

## Spatial Diversity and Narratives of a Decaying Culture: Jhāpān Serpent Festival of West Bengal, India

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### Abstract

Folk festivals, embedded within a distinctive geographical space, reflect the socio-cultural uniqueness through their vibrant symbolic elements. West Bengal, a culturally diverse state, hosts numerous folk festivals predominantly associated with the identities of various social groups. Such a critical folk festival is Jhāpān, a long-celebrated tradition of snake charmers in Bengal. The festival never fails to echo local tradition through exhibitions of a wide range of performances, from snake charming to ethnomedicinal practices and ritualistic performances, as well as various acts of entertainment by the snake charmers. Nevertheless, it is of great concern whether the festival is gradually dying out within the ever-changing social and administrative landscape or being remoulded. The purview provided an opportunity to delve into the origins and etymological dimensions of Jhāpān, explore its cultural extent, and delineate its transition. The findings highlight that, despite constant hindrances, the festival is gradually disappearing. It questions the survival of the cultural distinctiveness that the geographical space has carried for centuries.

**Keywords:** Cultural Transition; Festival; Snake Charmers; Social Identity; West Bengal; India

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## Introduction

Folk festivals have garnered considerable attention from social thinkers for their ability to interconnect the people, space, and culture (Dai & Tang, 2023; Quinn & Wilks, 2013). They play a key role in shaping the nature and magnitude of social relationships (Wilks, 2011). Despite the narratives and discussions on folk festivals being ever-growing, not much has been explored about serpent festivals, worldwide. Serpent festivals are found across diverse cultures throughout the world. They are well-embedded in the Western traditional cultures (Adam and Eve story), in ancient Egypt (the 'Tail-eating' snake symbol), in the Scandinavian regions, and in Greece (associated with goddesses and healing), holding a sign of ethnic and religious beliefs (Chao, 2012). The Serpent festival in the Appalachian Christian religious service (Kimbrough, 2002; Tidball & Toumey, 2007), the Hopi snake dance ceremony in the Tusayan village of Central America (Fewkes, 1893), the snake dance ceremony of the Baining people at Gazelle Peninsula, New Britain (Read, 1931), and the grand snake festival in the Miike and Omuta provinces of Japan (Hideki, 2018) are also widely popular serpent festivals. Furthermore, serpents also hold a significant position in the rich tradition of folklore, like the famous fictional story 'White Snake' or 'Madam White' in China (Chao, 1979; Lai, 1992). Snakes are also imperative for magico-religious and ethno-medicinal use in the Cuetzalan del Progreso, Mexico (García-López et al., 2017). In the case of India, numerous serpent festivals are also celebrated across the nation, which reflect the country's rich spiritual traditions (Hideki, 2018; Konar & Modak, 2010). Despite the festivals are deeply rooted in the culture, they are given scarce attention.

In the Indian subcontinent, the Nāga, has been widely recognised as the supernatural embodiment of the serpents for more than two millennia (Das & Balasubramanian, 2017). There are plenty of references to Nāga worship and narratives of popular cults of serpent deities in India (Allocco, 2013; Davids, 1898; Thurston,

1906; Whitehead, 1999), that are considered as the ideological core behind the popularity of serpent festivals in the country. The rituals and festivals are prodigiously practised and celebrated by the common people, especially the women in Tamil Nadu, where the Nāga deities appear in multiple gestures (Allocco, 2013). In Southern India, the significance of Nāga Aarāadhanā (Snake worship) and the ritual practices related to Nāgā Doshā (curses of snakes) is popularly seen through various art forms like Kalamezhuthu, Pulluvanpaatu, Sarpamthulal, Sarpabali, and festivals like Ayilyam Mahot (Das & Balasubramanian, 2017). In Western India, the Kalbeliya families are also familiar with street musicians, the performance of female singers, and male musicians (Joncheere, 2017; Neuman et al., 2005). They are well-known for catching snakes, which gives the metonymic significance of being snake charmers (Joncheere, 2017; Robertson, 2004). On the contrary, the snake deity Manasā got grudgingly recognised in the Sanskritic Hindu pantheon and has become a landmark of exhibiting the rich cultural symbol. The deity is, therefore, worshipped by both the Hindus and tribal communities throughout the north-east and eastern India, including West Bengal (McDaniel, 2004; Urban, 2018).

The state of West Bengal can be marked as a space of numerous culturally significant folk festivals (Bhandary et al., 2023; Deb & Malhotra, 2001). Many of the folk festivals can be traced back centuries, which have periodically changed their nature (Corwin, 1977; Rao & Dutta, 2012). In this purview, the serpent festival is one of those folk festivals that have historically emerged by centralising a myth and have long carried several cultural identities. The festival is popularly known as Jhāpān, or, as it may be called, the Serpent festival of the snake charmers.

The study, furthermore, delves into exploring the etymology of the 'Jhāpān' film festival, describes the mythological narratives associated with the festival, its history and so on. The subsequent chapters elaborately describe the

materials and methods related to the present study as well as demonstrates the findings in a comprehensive way. In the later sections, we discussed about the present and future of the festival and provide a conclusion of our study.

### Unravelling the Etymology of 'Jhāpān'

Exploring the etymology of the word 'Jhāpān' is noteworthy in present purview. The study delved into identifying the contexts where the term 'Jhāpān' was utilised and its surrounding discourse. However, the disagreement was there for the origin of the word and its interpretations. Hence, 'Jhāpān' stands as a testament to a bygone culture, bearing the vestiges of antiquity rather than being a contemporary creation.

Some of the literature has affirmed that this term originated to mean palanquin (*palki*) owing to the similarity of the cultural portrayal of processions and parades of snake charmers and numerous common people who come to witness the snake-embellished palanquin. A similar kind of narration of a palanquin is also found to be depicted in the *Manasāmangala Kābya* by Ketakadas (Kshemānanda, 1978). Again, from the literature, it is assumed that the word 'Jhāpān' might be derived from the related term 'Japyajan,' meaning the vehicle of the masses, although it was pronounced as 'Jhampan'. In a similar way, the Nobel laureate and notable poet Rabindranath Tagore also used the term as a means of transport while ascending the mountain in his essay *Himalaya Jatra* (The Journey of Himalaya). On the other hand, the lucid picture of the Jhāpān of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century is found to be portrayed in the work of the world-famous French artist Solvyns in his *Les Hindoûs Vol-II*, where it is spelt 'Jaupaun' in his narratives to mean the congregation of snake charmers and the masses.

Nevertheless, the Bengali dictionary *Bangiya Shabdakosh* defines Jhāpān as the oral ballad and breaks the term 'Jhāpān' into 'Jhapi' (woven basket for snakes) and 'Gaan' (songs). In search

of its meaning, it is revealed as a snake-charming festival for worshipping the Indigenous deity Manasā (Bandyopadhyay, 2020; Bhattacharya, 1965). From a different perspective, 'Jhāpān' corresponds to the performance on the elevated platform with the snakes by the exorcists and other rural healers (Lorea, 2018). The depiction in Bengali novels and other literary pieces could lead to different interpretations. It is further narrated as the stage of the snake show before the temple of Lord Shiva. The underlying connotation is to please the deity to save their daily lives and to get rid of the venom (Pandey, 2021).

### Mythological Narratives & History of Jhāpān

Jhāpān, is often interchangeably recognised as either a 'festival' or a 'fair' or both. The festival owes to the congregation of common people in a field or lane, despite the snake charmers always taking the central stage. Jhāpān is as significant a component as others, due to its reflection of the unique ethnic spectrum of the space. The festival involves the participation of several scheduled castes and scheduled tribe communities<sup>1</sup> like the 'Bede', the 'Bauri', the 'Mal', the 'Dhibar', the 'Bagdi', and so on.

The festival has emerged following the mythology of the serpent goddess, Devi Manasā. The present study further delves into the mythology of how the demotic goddess occupied the position in the history of this festival. Datta (2018) rightly elaborates in his study how the tales of Manasā in famous Bengali and Sanskrit literature eulogise the goddess in various forms. There are numerous sources of tales of Goddess Manasā such as Narayana Dev's 'Manasāmangal', 'Manasāvijay' of Bipradas, Vijay Gupta's 'Padma purāna', Visnupala's 'Manasāmangala', but Ketakādas Kshemānanda's 'Manasāmangal Kābya' stands out among all.

