

TUTELARY DEITY-DANTESHWARI AND BASTAR STATE

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Abstract: The tutelary deity –Danteshwari Ma of Royal lineage of Bastar plays a magnetic role of attraction like centripetal force among the subjects, of Bastar Raja. Bastar state was divided with about 79 parganas (as empirical data speaks) which are headed till date by Manjhi—the hereditary chief and wearing red turban; in each pargana there are number of villages under the control of a Manjhi. Bastar Dusehra (Bastar Dusehra is a series of rituals during Durga Puja which started from the day of Amush or hariali in the month of Saon (July- Aug). It is an appeasement of Danteshwar mata (who is considered as happiness and prosperity of the state) is unique in the country and evolved as a way of consolidating political power through Manjhi, Chalki etc, using cultural and religious symbol through Danteshwari Ma. The various matas in the shrines of different villages / parganas are directly or indirectly have some relation with Danteshwari suggesting the of political power of Royal family to grass root level of Bastar. The political connotation of the Dusehra festival is most evident towards the end of festival, that is, Muria Darbar, where voice of grievances and demands are expressed by the subjects of different parganas and now-a-days this ceremony is presided by the representatives of district authority and noted all the proceedings. The present paper highlights what happens when a tribal state disintegrates and how a new set of political control replaces a traditional order.

Keywords: Danteshwari Ma, Manjhi, Pargana, Muria Darbar, Political connotation.

It is obvious that only economic and political dominance are not sufficient to establish a kingdom or state adequately. A king or chief or a head of a state had to acquire enough knowledge and power or strength to present himself or herself as head of politics, society, religion and culture by adopting some more attributes which easily could percolate and be trusted by his or her subjects. Here, religious belief system was a favourable trait as soft corner and weakness on celestial belief system in order to avoid any curse and fear. The king or chief had to combine economic role of surplus extraction and exploitation and redistribution of wealth for the benefit of public life. Danteshwari Ma – the royal cult had to combine exogenous Brahmanic cult with varieties of endogenous ethnic cultures (Sinha, 1987).

Bastar, once a dominant tribal state was one of such example where with the help and belief of Danteshwari mata- the tutelary deity of royal family established a long span of regime of Kakatiya king of Chalukya dynasty. The paper highlights what happens when a tribal state disintegrates and how a new set up of political control replaces a traditional order

Religious institutions evolve as patterns of worship, that is, as cult; they evolve at the same time as patterns of ideas and definitions, that is, as beliefs; and they emerge as forms of association or organization. The cult has a mysterious value, which is attached to it that we cannot fully rationalize (Mead, 1934:296). The

relationships acted out in the cult are first of all relationships with the sacred object.

In each and every villages of Bastar there are a number of *matas* (or a kind of Mother goddess cult) who are appeased from time to time for welfare and blessings, their wrath may lead a troublesome life. The seats of these *matas* are in village shrine and some of those *matas* are already discussed in the preceding pages. Incidentally these *matas* are genealogically related to each other in their celestial belief system that again have some consanguineal or affinal relations with the supreme deity of Bastar – the Danteshwari mata-- the tutelary deity of Bastar king and the royal family.

The whole concept of various *matas* or mother cults as found in different villages of Bastar centers around the principal mother cult, Danteshwari which acts as a centripetal force. During Dusehra festival held in the month of Aswin (Sept.-Oct.) we have observed the centripetal nature of the worship of the mother cult since all the individual village deities are brought in to Jagadpur town for propitiation centering on Danteshwari mata. All these individual deities which are brought from various parganas are assembled at Gangamunda ward soon after the Dusehra festival when these individual deities return to their respective villages after performing *bidai* or *gangamunda yatra* ritual at *Gangamunda* ward of Jagadpur town.

The whole idea of centripetal nature of religious beliefs percolates in all strata of the society where the tribal and non-tribal ways of life form a bond of synthesis, at least in their religious world-view and socio-economic understanding of life. This impact is strongly evident in the life and culture of the people of Bastar at large even to this day though it might have crystallized during the reign of feudatory chiefs, who ruled Bastar till recent past.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bastar has experienced a number of historical waves, which have resulted into diverse cultural mosaic at this area. The Nals established kingdom during mid 6th century followed by dark era for about five years followed by Chalukyas and Ganga kings of Orissa. Then Nagvanshi kings came. They started their reign from middle of 11th century to 14th century. Then it was under control of Chalukyas of Godavari region and Annam Deo was the first Kakatiya king of Chalukya dynasty. In the book “Maria Gonds of Bastar” by Grigson (1991 reprinted) accepts Annam Deo to have established his princely rule in Bastar in 1323 A.D. With the beginning of Annam Deo’s rule Chakrakot came to be known as Bastar (Glasfurd, 1862). The family of the Raja of Bastar is ancient and is said to have come from Warangal of Andhra Pradesh at about 1323 A.D. when Muslim invaded the area and caused these rulers to flee from there towards north of Godavari. According to the traditions of the family, Annam Deo established himself in Bastar under the protection and grace of their tutelary deity – Danteshwari. In 1853 it came into direct political

relations with the British. The last king in the line was Pravir Chandra Bhanjdeo who ruled the state till its merger with Madhya Pradesh. It is also reported from historical accounts that during the Purushottam Deo's regime (1468-1534) the capital was shifted by the northern side of the river Indravati and named the newly established capital at Bastar. Bastar is situated 28 km away from Jagdalpur town and now it has become a large village. The most memorable event in the context of present discourse was his visit to Lord Jagannath at Puri of Orissa. He visited Puri by crawling in spite of having elephants, horses and Chariot etc. He to show respect to Lord Jagannath did it. He was the first Kakatiya king who visited the deity/shrine. Seeing his devotion Lord Jagannath became very much pleased and ordered the local king and priest of the temple through his divine command to invite Raja Purushottam. They gave him warm reception and entertained him as chief guest. On his return he was offered a Chariot with sixteen wheels. Among the 16 wheels Raja Purushottam offered back four wheels to Lord Jagannath and returned to Bastar with the rest 12 wheels along with a group of Barhai (carpenter) who used to make chariot and a group of Aranyak Brahman priest. The rest 12 wheels were offered to their family tutelary deity – Devi Danteshwari. He started the festival of *rath parikrama* at Bastar during Dusehra. They constructed two chariots with those 12 wheels ; one of those with four wheels and another with rest eight wheels. These two chariots namely, *Phool rath* and *raini rath* go round in Jagdalpur town during dusehra and this tradition is continued till date. At that time the King used to sit on the chariot with their own family deity – Devi Danteshwari (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996, Sundar, 1997).

