

TOURISM MEETS TRADITION: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF SATYA MAHIMĀ YOGA SĀDHANĀ

AKHIL CHANDRA RANA¹, Prof. BIBHUTI BHUSAN PRADHAN² & Prof.
RADHAMADHAB DASH³

PPRACHIN Department, SOA University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2025.6328>

ABSTRACT

Mahimā yoga sadhana, a profound spiritual tradition deeply intertwined with ascetic practices, has experienced a significant convergence with tourism, facilitating cultural exchange and socio-economic development. The spiritual practices in mahimā yoga are comparable to the seven traditional types of yoga. The yoga performed by mahimā saints is carried out in open and public areas that are conveniently located for the general public, tourists, and pilgrims when they visit. The accessibility and inclusive environment of mahimā yoga practices draw individuals from diverse backgrounds. This atmosphere raises the easy exchange and acceptance of spiritual teachings and learning.

Mahimā cult yoga serves as an instrument for social transformation by reversing rigid hierarchical ideology and promoting universalism. It provides a path towards self-cultivation and illumination, calling on believers to embrace non-materialistic ideals and a virtuous life. The teaching focuses on sunya brahman, the theory of an impossible absolute, that leads followers inward toward realization and away from distractions of the material world. The study also identifies four mahimā yoga in tourism and pilgrimage: saints, through sādhanā, being conducted in general places inviting a voluntary participation of the general population, teachings and instructions delivered at places like cult dānda and gādi, on occasions like māgha melā, practices at tungi that invite blessings, and guru-śiṣyā paramparā. As a result, these practices create the idea of yoga tourism and pilgrimage in mahimā cult, where people can learn yoga directly from saints during their travel. This connects between yoga, spiritual exchange, and cultural exploration.

Keywords: Yoga, Tourism, Pilgrimage, Concept of Transmission, Learning, Initiation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Mahimā cult is based on the principles of idealism, socialism, and humanism [1]. Its spiritual practices include yoga, homa gyana, bhajans (devotional songs), and bolis (tales), which resonate deeply with millions of people in Odisha [2]. Various tourism products, services, and experiences have been transformed and modified by diversity and standardization and homogenization, considering different ethnicities, geographical area religious facts and

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar, SOADU, Dept. of Humanities and Social Science (YOGA), SOA University, Bhubaneswar.

² Register, SOADU, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

³ Professor Emeritus, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar.

practices of tourists and pilgrims [3-5]. This tradition emphasizes the cultural transmission through various forms of yoga: bhakti yoga (devotion), gyana yoga (knowledge), haṭhā yoga (physical), kuṇḍalini yoga (influenced by śaktaḥ and tantra), and raja yoga (meditation). It suggests the ātma yoga, a fresh eighth type of yoga that focuses on self-realization. The principles of spiritual purity, good health, and a caste-free society are the guiding principles that these practices aim to achieve, thereby resolving conflicts and dispelling myths. The philosophy of yoga emphasizes the importance of self-realization, which can be achieved through various forms of pain, ultimately leading to liberation or freedom. Mahimā yoga combines spiritual practices with contemporary experiences, presenting teachings as cultural tourism offerings that benefit both tourists and local communities while safeguarding traditional customs [6]. Therefore, the cultural tourists and pilgrims as well as the saints transform this exchange process into appropriate and interpret aspects of cultural destinations for their profit and expansion of the culture of several communities [7-9]. This study tried to highlight the yogic tradition, a profound philosophical framework that merges idealism with humanism through mahimā cult transmission in tourism and pilgrimage.

