. Shiva agreed, but condition was, while carrying the Linga from Kailash-abode of Shiva - if Banasur stops, the Linga will get stayed there. Banasur started from Kailash with the Linga, got tired, and stopped for drinking water at a small lake, putting the Linga on ground. After drinking water, he returned, but could not move the Linga and built a Shiva temple around the Linga, known as Baneshwar Shiva Temple. Later, Aniruddha, nephew of Lord Krishna, got enchanted by the beauty of Usha, daughter of Banasur, eloped her. Banasur captivated Aniruddha. War started between Banasur and Lord Krishna, but Lord Shiva mediated, and the marriage was solemnised at the Baneshwar temple.

Historically, the temple was built 500 years ago, by Raja Prasanna Narayana.

The temple Architecture is very different from Bengali school of Temple Architecture as there is no Aat-Chala, or Mandapa. The top is a dome; above is a Mangal Kalash with a Trident; the dome is on a Square Base with a Garvagriha, very dark, where the Shivalingam is located at 10 feet below the Plinth (Acharjee 2019).

There are animal sacrifices which still take place at this temple on auspicious days with puja.

Adjacent to the temple is a lake called Mohan Pukur where lots of turtles are living, and they are called Mohan. They can not be caught, or killed. The temple feeds them. Water of this lake, as per mythology, quenched the thirst of Banasur, and the Turtles represent the Asuras and they are considered devotees of Lord Shiva, and Avatar (Incarnation) of God Narayana.

During Shiva Chaturdashi, (14th Lunar day, in Magha) there is a big Mela (Fair) held near the temple on that time, every year.

Kamteshwari Mandir Myth

Once upon a time there was a kingdom named Kamrup. Kantanath was the king of the state. Gosanimari was the capital of the state. It is 40Km away from the Cooch Behar city. His father's name was Bhaktishwar



and mother's name was Angana . They were very poor . In sleep they had a strange dream that Devi Chandi will give them a son and who would be the future king of Kamtapur state. Then the Goddess disappeared. On a auspicious day the house was filled with joy of having the son. The son was named as Kantanath as per Devi Chandi's direction .At the age of five his education began. In the meantime his father, Bhaktishwar died and the problems started to increase. So a neighbour Brahmin appointed him as his shepherd boy. Thus his days go on. One day the Brahmin found Kantanath sleeping under a tree and a large poisonous snake's hood had been protecting him from the heat of the sun. The astonished Brahmin did not say anything and he just noticed the 'Rajlakhan' in the hands and feet of the sleeping boy. After this Kantanath was freed from his shepherdhood. Then the Brahmin took a promise from Kantanath that if Kantanath could ever become a king, he will appoint him as Rajguru (Barman 2022).

After some years, one day his mother told him all the previous happenings. At dawn Devi Chandi dreamt him that after completing his ablution in Kajlikura , he would see three terrifying objects as capricorn, crocodile and snake in the eastern corner. At that time Kantanath was so terrified that he was unable to touch the first two objects . Then he gathered courage and touched the tail of the snake, the last object. Then Chandi appeared and blessed him that he would be the king of one era as he had touched the last object. Devi Chandi then ordered Vishwakarma to build a beautiful palace for Kantanath. Everything was built in the middle of a night. The next day Kantanath ascended the throne in a grandiose way. He had brought the brahmins from Mithila and started to worship the deities. Kantanath established his kingdom on the banks of river Dharala. There he worshipped Kanteswari (another form of Devi Chandi) , the goddess of kamtapur. Therefore the king was also called as Kanteswar or Kamteswara. On the behest of chandi, Sashipatra became the minister and Birvadro became the commander. Birvadro had five daughters namely Sukanchana , Akanchana , Sushila , Sushitala and Banamala. The king married all the daughters of Sashipatra . Among them Banamala was very beautiful and she was the favourite queen of the king.

Once the king planned a hunting trip but the rajpurohit told him that the journey was not auspicious. So he cancelled the trip and ordered his fisherman to catch fish instead. The fisherman collected a net to catch the fish but did not find any thing. Some time later he caught a fish (sol mach) when he took the Goddess Chandi's name. Suddenly a kite came and took the fish, then the fisherman started crying and his



wife started laughing. They started quarreling with each other and they were brought to the King's court to solve their problems. Then the wife of the fisherman told the king about the incidents and she also narrated the king the story of a cursed brahmin girl and Bhagadatta's armor theory which was hidden in his kingdom and about his heroic saga. The king again became aware of the power of Devi Chandi and he arranged a rescue team and started digging as it is informed by the fisherman's wife. After a long struggle they rescued the precious shield beneath a tree and they found 'Gosani' name enshrined in it. After that the armor was recognized as 'Gosani armor'. Then in his kingdom Gosanidevi (another form of Devi Chandi) was erected in a grandiose way (Pal 1978).