The Maharaja as head of the state used to carry out the administration of Bastar State with the assistance of a Diwan. The Diwan had powers of a District and Session Judge and he used to carry out his functions with the assistance of two subordinate judges. The Tehsildars and Managers had powers of Munasiff and were enjoying the powers of a second class Magistrate. The state was divided into five tehsils viz., Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Jagdalpur, Bijapur and Konda and four Zamindaris viz. Kutru, Bhoopalpatnam, Pamed and Sukuma. Mr Chapman (1898) wrote that the whole state was divided into about 88 parganas that were under paid officials who exercised civil and criminal powers besides collecting land revenue. Again in a *pargana* there are several villages under its control. A list of such *pargana* is also collected (from Tehsildar, Jagdalpur) and found the existence of 79 parganas to understand the network of relation from the King to village at grass root level. The wild and distant parganas were under Thanedars, Negis or Hikmis for revenue collection. These officials were paid officers and again they had paid servants under them who received a monthly payment (Jay, 1970). It is reported that *Thanaedars* (under whom number of *Majhis* were responsible for tax collection) were responsible for collection of taxes from wilder and distant parganas; *Negi* was a person who had control over a number of villages (under whom *Chalki* or *Patels* were working);

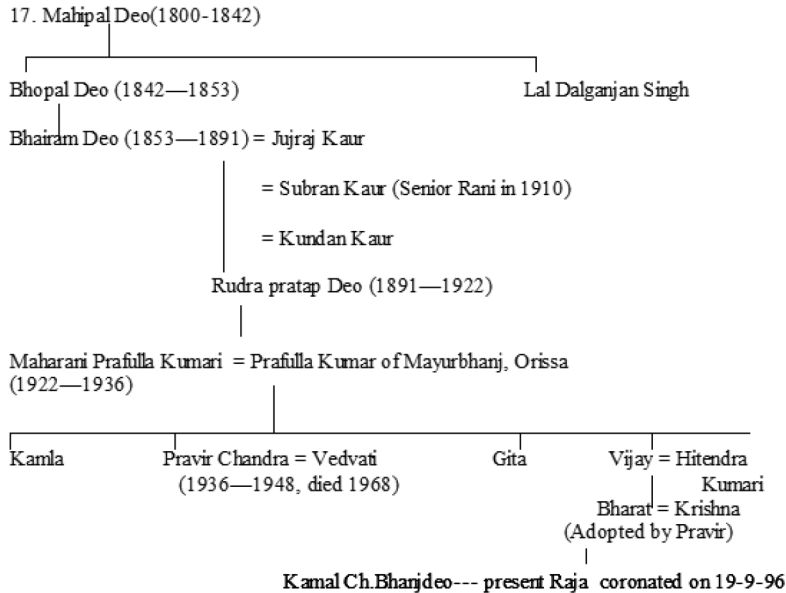
while *Hikmis* (or *Kotwar* or *Perma*) were employed under *Negi* to help in revenue collection. Under *Hikmis* there were several village headmen. Again each of them used to collect taxes which were apparently collected by them from the persons who were responsible to collect taxes in their respective villages and from communities.

The unit of land measurement was *nagar* representing the area of land that could be kept under cultivation with a pair of bullocks during one season. A plough was considered to be equal to 10 to 12 acres. Periodical assessment was made by collection of information from neighbouring villages about the number of cattle used by each cultivator in the area. Money was practically unknown and all the payments were not made in kind but were paid in cowries. The rate of assessment throughout the state used to be five *dogani* of cowries which is equivalent to 50 paise per plough. A rupee as a currency was first introduced in the state in about 1865 when teak, timber of the district found a market to Madras (Singh Deo, 1984).

Therefore, it appears that the King of the Bastar state has easy access to articulate with his Subalterns even in distant wild area of the state through the system of land revenue collection by *pargana manjhi* system. In fact *pargana manjhi* has a vital role in the state who used to act as a liaison between state administration and villagers at the grass root level.

The Name of Bastar Kings

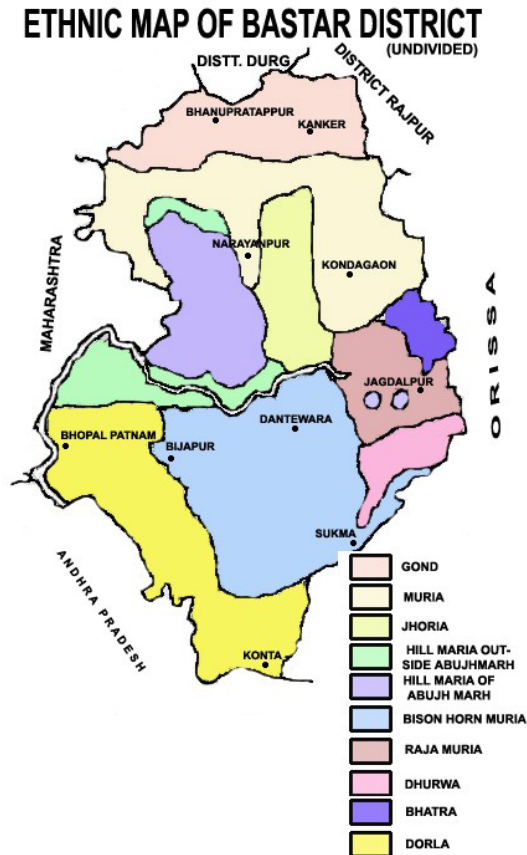
1. Annam Deo(1323-1369)
2. Hamir Deo(1369-1410)
3. Bhairab Deo(1410-1468)
4. Purusotham Deo(1468-1534)
5. Jaising Deo(1534-1558)
6. Narsing Deo(1558-1602)
7. Pratapraj Deo(1602-1625)
8. Jagdishraj Deo(1625-1639)
9. Virmaryan Deo (1639-1654)
10. Virsing Deo(1654-1680)
11. Dikpal Deo(1680-1709)
12. Rajpal Deo(1709-1721)
13. Chandel (1721-1731)
14. Dalpat Deo(1731-1774)
15. Ajmer Sing (1774-1777)
16. Dariya Deo(1777-1800)



