Nuakhai : An Epitome of the Great Tradition of India

Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat

Nuakhai festival of west Orissa is observed on panchami tithi (fifth day) of lunar fortnight of Bhadrava (August-September), the day after Ganesh chaturthi. Agriculture, as it is commonly all over India, is the main source of living of a bulk of the inhabitants of Orissa. In other words, the major chunk of the Oriya population derives its main income from agriculture. The great masses of tribal population are also cultivators, farm servants and labourers. The important and main tribes of Orissa like Binjhal, Bhumia, Gond, Kondh, Mirdha, Saura / Savara, etc. are at the moment settled agriculturists. Nuakhai is an agricultural festival of both the tribal people as well as the caste-Hindus. Despite the fact that the festival is observed throughout Orissa, it has a major influence on the life and culture of the tribal dominated west Orissa. It is not a pretentious celebration, not just an exhibition of tradition, either. It is a festival of worship of food grain. Accordingly, it nurtures a profound appreciation and admiration for the growth of rice, which is a symbolic manifestation of life itself. Worship of food grain is not at all new. It has been there since time immemorial. In other words, Nuakhai is of fairly ancient origin. For some researchers, the fundamental idea of the celebration can be traced back at least to the Vedic times when our rishis had talked of pancha yajna i.e. the five important activities in the annual calendar of an agrarian society. These five activities have been specified as sita yajna (the tilling of the land), pravapana yajna (the sowing of seeds), pralambana yajna (the initial cutting of crops), khala yajna (the harvesting of grains) and prayayana yajna (the preservation of the produce). In view of this, Nuakhai may be seen as having evolved out of the third activity, namely pralambana yajna which involves cutting of the first crop and reverent offering of the same to the mother goddess. Although, the foundation of this festival has got buried in darkness, oral tradition dates its back to the time of first Chauhan Raja Ramai Dev of Patnagarh in west Orissa. In his efforts to building an independent rajya, Raja Ramai Dev realized the significance of settled agriculture because the then subsistence economy
of west Orissan people primarily based on hunting and food gathering could not generate surplus to maintain and sustain a state as discussed elsewhere. During state formation in Sambalpur region, Nuakhai as a ritual festival played a major role.

As per the tradition, earlier farmers were celebrating Nuakhai on a fixed day designed by the village headman and priest. Afterward, under the patronage of royal families, this simple festival was altered into a mass socio-religious event in the entire west Orissa. Nuakhai is a celebration that speaks of an intense ritual where people of west Orissa start their life once again afresh. It is an instance of reconstruction of relationships. It gives a fresh lease of life to the tillers of the land on the assurance of anna. For prana without anna is absurd and unthinkable. Nuakhai, as it exists, is an elaborate affair steeped in the highest order of sanctity. Albeit its exact origin, religious faith rules the roosts as people of west Orissa commemorate the festival in style. Of course, off-late it has traversed international boundaries as well. A visit to west Orissa in the Hindu month of Bhudo / Bhadraba (August-September) makes one well aware and alert of the ensuing thrust of Nuakhai. Performed soulfully and with a sacred mind, Nuakhai ritual is the very cornerstone of west Orissa's agrarian institution. Hence, it is pretty different. The literary meaning of Nuakhai celebration is 'eating of new rice ceremony'. Obviously, it is the day of rejoicing and merry-making for the people as agriculture is their main livelihood. Since paddy is the staple food of the people in general, the rice crops sustain their hope and determine their fate. This is why, a non-agriculturist is also that much concerned about this ritual as a cultivator is. Customarily, each farmer offers the first grain of the harvest to the Almighty and then pertakes it. The paddy is given weight as the grain of rice is measured as a representation and symbol of manifestation of life itself. The significance and utility of Anna or rice in daily life of west Oriya people is understandable. The Hindu sacred texts identify paddy as a synonym of life itself (Pasayat, 2003, 2006, 2007):

Anna Brahmeti Hyajanat,
Annadeva Khalwani Bhutani Jayante, Annena Jatani,
Annam Prayantyabhisam Bishantiti.

(Meaning: The other name of Anna is Brahma who is Iswara i.e. God. In this sense, Anna is Iswara or God. Each life is born out of Anna. It is the source of energy. After death, Jiba or anything having a life, transforms into Anna for others. So, the importance of Anna is appreciated in every stage of life. For this reason, it is the source of life, happiness and a part of soul).

