

**Nanda Devi Raj Jaat****(A Longest Royal Journey in the world)****Prof. Sudama Singh Bhandari:** Research Scholar, JJT University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan**Dr. Asha Mirajkar:** Research Guide, JJT University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan**Introduction**

Nandadevi Raj Jat is an important religious journey of goddess Parvati in Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. Nandadevi Raj Jat is associated with the legend of Nanda Devi, a goddess held in reverence by the local inhabitants of the region (Chamoli District). It involves a long trekking for taking the areas reigning deity Goddess Nanda to her divine destination of Gaungati peak which is believed to be the abode of her consort, Lord Shiva. The genesis of Nanda worship is wrapped in mystery. However most scholars agree that its genesis dates are back to the 9th century or even before. According to folk songs survey at Nauti, during Raj Jat, King Shalipal of Chandpur Garh is said to have laid the foundation of this tradition. He directed his royal priests to worship the goddess according to his instructions.

The word 'Raj Jat' originally known raj yatra or royal journey. Perhaps it is their faith and intense devotion alone that helps them not only to smile their way through the tortuous trek but also to survive cheerfully even in the harsh climatic condition the Jat resembles the post nuptial rite of ceremonially seeing off a daughter as she leaves her husband home with all her personal effects and dowry. The Raj Jat is taken up every 12 years, after elaborate preparations by the descendants of the royal priests now living at village Nauti and royal class of Kunwars living in Kansuwa. The purpose of the 280 km. long arduous trek undertaken by thousands of devotees is to escort the Goddess to her in-laws place. The folk-lore of Uttarakhand, indeed the lives of the people are filled with dancing and singing. It is as important for them as wearing colourful clothes and ornaments, for them the gods can be influenced by dances. The art of singing and dancing also owes its inspiration to the fascinating mythical dancing damsels who dwell on snow clad peaks.

**Purpose of Thematic Study of Nanda Devi Raj Jaat**

Nandadevi Raj Jaat is an inspiring long journey by the people of Uttarakhand. While journey, plenty of songs sung by the different villagers in different tunes having deep faith and feelings towards lord Shiva and Parvati. Thematic means subjective. I mean, why Nandadevi Raj Jaat? What are the reasons and who are behind of this long journey? First of all Garhwali people have great religious faith as they are devotees of various gods and goddess. We don't want to vanish our tradition. Young generation should learn about our culture, religion, language and faith of the people. Various folk songs sung during one month journey of Nandadevi are precious. Generally these songs never written but handed over mouth to mouth. I wish these marvelous songs to be preserved.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- (i) **To translate old folk songs sung during Nandadevi Raj Jaat in a form of English Poetry.**
- (ii) **To find out origin of Nandadevi Raj Jaat.**
- (iii) **To explore mystery of Garhwali people towards Nandadevi.**
- (iv) **The article aim is to study, preserve and to make aware about Garhwali culture, language, faith and belief.**

### **Types of Song**

Generally the folk literature gave birth to ballad. Originally it is sung village to village. Most of the Garhwali folk songs sung in some very special festival of the special month. It has been observed the very few folk songs are written in Garhwali local language in a form of verse. And these folk songs are of the simplest kind, such as a memorable feud, a thrilling adventure, a family disaster, love and war, and the like. The tale is usually fierce and tragic and frequently introduces the supernatural. Harmony between thought and expression could be seen in every line of the folk songs. The repeated words create music with heavy emotions.

Nanda Devi Raj is a religious ballad. As it is 20 days journey crossing 280 km. and passing through hundreds of villages, it has variety of songs sung in vivid style and tune. Sometime, Harijans sing Jagars along with their Dhol and Damau to call other gods and goddesses in the soul of human beings to throw the evils such as masan and Aidy (ghost). Some songs are called Jhumela. The group of old ladies or men and women sing songs together in favour of Nanda the wife of Lord Shiva describing the love towards the goddess. The third kind of song is called Mangal. This type of songs has the speciality to welcome newly bride groom. In Nanda Devi Raj Jat old ladies sing songs together and welcome Gauri or Nanda .