The serpent goddess Manasā originated from the semen of Lord Shiva that was dropped on a

<sup>1</sup> As per Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India, the caste and tribe communities specified by the Honourable President of India by public notification are known as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled

Tribes (STs) of India (Constitution of India, 1950) (for more details, please see - [dopt.gov.in/sites/default/files/ch-11.pdf#page=1.18](https://dopt.gov.in/sites/default/files/ch-11.pdf#page=1.18))

lotus leaf and it eventually landed on the lap of the God Vasuki. Surprisingly, despite being the daughter of the Almighty, she was never recognised as a goddess. Unlike how a God should act, Manasā threatened humankind with dire calamity upon rejection (Bhattacharya, 1965). Later on, she realises that unless a wealthy merchant named 'Chand' submits to her worship, she is not gaining any respect from humankind. Once Manasā approached merchant Chand, she got mocked and insulted (Kshemānanda, 1978). Enraged by such an act, she mercilessly killed six of his sons, and yet, merchant Chand never submitted to her. The texts of '*Manasāmangala Kabya*' here introduce two celestial figures, Aniruddha and Usha, who were cursed and sentenced to be born as humans. They were born as Lakkhindar, the youngest son of Chand, and Behula, Lakkhindar's wife, respectively. Manasā, therefore, planned to kill his youngest son (Datta, 2018; Sen, 1960).

Eventually, a venomous snake, Kaal Nagini, bit Lakhindar and killed him. The tale takes a serious turn when Behula is determined to get back Lakhindar from Manasā. Finally, merchant Chand agreed to worship Manasā (though reluctantly) by offering a floral wreath in front of a Sij tree (Scientific name: *Euphorbia neriifolia* L., commonly known as *Manasā Sij*), and Manasā becomes a goddess. In the portrayal of the Sanskrit verse *Mahabharata*, Devi Manasā was referred to by various names like the wife of sage Jaratkāru, the sister of Vāsuki and the mother of sage Āstika (Datta, 2018; Sen, 1960).

Discussions about the history of Manasā puja may not collide with the history of Jhāpān. This culture can be traced back to Mallabhum, presently Bankura (Bishnupur), which was the ancient capital of the Malla dynasty (Sinha, 1987). The festival continues with the name of 'Jhāpān', reflecting the age-old tradition of Malla Dynasty as a gesture of patronage offered to the snake charmers or healers by the King's family in exchange of officiating ritual veneration (Lorea, 2018; Pandey, 2021). Even, the exhibition of snakes or '*Nag-darshan*' became a mandatory event in Jhāpān for the king's house when a snake healer provided traditional medicinal

support and rescued his life (Pandey, 2021). Samrat Singha Roy, a successor shares his experience (source: field survey), "Around 400 years ago it has originated and continued as our ancestors opined". Though the geographical extension doesn't limit itself only to that district, the nearby districts like Purulia, Birbhum, Medinipur, Jhargram, some parts of Hooghly, Nadia districts, and nearby states (Jharkhand, Bihar) are imprinted with this folk (See Table 1).

The principal aim of the present survey was to explore the spatial variation in the various socio-cultural elements of the Jhāpān festival and the extent to which these elements are on the verge of obsolescence, in response to shifts in social structure and institutions. The context can be analysed through the lens of the 'Structural-functional' theory, pioneered by Talcott Parsons in his book *The Social System*, which may justify the present context of the Jhāpān festival in West Bengal. Parsons (2013) provided a strong foundation for understanding how cultural institutions, such as festivals, are shaped and influenced to function in certain ways by various social structures, such as social norms and values. In the purview of the ever-changing social order and the urge to maintain social cohesion, traditional festivals are enforced to function under the network of the social system. Falassi (1987) further argues that the relationship between the elements (here, ritual process) of a festival and the adjacent social structure (here, social order) is reflected in its overall functioning. Despite the festival of Jhāpān having a history of a unique ritual process, it may have sustained this long by reflecting and reinforcing the social norm dynamics. This theoretical framework provides a strong platform for understanding the dynamics of socio-cultural elements of the Jhāpān festival and its functioning in the context of prevailing social norms.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Design

The present empirical study took a cross-sectional approach to collect relevant information, applying a qualitative method during the field survey. Relevant data were

collected through interview using a schedule as well as by non-participant observation. The survey continued for eighteen months in two segments in selected villages of southern district of West Bengal.

**Selection of Study Area**

In accordance with the study objectives, the principal aim was to select those villages currently practising the Jhāpān festival on an annual basis. Non-probability sampling was performed at the district and village levels to finalise the selected study areas. At the district level, a total of 6 districts were selected purposefully due to their distinct tradition of practising the festival. The districts were Bankura, Purulia, Burdwan, West Medinipur, Jhargram, and Nadia. In the initial survey, at the

village level, the Gram Panchayats (GP) were visited and out of 52 villages, 17 villages were identified that celebrated the festival at least once in the last five years. However, due to unavoidable constraints like funding and inaccessibility, only five villages were selected as per convenience (Figure 1).

**Selection of the Key Informants**

The study attempted to collect information from the important stakeholders of the festival, viz., snake charmers, priests, committee members, and local visitors. The key informants were identified based on their involvement in the festival for more than a decade. A total of 21 key informants participated in the study through informed consent. The details of the key informants are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Details of the Key Informants**

District	Social Groups involved				Number of Key informants (21)	Aspects of the interview
Bankura	Directly	Location (village)	Indirectly	Location (village)	Fair organiser: 3 Snake charmers: 2 Total: 5	1. Traditionality 2. Social group involved 3. Patronage 4. Rituals 5. Songs and Ballads 6. History 7. Mythology 8. Types of snakes they play 9. Specific snake magics 10. Instruments and attire 11. Present situation
	Dhibar	Keotpara	Brahmin	Lohaara, Ayoddha		
	Bauri	Bishnupur	Maji	Pandua		
	Tanti	Rampurhat, Tanti Para & Banshi	Dhara	Teliberia		
	Bagdi	Pandua	Bangal	Dwarika Gonsai		
Purulia	Bedia/ Baidyaraj	Sindurpur, Bakpati	Kumbhakar	Ajodhya	Fair organiser-2 Snake charmers-2 Total: 4 nos.	
			Bhumija	Kuncha		
			Dhibar	Manbazar		
Jhargram	Bedia	Juamboni, Lodhasuli	Jele	Chandrokona, Chichra & neighbouring areas	Fair organiser-2 Snake charmers-2 Total: 4	
			Sadgop			
			Napit			
			Bagdi			
Burdwan	Mal	Bokra	Bagdi, Hari, Chandal, Muchi	Raina, Gopalpur and neighbouring areas	Fair organiser-2 nos. Snake charmer-2 nos. Total: 4	
Nadia	Not found		No caste specific		Fair organiser-2 nos. Snake charmer-2 nos. Total: 4	

Source: Field Survey

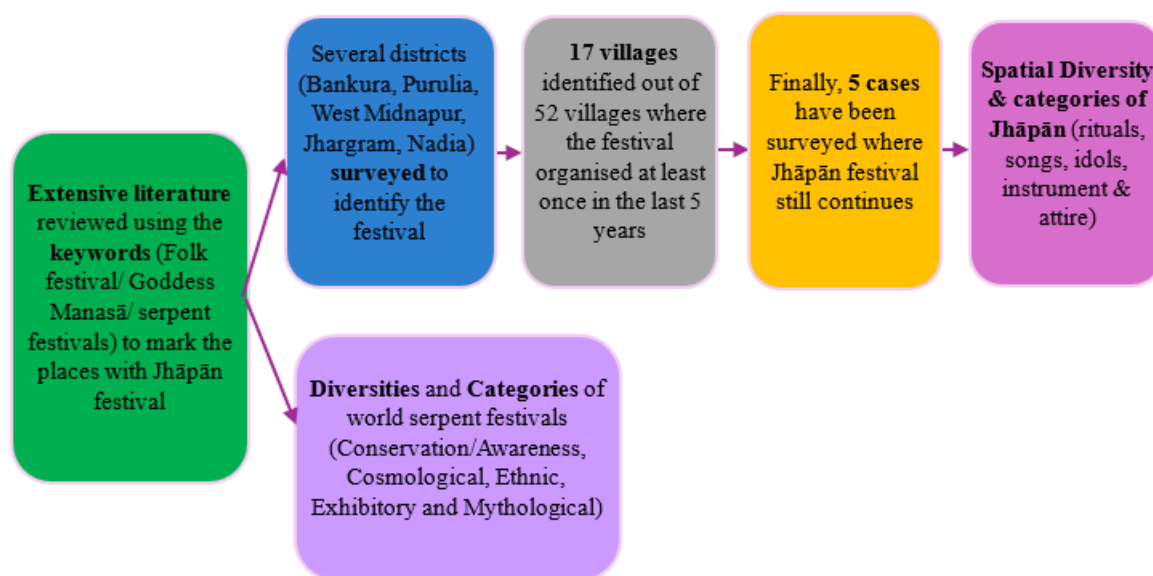
**Data Types**

The present study aimed to present a comprehensive account of the festival using primary data and to provide a global picture of