(Source: Author's fieldwork data; on the day of coronation of present Raja Kamal Ch. Bhanjdeo we were invited at the Palace of Jagdalpur, Bastar along with other Government Dignitaries of the State.)

THE PEOPLE OF BASTAR

The Bastar (undivided) district of Chhattisgarh is tribal infested area with forest-clad environment. More than 75% population are tribal and they are primarily Muria, Abujh Marias, Bhatra, Halba, Dandami Maria (or Bison-Horn Marai), Dorla, Dhurwa and a few pockets of Gadaba of the bordering Orissa belt. These tribal people are distributed sporadically in the district of which Abujh Maria are confined in North-western part, Dandami Maria are in South-central that is in Dantewada region while Muria inhabit in north and north-west, Dorla are in southern part, that is, in Kanta and western Bijapur area, Dhurwa are concentrated in south-eastern part of Kanger valley, Bhatra are confined in Indrawati plain in northern Jagdalpur while Halba are scatteredly distributed in north and south Bastar. All these tribal groups are endogamous in nature and each of the tribal groups possesses own belief system, which are different from others and in this way ethnic boundary is maintained. Apart from these there are sizeable populations of immigrants who are chiefly business community from Gujarat, Rajasthan and U.P., there are also government employees and some pockets are dominated by Bengali refugee settlements that were rehabilitated by the Government in various pockets of the district.



(Source: Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996 and Meteorological Office, Jagdalpur, Bastar.)

BASTAR DUSEHERA AND DIVISION OF LABOUR BY THE SUBJECTS

Bastar Dusehera is something unique. It is one of the very important festivals of Bastar, originally patronized by Royal family. In Bastar Dusehera is unique when all local deities from all Parganas and villages are invited and congregate at the temple premises of Danteshwari in Jagdalpur – the district headquarter. The Dusehera in Bastar, unlike Dusehera in other parts of India, has nothing to do with the triumphant return of Rama to Ayodhya. Dusehera in Bastar is dedicated entirely to the goddess – Devi Danteshwari. Bastar Dusehera has several components and each of which has a history of its own in which specific division of labour among the various ethnic groups of the Bastar (undivided) or among the subalterns is highly marked. Dusehera in Bastar is an occasion to propitiate the supreme goddess – ‘Danteshwari mata’ of the local pantheon. It is also told by the old inhabitants of Jagdalpur town that in early days during the regime of late Pravir Chandra Bhanjdeo, on the eve of

this occasion the village / *pargana* headman and other office bearers and the feudal chiefs - the local diviners, shamans, priests (*pujari* or *gaita*), sorcerer (*wadde*) used to attend the function at Jagdalpur along with the respective village deities (that is, the symbols of deities such as either carrying the umbrella or *chhata*, stick or *lathi* of the deities), carried on shoulders. The tribal inhabitants from distant villages used to come and stay in the neighboring open space surrounded by scanty jungle of the town during these festival days, which continues for about 15 days.

It is also reported that Dusehera and circumambulation of *rath* or chariot was started during the regime of Raja Purushottam Deo – the one of the king of Bastar during 1468 – 1534. The Dusehera festival intricately inter-relates a number of villages and *parganas* and also various ethnic groups. In Bastar, Dushera festival usually starts on the day of *kumb* or new moon of the month Saon (July-Aug.). On the same day the villagers also perform *Amush* or *Hariali*. From that day they start to bring wood for construction of eight / four wheeled *rath*. On that day they worship the *pata* wood (the main support of chariot) in front of Danteshwari temple. The construction of base of chariot is initiated by ritual *magarmuhi* when wooden support is provided to the base. Blacksmith of Pandripani and Tekamera villages and men from Agaria tribe do the work of fixing of wooden joints with iron nails. Before construction of chariot they perform a ritual – *barsi utarni* when they worship the tools and equipments used for construction of the chariot. A goat is sacrificed and liquor, bangles, camphor, incense sticks, coconut are offered. After the construction of chariot wheels are over, and before the holes are perforated *narphodani* ritual is performed and offerings are similar with that of *barsi utarni*.

There is an intricate division of labour in making *rath*. Raini rath (or *vijay* rath) is eight wheeled while the phool rath is the smaller or four-wheeled chariot. The overall responsibility of construction of chariot is traditionally vested on the Savara Naiks (i.e. workers of chariot makers) of the villages ‘Beraumar gaon’ and ‘Jharumar gaon’ of Bakawand block of Jagdalpur. The other ethnic groups involved in this construction work are Bhatra (ST), Saora (ST) and Raut; and they are altogether 177 in number and at present situation Dalpati Naik is *mukhia* of this group who hails from Saora community. It is also reported that there are a few Agaria who are traditionally iron smelters and provide nails at these work and Bhatra and Dhurwa are engaged in making rope for pulling the *rath*. The wood for various parts of *rath* are supplied from various villages of Bastar and it is estimated that in this work about 75-80 villages as well as villagers are directly involved. There are some important pieces of wood used in *rath* construction, namely *pata* wood, *magarmuhi*, *acchanda diwas*, *golasarai*, *kaichi* wood – cross beam (for support), *khamba* wood (wood from base to top), *dhaman* wood (for *rath* top), *kami sarai*, *tarlapatta* (for roof purpose), and *parlawhokana*. It is also observed that the size of *raini-rath* is about 30 to 32 feet long, 18 feet wide and 18 feet height while the size of phool rath is about 32 feet long, 17 feet wide and 17 feet height.