2.0 TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF YOGA

Yoga, deeply rooted in Indian tradition, serves as a bridge between cultural heritage and modern tourism. It is celebrated not only as a spiritual practice but also as a lifestyle that promotes physical and mental well-being. The socio-cultural impact of mahimā yoga emphasizes its significance in community harmony, preserving ancient traditions, and promoting sustainable tourism. The yogic activities like sun salutation in various postures are practiced two times a day, in the morning and evening, walking barefoot, never using vehicle assistance, self-restriction on drinking water, and eating foods after sunset. They engage in practices such as Guru Bhakti, Sevā, Bhajana-Kirtana, Dhyāna, Homa Jñāna (Dhūni and Dīpa), and Dikśā [10]. In addition, they also learn how to craft self-made items such as palm leaf umbrellas (Baradā), wooden sticks (Bādi) for support, palm leaf bags (Khesa), tree bark (Bakala), waist threads (Adabandha), and clusters of hair (Jatā Bāndha).

ନୁଆ ବରଡ଼ା ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ଧରି ପ୍ରଭୁ ଆପେ
ଶୂନ୍ୟକୁ ଟେକିଣ ଦେଲେ ବାବାଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଡୋଷେ
ଆପଣା ଶ୍ରୀହସ୍ତ ଲାଗି ହୋଇଥିବ ଭେତ
ଆପଣେ ଶ୍ରୀଗୁରୁ ଦେଲେ କୃପାସିନ୍ଧୁ
ବରଡ଼ା ବେତ ଦେଇଣ ଶୁକଲ୍ୟାଣ କଲେ
ପୂର୍ବ ରୂପ ଗୁଣକୁ ସେ ପୋଛିପକାଇଲେ

Nuān baradā khandie dhari prabhu āpe
Śunyaku tekiṇa dele bābāṅku se tōṣe
Āpaṇā śrihasta lāgi hoithiba beta
Āpaṇe śriguru dele krupāsindhu bhakta
Baradā beta deṇa sukalyāṇa kale
Purba rupa gunāṅku se pōchipakāile [11].

The Lord himself holds the new staff,

Supporting the void.

With his own divine hands, he offers the sacred stick,

The Guru himself bestows the ocean of grace upon the devotees.

By giving the stick, he brings auspiciousness,

Erasing the past form and qualities. [11]

This tradition highlights the transmission of culture through numerous forms of yoga:

- Bhakti Yoga (devotion)
- Gyana Yoga (knowledge)
- Haṭhā Yoga (the physical discipline)
- Kuṇḍalini Yoga (derived from śakṭaḥ and tantra)
- Raja Yoga (meditation).

These practices emphasize intellectual and spiritual growth, including Ātma Yoga—a novel form of yoga that focuses on self-realization as the eighth type of yoga. Mahimā Cult saints follow Guru Bhakti, Guru Seva, and Dhyāna and share knowledge with others to maintain internal peace and good health. These practices involve using intellect and self-reflection to understand one's true self while promoting relaxation techniques. Collectively, they enhance both the internal and external aspects of life. These practices promote relaxation techniques and involve using one's intellect and self-reflection to gain a profound understanding of oneself. They enhance both the external and internal aspects of life.

Guru and Śiṣyā Parampara represent the discipline and dedication of devotees to their guru, leading them towards the realization of the formless god. While engaging in conversations with their cherished śiṣyā [12], it emphasizes the transfer of knowledge and wisdom from the guru to the disciple, therefore ensuring the preservation of spiritual practices within the mahimā cult.

The initiation (Dikṣya) ceremony is conducted regularly for new devotees in three categories:

- Tyāgi (individual)
- Grihasta (family)
- Para Sanyāsī [13].

During this ceremony, Gurus impart the mantra “ALEKHA” to all disciples for constant chanting, “64 SIDDHIES” to Para Sanyāsīs, and instructions on lifestyle, including food, clothing, and shelter practices [14].