serpent festivals using secondary data. The key informants were asked a set of questions regarding the traditionality, the social group involved, the festival's patronage, rituals, songs

or ballads, chanting, history, mythology, associated snakes, snake magic, instruments, attire, and the present situation. The secondary data sources were used to obtain information on various serpent festivals not only in West Bengal but also in India and the World. In the present study, all the serpent festivals are grouped into five sub-categories, viz. Serpent festival on Conservation or Awareness, Cosmology-based, Ethnic based, Exhibitory and Mythological basis. To further elaborate, the serpent festival on conservation or awareness means these

congregations are meant for consciousness. The celestial lunar concept is used for traditionally scheduling dates, known as the Cosmological serpent festival. The serpent festival, which connects the ethnic people, is called the Ethnic Serpent Festival. The exhibition serpent festival involves displaying snakes for multiple purposes (education, entertainment, research). Again, the serpent festival, in which the mythology is considered to be the base of organising the event, is called the Mythological Serpent Festival.



**Figure 1: Procedures Followed for the Selection of Study Sites and the Categorisation of World Serpent Festivals**

Source: Developed by the Authors

### Data Analysis

A descriptive qualitative analysis was performed on the collected data. At first, serpent festivals in the global and national contexts were classified according to their distinctive features and purposes. In particular, the study analysed and interpreted the data, emphasising the diversities in rituals and important events in Jhāpān songs, as well as additional cultural elements (folk instruments, idols, attires).

### Results and Discussion

#### ***Typology and Distribution of Serpent Festival in a Global Context***

The study has explored the distribution of various serpent festivals worldwide. It was

revealed that some serpent festivals were ethno-specific, such as the Corocoro Snake Festival in Colombia, the Zulu Snake Festival, and the KwaZulu-Natal Snake Festival in South Africa. Some festivals were found focusing on snake conservation and awareness. Furthermore, some serpent festivals, found in India and Nepal, are celebrated in alignment with cosmological features, such as Nāgā Panchami and Shrabana Sankranti. Some others are marked as mythological, associated with a particular kind of myth, such as the Manasā puja festival. Again, some festivals are displayed via exhibition (See Table 2) (Figure 2). A total of 43 serpent festivals have been identified globally, grouped in five categories and mapped by their locational characteristics.

### **Typology and Distribution of Serpent Festival in India & West Bengal**

In India, the serpent festivals have also been categorised according to cultural diversity. However, it is not similar to the categories mentioned in the international context. For example, the serpent festival celebrated for exhibition is not found in India; however, the cosmological serpent festivals, the ethnic serpent festival, and the mythological serpent festivals are commonly celebrated in (see Table 3, Figure 3 and Figure 4). However, defining such

a category is difficult for India's case, because most serpent festivals are a combination of mythology and cosmological features. The rationale for categorising the serpent festivals is the prominent characteristics they share. For example, despite being a folk festival, Jhāpān also has multiple characteristics. It has a strong mythological base; at the same time, it carries a cosmological feature (organised on the last day of Shrabana), but owing to the importance of ethnic people's (snake charmers') vibrant cultural practices, it is also considered an ethnic serpent festival.

**Table 1: Global Distribution of Important Serpent Festivals (Excluding India)**

Continent	Country	Place	Name of the Serpent Festival	Category	References
Africa	Benin	Ouidah	Voodoo Festival	5	Anderson, 2023
Africa	Benin	Porto-Novo	Porto Novo Festival	3	Alves et al., 2012
Africa	Ghana	Kéta	Python Cult Festival	1	Diawuo & Issifu, 2017
Africa	Kenya	Mombasa	Black Mamba Festival	4	Smith, 2006
Africa	Lesotho	Thaba Bosiu	Serpent Healing Festival	1	Rakotsoane, 1996
Africa	Malawi	Lilongwe	Serpent Dance	3	Sullivan & Low, 2014
Africa	Nigeria	Gidan Zuru	Python Dance Festival	4	Udengwu et al., 2019
Africa	Nigeria	Lagos	Royal Python Festival	1	Udengwu et al., 2019
Africa	Nigeria	Niger Delta	Imbolc Festival	5	Byghan, 2020
Africa	South Africa	Durban	Mamba Day	4	Hauptfleisch, 2027
Africa	South Africa	KwaZulu-Natal	Zulu Snake Dance	3	Simelane & Kerley, 1997
Africa	Tanzania	Morogoro	Serpent Worship Festival	1	Lindhardt, 2017
Africa	Uganda	Jinja	Kura Snake Festival	4	Oestigaard, 2023
America	Arizona, USA	Hopi Mesas	Snake Dance Ceremony	5	Murphy & Cardwell, 2021
America	Bolivia	La Paz	Boa Constrictor Festival	1	Harris, 1981
America	Colombia	El Llano	Corocoro Snake Festival	4	Marriner, 2002

America	Idaho, USA	Lewiston	Snake River Festival	4	Cannon, 2019
America	Loreto, Peru	Iquitos	Anaconda Day	4	Navarro, 2020
America	Mexico City, Mexico	Xochimilco	Serpent God Festival	3	García-López et al., 2017
America	Michoacán, Mexico	Tzintzuntzan	Serpent Feast	3	Fewkes, 1893
America	Panama	Coclé Province	Snake Day Festival	4	Walters, 1953
America	Puerto Rico	San Juan	Culebra Festival	4	García-López et al., 2017
America	Texas, USA	Sweetwater	Rattlesnake Roundup	4	Weir, 1992
America	Venezuela	Barinas	Snake Catchers' Carnival	5	Girard, 1997
America	Venezuela	Caracas	Serpent Moon Festival	5	Navarro, 2020
Asia	China	Guangxi Province	Wang Lao Festival	2	Li et al., 2019
Asia	China	Henan province	She Huo Festival	4	Yuqi & Mokhtar, 2024
Asia	China	Jiujiang	Snake Island Festival	3	Stevens, 2007
Asia	China	All over China	Duanwu Festival	4	Jing, 2024
Asia	Indonesia	Surabaya	Reptile Day	4	Kusrini et al., 2021
Asia	Japan	Fukuoka	Miika & Omuta Daijayama Festival	4	Hideki, 2018
Asia	Japan	Kyoto	Gion Matsuri	4	Hideki, 2018
Asia	Japan	Kyoto	Yasaka Shrine	1	Hideki, 2018
Asia	Nepal	Kawasati	Nepal Snake Festival	3	Anderson, 2024
Asia	Thailand	Loei Province	Phi Ta Khon	4	Suksawang, & McNeely, 2019
Asia	India & Nepal	Various parts of India & Nepal	Naga Panchami	5	Lamsal, 2022
Europe	Croatia	Knin	Snake Day Festival	4	Zupančič et al., 2025
Europe	Ireland	Dublin	Saint Patrick's Day	2	Conway, 1883
Europe	Italy	Cocullo	Cocullo Snake Festival	4	Giancristofaro, 2023
Europe	Italy	Gubbio	Gubbio Snake Festival	3	Håland, 2011
Europe	Italy	Naples	San Gennaro's Day	4	Lancaster, 2005



Europe	Italy	Pretoro	Saint Domenico's Festival	5	Conelli, 2000
Europe	Northern Ireland	Belfast	Saint Patrick's Parade	1	Jarman, 1996