One day while he was returning to his place from a trip, he went to his minister Sashipatra's house. There he saw Sashipatra's son, Manohar who was extremely handsome, elegant and sings well. Upon returning home, the king appreciated Manohar's beauty in front of Banamala. Fascinated by the description of Manohar's beauty Banamala secretly arranged a meeting with Manohar and a love relationship was started between them and they used to meet in an underground tunnel. One day the king got this news and became furious and appointed apostles to catch him. The apostles caught Manohar with the help of Deru (the trap). Then Manohar died after being caught in a ditch. Next day when the apostles brought his body to the king, the king became furious and ordered his queen, Banamala to cook his flesh. Banamala started lamenting but she was forced to cook her beloved's flesh. Then Kanteswar invited his minister, Sashipatra for a grand feast. Sashipatra became shocked when he found his son's ring in his plate and understood the prophecy of Goshani Devi. He started lamenting and asked the king if his son had done anything wrong, then he should be judged according to the law. Why did he give the permission to cook and eat his flesh? Sashipatra became disappeared after several thoughts and no one was able to get his information. He went to the Nawab of Gaur and told him all the events and encouraged the Nawab to attack Kanteswar's state. Then he was attacked and captivated by the Nawab. When Nawab's warriors entered into the palace the five queens of Kanteswar turned to stone. There was a prohibited prophecy regarding the entrance to the Gosani temple, but Sashipatra broke the rule and entered into it with the warriors and found that there was no 'Gosanidevi' on the throne. Then the family deity of Kanteswar disappeared into Kajlikura. While Nawab captivated Kanteswar into a cage Devi Gosani indicated her position in the water of Kajlikura.



Then Kanteswar asked Nawab that he wants to give obsequies to the deceased ancestors for the last time in Kajlikura where his family deity also drowned. The Nawab gave him the permission and the king drowned into the water and went to the lap of Devi Gosani. When he was not rising from the pond for a long time Nawab thought that he was eaten by crocodiles indiscriminately. Then there was anarchy in his kingdom after his departure.

The archaeological remnants of Kanteswar's palace are found within the Gosanimari Rajpath Dhibi along with the Gosani temple . All these have perpetuated the myth of Kanteswar amongst the people of this area. Much later the royal deity of Gosanidevi was re-established by the Royal family of Cooch Behar. People still believe and worship Gosanidevi for their well beings and and as their protector. Due to these Gosanimari's Rajpath Dhibi has become tourists attraction.

Bara Debi Bari Mandir Myth

Cooch Behar is a large district of West Bengal. It is situated in the northern parts of the state. Debi Bari in Cooch Behar is a tourist destination. It stands tall in the district with its rich history and heritage. The Debi Bari Durga Puja is now a part of folklore, especially in the district of Cooch Behar. It is more than 500 years old; a staggering fact. The people of Cooch Behar have been associated with this puja, for generations. The temple attracts thousands of devotees from Assam and Tripura.

In the beginning of the 16th century, Raja Bishwa Singha, who laid the foundation of Cooch Behar kingdom, planted a twig of a Mayna tree along with his brother and started worshipping it. On that very night, Bishwa Singha got an order from Debi Maa in his dream. He obeyed them and started the regular worshipping of Devi Maa. This marked the start of the worshipping of 'Baro Devi Maa'. Initially this puja had been observed by implanting a twig of Mayna tree in the precinct of Madan Mohan Bari, but Raja Naranarayan initiated to make an idol of 'Baro Devi Maa' in 1533 AD. It is said that Biswa Singha had found the original idol in Kamrup (now Assam). It is kept in the Madan Mohan temple and is believed to be the reason behind the success of the empire of Cooch Behar.

Baro Devi is a special form of Goddess Durga worshiped by the Cooch Behar royal family. This being a Puja organized by the royal family was still always open for the general people. The idol is totally different from other models of Devi Durga. She is not accompanied by her children, here. She is red in



colour and is seen to be in a lackluster look. The Asur looks greenish and is seen to be bitten on the right hand by a lion and bitten by a tiger on the left hand. The height of the image is 11 foot. Jaya and Vijaya accompany the image. According to sayings, the Mararaja saw the Devi in this form in his dream. He introduced the puja of Baro Devi and the clay-image was made following his description as he saw the Goddess in his dream. Till now the image is identical to the first one to keep the tradition alive. As a hereditary act, Punyeswar Chitrakar of Chitrakar family of Dodeyarpur was entrusted to make the idol the previous year.