ଚଉଷଠି ମୁନି ସର୍ବେ ବିଷ୍ଣୁଆଂଶ ଯାତ
ଏଶୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଭେଦ ବାନା ଦେଲେ ଅବଧୂତ
ଚଉଷଠି ସିଦ୍ଧ ଅନନ୍ତ କୋଟି ସାଧୁ ଘେନି
ନିତ୍ୟ ଖେଳ ଆରମ୍ଭି ବେ ପ୍ରଭୁ ଶୂନ୍ୟମଣି

Causaṭhi muni sarbe bisnuansa jāta

Eṇu tāṅka bheka bānā dele abadhūta
 Causaṭhi siddha Ananta koti sādhu gheni
 Nitya khela ārambhi be prabhu śunyaṁaṇi [15].
 All sixty-four sages are parts of Vishnu,
 Thus, the Avadhuta gave them their robes.
 Sixty-four Siddhas, countless saints gathered,
 The eternal play begins, O Lord Shunyamani!. [15]

These yogic disciplines attract global visitors, offering them a unique opportunity to experience this culture. This fusion of yoga and tourism enriches practitioners' lives and contributes to the Guru and Śiṣyā Parampara.

3.0 CONCEPT OF CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

The concept of cultural transmission revolves around the preservation and sharing of spiritual and cultural practices. Mahimā Yoga serves as a bridge between ancient traditions and modern tourism, promoting the preservation of cultural heritage through practices like Guru and Śiṣyā Parampara, where knowledge and wisdom are passed from guru to disciple. This ensures the preservation of spiritual practices and values.

ଚିହ୍ନି ସଦାଶିଷ୍ୟ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଆଦେଶ
 ଅନେକ ବାଣା ଉଡ଼େଇ ହେ

Cihni sadaśiṣya danti ādesa
 Aneka bānā udai he. [16]

Recognizing the members, they give orders,
 Many arrows are shot, he!. [16]

କଳିଯୁଗେ ତରିବାକୁ ଗୋ ବାଟ ନାହିଁ
 ଗୁରୁ ସେବା ଭକ୍ତି ବିନୁ ଗୋ ଅନ୍ୟ ନାହିଁ [17]

Kalijuge taribaku go bāta nāhin
 Guru sebā bhakti binu gō anya nāhin [17]

In the age of Kali, there is no other path to salvation,
 Except for devotion and service to the Guru. [17]

After the initiation of saints, the gurus advise them to share the gained knowledge so that the mantra "ALEKHA" reaches all people in the society for the welfare and minimizes the dualism [18]. It has been a remarkable medium for the reduction of caste atrocities, a way of worshiping the deity, and transformed into one mantra, "ALEKHA," among devotees of the Mahimā Cult as well as in the society [19]. The spiritual practices are similar to yoga, bhajan (song), gini, khanjar, and the teachings of Mahimā Yogi [20]. Moreover, various cultural events such as sabha, balyaleela, bhajan, and dhuni are various ways of practicing spirituality in the Mahima cult that can be easily transmitted to ordinary people in everyday life.

ଆବର ଗିନି ଖଞ୍ଜାଣୀ
ଶଙ୍କ ଘଣ୍ଟ ବୀର ତୁରୀ
କମ୍ପୁଆଛି ବସୁନ୍ଧରୀ କାଳର ହେ
Ābara gini khañjanī
Śaṅkha ghaṇṭa bīra turī
Kampuchi basundharī kālara he. [21]

Again, the jingling of cymbals, The sound of conch and bells, the heroic trumpet,

The earth trembles, as the time of destruction arrives. [21]

4.0 TRANSMISSION OF YOGA IN PILGRIMAGE

Yoga is a traditional activity of Guru-Śiṣyā Parampara in Mahimā Cult which is one of the best ways of Yoga transmission from Guru and subsequently to the society through different cultural activities and spiritual practices for better health [22].

According to Bhagwat Gita states

ଯତ୍ରୋପରମତେ ଚିତ୍ତଂ ନିରୁଦ୍ଧଂ ଯୋଗସେବୟା ।
ଯତ୍ର ଚୈବାତ୍ମନାୟାନଂ ପଶ୍ୟନ୍ନାତ୍ମନି ତୁଷ୍ୟତି ॥ [23]

“ yatroparamate cittam niruddham yoga-sevayā
yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyann ātmani tuṣyati ” [23]

When the mind, restrained from material activities, becomes still by the practice of Yoga, then the yogi is able to behold the soul through the purified mind, and he rejoices in the inner joy [23].