Ahamanna Mahamanna Mahamannam,
Ahamannado Ahamannado Ahamannado,
Ahamanna Manna Madantama Drwi

(Meaning: God says that He is Anna. I am the only receiver of this Anna. Whoever takes Anna I accept that).

Apart from this, message of unity is spread through this event and it reminds every farmer that the crop they yield after great toil influences the entire life's philosophy and struggle. In view of the above quotations, it may be believed that it is the economy that decides and determines the cultural life of the people. The economy of west Orissa is predominantly based on agriculture; it is the fruit of the toil round the year that fulfills the needs of the community at large. Consequently, it is a matter of great joys for the peasants and farmers admiring the fruits of their efforts and pains and upon getting the first crop of the year, it should be accepted with great respect and celebration. Even the collection of this new rice by the head of the family is an important affair. As per the tradition, the head of the family proceeds to the field at the time reckoned to be most auspicious
for him and his family. There, he invokes the
pancha mahabhutas (the five primal forces of
nature) namely earth, water, light, wind and space
and offers them his devout offerings of obeisance
before he plucks the new grain in grateful respect.
After that, he returns with the first-plucked new
rice of his field and hands it over to the woman of
the house for worship. Balls of flattened rice and
gur are prepared in honour of goddess Laxmi,
the supreme mother, who is believed to bless us
with life-sustaining Anna. The celebration of
Nuakhai by the tribal people may, therefore, be
viewed as a tribalised version of a Hindu notion
of Anna or paddy.

There is no denying the fact that the new
rice is believed to be very sacred. Even in the age
of science and technology, Nuakhai has not lost
its significance with the rituals still being adhered
to. It is strictly a taboo for any one to eat the new
cereal until ceremonial rituals are performed for
the reigning deity. According to the common
people, the deity is the true master / mistress of
their lands. As a part of the agrarian custom, the
presiding deity is offered prasad prepared from
the new rice. The household, after perfectly
cleaning and washing in all its details, is ready to
invite the deity to partake of the first ever pristine
produce of the new season. Considered as an
expression of submission, the farmers attribute the
good yield to the blessings of the deities. As a
consequence, the newly grown rice is first offered
to him/her as a token of reverence and veneration
to the reigning deity. Subsequently, the Prasad
made out of the new rice is taken by the people
before they start eating the new rice. This is the
Nua which is offered to the deity as puja at the
auspicious time and gratefully received back by
the Karta of the family for distribution of the same
amongst the members of his household or clan.
By and large, people think that the ceremonial
ritual is an acknowledgement of the deity's lordship
over the land and the crop. In other words, it
may be understood that Nuakhai is a ritual after
which the newly harvested rice gets the status of
consumable item. No other festival in west Orissa
is celebrated with such pomp and gaiety as the
festival of Nuakhai.

Nuakhai is one of the most important
annual social and religious festivals of west Orissa.
It deeply influences the life and culture of this area.
Earlier, there was no fixed day for celebration of
this festival in west Orissa. The festival was held
sometimes during Bhadraba Sukla Paksha (the
bright fortnight of Bhudo / Bhadraba). It was the
time when the newly grown Kharif paddy started
ripening. There are reasons for observing the
festival in the Oriya month of Bhadrava even
though the food grain is not ready for harvesting.
The sole thought is to present the grain to the
presiding deity even before any bird or animal
pecks at it and variety of grain is also ripe for
eating. But old people say that there was no
proper irrigation facility in the past. In absence of
widespread irrigation network, poor and small
land-holders used to cultivate short duration
paddy, which were ready for harvesting before
the Nuakhai. Today, with as many as 120
varieties of paddy getting extinct and many more
vanishing from the scene, only a bunch of stalk is
picked up and presented to the deity. Every year,
the Tithi (day) and Samay (time) of observance
was astrologically determined by the Hindu
priests. In Sambalpur, Brahmin priests sat together
at the Brahmapura Jagannath temple and
calculated the day and time. What we want to
point out here is that observances of the day and
time were not common all over west Orissa. Tithi
(date) and Lagna (auspicious moment) were
calculated in the name of Pataneswari Devi in
Balangir-Patnagarh area, in the name of Sureswari
Devi in Subarnapur area, and in the name of
Manikeswari Devi in Kalahandi area. In
Sundargarh, Puja was first offered by the royal
family to goddess Sekharbasini in the temple
which is opened only for once on the occasion of Nuakhai. In Sambalpur, at the stipulated Lagna (auspicious moment), the head priest of Samaleswari temple offers the nua-anna or nabanna to goddess Samaleswari, the presiding deity of Sambalpur.