The tradition of human sacrifice (Nara-Boli) is still on at the puja of Baro Devi of Cooch Behar. Since human sacrifice is not possible these days, that tradition is maintained symbolically by sacrificing a human image made of rice-powder on the Maha-Astami night during Gupta-puja (secret worship). Human blood is needed to perform the Gupta-puja. A man named Shibendra Nath Ray(52) from Ray family of Kaljani village supplies the blood(three drops) by piercing his fingers as a hereditary act. The Cooch Behar Debottar Trust Board pays him for the act.

Sacrifice is a major part of the Baro Devi puja. Goats, buffaloes, hogs and numerous pigeons are sacrificed here. Sacrifice of hog is a speciality of Baro Devi puja, which is done during Chaliya-Bariya puja ritual. It is said that up until 250 years ago, human sacrifice was a reality at the regime of Maharaja Nara Narayan. Once he reportedly sacrificed 150 persons to Baro Devi and for that act he had earned fame in those days. Shibendra Nath Ray's ancestors were the ones who sacrificed their lives in this bizarre tradition (Bhaumik 2022).

It was the Duar Bakshi of that time (a person assigned by the king to look after all religious activities in the kingdom), named Rati Deb Bakshi, who got moved by the gruesome violence and advised king Naranarayan to put an end to such an inhuman practice.

The king stopped the practice of human sacrifice and replaced it with a symbolic ritual which is still in practice today. Later, the system became discontinued, but the tradition of human sacrifice is still followed by symbolic sacrifice.

The present Duar Bakshi is Amiya Deb Bakshi, the descendant of Rati, who is 82 years old. He says it was not easy for the king to change the centuries-old tradition of human slaughter, which was being followed



for a long time.

With the ageing Duar Bakshi, whose only daughter cannot inherit the legacy, and with Shibendra Nath Ray being unmarried, it seems likely that the ritual will die a natural death in the near future.

Though Raj-days gone, the rituals and systems for performance of the Baro Devi puja and the construction of the clay-image are almost similar to the earlier days, under the Marxist rule too. The Debottar Trust Board, running under state government patronage, is very much cautious in keeping all the traditional rituals on as-is-where-is basis.

The puja of Baro Devi ends on Maha-Navami. The large image is sliced into pieces and immersed at Jamuna (Lamba) Dighi. In those Raj-days the Maharaja, sitting on the royal elephant, had to set a Khanjan (wagtail) bird free on Bijoya Dashami during Yatra-puja ritual. The last time a Khanjan was set free in 1969.

A fair is also organised during the puja days encircling the age old Baro Devi temple at Debi Bari in Cooch Behar. Numerous devotees and puja viewers from distant places come to witness the puja and offer anjali to the Baro Devi. Visiting and offering of pranam to the Devi is a must for all devotees and pandal hoppers.

Burir Pat Mandir Myth

A shrine of a Hindu folk deity named “Buri Maa”, Burir Pat is located in Dinhata near Bypass Highway. The temple enjoys popularity in the town with its rich history. As per the little knowledge gathered while chitchatting with a fellow resident of this area, this temple was built during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War by a Muslim who fled to India from the then East Pakistan(present-day Bangladesh) and erected this temple at Buri Maa’s behest in his dream. Ever since then Buri Maa has been worshipped both by the Hindus and the Muslims of this locality. This is truly an inspiring story which talks to us about the importance of cultural syncretism and cosmopolitanism.

Buri Maa is a special form of goddess Durga. But unlike goddess Durga, she is not accompanied by her children here. She is a symbol of good luck and prosperity. People worship Buri Maa in their houses before arranging any auspicious occasions like marriage, rice ceremony etc with a view to expecting propitious result in that occasions being arranged. Generally, one sheoda tree is decorated with sakha, paula, sidur and a saree and worshipped as the manifestation of Buri Maa. This puja is mainly performed by the Hindus



in India who(or whose ancestors) emigrated from Bangladesh. So the majority of the people in India are unaware of it. The main oblation offered to Buri Maa is chhatu which is logical in that the elderly ladies are also fond of eating chhatu.