Source: Compiled by the Authors

**Table 3: Distribution of Important Serpent Festivals, India**

Serpent Festival	Category	Geographical Coverage	Time of Event	Description	References
Ananta Chaturdashi	Religious Observances	Across India	September	A Hindu festival where the snake deity Ananta is worshipped, seeking blessings for prosperity and protection.	Saxena, 2018
Nag Panchami	Religious Observances	Across India	July/August (Shravan month)	A traditional Hindu festival dedicated to the veneration of snakes, especially the Naga deity.	Singh, 2022
Bhujia Dungar Utsav	Religious Observances	Gujarat, Bhuj	October/November	A religious festival where snakes are worshipped to honour the local deity, Bhujang.	Nair, 2017
Kukke Subramanya Temple Festival	Religious Observances	Karnataka	December/January	A festival dedicated to Lord Subramanya, revered as the protector of serpents.	Vikram et al., 2024
Naga Mandala	Devotional Ceremonies	Karnataka	November/December	A performance conducted to seek the blessings of the snake god, focusing on fertility and protection.	Manohar et al., 2022
Padmavati Jatra	Ethnographic Rituals	Karnataka	January/February	A festival involving snake worship and rituals that reflect local cultural traditions.	Suvrathan, 2014
Kaakottikali (Snake Dance)	Cultural Exhibitions	Kerala	-	A traditional dance performed as	Das & Balasubramanian, 2017

				part of a cultural festival, often associated with snake worship.	
Sarpam Thullal	Ritualistic Performances	Kerala	January	A ceremonial dance performed to appease snake deities, held in sacred groves or temples.	Das & Balasubramanian, 2017
Mannarasala Ayilyam	Ethnographic Rituals	Kerala, Alappuzha	October/November	A temple festival dedicated to the serpent god Nagaraja, involving rituals and prayers for protection.	Nair, 2017
Snake Boat Festival	Cultural Exhibitions	Kerala, Aranmula	-	A cultural festival featuring snake-shaped boat races, reflecting local traditions and community spirit.	Halder & Guohua, 2024
Garudan Thookkam	Ritualistic Performances	Kerala, Kottayam and Kannur	March/April (Meenam month)	A ritual performance dedicated to Garuda, the eagle deity, known for its association with serpents.	Pillai, 2020
Bola Bhima Jatra	Cultural Exhibitions	Maharashtra	February/March	A celebration combining folk dances with serpent worship, based on local customs.	Chari, 1969
Serpent Festival	Cultural Exhibitions	Rajasthan, Jodhpur	March	A cultural festival celebrating serpent worship through dances and traditional practices.	Sharma & Sharma, 2013
Aadi Seshan Festival	Religious Observances	Tamil Nadu	July/August	A festival dedicated to Adisesha, the king of serpents, featuring various rituals and offerings.	Subramanian, 2000
Snake Catchers' Festival	Ethnographic Rituals	Tamil Nadu, Pattukkottai	-	A festival celebrating the skills of snake	Allocco, 2014

				catchers, highlighting traditional knowledge and practices.	
Nagoba Jatara	Ethnographic Rituals	Telangana, Keshapur	-	An ethnic festival celebrating the Nagoba deity, involving rituals and ceremonies unique to the community.	Trivedi & Mathew, 2021
Nag Nathaiya	Mythological Reenactments	Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi	November	A festival that reenacts the legend of Krishna lifting the snake Kaliya, with dramatic performances.	Tripathi, 2023
Jhāpān Festival	Ethnographic Rituals	West Bengal	August (Shravan month)	An ethnic celebration honouring the snake goddess Manasa, featuring snake charmers and ceremonial rites.	Lorea, 2018
Rayani	Religious Observances	West Bengal,	-	A religious festival involving snake worship.	Bhattacharya, 1965

