Workshop-cum-Training programme on Dansai dance of Santals

A workshop-cum-training programme on Dansai dance of Santals had been organized by the Eastern Regional Centre of Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata at Lakshmipur village of Birbhum district, West Bengal from 19\textsuperscript{th} to 25\textsuperscript{th} September 2015. Altogether 35 participants from the Santal community took part in the workshop.

Dansai dance is named after the name of the month Dansai in Santali language that corroborates with the month of Aswin in Bengali calendar. Through Dansai dance the Santal people commemorate the war between the Aryan and their ancestors as well as the death of their mythical hero namely Hundur Durge, who was killed by the Aryans fraudulently. They observe Dansai in two parts: Sukher Dansai i.e. Dansai of happiness and dukher Dansai i.e. Dansai of mourning. Till the sixth day (sasthi) of the bright fortnight they observe Sukher Dansai and from Sasthi to dashami i.e. tenth day of the bright fortnight dukher Dansai is observed. According to the myth Hundur Durge and his force were in war against the Aryan between sasthi and dashami and on the Dashami day Hundur Durge was killed. On the day of Sasthi, the Bel-baran ritual is performed by Kamru guru, the religious specialist in association with pat-chela, i.e., those who take part in dance afterwards. During bel-baran ritual, a sacred place (called thaan) preferably the Majhi-thaan is prepared for the dansai dance. A tulsi (sacred basil) plant is planted behind the altar. The altar is prepared in east- west direction and puja, the worship is performed by Kamru guru facing towards east which is considered as auspicious. The

At the altar three small stones are placed of which the one at the centre represents the supreme God, Marang Buru, the stone on right side represents Kamru guru and that on the left represents Bhuang guru.

After the puja, the guru and all the hent-chelas start dancing and singing. There is particular rhythm of dance and songs. During this period they collect medicinal plants from the forest for the participants. Various rites are observed every day till dashami. Collection of alms in the form of paddy, rice, some rupees etc. is an essential part of the ritual. While meeting with other groups they exchange songs and dance with verses. On the day of Dashami, the gurus again perform some rituals at the main alter (thaan). After completion of rituals all the ritual items including the holy Basil are immersed in the nearby water body, mostly a pond. Hent-chellas in a procession singing and dancing accompany the priest to the
water body. After immersion, the gurus and *hent-chelas* returned to the village and visit *Manjhi than* for the blessing of their supreme God. The songs and dance of *dansai* continues till midnight. With this the *dansai* ends.