Buri puja is held every year in this temple on sankranti in the Bengali month of Aashin, which corresponds to September–October in the Gregorian calendar, with thousands of devotees who come to pay homage and reverence to the goddess. This puja is also marked by sacrifices of goats, pigeons etc.

Natai Chandi Puja Myth

‘Natai Chandi’ is one of the many forms or manifestations of Mahadevi, similar to Durga or Devi Chandi colloquially known as Ban-Durga when she stands on the Sheoda tree. Chandi is one of the most popular folk deities in Bengal, and a number of poems and literary compositions in Bengali called Chandi Mangala Kavyas were written from 13th century to early 19th century. These had the effect of merging the local folk and tribal goddesses with mainstream Hinduism. This folk goddess is primarily worshipped in West Bengal as well as in Bangladesh by women as the goddess of domestic harmony and happiness. At the time of this puja, people recite slokas or verses eulogising her in order to receive blessings from Natai Chandi. Natai Chandi is associated with good fortune. Her auspicious form bestows joy, riches, groom, children, victory etc.

People vow to Natai Chandi every Sunday in the Bengali month of Agrahayana. It is said that all the shortcomings of those who observe this vow are removed and the family is filled with riches. Let us know the conventional story behind this vow.

Once upon a time there lived a merchant in a village. He had a son and a daughter who were very charming and affectionate. His wife died and later he remarried for the sake of his children. After a while he had two more children. But his younger wife was sad that her children did not look as beautiful as her stepchildren. One day she said to her husband, “How long will you sit like this? Go out to trade this time.” Hearing that, the merchant started to think something. He knew the attitude of the younger wife towards his first children very well. So he secretly called the cowherd and the confectioner and told them to give food to his two cute children every day. He also added that that he will return to the country after completing his trade and pay all their dues. He then hugged his children and cried a lot. Chanting Maa



Chandi's name and seeing a good day, the merchant went out to trade. While her husband was out for some days, the wife let go of the shepherd and ordered her stepchildren to graze cows in the field. When they returned home after grazing cows in the field all day, she would let them eat panta bhat or poitabhat. The children even ate that happily. When the children of the first wife went for cattle grazing, the herdsman and confectioner would come and feed them milk and various sweets as per their father's order. So they were becoming quite plump day by day. Seeing that the younger wife was very shocked. She wondered why that her own children were becoming skinny day by day in spite of eating milk, butter, fruits and so on every day. One day she sent her own children with their elder brothers and sisters to herd cows in the field so that she could know what they do all day. When the four brothers and sisters returned home after all day long, the younger wife caressed her own children and scolded her stepchildren. Seeing this, her own children said, "Mother, don't be rude to them; they are very good. We don't even know the names of all the food that they fed us today." The younger wife, realizing the reason for their stoutness, called the cowherd and the confectioner and forbade them. She told them that her master had sent a letter saying that he had a serious illness and that his two boats had sunk. So they should not give food to the children anymore.

Not being able to eat this way, the children become very thin and sick day by day. One morning they got up and went to the field to herd cows and calves. After a long day of hunger, they fell asleep under a tree. When they woke up they saw that they had no cows or calves. Then they appeared in front of a householder's house looking for their calves. Seeing the two children, the housekeeper called them and let them sit in the room. Then she listened to them all. After hearing all this, the housewife said, "Today is the Sunday of the month of Agrahayan. Worship of Natai Chandi in our house. Take her vow and all your sorrows will be gone." The children worried about their cows took the vow accordingly. Then she said, "Now you ask for Maa Chandi's blessings."

The children then asked Maa Chandi to return their calves. Hearing this, everyone laughed heartily. The householder says, "What kind of blessing is it? Tell Maa Chandi to send your father back to the country with fourteen boats of riches, diamonds, jewels along with a princess and a prince. And tell Maa Chandi to take away all your sorrows."



Then the housekeeper fed them plenty of foods and also told them to stay at her home for two days. On the other side, the merchant returned to the country with fourteen shallops filled with treasures and a prince and princess. When he came home, his younger wife was crying restlessly. She says the children have not come home yet. People say they have been eaten by tigers. The merchant did not listen to her and went out to look for them. Looking around, he saw his children herding cows on the field. Getting them back, he felt very happy and caressed them tightly.

On the other side, in his absence, his wife was burying all his treasure, diamond bracelet and money in the garden. One day she suddenly fell into the well while going to the garden and died. Seeing that, her own children started crying. When the merchant returned home with his elder children, he saw people all around and his other two children standing in the garden, crying. After realizing all this, he went inside the house with his four children. Later on the merchant married off his elder daughter and son to the prince and princess after performing the funeral rites of his younger wife. He also gave a lot of money to the housewife of the household who made his children vow to Natai Chandi. His elder son and daughter also taught their younger brother and sister to take vows of Natai Chandi to get relief from all their woes. From then on Nataichandi's vows spread all around.