During the stipulated time period, as fixed earlier by a group of veteran pundits, the households offer nua to their respective presiding deities in their homes. In other words, a common day of observance of Nuakhai festival was barely found in all the places of west Orissa. In some places, the time of celebration was fixed in the name of the local Gauntia and Zamindar of the village, once the day was fixed in the name of the reigning deity of that area. It shows how efforts were made in the past to localize the Nuakhai ritual. It also reflects the traditional nature of a village society in west Orissa and the role and dominance of the village head-man over the people. According to the local source, such feudal hangovers still survive in some villages of west Orissa. In course of time, though a particular date is fixed for Nuakhai festival, the celebrations are a fortnightly event. People in Sambalpur region initiate preparing for the event 15 days in advance. Nuakhai, also called Nabanna is understood to have nine colours and as a consequence nine sets of rituals are followed as a prelude to the actual day of celebration. These nine colours include: 1. Beheren (announcement for meeting to set a date), 2. lagna dekha (setting the exact date for partaking of new rice), 3. daka haka (invitation), 4. sapha sutura and lipa puchha (cleanliness), 5. ghina bika (purchasing), 6. nua dhan khuja (looking for new crop), 7. bali paka (final resolve for Nuakhai by taking Prasad i.e. pahur to deity), 8. Nuakhai (taking new crop as Prasad after offering to the deity followed by dancing and singing), 9. juhar bhet (respect to elders).

So, the preparations begin on the day when the elderly persons of the village sit together at a holy place after the beheren call. As per the tradition, the beheren calls the villagers by blowing trumpet. Then people get together and discuss with the priests the tithi and lagna for Nuakhai. It is definitely a typical gesture of priest’s authority in the village. He consults panjika and announces the sacred muhurta as to when nua is to be taken. It follows an informal discussion. After that, villagers arrive at a consensus. The incorporation of Hindu idea of astrology in the reckoning of tithi or lagna may be viewed as a later development. Most probably, when the caste-Hindus started migrating then the local tribal people adopted the idea of astrological calculation of tithi and lagna for the Nuakhai festival. In the same way, when the caste-Hindus adopted Nuakhai from the tribal people, they had to put some Sanskritik elements so as to make it convenient for the caste-Hindus to accept it. Nevertheless, there was an attempt made during 1960s to fix up a common tithi for Nuakhai festival all over the west Orissa. Later on, this attempt was not workable. Once again, an attempt was made in 1991 and Bhadraba Sukla Panchami Tithi was fixed for Nuakhai festival. This became successful and since then, the festival has been celebrated on that day for which the State Government has declared one official holiday also. Although for the sake of convenience now-a-days a common tithi is set for Nuakhai, yet the sanctity of the ritual of lagna sudhi in accordance with rasi and nakshatra has not lost its importance. Today, however, the system of setting the tithi and lagna and calling elderly persons for a consensus is a far cry in urban areas.

Nuakhai is celebrated both at community as well as domestic level. After all preparations are over, there is sanctification ritual before a day of celebration, which gives credence to Nuakhai. This is known as bali paka. This is known as pahur
It is offered to the grama devata or devati in a ritual. It calls for the formal ruling of the festival. Everybody comes to know that divine will now governs Nuakhai and no one can stop it from being observed. The ritual is offered first at the temple of the reigning deity of the area or to the village deity. Afterward, they worship in their respective home and offer rituals to the domestic deity along with Laksmi, the deity of wealth as per the Hindu Great Tradition. In other words, during the stipulated time period, as fixed previously by the pundits, the households also make offerings to their respective presiding deities in their homes. On this occasion, people wear new clothes. It is a tradition that after offering the nua to the presiding deity, the eldest member of the family distributes nua to other members of the family. After taking the nua, all the junior members of the family offer their unfathomable regards to their elders. Thereafter, follows the nuakhai juhar i.e. exchange of greetings with friends, well-wishers and relatives as well. This symbolizes unity. This is the occasion when people lay their differences to rest and start relationships afresh. Towards the evening people meet one another exchanging greetings. All differences are discarded and elders are wished nuakhai juhar. On the other hand, the elders bless their juniors and wish them long life, happiness and prosperity. Even the partitioned brothers celebrate the festival under one roof. In the evening, folk dances and songs are organized in different parts of west Orissa. People dance their way to the foot tapping rasarkeli, dalkhai, maelajada, chutkuchuta, sajani, nachnia and bajnia beats and tunes.