An active participation consists of guru and Śiṣyā when yoga is transferred through verbal and demonstration as cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 2) carried out in an ashram. The ways of transformation of yoga to Śiṣyā and then the practice of yoga have been done through verbal, ancient manuscripts, scriptures, and commentaries (UNESCO, 2016b). However, this kind of knowledge transfer is free and open to all spatially or linguistically. Additionally, Sanskrit yoga is available in English and other languages and contributed to worldwide spread (Kumar, 2017). Yoga is practiced in house and open since ancient in India and various countries like Bali, USA, France and many more. The composition of Yoga in spiritual practices in tourism and heritage places has been widely acceptable and impart to social cohesion (Shah & Ramamoorthy. 2014). It is worth emphasizing that mobility, social media, tourism and telecommunication have been influencing factors for traditional yoga centres in India such as Vrindavan, Mathura, Varanasi, Ganga Darsan, and Kaibalya Dhama.

Another key aspect is to understand the real form of lifestyle, like household services that highlights the balance between spirituality and daily responsibilities. This approach ensures that spiritual growth is not isolated from everyday duties but is integrated into them. The ultimate goal of Mahima Cult is threefold surrender, which involves different paths of

renunciation. Through these progressive stages, a practitioner attains higher levels of yogic wisdom and enlightenment, ultimately leading to liberation (Mokṣha).

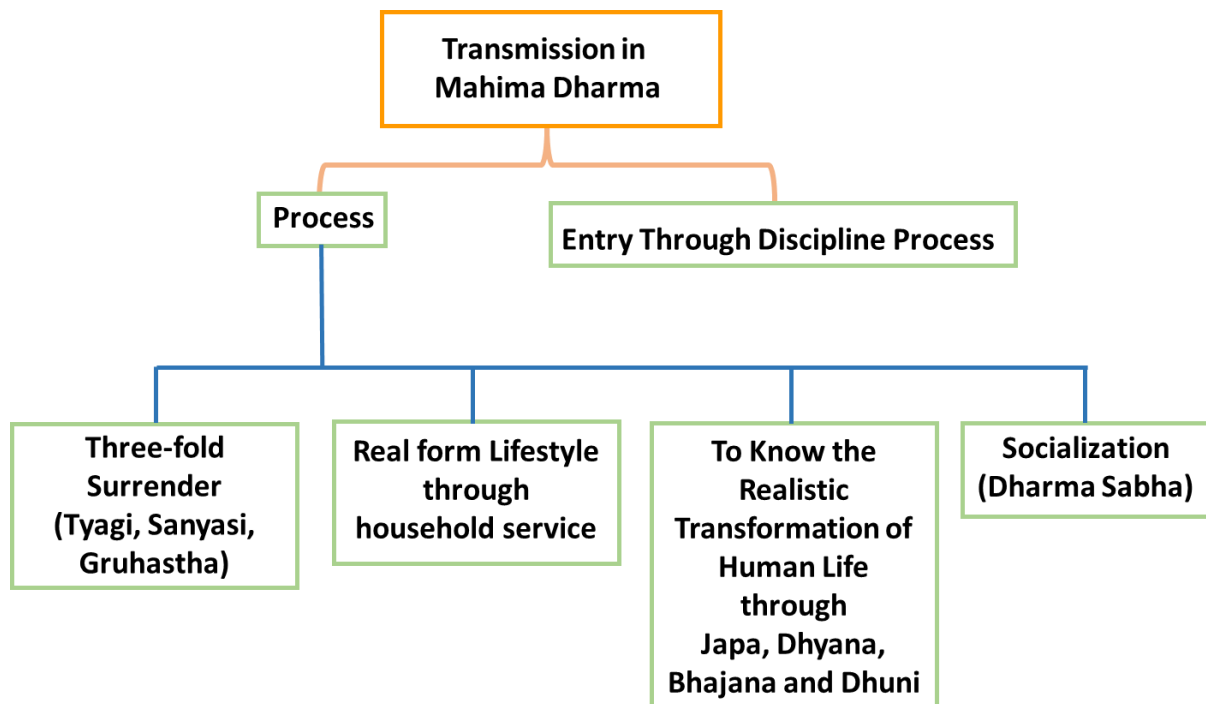


Figure 1 Pictorial representation of medium of Mahima Cult transmission by practice of yoga that leads to the transformation of human life, a structure composed of self-discipline and the spiritual guru's guidance.

