



Keeping Traditions Alive: An Introspection on the Tribal Dance of Uttar Pradesh

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The river valleys are the mother of all ancient civilizations of the world. Whether it was civilization of Dajla-farat of Mesopotamia, Harappa culture, the rivers have always provided all the necessary means for the nourishment of human culture. Here in the first phase of human civilization it was believed that Kaarush people came here who were called as Oraon (Dhaangar).

According to folklores, Oraon ruled in areas of Chotanagpur, who were later defeated by other groups in a war. Some of the defeated groups entered into Son water area from Narmada valley. From here they scattered in many areas of Sonbhadra. From the folklores it is known that in the tribes of Sonbhadra, the "Karma" is celebrated on Basant Panchami. It is believed that when rice is harvested and wheat is sown then this dance is performed. In the early phase of development when man was away from materialism then his happiness lies solely in the grains, its cultivation and harvesting. Some occasions like Bihu, Onam etc. are celebrated in other states of India. Pandit Dev Kumar Mishra and Dr. Arjundas Keshari has accepted Basant Panchami as the first Karma occasion of the tribes.

In the Mirzapur District Gazzetter and Warriar Elvin's famous book "The Dance of India" there is illustration of Karma being celebrated in the month of August. Dr. Arjundas Kesari, while writing about "*Bhaado ki Reetiyan, niti anhiyaria ho, aain karma k deen*" has mentioned that Karma is organized in the dark night in the month of August. In Madkudi Jogeil, Parsoi, Devari, Tirkatwa etc. the Karma is organised on Diwali and Dussehera. Khasia and Kharwar organize the Karma dance with full delight on the occasion of Dussehera. There is a tradition of dancing on the whole Diwali night till next morning.

Traditionally, on special occasion the Karma is organised, where these tribals maintain their religious rituals. There is a tradition of worshipping Goddess Durga among tribals. They also worship Barno Bhawani, Khermaata Kudari devi and Jwalamukhi devi. Today on the national and international platforms this Karma is being organised but in the Son valley still the beliefs of these tribals are still alive. Karma song is basically an initiation song. A

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group of young girls goes out of the village, in a jungle to search 'Karm' tree and prays in front of it that- " O God of tree, we are here on a fast." -

Hey Karma Devta

Banwa mein rahila upase.

This is the first phase of Karma song from where the initiation starts. The young girls think that God of Trees, till now you were pride of jungle, now come into my house (verandah).

Otana din Karam

Banwa Pater Hav

Aaj kal angina mein thadi

Hey, karam devta ho

From here the Karma starts. The songs which are popular by the name of Karma apart from this initiation, or which the interviewer has collected, it is known when the Karma festival is celebrated by the tribals. The main are-

Bhado mahinawa chaudas ratiya mein

Aain karam ka dev ho (kawaar- parsoi)

Bhado ka ratiya neeti anhiriya ho

Aain karam ka deen

(Dr. Arjundas collection)

From these songs it is known that this festival is celebrated in different tribes on different occasions. Karma song is not a ritual song i.e. the reason why this Karma is neither used commonly on the occasion of birth of a boy nor in marriage ceremony like other marriage songs or "Sohar". The song is mainly seen in the context of any unmarried young girl of tribal family. In tribals girl prays in her heart that never ever a day come when she has to leave her paternal home. She prays to her father not to sell her. All this joy, festivals, happiness, delight will end, the moment I leave.

Angahai raina gooti baba hoye

Ninghai aedpa nu jhaanz-maandar manobaba hoye

Ninghai bosoye hole baba hoye

Ninghai aedpa raisoona baba hoye.

She thinks she has nothing. She has to listen to her partner's taunt and faces insult. But she never refuses.

Ningan pello uyon badan

Neen pello bairang anai manai

Khebda nu taar malla

Khebda nu jhika malla

(Dhangar-Dupatia)

One more emotional and heart touching tale related to a woman's life is seen in these songs. The tribals practice polygyny. 'Maalkin' is the eldest married woman i.e. why the woman who came later does not get that respect. The pain of polygyny can also be seen in the Karma songs-

Kaatal madwa katal rahijaye

Kaachal kamay, kunwar rahi jaye

(Ghasiya- Markudi)

The forests are owned by the tribals and so its land. There was the time when the tribals lived as the land owner there but later on as the development took place, they lost everything. After the industrialization of Sonbhadra and the construction of Rihand dam has

led the displacement of many tribals. This pain is seen in the Karma songs also. These songs have the context of leaving and roaming here and there-

Raaji-Raaji bhulale
Dese-dese bhulale
Na dese nekha adhikaar

(Dhaangar)

Other people have so many facilities and live happy life but on other hand tribal people have to face so many hardships.