Nuakhai has a rich and glorious tradition of its own. The social aspect of the institution is traditionally manifested by three important aspects. These are adhia, bebhar and bhar. Our ancestors have recognized these practices so as to ensure that everyone in the traditional self-sufficient village community has the barest means required to observe the day in gratefulness to the divine mother for her generosity. It is seen as an affront to her dignity even if one needy or poor household is to be left out of the celebrations because of its indigent circumstance. Adhia is a provision of basic things to those families of the village whose livelihoods are dependent, not on agriculture, but on their professions as village priests, barbers, washermen, blacksmiths, potters and the like in the traditional jajmani system. In fact, they are the traditional sevakas or servitors in the village community who are easily the most vulnerable. Consequently, they are provided with adhia for their seva or service to the village community. When all agricultural families of the village construct this occasion by extending their goodwill in this manner, obviously every family in the community is taken care of and nobody is left to feel sad for want of means. In this sense, this justifies and strengthens the jajmani system in a traditional village community. This is a way to pay homage to the divine mother who validates and rationalizes the traditional village economy based on caste system and unequal distribution of resources. This is a way to include and involve everyone in the traditional hierarchical social structure. On this principle, when people sink their differences to start a new life on the promise of a new tomorrow consequent upon eating of nua, then it confirms and corroborates the same age-old tradition of exploitation. Of course, this practice of unequal exchange of goods and services is on its last legs. The second kind of courtesy and kindness is extended in the form of bebhar which is sent to household of friends, equals and neighbours as a sign of goodwill, friendliness and reciprocity of sociability. Bhar, the third form of humanity is offered to the relatives living elsewhere after marriage or under other circumstances. There is no denying the fact that bebhar and bhar are also on the way out steadily these days.
Nuakhai has been observed more or less by the entire major tribes in central and eastern India, of course, with a minor difference in their nomenclature. In this context, instance can be given of Jeth Nawakhai among the Dudh Kharia and Pahari Kharia, Nawakhani amongst the Oraon and Birjia (Singh, 1982:24, 74), Jom Nawa among the Munda (Singh, 1982:74) and Birjia, Janther or Baihar-Horo Nawai by the Santal (Singh, 1982:74), Gondli Nawakhani by the Christian tribal people of Ranchi district, Nawa by the Birjia, Nawa-Jom by the Birhor (Singh, 1982:75). Dhan Nawakhani by Korwa (Singh, 1982:27) and so on. Russel and Hiralal (1975:326) have mentioned about the Nawakhani festival of the Paraja, a small tribe found in the Bastar region and Orissa. Gautam (1977) has, in addition, mentioned about the new corn offering and eating rice of Santals in Santal Pargana which they term Jom Nawa. Das Gupta (1978) has noted the Nawa ceremony of the Birjia, a section of the Asura tribe of Chhotanagpur. Bhaduri (1944:149-50) presents a short note on the celebration of this festival of Tripura renowned as Mikatal where Mi stands for paddy and Katal refers to new. It is celebrated in the month of Aswina (September-October). In West Bengal and in the coastal districts of Orissa, this festival is named Nabanna by the caste-Hindus. Nonetheless, the main objective of this festival is to get social sanction to a new crop, and also to invoke the deities to bless the land with abundant crops.

Nuakhai is really an occasion which strongly approves and endorses the patrilineal nature of west Orissan society. It is an event when one finds filial affection and unity of the family when all from the patrilineal side participate in the festivity. The head of the family calls up all those staying outside and intimates the tithi and lagna of Nuakhai. Definitely, It is considered to be a festival which bring all the members of an extended family together and unites people in a village, community and region. In fact, Nuakhai is the home-coming time for persons who have left their native places in search of greener pasture. More than the celebrations, the feeling of reuniting with their families holds significance for them. Juhar bhet which follows the Nuakhai at home is the unique aspect of this event and is evident for its contribution to social harmony and solidarity. In other words, Nuakhai has a cohesive force which has the power to attract and unite people of west Orissa. In turn, Nuakhai fastens hopes and aspirations of people. Relationships are renewed and repaired, estranged souls are rejoined and reconnected, old rivalries and bitterness are consigned to the dustbin. Of late, it is being observed on a single day throughout west Orissa except in households whose members are working outside and are unable to come. Generally, such families observe Nuakhai during Dasra or Durga puja which is also an occasion when family members come home. In other words, wherever they are, all the family members must assemble on this big day to celebrate Nuakhai together. Since, this is the instance of union of family members and annual get-together, long wait for near and dear ones culminates in a festive mood. It is the festival of masses. It is earnestly and enthusiastically awaited by all, starting from poor to rich in the entire west Orissa. All ice is broken when the young of the community rush to the feet of elder ones in gesture of respect and affection. Friends become friends again and the entire village becomes one.