### **Treatment of Nature**

Lord Shiva and his consort, Parvati both have been associated with Himalaya which is believed to be the abode of Gods. Shiva is believed to reside at Mount Kailash while Parvati is mythologically regarded as the daughter of the hills. Parvati is also known as Nanda in Garhwal and Kumaon area and the highest peak of the district has been identified with the name of reigning deity of the area. After every 12 years, Nanda Devi Raj Jat originates from Nauti village after elaborate rituals. The images of the goddess and offerings are taken in a procession, accompanied by bare footed devotees. The followers observe self control. Partaking of food

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prepared according to prescribed religious instructions only and participates in fervent rendition of devotional songs and dances.

Thousands of people from hundreds of villagers take part in this holy, religious tradition assemble and put their heads together to draw the events starts off on an interesting note when priest and patrons associated with this ancient tradition assemble and draw a time schedule for the retinue to reach the scheduled spots on the itinerary on specific auspicious dates . The objective is to reach Home Kund on Nandastmi, falling sometime around August - September and Kulsari on the succeeding new moon for performing special rituals related to worshipping of the goddess.

### **Portrayal of Society**

King Jasdhaval of Kannauj is closely associated with the history of Nanda Raj Jat. It is believed that Jasdhval's queen, Vallabha, was the daughter of rulers of Chandapur Garhwal. Once upon a time, the queen was cursed by Nanda Devi therefore her kingdom became victim of draught, famine and many other natural calamities. The king's irreverence earned the goddess' wrath, which caused a very heavy snowfall that night. It was followed a deadly avalanche in which the entire royal entourage perished. Some persons are said to have slipped into the nearby Roopkund Lake and died. According to the local legend, the dancing girls were frozen and turned into rocks that can still be seen arranged in a circle. This accident is believed to have occurred sometimes around 1150 A. D. Jasdhval is believed to be an ancestor of the prince of Kansua and thus began the tradition of offering homage to Jasdhaval at this point.

No doubt Nanda Devi Raj Jat keeps alive Garhwali culture. It indicates that we must not drift from our culture. There is need to protect and preserve the culture for our future generation. The image of Nanda is cultural identity of Garhwal. Nanda Devi Raj Jat is just like Mahakumbh.

### **Exploitation of Myths**

The genesis of Nanda Devi is not very clear. Folk lyrics suggest that Nanda was princess of the Chanda dynasty of Almora. Some people associate the goddess with Yogmaya, the daughter of Nanda, who replaced the eighth issue of Vasudev father of Krishna and who escaped from the hands of her assailant, Kansa and forwarded him of his impending death at the hands of Krishna. Naini of Nainital and Naina of Himachal Pradesh also appear to be variants of the same goddess. These are ancient temples of the goddess at about twenty places all over Garhwal. As per the myth it has been said that goddess Nanda appears in a dream of a farmer in every twelve years. She indicates the farmer about the four horns ram which has taken birth along with sheep. She advises the farmer to perform Raj Jat in the month of Magh. Some people say that she was very angry from her parents and the villagers as they did not remember her after marriage. She was quite in trouble in Kailas so she cursed everyone. To remove this curse, Nanda Devi Raj Jat is performed. When Nanda comes in the villages, old and young ladies dance and sing (jhumela) song in their traditional dress.

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A Sight of Garhwali Folk Song on Nanda Devi Raj Jat (royal journey)

Literal translation (Garhwali language)

Jai, jai bola jai Bhagwati Nanda,

Nanda uncha Kailas ki jai

Jai bola teru chausinga khadu

Teru chantoli ringoli ke jai

East devi Nanda, Nanda Kumao – Garhwal ki jai-----

Idiomatic Translation

Victory! Say the victory, goddess Nanda victory.

The wooden palanquin mark the victory,

Your four horns ram on the way, victory

Family God of Kumao and Garhwal- victory.

**Conclusion**

Nanda Devi Raj Jat is an excellent example of the vibrant culture of Uttarakhand pulsating in a land blessed with superb natural beauty with verdant villages, meandering streams, high mountains, deep gorges and a rich cultural heritage. The festival offers a kaleidoscopic view of the colourful lives of the inhabitants. The daughter of Hemwant Rishi and Mainawati, goddess Nanda is remained in the heart of the devotees. Even Nandadevi Mountain is symbolized by Goddess Nandadevi. There is need to preserve this rich and inspirable culture for the future generation.

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