Aisan ta janam ghar chodi ke pahade dera,
Kehu khaye dal bhaat, kehu ghiyu khichari,
kehu khaye kodo roti paan mein churaye ke
Aisan ta janam.

Due to the today's impact on Karma songs, the Goddess, God Ram, Krishna came into the songs and the description of 'Kalyug' began in the songs. Based on these, new songs were made on the name of Karma but still these songs have the pain, feeling alive in them. The description of Karma dance pictures in mind, a culture which is far away from the glamour and materialism of the city life. The description of Karma memorizes the tribals living in the Sonbhadra area. Karma is a dance song. In this some sings and dance along with playing some sings and dance along with playing some musical instruments. This tradition of dancing and singing today is now popular in tribes in different ways. The dance and songs of Duddhi, Myorpur or Babhani, Bindhmanj or Singhrauli is different from those tribes living in north of Son region. We can see them in 3 contexts:-

Those tribals who were unaffected by the influence of the cities. On their scheduled occasion they celebrate their festivals, wear traditional dresses and sing Karma and dance. In other category those tribals falls who organizes the fair and wear colourful dresses. The change can only be seen in their dressing pattern. Now they wear plastic shoes, wear colourful lungi and white or colourful kurta on top. The women who come in these festivals do not wear traditional dresses. They wear kurta salwar, synthetic saree, petticoat, slippers, bindi on forehead, some brass ornaments and put lipstick on lips.

Third category is of those tribals who have started using this dance song professionally. They can be seen on national and international platforms. Their dresses reveal the fresh and new way of showing the things. They wear colourful dresses and sing Karma song while standing in a line. By their dresses they appear like tribals but look-wise they are not.

Karma is organized both in day and night. During night there is no proper facility of light, so, "Chamars" in their "Natua" dance lit kerosene dipped cloth in a bottle which works as a light source. But in Karma this light source is not used that is the reason why Karma is organized on full moon of 'shukla paksha'.

Karma is not an organized stage dance form. The Karma organized on any professional stage is the real form of Karma but the, dresses, ornaments of the performers and the musical instruments used are far different from what is traditionally used.

Dress Pattern

Karma is combined dance form of men and women. The woman use saree in two ways. First they wrap it and tie it on a waist which is called as "Kachhani". This is the old fashion of wearing saree and esp. when they have to dance and participate in any sport. Secondly, saree is divided in two parts and then triangle is made below the knee and then it is tied behind, below the "Kachhani", so that there is no problem in the movement of legs and also no body part is visible. Males also wear saree as a "dhoti".

Saree is very thin and made of very transparent fabric. So in order to avoid any visibility through the saree, woman while dancing wear a rectangular cloth under the saree which is called as "astar". This "astar" is like an undergarment but it is not a part of Karma. It is just required. But nowadays women wear petticoat under the saree. Men wear "Ghaghara" when they go in any festival. "Thangar" "Agaria" "Ghasiya" "Ganji" wear dhoti when they dance.

It is also important to discuss those clothes which are worn above the waist. This includes the outfits of both men and women. Men wear either white or colourful "Bandi" (Ganji) or full sleeve "Kurta" and dance. Women wear "Jhulla". "Jhulla" is stitched from colourful cloth or 'maarken', which is given different colours. Its stitching style is of 3 different styles-

1. It is of waist length so that the women's waist and back is not visible while dancing.
2. It is stitched with "astar".
3. Sometimes in "Jhulla" pocket is also made.

It is not appropriate to link this cloth or dress with Karma dance form because it is the usual dress of the tribals as well. In recent years blouse, fancy clothes like velvet or fellaheen blouse which are very soft are also wore by them.

Ornaments

There is no special ornament worn during Karma but the ornaments which women wear During festivals and occasions, are also wear by them during Karma dance. The main among them are- "Mathvedi", "Vanphool", "Nakbulli", "Bulaak", ad "Jhulki". "Lehti" made of iron and glass bangles are worn in hand. Some women wear cheap watches between these bangles.