In the Mahima cult, a structured yogic path is followed by a Mahima sadhaka, leading them towards spiritual enlightenment. This journey begins with social entry, where a seeker assumes the role of a disciple, whether as a Siddha Sadhu, Tyagi, or Grihastha, and engages themselves in exploring the social reforms (Figure 2). Individuals on this path can be categorized based on their level of dedication. Non-dedicated common people engage in yogic sadhana but remain largely influenced by societal norms, undergoing a process of enculturation. On the other hand, those who dedicate their lives to the guru's advice engage deeply in socialization, reinforcing their spiritual commitment. The individual who is in the stage of Grihastha, who is responsible for both spiritual and social duties, gradually incorporates the Mahima cult into their daily life through assimilation, separation, and integration from worldly attachments. A higher stage involves an all-around development process through yogic sadhana, which leads to realization, a state of deep spiritual awakening. Ultimately, the achievement of Alekh Purusha, the highest level in the Mahima Cult.

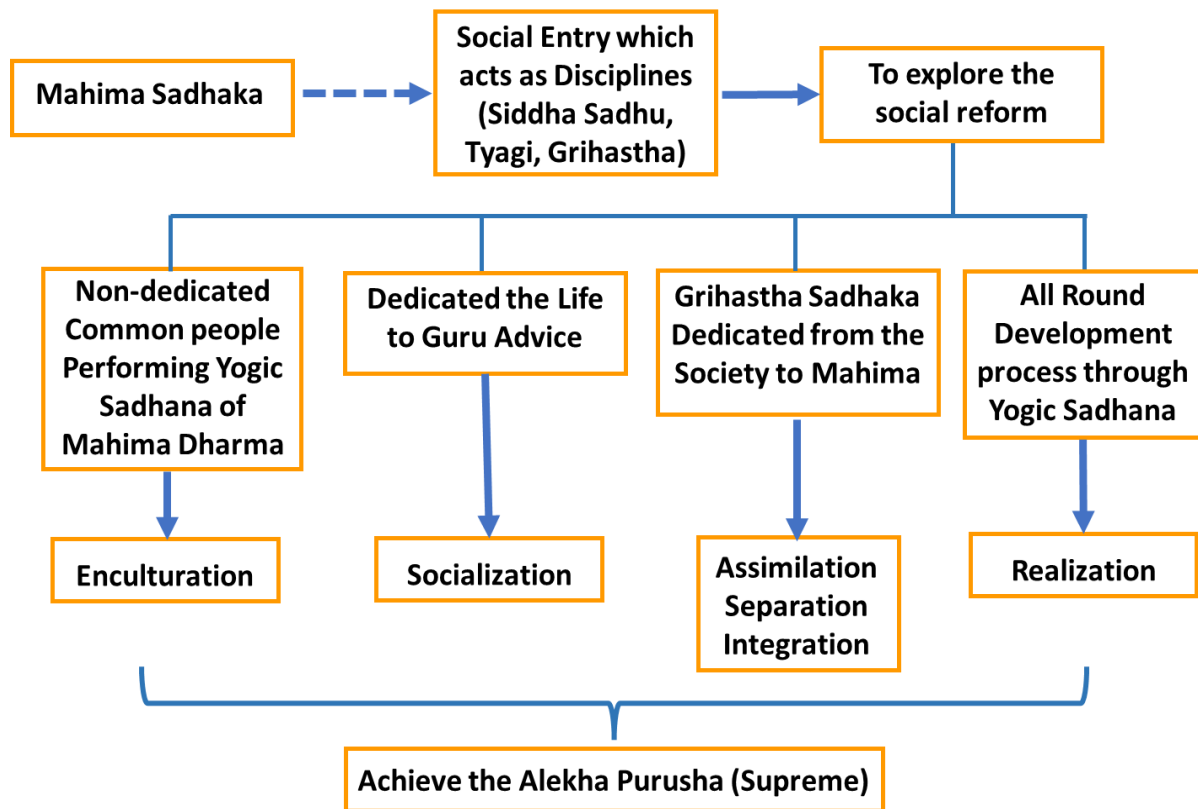


Figure 2 Illustrations of a structured sequential yogic path that a Mahima Sadhaka progresses toward spiritual realization. This journey begins with social entry, accept as a disciple, whether as a Siddha Sadhu, Tyagi, or Grihastha, and work for social reforms.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The evolution of yoga tourism with its socio-cultural impact is really interesting. It is the blending of ancient and modern yoga forms. It involves traditional and modern yoga, adapt as a global phenomenon. This development correlates with the concepts featured in Pilgrimage Meets Tradition: The Socio-Cultural Impact of Mahimā Yoga Sadhana. Mahimā Yoga Sadhana emphasizes the spiritual and cultural of yoga, in which it resonates with the idea of yoga as insubstantial cultural of tourism. Travelers participate in rituals and ceremonies that deepen their spiritual connection with Mahimā Yoga Sadhana. Additionally, the concept of culturalization, acculturation, and transcreation in yoga teaching is to preserving its spiritual essence of Mahimā Yoga.