The Nuakhai can be studied through the concept of ‘spread’ given by Srinivas (1952). The wide occurrence and popularity of the Nuakhai ritual among the caste-Hindus other than tribal people of Orissa, however, indicates that it is Sanskritised. Considered as an agrarian matter, the Nuakhai celebration has transcended caste, creed and religion barriers with people rejoicing...
the festival with zeal and zest. The mode of its observance and the numerical dominance of the tribal people in the past in Orissa and west Orissa in particular maintain and support the argument that Nuakhai was basically a tribal festival and that the caste-Hindus gradually incorporated it in their fold when they came in wider contact with the aboriginals of west Orissa. The fact of fixed time of observance determined astrologically by the Hindu priests also indicates strong influence of Hindu ideas in later stage to present it a Sanskritik colour and image. When the festival is celebrated in a mass scale in west Orissa, it is perhaps, essential for them that a tribal ritual could have got a place in the Hindu religious culture in Orissa. It is commonly believed that the Hindus were originally celebrating the Nuakhai or Nuakhia festival. Over long period of interaction between the tribal and non-tribal peoples in Orissa, most probably, the tribal people borrowed this cultural trait from the caste-Hindus. Be that as it may, one point is clearly understandable that it is the tribal people other than the common Oriyas who are, at present, celebrating this festival. Secondly, as it is the case with all the aboriginal tribes, there was no fixed point of time for celebration till 1991. Thirdly, it appears that the word Nuakhai or Nuakhia has a lot of similarities with the tribal names given for the same festival in and outside the state of Orissa, as discussed previously. Very likely, Sambalpuri / Koshali name Nuakhai has been borrowed from the tribal names of the similar ritual and given a regional content. Fourthly, during Nuakhai day, people celebrate their dinner at night with non-vegetarian food. Eating of non-vegetarian food during the celebration of a Hindu religious festival is generally not acceptable and permissible. In west Orissa, there is a saying that if a person does not eat meat on this day then he/she will be born as a Baka i.e. Crane in the next life. Significantly, people irrespective of their caste back-ground eat meat on this day. Even though, it is ethically undesirable on the part of a traditional Brahmin to have non-vegetarian food, he does not mind to accept it on this day. In these days, of course, meat-eating has become a universal phenomenon among the people of all castes. Yet, basing on financial provisions various traditional dishes and cakes are prepared and offered to the presiding deity before it is consumed together by the family members.

Therefore, the occasion is a renewal of mutual ties that spreads love and affection, warmth and kindness all around and mutually binds the families and communities in a spirit of solidarity. The sentimental aspect of the Nuakhai is most brilliantly reflected in the widely used nuakhai bhet ghat juhar. Nuakhai is the festival of splendour and fun. It has a special significance for west Orissan people. It has unique characteristics of folk culture, religion and socially sanctioned entertainment of collective past, which is blended beautifully in the Nuakhai celebrations. In fact, Nuakhai is a festival of thanksgiving for a good harvest. As discussed elsewhere, it is an agrarian festival and celebrated by taking rice from newly harvested crop after offering it to the presiding deities and goddess Laxmi. Nua or new rice is offered to the deities as a mark of gratitude for a bumper harvest, good rain and a favourable farming weather. The fundamental idea behind Nuakhai performance of ritual ceremonies before eating new rice/paddy, which is derived from a Hindu tradition was easily absorbed by the tribal people because they were also settled agriculturists. It appears that the tribal people started celebrating the new rice eating ceremony as usual in different names when they became settled agriculturists. This idea of ceremonial eating of new rice/paddy was applied in other areas also. For instance, in the Gundikhai festival held on the day of Phagun / Phalguna Purnima i.e. full-moon day of Phagun (February-March), the people of west Orissa first
offer mango ritually to the deity and then takes it.
In sum, efforts are made to tribalise the celebrations of a number of rituals and festivals which might have been non-tribal in their origin and essence. On the occasion of Nuakhai ritual, caste-Hindus worship Goddess Laksmi along with their family deity. It is the household dimension of this festival. An important characteristic and similarity of this ritual is the 'mother worship'. Nuakhai festival is not confined to any particular ethnic group or community in west Orissa. It is, above all, a mass festival in terms of its collective nature and the sincere involvement of the tribal people and caste-Hindus in west Orissa, whereas outside this region it is not a mass festival and it is confined to a place largely to the family and group only. Indeed, Nuakhai is a tradition that has cultivated noble virtues of tolerance, acceptance, sacrifice, trust, affection, understanding and social responsibilities since a long time and is gradually being celebrated in a big way in various parts of the country.