The two ornaments which can be described differently are- "Peti" and "Penjani". In "Penjani" 'Ghungaroo' are attached which is worn in the waist whereas "Peti" is either bronze or iron bangle. It is hollow in which either concrete or iron balls are filled which produces noise with the movement of legs. Other important ornament is of those 'Ghungaroots' which is worn by tribal men on the back side of their waist. On the strip of cloth 'ghungaroo' or bells of brass are attached in three parallel lines. It produces noise when men perform Karma or 'Natua' dance. In 'Natua' it is called as "Kasanhati". In 'Natua' the sequence of brass bells is used whereas in Karma 'ghungaroots' are used. Tribals call it as "Karampeti". In Natua the waist movements produces the sound of brass bells whereas in Karma the front back movement of waist produces the sound of 'ghungaroots'. This ornament is complimented with the 'Pekari' and 'Pairi' which is worn in the feet. This 'Kada' (bangle) is worn in the feet. It is also called as 'packet'. 'Peri' is its smallest name but both mean the same.

Likewise "Maadal" goes on well with the song and motivates to sing by producing music. Whether it is Valsar area of Madhya Pradesh, Singh bhumi, Thalbhumi, Maanbhumi of Jharkhand, nearby hilly areas of Ranchi, forest area of Palamu and Rohataasgarh, southern area of Son of Sonbhadra, some north villages, whereas tribals went, "Maadal" was integral part of their culture. Its beat attracts all the people. Tribals play all the instruments whether it is "Maadang", "Dhol", "Nishaan", "Nagada" but "Maadal" is most important and striking feature of Karma.

Karma devta hooooo...

Banwa mein rahi ha upaase

'Maadal' gives music to the song, along with "Paikar" and "Pairi". All this gives beauty and sweetness to Karma song. Initially Maadal was made of mud but later on it was made of hollow wood with the shape of 'Dhol'.

Mud is kneaded and two spheres are made at the end. The sphere at one end is large than than other. It is baked in fire then both the ends were tied with goat's skin. The tradition of making mud 'maadal' exists today also. This is called "Maaanar". 'Maanar' is a holy musical instrument. it is played in a group which moves from one place to another. During the wedding, when women go to dug mud for making 'Poojanvedi' or 'Vivaah vedi', at that time "Maanar" instrument is first worshipped. On the third or fourth day of wedding to worship God, the group of women moves singing the worship songs then the 'Maanar' is played, leading the group. The women of lower caste (esp.'Chamar') plays this instrument and leads the group. It is also played during the puja with bamboo sticks. This tradition is also important in Hindus.

Maadal Maanar- Chain of tradition 'Maadal' being structuraaly different from 'Maanar' is important instrument during worship in the tribals. The Karam stick is fixed on the ground and on its one side men stand in a semicircle and plays 'Maadal'.

*Hey Karam dev! Mere aangan mein aakar khade ho jaye,
Mere ghar, dhan-dhanya se bhar jaye.*

Comparative study of Karma in 'Sonbhadra'

For comparison three castes have been taken into account- 'Dhaangar', 'Ghasiya' and 'Kharwar' or 'Khairwar'. Karma is a ritual that is why auspicious date is important to organize it. One week before the date, the 'jaini' is sown near the Karam tree. In seven days it grows big. In 'Ghasiya' caste Karma is organized on Dussehera, Diwali, Basant Panchami and Navaratra. In Navaratra people of this caste worship Goddess along with Karam tree but 'Dhaangar' only worship Karam dev. 'Kharwaar' celebrate this occasion on 11th day of the month. They organize Karma in Dussehera, and Diwali.

'Baiga' is the main carrier of this ritual. All work is done in its presence. He does the prayer and he is the organizer of the ritual. Unmarried girls play important role in taking the Karam branches to house. In 'Dhaangar' five unmarried girls observe fast and then go to take the Karam branch and they pick it up while singing. They keep on singing, bring it to home and also fix it with the song. In 'Ghasiya' this work is done by seven girls. Ghasiya young boys are also present and participate in this. In 'Khairwar', no number is seen but in the same way young boys and girls observe fast and go to pick Karam branch and fix it. The tradition to complete this ceremony by observing fast is relevant in all the castes. The tradition of sacrificing during this ritual in order to please the God is still prevalent. Goat and pig is used for the sacrifice. Also, a bird is also seen i.e. hen.