It has been also observed that only one chariot is constructed yearly. In one year they construct the raini rath and the next year they construct the phool rath. After the chariot is constructed, the villagers of Mogradalpur decorate the chariot and it is known as rath singarni. At the beginning of the circumambulation of chariot they perform a ritual – rath-rengani.

Next phase of the ritual is to take permission from Kachan devi to celebrate Dusshera festival. It is a swing in the ‘kachangudi’ – the abode of the deity at Pathraguda of Jagdalpur town. The seat of the swing is made of thorns of *bel* tree. They perform the ritual on the new moon day of the month Aswin (Sept.-Oct.) i.e. on the day of *pitra paksha* or *mahalaya*. On this day both Kachan Devi and Raila Devi are appeased – the most revered deities of both Panika (weaver) and Mahara (untouchable caste) communities. They believe that Kachan devi protects their wealth. As per their legend Kachan devi and Raila devi are two sisters and Raila devi is young, who married outside, in a community of lower position in hierarchic ladder and thus her family refused to accept her as their daughter. Perhaps during that time Mahara and Mirgan accepted her as their deity where her elder sister is also worshipped. In fact with the blessing of Kachan devi, (as they believe) Raja Vir Narayan Deo’s (1639 –54) wife gave birth to a daughter.

The *Kachan gudi* ritual is officiated by a Panika priest since time immemorial while the priest of “Raila Devi” belongs to Mirganjati – Harijan community. On this occasion they select a virgin of Panika caste who becomes possessed by the deity – Kachan Devi. During field investigation it was observed that a virgin girl was selected to perform the ritual. Her name was Kunti Baghel, Panika by caste, 8 years old and a student of class-IV; and she performed- the ritual keeping fast for the last 4 days.. The name of the priest was Sukul Das, Age-40, and was from Manikpuri Panika caste of Rajen ward, Jagdalpur. On this occasion ‘*gurumaya*’ two women of Panika caste played on *dhankul* – a musical instrument (a bow with string) to invoke the deities. The virgin was possessed and moved round the swing for three times along with the sorcerer and Bhairam dev(deity) and then she is sat on the swing and gave permission to celebrate Dusehera festival. Previously Raja used to come to take permission. Till date same tradition is followed and present Raja accompanied by chief priest – Laloo Pujari and other dignitaries of *raj paribar* came there to take permission prior to their journey the route is cleared by driving out all sorts of malevolent spirits. This work is done by Anga deo (a deity) often it is also known as Pat deo who is carried on the shoulder of four persons who are at that time were possessed and they were also Panika and Dhakar by caste.

Next day after Kachan gudi that is, on the first day of the lighter half of the month Aswin (Sept-Oct) they perform the ritual Kalash Sthapana or placing of brass tumbler inside the temple of Danteshwari mata filled with paddy grain. On this event 36 figurines of Durga Devi is made of silver, one nail like structure made of gold and the materials of offerings are given to the priest to start the ceremony.

Twenty-eight Brahman priest are invited to perform the rituals associated with *kalash sthapana*. Fourteen of them recite the holy book *Chandi* and the other fourteen recite *Saptapadi*. They perform rituals of various deities, like, Chandi, Hanuman, Bagala Mukhi, Vishnu etc. It continues throughout the days and nights of *Navaratri*.

In the evening of the same day Jogi bithai ceremony is performed at Sirasar Chawk Bhawan – adjacent to Palace of Jagadpur town. According to myth when king Annam Deo left Warangal for Bastar, the jogi of Halba community followed him and behind them Mata Danteshari also came. As per the dictum of the king, one married man from Halba caste acts as Jogi. He keeps *sanjam* or fast during Dusehera for 9 days at a stretch. There is a pit at Sirasar Bhawan. The Jogi sits in the pit in prescribed posture. All these days he keeps fast on behalf of Royal family and consumes a small quantity of milk. At the time of “uthai” or end of ritual, they are given cash along with goat, liquor etc.

During present field investigation a 25 years old person of Nag clan of Halba community named Bhagat Singh, acted as Jogi. He was from Bade Amabal village. On that day from the temple premises of palace the Jogi comes with procession of *manjhi* (red turban), *chalki* (red turban), *sadashya* or member *manjhi* (blue turban), *munda baja* (beating of small drums by Munda community) along with chief priest – Laloo pujari. Before coming to Sirasar Bhawan, he has to visits Maoli / Mavlimata temple for her blessings. A Kalash or brass tumbler and sword of the king are kept beside Jogi. The rituals are performed during day time and on the 9th day, on the day of *Mavli Parghav* the Jogi breaks his *sanjam* (Self-restraint) and leaves his seat from the pit. He sacrifices a goat in honour of the deity and takes it with him. Now, the goat is given to him by the State Government and gets only a few cash (like Rs.60/-) with some clothes . During the reign of the King , the King used to present him a horse and some gold coins.

On the next day after Jogi bithai ritual, the *phool rath* is drawn. During this period *navaratri puja* is performed every day for nine days. After the holy recital by the priest in the Danteshwari temple at Jagdalpur, Rajguru takes the *chhattar* of Danteshwari mata of Danteshwari temple at Jagdalpur with him and then it is placed on the *phool rath*. Then the chariot is drawn from Sirasar Chowk in a procession to take round the Mavli Mandir (considered as sister of Danteshwari mata and infact she is the tutelary deity of Royal family; it is reported that when Annam Deo fled from Warangal, he fled along with their tutelary deity whose position in Bastar is considered as sister of Danteshwari mata) in circumambulation and finally up to the Singh Dyodhi of Danteshawri temple. During circumambulation some persons continuously keep fanning the deity with *chavar/chamar*. The *rath* is drawn for five days and about 800-1000 villagers of about 30-35 neighbouring villages are assigned to pull the *rath* during these days (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996).