Source: Compiled by the Authors

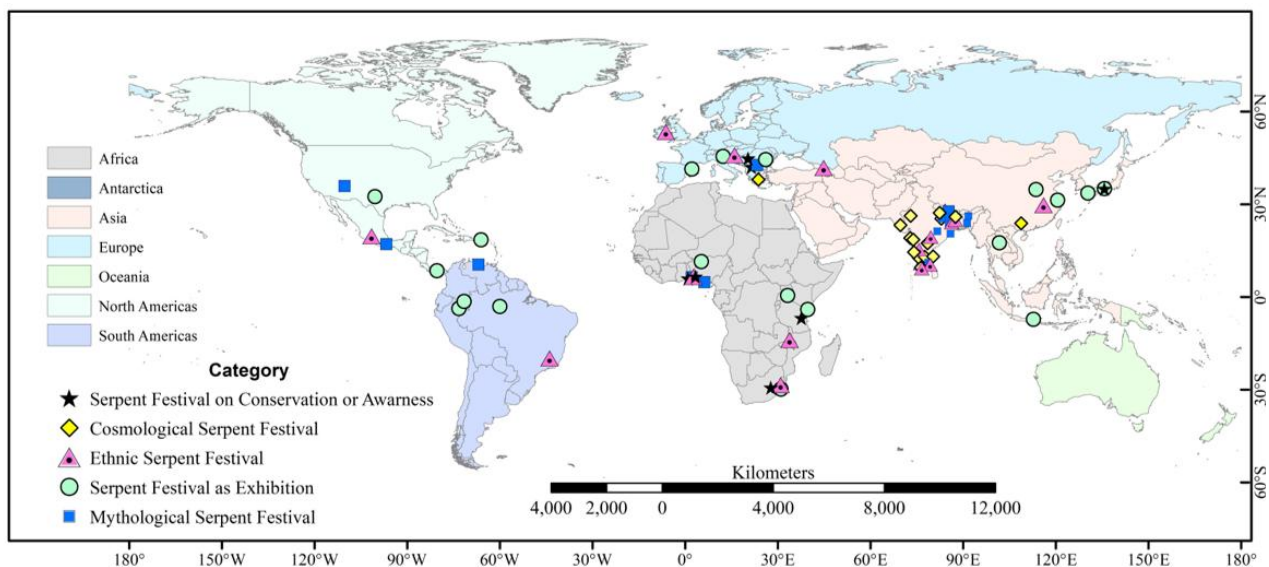


Figure 2: Global Distribution of Serpent Festivals

Source: Developed by the Authors

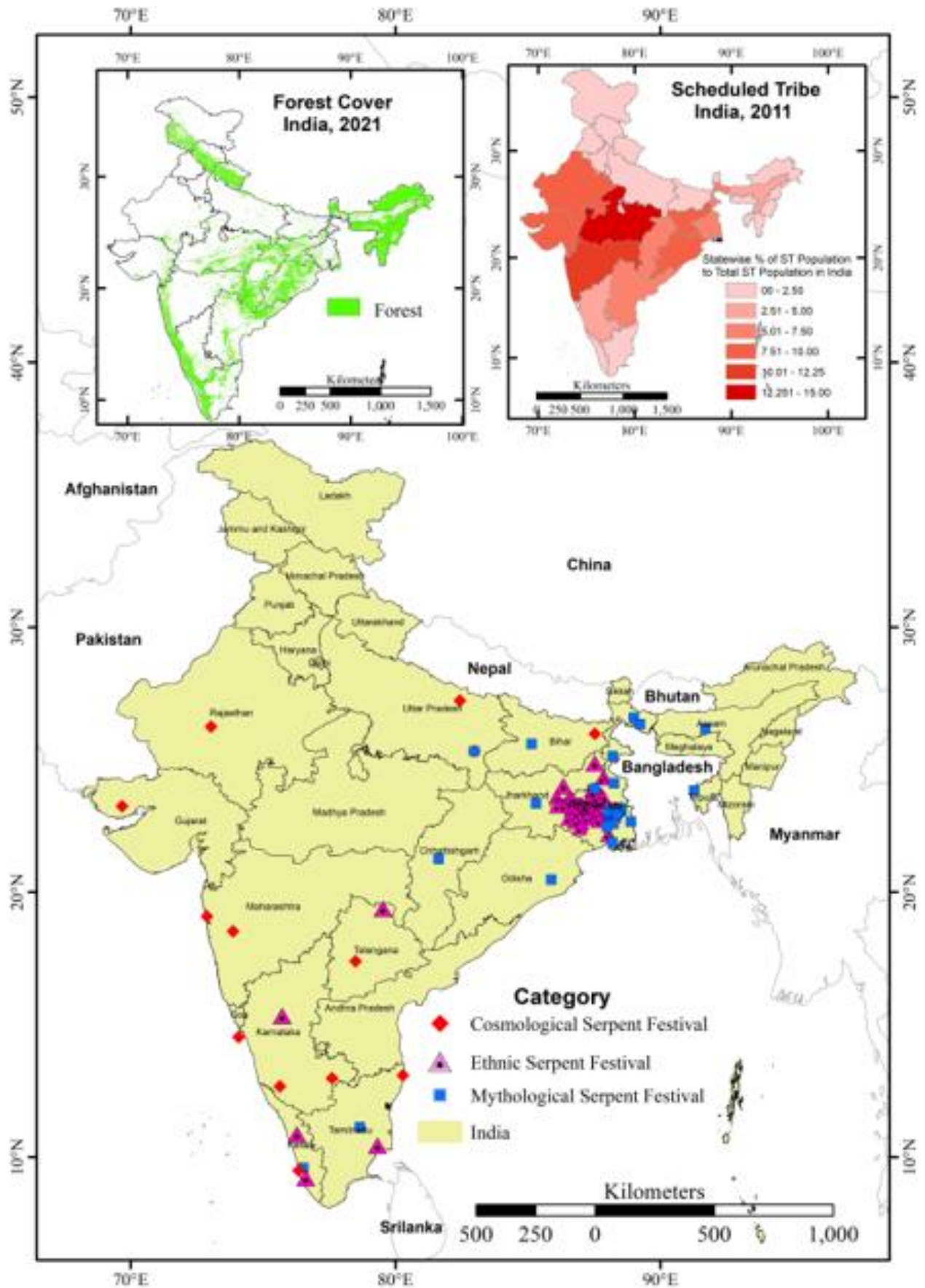
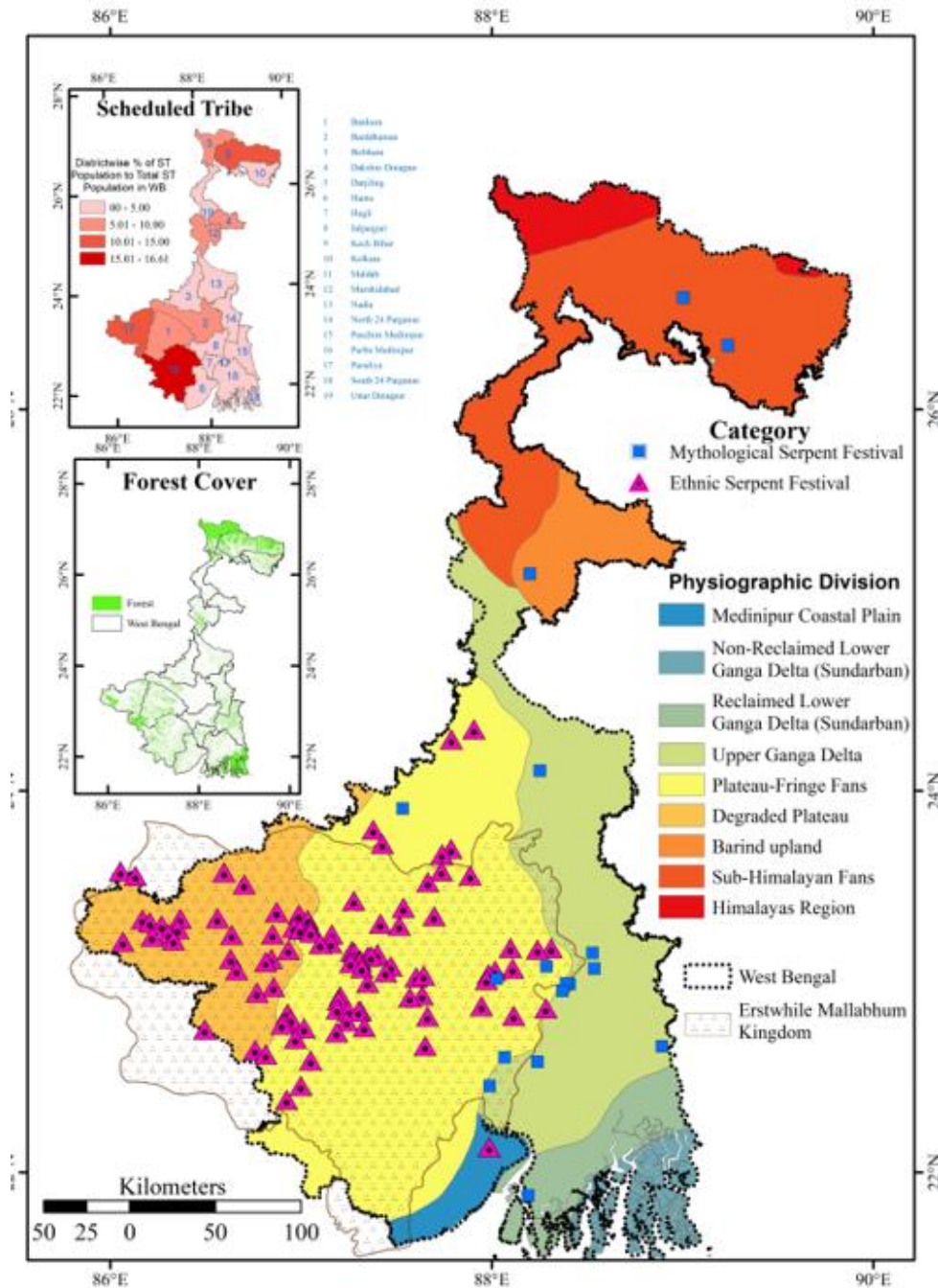


Figure 3: Serpent Festivals, Scheduled Tribes and Forest Cover in India  
Source: Developed by the Authors



**Figure 4: Distribution of the Serpent Festival across Different Physiographic Zones in West Bengal**

Source: Developed by the Authors

**Spatial Diversity of Jhāpān Festival in West Bengal**

The term ‘diversity’ usually denotes a situation of multiplicity and heterogeneity. The variation of a given factor over geographic space is generally defined as spatial diversity (Stephanopoulos, 2011). Spatial diversity in this study refers to the variation in the festival’s

cultural components that changes across space. Jhāpān folk culture needs for uncover diversity owing to its cultural uniqueness in different districts. We planned to disseminate the spatial connection of this culture through several inseparable components: diversities in rituals within the space; songs and verses; instruments; idols or embodiments; and the attire they use to perform and assimilate. However, several folk

serpent deities are also found in West Bengal (Table 4).

**Table 4: Folk Serpent Deities in West Bengal (other than Manasa)**

Deity	Place	Source
Brahamhani Devi	Nakashipara, Nadia	Field Survey
Khedai Baba	Chakdah, Nadia	Field Survey
Jagatgauri	Mondal gram, Purba Bardhaman	Field Survey
Kaliburi	Ajodhya, Bankura	Field Survey
Bishahari	Rishra, Bankura	Sen, 2006
Lapurshini	Lapur, Bankura	Sen, 2006
Madani	Barpetta, Bankura	Sen, 2006
Mare or Marei	Coachbihar	Sen, 2006
Astanaag	Jalpaiguri	Field Survey

Source: Compiled by the Authors

### Diversity of Rituals across Spaces

In India's perspective, the festivals are not merely a congregation for commercial purposes. It is accentuated with the cultural ceremonies in each of the festivals. For this reason, Indians never neglect their ritualistic performances and always crave for their celebrations to unravel in a better way. Here, from our field survey, we have noted 15 rituals (see Table 5) which are inextricably connected. Most of the rituals are diversified in nature or space-specific, and some are common. Specifically, *Bari-anayan*, which is bringing holy water, '*choter khela*' or taking a bite, *Boli* (sacrifice) is found across the space. Besides, there are rituals associated with the place. Likewise, *Naag-Archana* is only found in Jhargram, where it is immediately evident after the *Bari-anayan*. Jhupal, or the possession by a spirit, is mainly found in Purulia and Bankura. Again, Bankura is the only place where we found exclusive rituals, like *Bhokta* dance, *Naag-darshan Dhuna purano*, *Agun-sanyash*, *Ananta sajja*, *Bagh- Jhāpān*.