In this context of sacrifice the 'Dhaangars' are different than others. Among this caste there is a tradition of sacrificing a pig on every third year, which in their caste is called as "Sawa Suar". There is different process of worshipping the Karam tree after it is fixed. In this puja 'havan' is done by putting ghee and gur in the fire. Meat and alcohol is also used in puja. In 'Dhaangars' ghee, gur, alcohol is important. Same is with 'Kharwaar'. 'Ghasiya' also use meat in puja. In all three castes they start the preparation of the puja before one week. After establishing the Karam branch the tradition of dancing, singing and doing prayers is seen in all three castes

After establishing any God, the established idol of God is taken to the whole village and then it is immersed in water. This belief is famous in the whole world. In Maharashtra after Ganesh Chaturthi the idols of Ganesh is immersed in water in the same way. All people say aloud "Ganapti Bappa Maurya", to please the God. These traditions are different in different areas. In Bengal after Durga puja the big and huge idols of goddess of Durga are immersed in the water. The Bengalis worship and prays-

Aey baar aisho maa
(Hey maa ek baar fir aana)

The culture of India is so splendid. The work which the developed and civilized castes are doing now, that has been done by the tribals from the very beginning. After roaming in the whole world with the Karam branch, the young girls who had observed fast, immerse the Karam branch in the flowing water. They hope that they have a prosperous year and with the next New Year the Karam God will again visit their home and take away their problems and pain. It is important to tell that the form of Karma which we see today is in a modern way, and it is just a glimpse of the original, splendid Karma form. That is why people only see it as a dance form.

Totem and Karma of the tribals

The tribals living in the Sonbhadra claim their suspicious relation with any matter, trees or animal. This is called '*totem*'. According to Hindi literature- "totem is a belief of the tribals in which they believe that their origin is from any inhuman ancestor". D.N. Majumdar writes- "some Indian tribes are divided into more than 2 or 3 clans like Mall, Dhall, Sikhora and Maana. Mall are related with Mall land, Dhaal with Dhaal land and Maan with Maan land. In this each and every group is endogamous group.

The presence of worship of trees and the 'mantras' in the Vedas proves the presence of totemic beliefs. In Vedic Sanhitas there is a description of gifts dedicated to the trees and plants. Banyan tree, Vat, Bail tree are worshipped but that is not totem. In Hindus Shiv's carrier "Vrashab" (ox) is worshipped. Goddess Saraswati vehicle 'Peacock' and God Vishnu's vehicle 'Garun' is worshiped. The Karam tree and Karam dance related to it, is a totem which is believed in many tribes.

The native of Roberstganj, Sonshah Kharwaar, age 60 years, while telling the story of Karma has told that when the earth came into existence, there were no humans. Only God Brahma, God Vishnu, God Mahesh lived. To measure the depth of water God Shiv went into the water. His body got covered with mud. He removed the mud from his and wherever the more mud got collected there emerged the mountains and where less mud accumulated there emerged plains. Then the God thought who will live here, so He created humans and their 7 children. Brahma asked them all to observe the fast on '*eikadashi*' and plant a Karam tree and worship. But the boys did not obey Him. The elder brother works on the field. The responsibility of younger brothers was to bring food in the house. Then one of the elder brother came and he saw that his younger brother and seven women are worshipping the Karam branch. The elder brother who was atheist threw the Karam branch out of the house. After that all the food on the field turned into red colour. At home the problems, disease started. The younger brother who was religious guru started worshipping the God. After the God was pleased, He asked him to plant a Karam tree in the house and worship it. All the brothers went to the jungle to bring the Karam branch. They saw that the Karam branch was flowing in the sea. Whenever anyone tries to get it, it moves on. In the end the younger brother prays to the God and grabbed the branch. They brought the Karam branch in the home and placed it in the verandah and started worshipping it. With the worship of God Karam prosperity came in their home.

Bringing the Karam branch from the jungle and planting it in the house is popular in all the tribes. Western scholars William Cook, Dalton, Warier Elvin have described their totem and Karma in many contexts. In 'Dances of India' page no. 211, Warier Elvin writes that in Mayurganj area of Orissa, among the various dances of Bhumiya tribe, the Karma dance which is celebrated on 11th day of August month is very popular.

Durkheim also believes Totemism as an initial form of religious life and according to him totemic animal or plant is the representative of the whole society. Dr. Kaashi Prasad Jaiswal has illustrated "Bharos" and "Bhaarshivs" who wear Shiv idol on the neck. Their totem was dog and deer. Damodar Dharmanand Kaushambhi opines that- "Nag word became common word for those tribals whose totemic symbol was Nag and who worship Nag, without knowing each-other. The worship of Karam branch, organizing Dance-song is prevalent in all the tribes of Sonbhadra. This Karam totem is prevalent in all caste of Dhaaangar, Ghasiya, Kol, Godh, Chero, Mangawar and Pathari.

Russel in his book "Tribes and caste of Central Province of India" has described the story of 'Nangin Baigin' and 'Naga Baiga' in 'Baiga' caste. There is tradition of keeping names like Chitu, Faagu on the basis of months. On the house, on the roof, the images of "Khermata" (regional deity) is seen, who protects the people in adverse condition.

