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Information & Public Relations Department
Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar-751001
Phone : (91-674) 2536736 /2390818 (Fax)
e-mail : iprsec.or@nic.in

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Virtual Tour to State Tribal Museum ***Dance and Songs of the Koya Tribe***

Bhubaneswar, 19/12/2020

Visitors can visit the dance and songs of the Koya tribe on Sunday by opening the Face-book and Twitter pages @stscdev, @scstrti.

The Koya constitute the principal tribe of Malkangiri. Their major occupation are hunting, food gathering, shifting cultivation, forestry, livestock, rearing, agricultural labour, basketry. They have two important deities: Bijagudi, the house deity and Gudimata, the village deity. They worship Mother Earth as village deity. They have retained their rich and varied heritage of colourful dance and music which form an integral part of their festivals and rituals. The Koya dance is characterized not only by its originality and spontaneity but also for the wide range of movements. When happily inspired they express their pleasure and happiness by composing songs.

Dance and music are central to the celebrations of Koya Festivals. The sacred seed festival of Bijapadu is celebrated in the month of Chaitra. The festival honours the village goddess Gudimata and appeals to her for a bountiful harvest. During this festival it is the Koya women who sing, dance and play drums to welcome the men from a ritual hunting expedition.

On other occasions men and women dance together. At such times the women don brass head bands and use sticks fitted with bells called Gujuri to beat the ground in rhyme with the music. The men wear a special head dress of bison horn and cowries. The head dress is elaborated in its construction and is passed down from generations. The Koya are one of the few communities in this region who use cowries for ornamentation. The men hang large drums from their necks which they beat at the time of dance.

The bison horn attire of the Koya has a close similarity with that of the Marias of Bastar and is believed to have similar magical significance. The men often engage in mock fights that mimic the bison during the dance. It is through these festivals and dances the community reinforces its connection with nature and maintaining harmony and respect for the environment.

Dr. Jyotirmati Samantaray
Information officer