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'Burlang Jatra': focus on conservation of bio-diversity

Staff [Reporter](#)



People at the 'Burlang Jatra', traditional festival of Kutia Kondh tribals of Kandhamal district.

'Burlang Jatra', traditional festival of Kutia Kondh tribals of Kandhamal district to worship [mother nature](#) is getting transformed into a festival to promote conservation traditional seed breeds and of bio-diversity.

This festival was earlier being observed at tribal homes. Before start of agriculture process for the year, the Kutia Kondh tribals used to worship their deity representing mother earth, 'Dharani Penu' with the seeds they would sow. But this year this festival was converted into a mass festival at Kadapanna village of Belaghar panchayat in Tumudibandh block of Kandhamal district. Social [organisation](#) 'NIRMAN', which is working with Kutia Kondh tribals in Tumudibandha block in Kandhamal district for promotion of [sustainable agriculture](#) and biodiversity conservation, was the catalyst behind the transformation of this festival.

During the Burlang Jatra this year the tribals [performed](#) their ritualistic worship of 'Dharani Penu'. During the rituals they also offered their seeds to their deity. At the Burlang Jatra organised as a community festival inhabitants of several Kutia Kondh inhabited [villages](#) participated. During the festival they displayed the seeds of millet and other crops. The tribals also exchanged traditional seed [stocks](#) among each other.

Tribal leaders involved in millet seed breed [conservation](#) from Medak district in [Andhra Pradesh](#), other parts of Kandhamal district as well as from Bolangir district also took part in this festival to promote conservation of traditional seed breeds among the tribal farmers of the area.

Some of the successful millet [farmers](#) of the area were also honoured.

According to [executive director](#) of NIRMAN, Prasant Mohanty, at present seed banks to preserve and promote traditional seed breeds especially that of millet are operational in 27 villages in Tumudibandh block. When this organisation started its work among Kutia Kondhs of Tumudibandh block, they came to know that the variety of millet grown by them had come down to just eight to 10 varieties. It was an irony that few decades back these tribals were cultivating over 30 varieties of millet.

With support of [local](#) tribal [elders](#), the NIRMAN activists promoted bio-[diversity](#) conservation based millet farming in the area. They also procured millet seed varieties from other districts. Due to it at present the tribals of Tumudibandh block are now cultivating 45 varieties of millet and have their seed banks to preserve these seed varieties.

As a result of it the tribals have also started preserving seeds of traditional breeds of other crops and vegetables.

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