In search of the connection between rituals and the place, we found that the spatial embeddedness is closely associated with the history of this land. For instance, Bankura, where most of the rituals are concentrated, was once the province of a Malla king who patronised snake charmers. Consequently, the ritualistic multiplicity of Jhāpān is less evident to imprint in Jhargram, Burdwan, and Nadia due to their distance from the territory. Again, in Nadia and

the associated area, the tradition of this culture was not obvious; the involvement of other social groups (not snake charmers) was quite evident.

### Spatial Diversity in Jhāpān Songs

Undeniably, the diversity of songs, ballads, and verses across the space enriched the multidimensionality of culture. Here we mention 'song' which could be interchangeably addressed as folklore for some districts, though Jhāpān in some districts is based on *Mangal-kabya* (so, it is not oral). While some of the songs are saturated throughout the space, others are very much place-oriented. For instance, the song—*Maa ke puji ami nobin billodole* is related to Nāgādarshana, which can only be seen in Bankura. On the contrary, *Bajuk bishom dhaki, choluk Jhāpān* is sung by the charmers all over the place. Interestingly, we found the similarities in the structure of Jhāpān songs in the four districts (Bankura, Purulia, Jhargram, Burdwan). However, for Nadia, it denotes a different structure (consisting of different '*pala*'). For better understanding, this is represented in Table 6.

From the above section, it is worth noting that the songs have a spatial connection. A much greater diversity has been noted in Bankura in terms of the songs of the Nāgās. Furthermore, *Sakkhi* songs in Jhāpān prevail in the parts like Bankura, Purulia, Burdwan, but for Nadia, mostly we found the *Jaat gaan* or *Manasāmangala* songs, and some recently made songs which symbolise a great shift from traditionality.



**Table 5: Important Rituals/Events and Their Concentration across West Bengal**

Rituals	Meaning	Districts				
		Burdwan	Nadia	Jhargram	Purulia	Bankura
<i>Bāri-ānāyana [Figure 6 (d)]</i>	Bringing holy-water	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Nāg-archan</i>	Worship of snakes	⊗	⊗	✓	⊗	⊗
<i>Jhupāl</i>	Sudden Leap	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓	✓
<i>Bhoktā Dance</i>	Devotee's Dance	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓
<i>Dhunā Purāno</i>	Sacred Smoke Ceremony	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓
<i>Agun Sanyāsh</i>	Renunciation through Fire	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓
<i>Boli</i>	Sacrifice	⊗	⊗	✓	✓	✓
<i>Nāg Darshan</i>	Showing snake to dairy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Sailā</i>	Making Friends through Garlanding	✓	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
<i>Bandanā</i>	Devotional Song of Praise	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Choter Khelā</i>	Taking Bites of Snake	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Jive Kāmor neoā</i>	Biting on Tongue by Snake	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Anonto Sojjā*</i>	Laying with 100 snakes	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓
<i>Bāgh Jhāpān*</i>	Playing with snakes sitting on Mud made tiger	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓
<i>Sāper jādu</i>	Snake Magic	✓	⊗	⊗	⊗	✓

\* These are not presently practised.

Source: Compiled by the Authors

### Categories of Jhāpān Songs

In Pandey's pioneering work (2021) on this festival, he notes that the songs are divided into four categories: Sakkhi (competition of verses between two groups), *Jaat gaan* (the song based on *Manasāmangala*), *Bhasan* (ballad or verses), and *Mantra* (chanting). In addition to this, our work on classification is not based on its grammar; we tried to classify into two other

divisions: based on vulnerability, and the subject matter of songs. The base of these two broad divisions is the field survey of the aforementioned districts. Again, the categories are presented in a flow diagram (Figure 5).

**Table 2: Spatial Diversity of Jhāpān Songs in West Bengal**

District	Ritual	Song (in Bengali)	Translation
Bankura	During the ritual of <i>Bāāri-Anayan</i> (fetching water) (See fig. 6, d)	<i>O maa nāite jabi go, Khirai nadir kul / Paye dibo lāāl jobā, Kopale sindūr</i>	Oh, mother, would you go to take the bath, at the bank of the river <i>Khirai</i> / I will offer <i>Hibiscus</i> on your feet, and vermilion on your forehead
		<i>Jhālu mālu dui vai mach dhorite cholo jai / boli aay go maa monosā puji maa tomare</i>	Two brothers, Jhālu and Mālu, let us go for fishing / I say, come, Goddess <i>Manasā</i> , I will worship you
	During the ritual of <i>Nāāg Darshan</i> (or showing the snakes to the deity <i>Manasā</i> )	<i>Maake puji go, nobin billodole / Aj maake pujbo ami swhet shotodale</i>	I will worship my mother with new green bell leaves / Today, I will worship mother with white lotus flower
	During the <i>Bandanā</i> (or the introductory song)	<i>Uma bondilam ganesher ghote / prothome bondibo ami dhormo nironjon,</i>	I adorned Uma with the embodiment of Lord Ganesha / At first, I'll start conferring with the remembrance of Dharmaraaj
		<i>Bondo ek mone joto debo gon he kritānjali he tomare</i>	I will bow to you single-mindedly / Oh, mother, I salute you on your feet
	During the ritual of <i>Sakhi</i> (or competitive songs)	<i>Ek chakhkhu kānā saper holo ki karone / Ihar uttor dao sobar majh khane / Ek chokkhkhu kana saper mayer konkoner ghay / Eito tomar kothar jobab hoye gelo vai</i>	Please, tell, why the snake (goddess <i>Manasā</i> ) appears to be one-eyed? / Answer before everyone, present here / The one eye was affected by the hitting of mother Chandi's bangles / Here is the reply to what you asked
		<i>Binodini rai ke bishe ghireche / kala chand ke radhikar mone poreche</i>	Binodini Rai is devoured with venom / At the very moment, Radhika recalls Kalachānd (Lord Krishna)
	During the ritual of <i>Jive-kamor</i> (or Snake-biting in the tongue)	<i>Jive kamor lichi, lichi maa go jononi / Rokhha koro astiko jononi</i>	Undergoing with the snake biting on the tongue, Mother, please save me, Mother of the believers
	During the ritual of swallowing a snake	<i>Kalo pipra samabar jaiga nai go / Kon pothe samalo kal nagini!</i>	There is no place for the black ants to enter / I wonder how the black snake has gone through!
	During the ritual of <i>Uposonghaar</i> (or at the end of the ritual)	<i>Tora narbi narbi Jhāpān bhagate / Toder gunin palaye gelo jonar barir pothe.</i>	You will never cease the <i>Jhāpān</i> / As your exorcist ran away on the way to Jona's house.



Jhargram	During the ritual of <i>Bāāri-Anayan</i> (or fetching water)	<i>Boli aay go maa puja koribo amader ghore</i>	Welcome, Mother, we worship you in our home!
	During the ritual of Snake charming	<i>Kiser karone go dada boloram / Ram kande, lokkhon kande, kande honuman</i>	What is the reason, brother Balaram, that Brother Ram, Laxman and even Lord Hanuman cry?
	During the ritual of <i>Uposonghaar</i> (or at the end of the ritual)	<i>Ogo maa monosā tomari vorosa / Korojore daki maa go purno koro asha</i>	Oh, Mother <i>Manasā</i> , we rely on you / Please accomplish our hope
Burdwan	During the ritual of <i>Bāāri-Anayan</i> (or fetching water)	<i>Maa ke ante jabo go Khirai nodir kul / Gole dibo chandmalā chorone joba ful</i>	We'll bring Mother from the bank of <i>Khirai</i> River / Mother will be garlanded, and her feet will be full of <i>Hibiscus</i>
	During the <i>Bandanā</i> (or the introductory song)	<i>Debi eso go maa amader asore / Dhulay pore kator hoye daki maa tomare</i>	Come, Goddess, into our gathering / We cry out to mother in anguish, and our legs covered in dust
	During the ritual of Snake charming	<i>Saranishi jagilam go haralam go / Bandhlona prano pothik</i>	Passing the sleepless nights / We have lost our beloved!
	During the ritual of <i>Uposonghaar</i> (or at the end of the ritual)	<i>Nomo go maa monosā debi nomo narayani / Doya kore debe go maa chorono du khani</i>	Mother <i>Manasā</i> , we will worship you as <i>Devi Narayani</i> / Please, mother, give us prayer of your feet
	During the ritual of <i>Sakkhi</i> (or competitive songs)	<i>Vai re vai tobe saki gai ostader golay fuler mala, bajuk bishom dhaki / Saanp molo sapini molo molo badir vaya...</i>	Brother, let's sing <i>Sakkhi</i> . The <i>gunvor</i> is garlanded, the <i>Bisham Dhaki</i> is also with us, snakes are dead, even the charmer also died
Nadia	During the <i>Bandanā</i> (or the introductory song)	<i>O bondilam bondilam go o amar maayer e choron</i>	We worship the goddess <i>Manasā</i> / We confer flowers to her feet
	During the ritual of Birth tale	<i>O ami aslam chute valobese premer karone / Prothom valobasa ogo amar pitar o sone</i>	I have come fast with love for my beloved only / My first love was with my father
	During the ritual of Snake-biting	<i>Basor samal samal go Raja Chondrodhor / Raat barotar pore, kali dhukbe basor ghor</i>	Be cautious for their ( <i>Behula</i> and <i>Lakhindar</i> ) marriage night, Oh, King <i>Chandradhar</i> / After midnight, the snake could enter the room
	During the ritual of <i>Uposonghaar</i> (or at the end of the ritual)	<i>O maa ekta fuler lagi ato oviman / Tomar ghore lagaye dibo fulero bagan</i>	Goddess, you don't mind only for a flower / We will devote you a garden at your house
Common Songs in Jhāpān across the Space			

