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In Ganjam village, a frog dance to woo the rain gods



Frustrated over lack of adequate rain, inhabitants of Masiakhali village in Odisha's Ganjam district on Thursday resorted to the traditional ritual of 'bengei nacha' or frog dance to appease the rain gods.

Despite the onset of the monsoon, several areas in Ganjam district have not received proper rain. As a result, the villagers of Masiakhali have not been able to start work for the kharif season.

Now, the villagers are trying out an old tradition, involving frogs, in the hope that it would bring rain. According to them, the croaking sounds made by frogs during the ritual would alert rain god 'Indra Devata' to the lack of precipitation in the village.

As per tradition, two big frogs were snared and then bathed with turmeric water and smeared with vermilion. They were then tied to a long pole with a piece of new cloth and carried around the village to the beat of traditional drums and cymbals. The carriers of the frogs danced to the drumbeats, making the frogs jiggle inside the cloth bundles.

Throughout the journey, the womenfolk poured turmeric and red water on the frogs. "It was as if the festival of Holi had revisited the village along with 'bengei nacha'," said a villager.

The procession culminated at the Kali temple in Masiakhali, where a special puja was performed. Later the frogs were released in the nearby fields.

Jamula Suresh of the Humanist and Rationalist Organisation, Odisha, termed it superstition with no scientific basis as "rains and frogs have no connection", and called upon the villagers not to torture the poor creatures.