Dhaangars believed that the Banyan tree is one of their ancestors, that is the reason why they do not cut it. There is a sub-caste named "Ekka" which means "Detua". Dhaangar do not kill them as they accept them as their ancestral deity. Their sub-caste is "Tiga" whose relation is with the stem ('jadi') of Dhaangar jungle and that is why they don't use it in any eating items. In Sonbhadra, there is a branch of Dhaangar- 'Khaaha' which means Crow. That is the reason why the people of this caste respect it and do not harm it. The people of Sonbhadra believe that when the God created their ancestors then He covered them with a "Jhaanpi" and gave them "Baanki" (a kind of knife).

While illustrating the totemic beliefs of Kharwars, Cornell Dalton in his book 'Descriptive Ethnology' writes that a wild animal came out of the sea and reached "Aahir-Pipari" and gave two eggs. From the one egg male born and from the other female. One branch from 'Aahir-Pipari' moved towards 'Hardati' and who were called as "Kharwaars". In south, Risley, while describing the emergence of 'Lohaardaaga' describes the 'Khar-Ghaas', which is their totem. That is the reason why they don't cut long grasses.

'Majhwaar' or 'Maajhi' is tradition of Dravid caste which lives in south Sonbhadra. The ancestor men had 5 children and they are their descendents. They are- 'Poiya', 'Tekaan', 'Bharaai', 'Oika', 'Olku'. Among them Bharaai was brave who ruled 'Mandala' house. It is proved that thus caste is related to one totem only. The story behind it is- 5 brothers were crossing the river and two among them were unable to cross the river. One turtle made them to cross the river on his back. These two were the fathers of the 'Poiya' and 'Tekaan' sub-branch. From then, the 'Majhwaar's' worship the turtle and do not kill or hurt it. Majhwaar do not cut 'Saal' tree as they believe that their God 'Booradev' lives in it.

William Cook in 'Tribes and Caste of North-west of India' has discussed about Gangaram, Gajadhar and their sister 'Barij Somati' and her beauty. The belief of walking bare-footed on fire and not getting hurt is seen mainly in religious occasions. The caste of one totemic belief is endogamous. They do not marry outside their caste but there is prevalence of marriage in different sub-castes. The primitive castes can fight among themselves and kill each-other but do not kill or eat trees, birds and animals as its other species who they believe as their ancestors.

Since Vedic period till now human has developed its culture and cultural values. Somewhere modernism has overpowered the existing beliefs and somewhere the beliefs of the people have faded. Away from these conditions, the primitive tribal beliefs, culture, totem is alive today also whose epitome is this dance-song of Karma.

Karma:- A Religious Ceremony

It is amazing how these tribals forget their all problems while doing this dance-song in midst of the struggle and grief in their lives. By the pleasant smell of Mahua and on the beats

of Maadal these tribals forget all the things and perform on the beats of Karma. Karma has become the way of expressing happiness, pain and grief. This performance of Karma which is far away from materialism gives the inspiration to be happy even during struggle. From folklores it is known that the tradition of Karma dance-song was first popular in Ghasiya tribe. The Karam tree which is believed as a Deity holds the main importance.

Karam Tree

Tribals believe that worshipping the Karam tree after placing its branch in the house, brings prosperit and happiness. Epidemis and unnatural deaths do not occur in the village. Cattles are safe. The stories related to it are seen in Ghasiya and Manjwaar. These stories are also illustrated in the Mirzapur District Gazetteer.

One week before the occasion, Baiga and the elders of the village goes in every house near Karam tree and give them the invitation for occasion. On the day of occasion, Baiga, unmarried girls and a young boy sings a song and go to get the Karam tree. It is a tradition that the branch should get detached from the tree in one go and it should not fall on the ground. The girls' catch it before it falls on the ground. After that it is brought to the place of occasion by singing and then it is fixed there. A tool of iron is also worshipped and placed with the tree on the ground. Baiga calls the Karam God to come in the tree by offering Him ghee and gur. Tribals believe that the Karam God lives in that Karam branch and it brings happiness and properity to them. Tribals got the inspiration to work hard in adverse situations from the Karam God.