On the fourth day of the lighter half of the month Aswin (Sept-Oct) the *magarmuhi charani* ritual is performed. After the completion of construction of

new *rath* (chariot) when new wooden wheels are inserted this ritual is performed with the sacrifice of a goat and two hens. The labourers engaged in this work are from 'Bera Umargaon' and 'Jharumar gaon' of Bakawand block which has already mentioned earlier. This ritual is important because in this ritual rope is tied for pulling the *rath* for circumambulation.

Next important ritual is Nisha Yatra. It is performed on the 8th midnight of *Navaratri*. During the night at about 11.30 p.m. to 12 midnight they perform Nisha Yatra (*nisha* means night and *yatra* means sacrifice). On this event they prepare rice, pulses and milk porridge at the Mavli mandir and at midnight those are carried in earthen vessel by Dhakar, Halba (ST) and Bhatra (ST) in the form of procession to Khemeshwar devi temple followed by Bhatra men who carry the earthen lamps known as *mal diya* lighted by oil of the bark of *char* tree. The lamp bearers carry the lamps on their shoulders that are arranged in a series of wooden frame. At the Khemeshwar devi temple *bhog* ceremony is performed by present Raja, Raj Guru and Chief Priest and goats are sacrificed by *pharsa* (*tangi* or axe). Raja Muria (ST), known as *jatal* of Bhatpal village, does sacrifice. It is also learnt that this ritual is performed to appease their ancestors and Khemeshwar Devi at the temple, and the deity is regarded as village guard deity.

After the ritual at Khemeshwar temple is over the procession returns back to Mavli temple and goats are also sacrificed there. There after goats are also sacrificed at Danteshwari Mandir. In Danteshwari temple a pumpkin is also offered now, which is a symbolic offering alike a buffalo in early days.

On the 9th day they perform Kumari puja in the Danteshwari temple. On this occasion nine virgins and one bachelor all less than 10 years old are as Bhairam deo. He seats separately in front of the virgins (*Kumaris*). On the same of Danteshwari of Dantewada) in the evening on this day. On this auspicious day the invited deities from various places of Bastar reach at Jagdalpur and they are represented in the form of *doli* (palanquin), *lat* (stick) and *chatter* (umbrella) etc. of the deities are brought from the villages by the villagers. The main deities are Danteshwari mata of Chhote Dongar of Naryanpur and also Danteshwari mata of Bade Dongar of Naryanpur tehsil. These two deities are special invitees on this occasion. Formal invitations are sent to them in the form of cash Rs.5.00 each, and one goat each and coconut, camphor, incense, bangles, vermilion etc. The priests of the two deities along with their companions also come to Jagdalpur on the day of Mavli Parghav and participate in the ritual procession (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996). Beside this others gods and deities of various villages and *parganas* also participate viz. Chepraguddan Mata from Asana village, Mavli Mata from Madpal village, Chorni Mata from Morath Pal village, Shitala Mata from KankaPal, Pardeshin Mata from NengaRas, Badi Mata from Nal pawand, Ganga dei from Parwa, Hingla Dei Mata from Bakawand etc.

In the evening of 9th day of *Navaratri* or *nabami* the *Mavli Parghav* ritual is

held. On the first day of *navaratri* the Rajguru sends invitation through a *majhi* to Danteshwari of Dantewada. Invitation are sent with Rs.101=00, a piece of towel, cloth, one cocoanut, incense, camphor, bangles, hair pins, bindi and red *tikli* (used in the forehead by a Hindu married girl) as a mark of homage to her. After that on the 9th day the ‘palanquin’ and *chhatra* (umbrella) of Danteshwari mata of Dantewada along with her some ornaments are brought to Jagdalpur in a procession and are placed at ‘Jiya Dera’. The *chhatra* of Danteshwari mata of Jagdalpur is also brought to *jiyadera* and placed there in the company of *chhatra* of Danteshwari of Dantewada. In earlier days the Raja of Bastar used to go to receive the palanquin and *chhatra* of Danteshwari on this occasion. Now Rajguru, chief priest receives her along with District Administration. The people of Jagdalpur receive her in a big procession. They light lamps, burn cracker, dance, and play and sing song. The Bison-Horn Maria or Dandami Maria come in groups in traditional attire and dance with the rhythm of *mandal* and *nagera*. After receiving the *chhata/chhatra*, the chief priest (Laloo Pujari – Aryanak Brahman) brings it to the temple of Danteshwari Mata at Jagadalpur. At temple then a goat is sacrificed and *prasad* is distributed.

On the tenth day they perform *Bhitar Raini* when eight wheeled chariot – Raini Rath is drawn. Since this chariot moves for the first time on the tenth day, the offerings are given before its movements and goats are sacrificed. During afternoon the chief priest sits holding the *chhatra* (umbrella) of Danteshwari of Dantewada is ceremonially placed on the *Raini Rath*. Previously the king played this role. Offering of *mogra* fish is given before the start of the movement of *rath*. The *Raini Rath* is drawn by Dandami Maria of Kilepal village area and this practice is continuing since time immemorial. In *Bhitar Raini* the chariot is drawn from Sirasar Bhawan taken round the Mavli mandir in circumambulation like Phool Rath and is taken to ‘Singh Dyodi’ (main gate of palace). At this place the *chhatra* is taken down from the *rath* and kept at Danteshwari temple of Jagdalpur. Then some rituals are performed before *rath* by some married women who sprinkle mustard seed and salt to protect it from evil eyes. On the same day at night the chariot – Raini Rath is ceremonially stolen by the Bhatras (ST) who brings it to Kumbharakot.

