

**Survival and continuity of folk culture amidst Jain remains in Purulia district of West Bengal (India)**

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The paper is an attempt to highlight the survival of folk traditions, rites, rituals and festivals amidst the many Jain historical remains in Purulia district of West Bengal (India). The region saw an important assimilation of ideas across last two thousand years- resulting in the survival of many Jain icons (Tirthankara idols in blackstone). However, this very essence of survival also highlights an assimilation of religious thought processes- giving rise to a distinctive individuality in present times. This identity in turn has provided a platform for the survival of a unique folk identity- which also has helped to retain a significant aspect of the historicity of the region. Innumerable Jain icons of Tirthankaras (dating variously between 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century CE) are worshipped variously as folk deities (including both male and female) with varied names. Each one of them- holds a special place amidst the village it is situated within (or the nearby villages) and are revered by the people as most are also considered as the gramdevata (presiding village deity). Sometimes these festivals, rites and rituals of the deities also attract people from outside the district of Purulia as well. With very less work of a continuous documentation in the region- the historicity of these idols are difficult to be traced across a continued historical path, however, the cultural identities and other ethnographic studies of the region highlights significant information about the survival of these Jain remains. Based on an extensive ethnoarchaeological study of the region- this paper attempts to highlight this pattern of survival in present times that reflects a unique assimilation of thought processes.

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