Baiga

The religious works of these tribals have always been done with all the traditions. The Baiga caste among them carries out their rituals and other religious works. They carry out all the work like birth of a boy, weddings, totem and all other pujas. Baigas are respected as religious head. With the smoke or fume of the puja being done, the Baigas forecast about the coming future and how the village will prosper with the blessings of the deity. It is believed that on special occasion the Deity comes on the Baiga under the effect of which the Baigas do all the work. The tradition of "Habu-aane" (uttering voice of *Hako-hako* by rotating the head) is rooted in these religious heads where it is believed that deity ends the pain of the sufferer. Baigas with this art gets to know everything and then presents a solution for the problem.

Some days before the Karma occasion, Baigas go to the jungle and worship the Karam tree and ties it with a thread. He prays to Karam God to come to village on a particular day. On the occasion of Karma Baigas go to the jungle with young girls and boys to get the Karam branch. The group sings and go to the jungle. Then the Baiga cut the branch of Karam tree and brings that in the village. On the neat and clean place of the village or the house, Baiga first do the puja and then establishes the Karam branch. Whole night till the ----- which takes place in next day, Baiga sits there. They worship Karam God by offering Him ghee, gur, alcohol and sacrifices. After the ceremony, the Baigas perform puja with all the rituals and then immerse the Karam tree in nearby river.

Unmarried girls/boys

In Karma ceremony, the mental and physical purity is of high consideration. In Hindu religious beliefs, unmarried girls are pure and sacred. On the occasion of Navaratra they are considered equivalent to mother. Along with Baigas, young unmarried girls and boys go to get the branch of Karam tree. Girls observe fast on this day. Girls sing and go to get the Karam branch. After plucking the branch the girls catch it before it falls on the ground and then this group returns to the village and establishes the the Karam branch. In Dhaangar five girls and in other castes' seven girls go to bring the Karam branch. Before the --- puja these girls stand around the Karam branch. After the Baigas complete the puja, the girls take the

Karam branch and visit the whole village, sing the songs and finally immerse the branch in the river.

Sacred Millet

Many rituals in tribals are similar to that of Hindus. In Hindus there is a tradition of sowing millet while establishing the idols of Goddess Durga. The big grown millets are believed as the blessings of Goddess Durga. In Sonbhadra, this ritual is famous in many tribals. Some days before the Karma occasion, millet is sown in the semicircular pure mud. On the day of Karma, the good grown millet is brought from every household and after performing puja it is kept near the Karam tree. When the Baiga digs out the Karam tree after worshipping it, then the young girls take the Karam branch along with the millet and visit the whole village and then immerse it in the river.

Home Karma

Baigas do the worship/puja of Karam branch with all the rituals then after putting it on the ground offer it ghee, gur, flowers. Karam is also bathed with the milk.

Musical Instruments

The musical instruments of tribals make the atmosphere delightful on the occasion of Karma dance-song. The chief instrument played on this occasion is - "*Maandar*" without the beat of Maadal tribals do not shake a leg. On the beats of Maadal the worship songs of deities are sung. Circular "*Dhaphla*" is also important instrument of tribals for worshipping. Their rituals and dances are musical. Tribals please the deity with their dance-song that is why the dance performed during the time of rituals, surrounding the Karma tree is the basic worship dance. Likewise manjeera a little big instrument is called as "*Jhaanjih*". This instrument is made of wood in which circular and thin opening made of brass are there which is played by putting it on thumb and fingers. The Karma dance attracts all when tribals' dance wearing 'Pairi' in feet. In this the iron balls are filled between two hollow and circular layers, which produces different sounds while dancing.

In South and in Bengal, there is a tradition to please the God and Goddess in temple by performing dance. It can be guessed that in Karma dance the assimilation of dancing in front of Karam tree and pleasing the God took place in later stage. That is why the people who understand the importance of this ritual consider Karma only as dance-song. That is the reason when the Karma is performed on huge platforms then everything remains the same besides the presence of Karam tree which was the base of this dance-song form. If we simply see then these songs appear to a part of general tradition of the tribals but the incidents related with these occasion give it a form of ritual. Praying to God in jungle a week before, tying the tree with a thread, bringing it by unmarried girls, worshipping the sown millets after bringing it to Karam tree and after doing the puja immersing the Karam branch and millet, all these activities provide this occasion a high order religious ritual.

Karma and the Classical Dancers

Lore and the tradition related to it take the form of dance-song. Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi accepts village songs as the 'veda of culture'. Tribals have found their origin and prosperity in their beliefs and customs. The imagination of the happiness of house, family, society can be simply seen in these songs. Warier Elvin says- 'in midst of these problems, it is amazing to see the tribals who dance all night.