<i>Jaya jaya Maa Manasā, jaya Bishahari go Bandana kori mago Ma manashar chorone</i>	Salutation to deity Manasā / We salute you at your feet
<i>Rone ke chapilo re, bir hanuman Bajuk bishom dhaki, choluk Jhāpān</i>	Is the brave Hanuman fighting? / Play the drum, let them jump
<i>Debi eso go maa amader asore Dhulay pore kator hoye daki ma tomare</i>	Come, deity, into our gathering / We welcome you ardently.
<i>Moder Ashirbaad dao go komola, Dyakhabo ma Jhāpān er saap khela</i>	Bless us, Mother, Kamala (Manasā) / We will start charming snakes
<i>O ma Manasā, tomar e bhorosa Korojore daki mago purno kori asha</i>	Oh, Mother Manasā! We rely on you / Please accomplish our hope.

Source: Compiled by the Authors

The traditional Jhāpān folk songs in some districts (Bankura, Purulia, Jhargram) are really in question, whether these invaluable ones will be retained further or not? Because the culture is rapidly diminishing in the space. Though Jhāpān songs in Nadia district are vulnerable because they are in the written script (primarily based on Manasāmangala), other factors may include the social groups involved in this district, which are not snake charmers (non-tribe). However, mainly where the Jhāpān songs are in the snake charmers’ hands is the question of vulnerability. Because they are economically

marginalised and earning opportunities are plummeting rapidly due to administrative interference and the banning of the culture (including songs) across the region (Lorea, 2018). For this reason, the songs have been classified according to their subject matter or substance. Accordingly, six sub-categories have been identified: the welcoming of the deity or Bandana, mythological storytelling through songs, descriptions of snakes, and prayers for redemption from the venom, all of which need to be treasured.

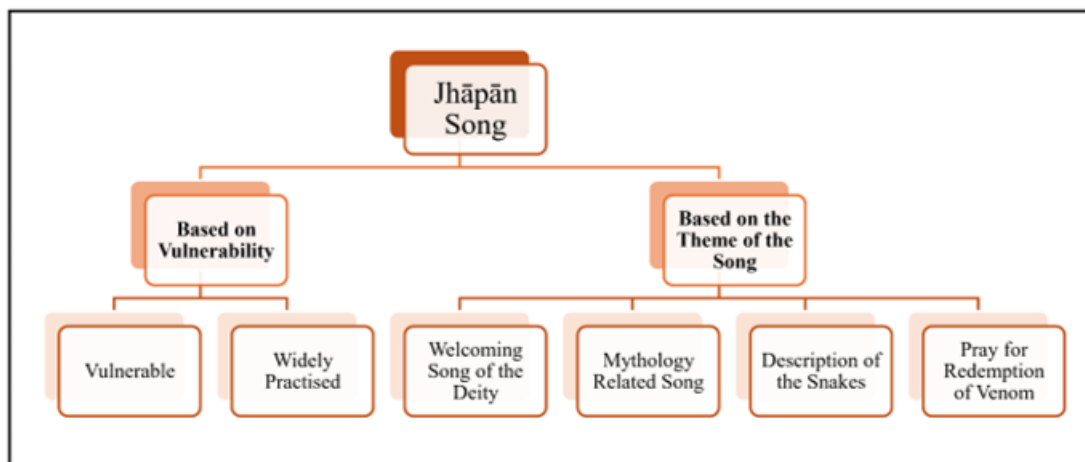


Figure 5: Categorisation of Jhāpān Songs

Source: Compiled by the Authors

**Based on Other Elements**

The way their instruments, idols, and attire change from one district to another is denoted as spatial diversity, based on other elements. *Bishom dhaki* is such a unique and signature instrument, which one would not find anywhere else. Further, *Bari* or mud-made pot with the face of a deity and a Chholon or Hati-Ghora murti

(horse, elephant idol) are worthy of mention for their distinct space connection. The diversity in instruments has been shown. In attire, *Dhoti* (traditional cloth for the lower section of the body), *Uttariya* (in the arm), *Pagri* (head cover), which also has spatial concentration across the region.

The finding reveals the strong association of space and culture, which, in the case of Nadia, is found to be different as the instruments are very contemporary (Casio, synthesiser) and attire also has a present-day's reflection (in comparison to other districts). Again, in the case of Idols in the temple, the strong vicinity of the culture of Mallabhum or Bankura and its

associated regions is reflected throughout in idols (like *Bari* and *Chholon*). The other places, like Jhargram, Burdwan, Nadia, which do not come under Mallabhum, where the commonly seen Manasā idol is evident, are owing to the transition or reflection of the margin of Mallabhum, where the distinctiveness of Mallabhum has faded.

**Table 7: Spatial Diversity in Folk-Instruments, Idols and Attires**

District	Folk-instrument	Idols	Attire
Bankura	<i>Bishom dhaki</i> [Figure 6 (c)], <i>Khanjani</i> , <i>Naal</i> (recent), <i>Khol</i> (in the time of Manasamangala songs), <i>Kartaal</i>	<i>Bari</i> (only face of deity on the mud-made pot) [Figure 6 (f)], <i>Sij</i> (cactus tree), <i>Cholon</i> or <i>Hati-Ghora murti</i> (horse, elephant idol)	<b><i>Dhoti</i> (traditional cloth for the lower section), <i>Uttariya</i> (in the arm), <i>Pagri</i> (head cover)</b>
Purulia	<i>Bishom dhaki</i> , <i>Khanjani</i> , <i>Banshi</i> , <i>Kartaal</i> , <i>Dhol</i> ,	<i>Debi Pratima</i> (the full structured deity idol)	<b><i>Dhoti</i> (traditional cloth for the lower section), <i>Uttariya</i> (in the arm), <i>Pagri</i> (head cover)</b>
Jhargram	<i>Tasha</i>	<i>Debi Pratima</i> (the full structured deity idol), <i>Sij</i> (cactus tree)	<b><i>Punjabi</i>, <i>Dhoti</i></b>
Burdwan	<i>Dhol</i> , <i>Dug Dugi</i> , <i>Banshi</i> , <i>Khanjani</i>	<i>Debi Pratima</i> (the full structured deity idol)	<b>Bare body at the upper portion, <i>Dhoti</i> in the lower, <i>Uttariya</i> (in an arm)</b>
Nadia	<i>Dhak</i> , <i>Dhol</i> , <i>Ghungur</i> , <i>Kortal</i> , <i>Jhumjhumi</i> , <i>Dotara</i>	<b><i>Debi Pratima</i> (the full structured deity idol) Figure 6 (e)</b>	<b><i>Punjabi</i>, <i>Dhoti</i>, <i>Uttariya</i></b>

Source: Compiled by the Authors

### Underlying Factors Behind the Sustenance of Serpent Festivals

In the context of the present research, it is noteworthy that several culturally vibrant folk serpent festivals worldwide are in decline. On the contrary, some other ethno-religious snake festivals are thriving. For instance, the *Nagoba Jatara* in Telangana, India; the *Mannarasala Aiyilam* in Kerala, India; the Festival of San Domenico in Cocullo, Italy; and the Snake Handling Rituals of Pentecostal communities in the Appalachian United States. These festivals persist because they retain their capacity for accommodate community identity, ritual sanctity, and socio-religious purposes.

