

Karam Utsav The Karam Festival of Oraon Ethnic group

This festival celebrated for good harvest. Nine types of seeds planted in basket such as rice, wheat, corn etc which is called Jawa. Girls take care of these seeds for 7-9 days. In the festival girls observe fasting throughout day. In the ritual, people go to the jungle accompanied by groups of drummers and cut one or more branches of the Karam tree after worshiping it. The branches are usually carried by unmarried, young girls who sing in praise of the deity. Then the branches are brought to the village and planted in the center of the ground which is plastered with cow-dung and decorated with flowers. A village priest (called Pahan) offers germinated grains and liquor in propitiation to the deity who grants wealth and children. A fowl is also killed and the blood is offered to the branch.

The village priest then recites a legend to the villagers about the efficacy of Karam puja. After puja, in the next morning the karam branch immersed in the river. Around Ranchi, tribes like the ho, mundari, kharia, panch pargania, kurukh, khortha, santhali, nagpuri and kur mali worship trees during this festival (as they are a source of livelihood), and they pray to Mother Nature to keep their farmlands green so that they get a rich harvest. Karam Devta is the God of power, youth, and youthfulness, is worshipped during the festival. The devotees keep a day-long fast and worship the branches of karam and sal. Girls celebrate the festival for their welfare, friendship, and brotherhood by exchanging a jawa flower. Hariya is an important component of the festival. A cup of Hariya is given to all as it is considered an energizing tonic that ensures good physical and mental health.