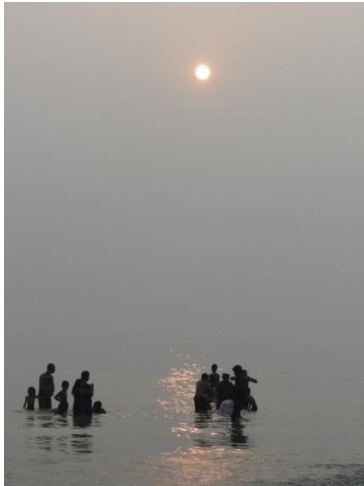


Festivals of Sundarbans

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The identity and perception of the Sundarbans are, by and large, associated with a grand forest, majestic tigers and wildlife, which has been fostered further by mainstream discussions on conservation and restoration of environment and concerns for sustainability and climate change.

The multiplicity of rich culture, rituals and festival that are ingrained with people and their livelihood, often, do not find adequate mention.



Four major factors, State-Community and Environment-Mythology, are prominent in Sundarbans-related discourses, and are used here to develop an operative framework in order to understand the culture of festivals. The assumption is that the culture has taken shape through interplay between environment, community and mythologies.

Sundarbans has a rich body of mythological narratives, most of which are drawn from local experiences and stories and have continued for generations through colloquial texts, lyrical ballads, folk plays and festivals. In course of time, symbols, rituals and icons from different religions have been included and appropriated to make new folk divinities. In the process, gods from Hindu pantheon were transformed into vernacular cults. Hagiographies about local Muslim god-like figures, too, gained popularities.

Social co-existence of religious groups has been strengthened by mutual cultural exchanges and syncretic influences. Occupational similarity requiring close contact with nature and high risks associated with it also encourage people from different religion to come together to seek divine help.

Study of important festivals and review of literature indicate five key inter-related phenomena: Nature, Occupation, Rituals, Narrative and Religion, that contribute to the “culture of festivals” in the Sundarbans.