Mangalchandi myth

It is believed that Maa Mangalchandi always protects her devotees if they observe “Sankat Mangalbar Vrata”-a vow observed on Tuesday of Shukla Paksha of Ashad month or Tuesday of Shukla Paksha of Agrahayana month in the traditional Bengali calendar. This vow is observed only by women. Let us know the story behind this vow.

Once upon a time there was a rich merchant who had his mother, wife and many servants and maids in his house. He prepared seven canoes for trade and set out on a good day. Seven years passed but the merchant did not return. On this side, his mother and wife were all crying and became restless. The members of the house made many vows, worshipped in the temple, but still the merchant did not return. Twelve years passed in this way. One day at noon an old woman came to ask for alms and after hearing everything from the merchant’s mother asked her to take a vow of “Sankat Mangalbar”. The old woman said that this vow can only be done by the married women and two married women have to take this vow together. After



hearing this, the merchant's mother sent for her daughter from her in-laws's house and then her daughter and daughter-in-law together performed the Puja of Ma Mangalchandi on Tuesday of Shukla Paksha of Asadha month. The old woman had already said that there should be no talking during the meal as per the rules of the Puja, and after the meal two of them will have to say to each other "Let us get out of the crisis" to which both of them will have to say "Yes" and then they will have to collect their own leftovers and float them in the pond.

While the wife was thinking about her predicament during the meal, a maid came and informed that a boat had arrived at the shore and she saw her master coming down from it. Hearing this, the wife threw the food and rushed to the shore. The maidservant then had to finish her meal instead and after picking up the leftovers and floating it in the pond she washed her hands and face. At the river bank, everyone played the conch shell and brought the merchant home. But when the merchant came home, not recognizing his wife, he took the maid to his room and gave her gold, pearls and various jewels that he had brought. His wife, mother and sister were all surprised to see that. The wife stopped eating and cried for the whole day and chanted Mangalchandi's name.

One day she dreamed that Maa Mangalchandi said to her, "Why did you get up without observing the rules of the vow? The maid became fortunate after eating rest of your meal. You do one thing, tomorrow is the Tuesday of Suklapaksha in the month of Agrahayana. Again observe the Sankat Tuesday Vrat with strict adherence to all the rules."

Again the merchant's wife and his sister both took this vow and this time there was no mistake. After a few days, the merchant remembered everything. He realized his mistake, and wiped his wife's tears and accepted her. He apologized to his mother, sister and wife while chanting Ma Mangalchandi's name. Months passed, both his wife and sister got pregnant. Finally, they regained everything they lost. In this way the relevance of Sankat Tuesday Vrat got spread all around.

Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Temple in India is considered as an abode of God Almighty, a centre of reverence. The Hindu temple, in more than one sense, epitomizes the numerous sides and complex processes of the cultural development of Hinduism through its oral myths. The history of Indian temple since its beginning has been deeply



embedded in the various oral myths, traditions, rituals, beliefs and values found in all parts of India. From late medieval period Bengal may be singled out as a region which has developed an enormous wealth of traditional knowledge. Actually the topographical characteristics of Bengal favored this kind of artistic narratives by virtue of which Bengal holds an important status in the intangible cultural heritage of India. Through this article an attempt has been made to explore, examine and perceive the rich cultural diversity of these temples by undertaking field survey in Cooch Behar and other places of Bengal. I believe my research will be an effective strategy to guarantee the social, cultural and economic interests of these tribal people and local communities. This research would be useful for impeding further loss of traditional knowledge in the flux of time, maintaining certain oral myths and ancient traditions over time, and ultimately protecting traditional knowledge from unwanted uses. As there is no written information about these temple myths I strongly recommend further research to be undertaken in this specific field lest the nuances and the rich cultural heritage of these two terrains are engulfed by the processes of industrialization, and consequently the identification and broader social recognition of these indigenous people and local communities in relation to specific traditional knowledge are sustained. Moreover, to revive these beliefs and myths, there is an immediate need for setting up an institution primarily focused on this subject matter other than my research. To conclude, however, after discussing and considering all these facts certainly it can be said that the temple myths of Cooch Behar and other parts of Bengal did contribute impressively for the versatility and enrichment of Bengal and Indian temple architecture.

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