The main ritual of *Bahar Raini* is performed at Kumbharakot on the 11th day of Dusehra festival. All the invites and invited deities of various villages and *parganas* along with the villagers assembled at Kumbharakot from early morning. On this day Raja used to partake the food at Kumbharakot prepared from newly harvested crop. This ritual is known as Nayakhani. Now a day this ritual is attended by present Raja (symbolically because he has no authority, power, etc.) with Rajguru and chief priest. Some sacrifices (goat and pumpkin) are also made there. A thatched hut on the bamboo pole is prepared, it is almost closed with single circular opening and the thatched hut is known as *Rani Mancha*. It is learnt that in early days *Rani* (queen) used to witness all the ritual activities at Kumbharakot sitting on this *Rani Mancha* through the circular opening and villagers of Karanpur is entrusted traditionally

with the construction of *Rani Mancha*. Now-a-days construction of such hut is simply a ritual behaviour among them. On that day Dhakar and Panika communities worship Kachan devi, with goat sacrifice in view of protection from infectitious diseases. In the evening of the same day the *rath* is drawn back by Dandami Maria with a large procession where present Raja stands on a jeep under the ceremonial umbrella of his kingdom.

On the 12th day of the ceremony of *Kachan Yatra* is performed at *Kachangadi*. On this event goat, pig and cocks are sacrificed and same virgin girl who was seated on the swing made of thorns of 'bel' tree is brought and given her cash and new clothes. Thus the ceremony ends with a belief that with this ritualistic performance the girl becomes free from her possessed state.

On the evening of the 12th day - the next event of Dusehra festival is Muria Darbar which is an annual and important aspect of Dusehra function since 1906 (Sundar, 1997) at Sirasar Bhawan. It is told that "it was started with the intention of training the king in administration and what we would today call 'communication skills'. It is an occasion when the adivasis of Bastar of noble intention of the state, exhort to conserve forests and engage in improved agricultural practices. It is a moment for the profession and rewarding of loyalty and even for the voicing of those minor notes of dissent that are permissible within the structures of official patronage". (Sundar, 1997).

Manjhi or Muria Darbar

During *Manjhi Darbar* or *Muria Darbar* where customarily the King sits in the dais with the *pargana manjhi* (headman of cluster of villages, hereditary post and wear red turban with black coat), *Naik*, *Chalki* (he is assistant to *manjhi*, hereditary post, *Chalki* wears blue turban while *Naik* wears yellow turban and he is supposed to receive the *chata* or umbrella of Danteshwari of Dantewada), *Munda baja* (hereditary post of a community and wears pink turban) *Member/Memberin*, *Kotwar and Sarpanch*, *Patel*, *Mukhiya* (these posts are government post and are selected through election) etc. to discuss and solve their problem and their request were also taken care of. Now-a-days instead of King the dais is chaired by (during 2004 Dusehra) Chairman of Dusehra Committee, Minister and MLA of Chhattisgarh, Collector of Bastar district and Executive Officer of Panchayat (a woman). It is essentially an assembly of *Manjhi*, *Chalki* and *Member* where they are allowed freely to express their demand, problem of their area before this *Darbar* (assembly) where administrators and policy implementers are also present and it becomes a direct interaction with state officials. Due to presence of *Manjhi*, often this Darbar is known as *Manjhi Darbar*.

It has been observed during *Muria Darbar* on 25.10.2004 at 2.30 p.m. that *Manjhi* expressed their grievances and demand before district and state authority:

Case 1. Tulsiram Pujari, Age-56, *Manjhi* Chotedongar Pargana, Muria (ST), reports about village roads, deforestation etc which directly affect their sustenance activities, because hunting through various traps are their daily activity being food item and one of the economic pursuit among them.

Case 2. Sadasiv Thakur, *Manjhi*, Hamirgarh Pargana, Age-55, Caste – Dhakar, he is demanding for Rs.1000/- per month as remuneration for carrying out the duty of *Manjhi*. Till date they have not received any such amount from administration. Chief Minister assured them through the officials of State on the dais that from now onwards State administration will incur Rs.500/- and Rs.300/- p.m. to *Manjhi* and *Chalki* respectively.

Case 3. Koram Kaunreya, Age-52, *Manjhi* Goalkunda Pargana of Bhopalpatnam, Dorla Gond (ST).

He expresses his opinion about unemployment in the area and due to such young generation is inclined towards Naxalite activities.

Case 4. Lakhindar, Age-65, *Manjhi* Chitapur Pargana of Jagdalpur Tehsil, Bhatra (ST)

He expresses his opinion is that due to good yield in this year with the blessing of Danteshwari mata the number of crowd is more and earlier it happened during 1965.

On 15th day Danteshwari of Dantewada is given farewell and it is the final ritual of Dusehra function. Her palanquin, *chhatra* and escorts return back to Dantewada. In her farewell. She is offered rice, wheat, flour, pulses, sugar, jaggery, ghee, mustard oil, lamp oil, chilies, three saris with silver embroidery, cocoanut, dhoti, goat, incense, camphor, cash, vermilion, bangles, mirror, comb, ribbon, hair pin, shawls etc.

Thus, Dusehra is the ritual, which brings the tribal and non-tribal Hindus, irrespective of their caste/ethnic boundary and status, close to each other, and it binds all of them by a single thread (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996). In short, this can be illustrated through the following table where in left hand side various rituals associated with Dusehra are depicted while, in right side of the table the name of the communities / involved villages are narrated and these are continuing till date since the inception of Dusehra festival of Bastar.

