

Name of the Element: Bali Jatra

Community/ies: People of Odisha

Region: Odisha

Brief Description: Bali Jatra (Bali Yatra), meaning 'Voyage to Bali,' is a festival that commemorates the rich maritime legacy and ancient cultural heritage of the sea journeys made from the Cuttack region in Odisha, an eastern state of India, to the Indonesian islands, primarily Bali. The name of the festival refers to Bali, considered a destination of the trans-oceanic voyages from India, reflecting a shared heritage.

This festival, a memory of these voyages that fostered trade, shared culture, and livelihood, is organized as a week-long social event from the full moon day in Kartika (October-November) at the banks of the River Mahanadi in Cuttack. Small boats made of banana leaves and paper are floated in the river as part of the ritual.

The ancient voyagers established links with the four major islands of Indonesia, gradually expanding the transmission of knowledge about oceanic heritage, indigenous climate studies, and cultural exchanges in arts, beliefs, architectural designs, local craftsmanship, and boat-building techniques. Many folklores, stories, and idioms grew from this amalgamation.

The great Indian epic *Ramayana* is a major theme in Indonesian dance-drama traditions, especially in Java and Bali, known as the Kakawin Ramayana, further developed into the Balinese Ramakavaca. The Ramayana-based Wayang puppetry of Indonesia, which incorporates stories and characters from Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, embedded oral expressions, mythologies, and religious iconographies into the cultural matrix of Indonesia. These voyages became transmitters of intangible heritage between regions.

Bali Jatra, organized as a people-centered social event, facilitates public participation, attracting scores of people from across India and tourists from other nations. The festival provides livelihood opportunities for service providers, artists, artisans, local traders, and communities, promoting economic and cultural collaborations through exhibitions, stalls, local craftsmanship, cultural performances, and traditional cuisines.

The interconnectedness of traditions, ethos, and culture is vital for social development at all levels and has the potential to strengthen the means of implementation, revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.