After wearing 'Maandar' in hands and 'Pairi' in feet, the tribals forget themselves when they dance in front of Karam branch. The beats of Maadal and the movement of legs on the beats make a musical combination. Wearing bells on waist and dancing, all the tribals men and women got completely into the dance. The group of men and women facing each-other revolve in a semi circle, around the Karam tree and dance. There is expression of sorrow and

happiness in these songs related to lives of people. When the people express their pain of displacement, then their feet stop for a while. Daughter on the occasion of her wedding feel sorrow and upset. She has to leave her paternal home and her heart bounces back at this moment. Sometimes the lyrics of song, sometimes beats of the hands on 'Maada' and sometimes the movement of the feet have expressed and supported these emotions. In the songs of Oraon, the father while taking the bride-price and mother while washing the feet if the guests become unrest. The grief of the daughter bursts when she says-

*"Mere hote aapke ghar jhaanjh maandar hoga,
Mujhe bech denge ta aapka ghra soona ho jayega"*

All the emotion of happiness and sorrow are expressed in the dance-song of tribals.

Karma and Environment

The vegetation has strong relation with the human lives. Without the trees and plants there was no existence of primitive man. The struggle of plant and trees inspired the man to face the problems of life and these primitive men through their dance, tradition and ceremonies taught the next generations about their culture.

The Karma ceremony starts with the establishment of the branch of Karam tree. When the dancing troops of Karma perform outside the village then they use any branch of any tree symbolically but when they are in their village and celebrate the Karma then they use the Karam branch which they bring at that time only. Among regional tribals "Haldu" tree has been given the acceptance of Karam tree. Somewhere it looks like 'Kadambh' tree.

After the partition of the state, Sonbhadra is the only district of Uttar Pradesh whose 54% of land area is under forest cover. This region is endowed with natural beauty. The flora and fauna is very rich. Fauna includes deer, chinkaara, leopard, rabbit, saambhar etc. Migrant birds also come in huge number in many areas of this region and make this place more beautiful. 65%-70% medicinal plants are also gifts in these forests. Today the deforestation, mining of mountains has adversely affected the environment but these tribals have preserved their piece of land.

Dr. B.D. Sharma, in his 29th report to the President, in Para 38 has illustrated that the lives of these tribals and their relation with environment and national development cannot be neglected in terms of management. The condition of forests has become worse if any work will be done without the consent of the society. After so many legal fights they do not even get a penny on the name of settlement. The use of forest products like wood and other things is like the relation of mother and son to the tribals.

Cutting the trees to plant hybrid trees, giving lease to forests on low rate in the name of scientific management has badly affected the forests. Chir belief is- that whatever thing a person worships and respects, he never destroys it.

In Hindu when the Peepal tree was given importance as a religious belief due to its many environmental qualities, after that Hindus hesitate to cut the Peepal tree. The worship of Karam tree is not only a belief for these tribals but also an epitome of love for the nature. They feel safer when they are near the trees and forests that is why they are more concerned for the conservation of the forests and medicinal plants as they are more attached to it. Their affection for the forests can be seen in their songs as well-

*"Peid na rahi hain
Ta Lalnawa kaise jehain
Roji kaise pahain, ka oo khaahihain"*

The tribals are more concentrated in the areas rich in forests reserve. Among them Ghasiya, Dhaangar, Kharwaar, Panika etc celebrate Karma as their chief occasion all these tribals have adopted a lifestyle in which they preserve these forests.

With the environmental imbalances of the world, the problem is also arising on the environment of this district. The various reasons like poisonous smoke emitting out of the chimneys of the industries, disposal of chemicals, illegal mining, extracting the sand, illegal cutting of forests, killing of the animals, increased deforestation are responsible for the environmental imbalances. In same way, poverty, illiteracy, fear of Naxalites, migration from villages, presenting the Karma dance-song for money, has affected the importance of Karma dance-song.

UNO has declared the year 2002 as 'Eco- Tourism Year'. The folk dance dresses, living style of India is centre of attraction for the tourists. The determination to develop and conserve the tradition, beliefs, their unique occasions and ceremonies is important because the message to preserve the beauty of the nature is given by Karma ceremony of these tribals which completely defines the UNO's Eco and Tourism.

The development and conservation of the cultural value is important for the prosperity of any society. In today's world where the people have redefined the way of living and are moving ahead on a faster pace, there, these tribals of Sonbhadra have still maintained their tradition and beliefs and live in the lap of the nature with immense pleasure and satisfaction.