Housewives in general start preparing for the festival a week before by cleaning up the house and furniture, washing up utensils and clothes and collecting ingredients for special dishes to be served on the day of festivity. One finds hectic economic activity with peasants and artisans working overtime to earn some quick buck. It helps them spend something extra during this festival. Besides white-washing of houses, new clothes are worn on the festival day. Preparations pertaining to the celebration like cleaning of house and purchasing new clothes are taken up as usual. Poor clean their mud and thatched houses with cow dung, while the rich do the arrangements as per their capacity. Weavers churn out cheap handloom sarees, which are part of tradition for these common people of west Orissa. With simple designs, the weavers roll out sarees to make them affordable and ensure that these reach the users in time before the Nuakhai festival.

Keeping this in mind, the mahajans (money lenders) are quick to lend money knowing the truth fully that the reimbursement is certain. Besides the weavers, it is daily labourers who stretch themselves for the festival as well. They are seen working till the dawn to earn that extra buck. With all households being cleaned for this annual festival, daily labourers are much in demand and have seized the opportunity to jack up their wages. In the same way, Betras (bamboo basket-makers), Luhuras (blacksmiths), Kumbhars (potters) and small time Badheis (carpenters) also work round the clock. While baskets made of bamboo are much in demand for use in the rituals and puja, the blacksmiths are found busy in making door latches, traditional vegetable cutters and such other household implements. On this occasion, the carpenters are much in demand to take on repair work in households. While the men folk are seen toiling hard, women folk are found busy in making Khali (leaf plates) and Dana (cups). Nevertheless, it is a festival which brings friendship, equality, help, and cooperation and envisages the age old tradition of this region. It helps to renew the social bonds and thus strengthen the social solidarity. In other words, this indigenous culture has ensured a separate identity for the natives of the whole region of west Orissa and binds them together.

Onslaught by various cultures, tradition, modernization and industrialization are unsuccessful to interfere and obstruct the rich tradition of Nuakhai in west Orissa. Hence, it is a symbol of friendship, love and affection which give foundation and fosters to lead a peaceful life. People of west Orissa celebrate Nuakhai festival in much fashion and style which off-late has crossed international boundaries. In 1980s, when the author was reading in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi the students of the region first organised and celebrated this festival in the Jagannath Temple at Hauz Khas. In the present
day, Nuakhai is a cohesive and unified force between west Oriyas in Delhi when they come and unite together on the occasion of Nuakhai. These days, not only in Delhi but also in Bangalore, Goa, Mumbai, Vishakapatnam etc residents of west Orissa have been rejoicing Nuakhai for the past few decades. Nuakhai now being observed on the fifth day of the second fortnight of Bhadrava, was unquestionably given a new look of homogeneity and uniformity by the then Biju Patnaik Government in 1991. On the other hand, it has lost its enormity and variousness with the passage of time. This is not the first time that the contours of the festival have been reshaped and restructured by executive fiat. During the period of Garjat kingship, attempts at the standardization included endowing this strongly private function with a rather more political and public character. Looking ahead into the future, our new and young generations, groping to recognize rice and wheat apart, do not appear to be too much interested to transmit the tradition forward. Nuakhai essentially the worship of the sanctity of Anna may soon be in its last throes. The way we are defiling land and defying nature is only indicative of how weak our connections with mother earth are. Uncertain about the ground beneath our feet, we are the linkage between a hoary past and frightening future. The admiration and respect of the land of our ancestors depends on us. Let the occasion of Nuakhai encourage and motivate people to give a new lease of life to their roots anew.

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Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat lives in Qrs. No. VA-24/2, Unit-II, Bhubaneswar, Orissa