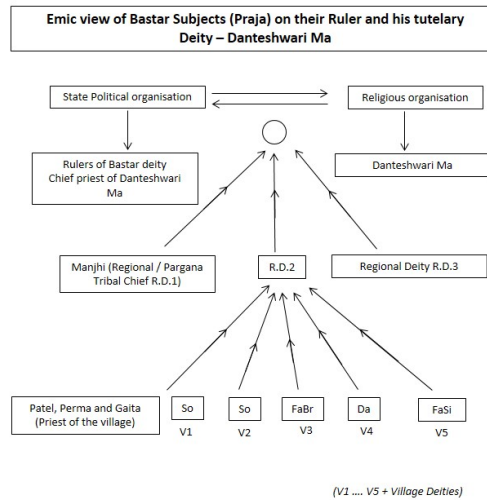
TABLE: ASSOCIATED RITUAL COMPONENTS OF BASTAR DUSEHRA AND INVOLVEMENT OF VARIOUS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES/ VILLAGES

Ritual Components	Communities / villages involved
(i) BarsiUtrani (when they worship the tools and equipments used for construction of the chariot)	Bhatra(ST), Saora(ST), Raut, Agaria
(ii) Nar Phodan	- do -
(iii) Rath Construction	- do -
(iv) For bringing of various pieces of wood for rath construction :	Ulnar, Talnar, Chitaloor, Nangur, Billori, Madmoor, Nagarnar, Sadgud.
(a) Pata wood	
Magar Muhi	Pandripani, Bade Marenga, Bade Morathpal, Lendra, Rajur
(b) Acchanda Diwas	Kurundi, Dhanaloor
(c) Gola Sarai	Khutapar, Baniagaon, Belgaon, Mejpadar, Dhanpunji, Chokawada, Maganpur, Bahmni, Amaguda, Jirgaon, Khumli, Markel, Kopaganda, ChoteKawali, Chilkuri, Bademurma, Jamawada, Keshapur, Phurapal, Magnar, Neganar, Badepara, Telegarapur, Alanar, Merawada, Parpa, Duganpal.
(d) Kaichi wood(cross beam)	Erikpal, Koyapana, Sendwa, Chingpal, Arshkot.
(e) Khamba wood (wood for base to top)	Bringpal, Dimrapal, KhumarMarenga, Kilepal, Mahakapal, Kaknar, Chindbahar, Koyanar
(f) Dhaman wood (for top of chariot)	Tondapal, Badebadam ,Chizaukutti
(g) Kami Sarai	Keshloor, Bادهارapur, Rajkot, Netmoor, Telimarenga
(h) Tarlapatta (for roof purpose)	Birasguda, Badebadam, Kolabada, Bade Kawali, Parati
(i) Parlawhokana	MavliPadar village.
(vi) Rath Singarni	Aryanak Brahman of orissa, Panera (Mali)
(vii) Rath Rengani	Aryanak Brahman, Dhakar, Bhatra (ST), Jogi.
(viii) Kachan Gadi /gudi	Panika, Dhakar, Aryanak Brahman along with Royal family. (It is also observed in this ritual that two aged women known as <i>gurumaya</i> play <i>dhankul</i> (a musical instrument which looks like a bow with a string). Dhankul signifies for wealth; it is also playing during Lakshmi Jagar ritual. This instrument may be symbolizes for end of bow and arrow era which is full of uncertainty and entry of stable economic condition in view of practise of settled cultivation where food is secured.)

(ix) Raila Devi	Mahara, Mirgan, Aryanak Brahman along with Royal family.
(x) Kalash Sthapana	At the temple premises by 28 Brahmans
(xi) Jogi bithai	Jogi of Halba (ST) caste, Aryanak Brahman, Munda (ST), Manjhi-Chalki (BhatraDhakar, MuriasDandami Maria, Abujh Maria etc.), Member Manjhi (of Munda, Bhatra, Dhurwa etc.)
(xii) Navaratri Puja (a) Circumambulation of rath within town - for rath pulling	Brahman Chiefly Dandami Maria for pulling rath, <i>munde baja</i> (Munda) and others.
(xiii) Magarmuhi Charani	Lohar, Agaria
(xiv) Nisha Yatra	Royal family, Brahman, Dhakar, Bhatra, Raja Muria, Halba and others
(xv) Kumari Puja and Mavli Parghav (reception of Danteshwari mata of Dantewada)	Brahmans, Royal family, Dandami Maria, Rajguru and District administration.
(xvi) Bhitari Raini	Brahman, Dandami Maria, Bhatra
(xvii) Bahari Raini	Raja, Rajguru, Brahman, Dandami Maria, Dhakar, Panika and villagers of Karanpur
(xviii) Kachan Yatra	Panika, Dhakar
(xix) Muria Darbar	Manjhi, Chalki, Member, Patel, District and State Administrator.
(xx) Kutumba Yatra/ Gange Munda Yatra	All the invited deities are given farewell with the help of Brahman, <i>Sirha</i> (Sorcerer) and Leske (tribal priest)
(xxi) 'Bidai' (of Danteshwarimata)	Brahman, Dhakar, Dandami Maria

Analysis

Bastar, in fact, was a stronghold of *Saivism* from time immemorial. This aspect was fully exploited by the founder/s of the Bastar dynasty who fled from Warangal with an idol of their tutelary family deity -Danteshwari/ Maoli-an incarnation of Durga and installed it at Dantewada; and declared themselves as the chief priest of Danteshwari. By declaring themselves (i.e. royal lineage) as the prime worshipper of Danteshwari, "the kings of Bastar could integrate the tribal population of Bastar with the State. As stated above, the animistic religion of Bastar had already possessed by the '*mata* cult' complex in different names shades and hues such as Maoli Mata, Bhandarin Mata, Pardeshin Mata, Jaliniburi Mata, Telangin Mata etc. The cult of deities is inseparably woven with the cultural fabric of the tribal Bastar. The tribal social organization is linked closely with the kinship organization found among the deities – smaller villages are the seats of secondary and tertiary relatives of a more prominent deity who is housed in another village and becomes a nucleus of a bunch of villages. It can be illustrated in the following manner--



In the above illustration it has been shown that v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5 are villages having their own deities who are related in turn with R.D.2 which is regional deity and similarly R.D.1 and R.D.3 are other regional deities forming separate cluster of villages. Each of the regional deities is the various manifestations of Danteshwari Mata” (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 2010).

Looking at the process of State formation in Bastar it has been observed that by becoming the *purohit* or chief priest, the Rajput kings of Bastar carved out a religio-political niche for themselves to which they remained inseparably attached till the last king-cum-priest-Pravir Chandra Banjdeo was assassinated in 1965. The political control of the ex-rulers of Bastar ran more or less parallel with the religious organization.