Darshan of Karma

In Indian values the place of 'Karma' is very high. Wherever the knowledge, puja, worship, has been discussed there the importance of Karma has been seen. 'Work is worship' is also a western belief. Tribals are not beggars in front of any deity. He does not know about knowledge, 'yog', 'tap'. He has beliefs for some local things. "*Ganvheir*" "*Baghut Baba*" is related with his security. The deity who protects the whole village is 'Ganvhari'. 'Baghut Baba' protects the tribals from lion or tiger.

The description of God "*Rudra*" in Vedas and Upanishads is lyrical. The Aryas living in "*Aaranya*" has worshipped the God *Rudra* for their safety. Due to this quality of Lord Shiva, the historians have believed Lord Shiva as God of tribals. The tribals living today in the forests worship those God who protect them and their animals. '*Baghut Baba*' is such a kind of deity.

But the whole belief of Sonbhadra tribals rest upon the "Karma". In eastern dialects the Sanskrit word "*karm*" is called as "*Karam*". The word Karam is used in castes of Dhaangar,

Ghasiya, Basiwaar, Agariya. This 'Karam' is their God. The veranda is their temple and Karam God is worshipped. All the prayers and puja is being done for Him and in front of Him.

In the developed castes, observing fast, '*akshat*', '*roli*', '*haldi*', '*kush*', '*doob*', is important till now. Without the leaves of mango tree no puja or ceremony is complete. The tree is indispensable part of the castes '*Doorva*', '*Gandh*', '*Dharti Arya*'. The tree for the tribals of Sonbhadra is as much important as the branch of Karam tree. Tribals also perform '*Havan*' by putting the havan material in it. It is incomplete without the alcohol '*Laalpari*' which is offered to the tree. Giving sacrifice to the goat and cock is important part of this puja or ritual. All these things which are being done are dedicated to Karam, Karm God. This is the belief, life, destiny of his life. Many things in present time have changed but the belief of these tribals towards Karam God is immortal. The ritual of Karma is the worship of this Karam which is completely by singing and dancing.

The Journey from "Cherui" to abroad

Although the Karam is the indispensable part of the ritual of the tribals of the district but later on, it has developed as the independent dance form. This is amazing coincidence

that Karma is now being popularized as the dance-song form on national and international platforms. That is the reason why the different style of dresses of Karma dance song has been popularized among those who use this Karma dance song professionally, beyond its traditional importance.

There are such songs of Karma which has been published by the names of the caste like Karma of "*Biyaar*" caste, whereas, originally in this caste Karma is not sung. The same situation is with those dancers who perform Karma only on professional platforms. It is appreciable that Karma has reached to capital Delhi and abroad coming from these tribals of Sonbhadra.

The actors doing Karma have performed in Lucknow, Kerela, Delhi, Andaman Nicobar, Mauritius and many other places. The state government has also rewarded these actors as the govt. want to preserve and motivate the values and traditions of these tribals. These actors and performers have got the chance to meet the Prime Minister, President and the other VIPs and have also dined with them. These folk dancers tell that Late P.M. Smt. Indira Gandhi was immensely impressed by these dancers and danced with them. The tribals have safely kept the newspaper cuttings, invitations, poofs and all news related with their Karma.

In the South-east hill of the district headquarters of Sonbhadra lies a village 'Cherui' which is the symbolic village of tribals of Sonbhadra originating from here, Karma dance moved to occasions, festivals, fair and then coming out of the village it reached to cities, capital and finally to abroad. Karma is not merely the carrier of the tradition and values of tribes but today it has emerged as their identity.

When we talk of democracy then neither we can neglect the people nor the tradition, values, beliefs, art forms related to them. This is known to all the political leaders. Although the pain of displacement is huge in these tribals of Sonbhadra and they feel humiliated but still the capability to establish himself in this world with his prosperous and splendid art form, Karma is such a ritual, dance song of these tribals which has added feather to their cap.

In 90s the govt. of former PM of India Late Rajiv Gandhi had organised a huge folk cultural program which is named as "*Apna Utsav*" in the pages of history. In this occasion the troop of Karma dancers was of Sonbhadra. Rajiv Gandhi had also danced with these dancers and had worn their costume. This was huge respect which these dancers of Sonbhadra had received. This was the insight of the PM who gave importance to the folk culture.

This is notable that the tribals related with Karma are still hopeless and sad. Today also he has hoped to get anything in life which he has been longing for. This Karma is not a professional dance style for them; this is their belief, their self-confidence in the God. This Karma is an expression of their struggle of life.

The tribes who believe in Karma they do not expect anything from others. These tribes are capable of making their culture strong and alive in the future. Their strong belief in Karma is their soul and life.