*Nagoba Jatara* is illustrative of having a transformative cultural affirmation of Gond tribe folks with communal cohesion forged through ancestral reverence (Trivedi & Mathew, 2021). The example of *Mannarasala Aiyilam* involves perpetuation in powerful matrilineal values, temple beneficence, and fusion with dominant Hindu culture (Nair, 2017). A study highlights the way in which the sacred groves or *Sarpakavus* of Kerala, which have strong associations with serpent worship, are not only religious sites but also indigenous ecological systems promoting biodiversity and reaffirming socio-spiritual values (Devika, 2024). Likewise, Cocullo festival, which is in honour of San Domenico said to have died from snake bites, endures because it reconciles Catholicism with old pagan tradition,

revitalised anew every year through lively communal activity and religious tourism (Fagundes-Moreira et al., 2025). In Appalachiasnake handling ceremonies continue among small Pentecostal communities as a powerful expression of devotion and survival (Hood & Williamson, 2008). These festivals evolved with the times, either by reinterpreting ancient practices or by reaffirming resilient religious symbolism, thereby guaranteeing their survival. Additionally, Indigenous cultures across the globe illustrate that sacred groves for serpent gods are crucial in mediating human–snake relationships, averting environmental degradation, and maintaining ritual significance in local societies (Yuan et al., 2019). The practices show that survival frequently depends on how well traditions balance religious reverence and ecological management.

### Conclusion

The central aim of this study was to critically analyse the spatial diversity and narratives of the Jhāpān serpent festival of West Bengal, which is in gradual decay. Indeed, the several centuries-old traditions of Jhāpān are constantly decaying in many places of West Bengal. In Bishnupur (Bankura), it was ceased in 2015 due to a Forest Department crackdown, ending the age-old celebration. Despite efforts by the Bishnupur Jhāpān Committee, funding shortages limited them to inviting only two Ojhās troupes, compared to the previous five or six (Lorea, 2018). The ending of the festival certainly draws attention, for the loss in terms of place-specific cultural identity, specifically, the music, songs, ethnic instruments they play (*Bishom dhaki*, *Khanjani*), *Mantras*, their ‘*Saila*’ custom to make friends and so on. The festival is struggling to sustain itself in an ever-changing social landscape and requires appropriate measures to safeguard it at all costs.

For their survival in terms of earning, the members of the Jhāpān troupe had to shift their occupation for the sudden ban. The dependability of each troupe member at the festival has been surveyed. In the Jhāpān troupe, there were 7-10 members, among them 4-5 who played various instruments (harmonium,

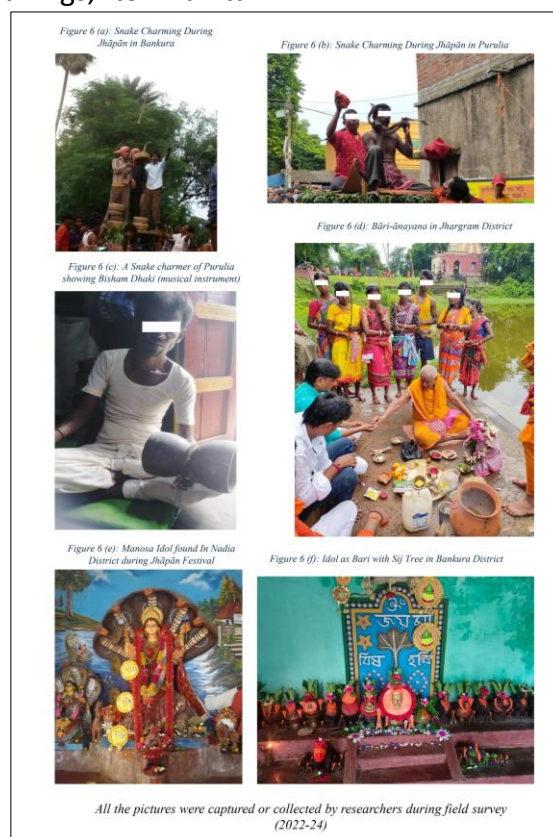
Bishamdhaki, Kartaal, Maracas, Casio, Dhol), and some who sang and narrated. They were paid about INR 5000-6000 to perform the show within 20-30 km or around villages: INR10,000 - 12,000 for booking within different nearby districts. For such, instrument players would get INR 300-500 per show. Around 50% of the money from each show is received by the main snake charmer or head of the troupe. Unfortunately, in the present day, after the banning of this festival, they had to move their occupation mostly in the brick field as unskilled labour (earning about INR 300 per day), some are engaged as fishermen, catching small fish (mostly chuna fish). Some work in the agricultural fields (earning INR 200-250 per day). Except, for the snake charmers, the instrument players of the troupe have also shifted their occupation in different folk-troupes, such as *Chou*, *Bauls*, and *Jhumur*. Overall, they are facing a troubled circumstance, and in turn, their lives are also becoming uncertain.

Through the decades, Jhāpān has undergone notable changes in its appearance and activities. The legacy of this festival and the cultural fabric of several lower-class societies (including tribes) is gradually dying out. We are certain that once the festival loses its true essence, its cultural heritage and allied components, such as literature, music, drama, etc., may completely disappear. This means the core elements of a community’s identity are in jeopardy. Therefore, the festival must be preserved in such a way that it can be rejuvenated with a new gesture in the evolving geographical landscape over time. The festival of Jhāpān comprises a rich tradition of showcasing various socio-cultural elements, including ritualistic practices, healing with ethnomedicinal plants, literature through folk songs and hymns, and fostering the exchange of cultural knowledge among people. However, there are a few activities that are evidently detrimental for the individual and society (for instance, risky rituals can lead to loss of life of the charmer by snake-biting, sometimes snakes may be affected by the rough and tumble charming).

As is evident, the Jhāpān festival of West Bengal, traditionally celebrated as the snake Goddess

Manasā, is rapidly declining. A once-thriving rural festival that represents healing and piety is now fighting the strict enforcement of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (amended in 2002) (Lorea, 2018). Besides, urbanisation and the decline in reliance on traditional medicines are worth mentioning in this context. While both Nagoba Jatara and Cocullo's San Domenico have succeeded in reviving and remixing their rites for modern crowds, Jhāpān has been unsuccessful in remixing or revamping its rites for the modern consumers. The lack of patronage among younger generations, the absence of state-sponsored cultural promotion, and the waning significance of the snake have all undermined its relevance. This difference emphasises that the survival of ethno-religious festivals hinges on their capacity to adapt while retaining fundamental symbolic meanings, to maintain

strong community participation, and to learn to balance tradition with the socio-economic conditions of an evolving world. It clearly reflects that the festival of Jhāpān may thrive for a, more extended period of time, if the stakeholders adopt a more inclusive approach to attract modern consumers, as well as promote the socio-ecological significance of the festival to society. In this context, the community and the government must be efficient in decision-making regarding how the artefacts, documents, and recordings are archived. A flexible mode of adaptation in a contemporary backdrop is essential for the sustainability of the festival. It is a fact that culture is ever-changing. That should also be considered for 'Jhāpān', where the festival continues to uphold its core values rather than die out.



**Figure 6: A Few Glimpses from Fieldwork**

Source: Authors

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### Ethical Considerations

The authors affirm that the manuscript was prepared in adherence to the protocols of the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their understanding of the study's nature, aims, and objectives. Every measure was taken to safeguard the participants' safety, rights, and well-being.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest—financial or personal—associated with this research.

### Authors' Contribution

Bhupal Bhandary & Rabi Narayan Behera conceptualised the present research context and developed the research design. Bhupal Bhandary developed the methodology and collected the data. Bhupal Bhandary, Nayan Roy & Akash Mallick analysed and interpreted the data and prepared the drafts of the manuscript. Sasmita Rout and Rabi Narayan Behera critically revised the manuscript, provided insights and finalised the draft.

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**Data Availability Statement**

Data generated from this research will be made available upon request, provided a valid justification is provided.

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