Dusehra festival on the other hand clearly signifies that it is an “integration rather than displacement of tribal elements in the development of ‘nuclear areas’ of sub-regional power. Ultimately, it was the fusion which helped legitimize rule in these areas.” (Sunder, 1997).

It can also be said from the empirical observation on Dusehra festival that within the agricultural mode of production, the Dusehra is an extension of the village *jatra* (sacrifice) – local festivals necessary to preserve fertility and avoid sickness. According to Dubey and Mohril (1961) Kachan gudi ritual is claimed a fertility ritual. To them, Kachan being an earth goddess associated with fertility and reproduction and song sung by the *gurumaya* women. According to Panika priest, a Panika sorcerer helped a childless queen to conceive and in return she was asked to pray to Kachan devi, who is a symbol of prosperity.

The contextual, date also suggest that the king was seen as necessary to the

performance of this Dusehra function for the interest of his kingdom. Induction of various role assigned to specific ethnic groups as participants and contributors to the Dusehra ceremonies, the royal family simultaneously ensured their contribution in terms of revenue, administration and control even at grass root level for sustenance which makes them cohesive adaptation and adjustment and synthesis of cultural behaviour between two or more ethnic groups which ultimately lead towards harmonious environment in the region.

The annual ritual during Dusehra since 1906 – the ‘Muria Darbar’ / ‘Manjhi Darbar’ – wherein the tribal or village chiefs (Manjhi or Chalki) are allowed freely to speak about their problem in the village regarding agricultural practices, land irrigation, forest and its resources, wages of labour, drinking water facility, induction of developmental activities in their area, and unemployment vis-à-vis rise of Naxalites etc. A kind of promise is assured from the ruler of Bastar who would do everything in his power to alleviate the sufferings of his subalterns.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it clearly reveals that right from the days of Maharajas, the system of political organization in Bastar has been a very interesting one. The rulers who were also the chief priest of the goddess Danteshwari, were regarded as the political heads. The hierarchical authority is as follows – *Diwan, Pargana Manjhi* (who is helped by *Patel* in revenue collection from villages), Panchayat, Manjhi-Mukhiya-Member and Memberin. At every level an official enjoys its authority and sustenance directly from the one above it (Das, 1974). Therefore, from the top of power structure – Maharaja to the village grass root level with the help of the institution of Manjhi, the political network and authority was well inter connected and firmly established which helped Maharaja to unite its subalterns who are even of various ethnic groups.

On the 13th day they perform *Ganga Munda Yatra*. This is held in Ganga Munda tank of Jagdalpur. This ritual is also known as *Kutumba yatra*. All the invited gods and deities brought from various villages assemble at this place for collective farewell through community sacrifices of goat, pigeon, chicken, egg (fertilized) etc. With the performance of some ritual, they offer some money to the persons who have brought the invited deities and then the deities return back to their respective villages.

This will integrated system of political control remained intact till 1965 – the last ruler of Bastar and after his death the system is gradually faint away, though present democratic setup government has not been able to maintain the same degree of cohesion between rulers and ruled as it existed earlier but Dusehra ritual being a kind of cohesive agent it function as a centripetal force through which all the communities are integrated and as a result fusion of cultural behaviour as well as synthesis in religious arena has occurred. Dusehra of Bastar in other word may

be termed as a meeting place for gods and goddess as well as of various ethnic groups on a larger scale. During the field investigation year (i.e. 2004) it is reported that altogether 79 Parganas / Villages gods and goddess who are in most cases genealogically related in their celestial world, were invited at Jagdalpur who were represented at Jagdalpur by a silver umbrella (*chatta*) or *lathi* ect. In this regard Sundar (2001) observed that the ritual division of labour between different groups for Dusehra parallels that of different lineages in the propitiation of village gods. The whole Dusehra ritual may be identified as a royal or political ritualistic activity, which acts as a cohesive agent of Bastar state. Here religious activities was shaped through the demands of state legitimacy or “in other words, how royal hegemony has been dependent on the appropriation of popular religion” (Sundar, 2001). It is also reported that the priest of all the temples of Jagdalpur were headed by non-Brahman or low caste and gradually within the past few years specially after independence these are replaced by Brahmans only.

- (i) The mother cult – Danteshwari acts like a centripetal force where both Hindu and tribals are roaming from apex to center. It has tremendous attractive force, which one can realize through empathy; because in their mind if Danteshwari is not appeased, people of the State will become restless, starved, ill, so the subalterns of Bastar worshipped her. She is the supreme in the heavenly world of Bastar people. Her dictum is final and she controls her subalterns through the dreams of chief priest since now the position of king is simply obligatory.
- (ii) To our opinion the essence of Bastar Dusehra which is unique in the country and evolved as a way of consolidating political power (through *Manjhi*, *Chalki*, *Patel*, *Gaita* etc.) using cultural and religious symbols through Danteshwari Mata. The various *matas* in different villages are directly or indirectly related with Danteshwari which clearly reflects the extend of political power of Raja (or king) to grass root level.
- (iii) The then king of Bastar intended to involve all the ethnic groups of his states and even villages in this festivities and thus network of bondage of relationship was formed both at terrestrial and celestial levels (i.e. through their deities in which they have a strong supernatural belief).
- (iv) The political connotation of the festival is most evident towards the end of the festivals. On the performance of Muria Darbar where all tribal / parganas chiefs or Manjhi voice their grievances and problems at the Darbar. Earlier it was presided by the king but now-a-days it is presided by district administration.

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the work on “*State Formation of Bastar and Role of Danteshwari Mata in administration*”, which is unique in the country and evolved as a way of consolidating political power (through Manjhi, Chalki, Patel, Gaita etc.) using cultural and religious symbols through Danteshwari Mata, were documented but due to some problems it is till date not completed. Whatever I able to present is half done work with a hope in future some scholar may use this data as first hand raw data to complete the remaining part. I also acknowledge Dr. Amitabha Sarkar for his help in generating empirical data and use of his official capacity to access various help from Bastar district authorities.

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