

RajoParbo – Monsoon celebration through menstruation

From the end of May, India is looking hungrily towards the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal for its eternal ecosystem manipulator – the monsoon. The advent of monsoon is celebrated across the country through various festivals to express human gratitude towards nature for supporting their survival. This transition from scorching summer to rejuvenating rainy season has a pivotal role in agriculture as the soil gets its required moisture, micro-organisms stimulate normal nutrient cycling and there is a boost for young members to grow. In Odisha, this natural phenomenon is linked with one of the vital events of the human life, i.e., menstruation and is celebrated through RajoParbo or Raja Festival. As menstruation indicates



shedding of the unused eggs and associated tissues from the woman body to render it ready for fresh egg formation cycle; the analogy is drawn with mother earth's rejuvenation during this seasonal transition. This three-day long festival is dedicated to 'Vasumati', the Earth goddess. It is believed that during the first 3 days of the festival mother earth goes through menstruation shedding past scorching experiences of summer and prepare herself for coming period of reproduction, i.e., cultivation and harvesting. At the 4th or last day, a ritualistic bath has been conducted (VasumatiGadhu or the ritual bath of Bhu Devi) to indicate the end of natural menstruation for mother earth.

The festival emphasizes on unmarried young girls (who have attained puberty) to celebrate their time freeing from daily household jobs. They can enjoy song, dance, games, various foods and other joyous activities which otherwise is not possible in the day to day work. Synonymous with that, all agricultural activities are banned at this time period to put the earth at rest. After the 4th day, the normal agricultural schedule starts as usual. In the present time, it is one of the most popular and commercially attractive festivals to the retail, entertainment and food industry.

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Collector: Rakesh Mitra