Further, it has been observed that the local community's yoga tradition, retreat and products is exhibited to attract travellers from different place to place. Therefore, this blend of tradition and modernity represents how yoga serves as a tool for cultural diplomacy and wellness tourism, enriching both the local community and visitors.

In essence, the socio-cultural impact of yoga tourism, as it is described the complements, themes of Mahimā Yoga Sadhana by highlighting the interplay between tradition and modernity, spirituality (Dhuni, Jagngyan), commerce, local, global influences (Dharma Sadhana).

REFERENCES

1. Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 12–21.
2. Chhabra, D. (2010). *Sustainable marketing of cultural and heritage tourism*. Routledge.
3. Du Cros, H., & McKercher, B. (2020). *Cultural tourism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
4. Jovicic, D. (2016). Cultural tourism in the context of relations between mass and alternative tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(6), 605–612.
5. Li, X., & Wang, C. (2023). Understanding the relationship between tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of traditional village cultural landscapes and behavioural intentions, mediated by memorable tourism experiences and place attachment. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 254–273.
6. Baillie, B., Chatzoglou, A., & Taha, S. J. H. M. (2010). Packaging the past: The commodification of heritage. *Journal of Heritage Management*, 3(1), 51–71.
7. Cruz, A. G. B., Seo, Y., & Scaraboto, D. (2024). Between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation: Self-authorizing the consumption of cultural difference. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 50(5), 962–984.
8. Puczko, L. (2006). Cultural tourism in a changing world: Interpretation in cultural tourism. In M. K. Smith & M. Robinson (Eds.), *Politics, participation and (re)presentation* (pp. 227–243). Channel View Publications.
9. Salemink, O. (2012). Appropriating culture: The politics of intangible cultural heritage in Vietnam. In *State, society and the market in contemporary Vietnam* (pp. 158–180). Routledge.
10. Bhōi, B. (1978). *Chautiśā Grantha Mālā* (p. 12, Boli-27–29). Dharma Grantha Store.
11. Dās, N. (2000). *Bādā Krupasindhu babañka Jibaṇi* (Bābā Nandakisore Dās, pp. 43, verses 50–58). Mahima Dharma Parisada, Paschimanchala.
12. Bhoi, B. J. Y. H., Histories, P., & Nāths, L. (2011). The influence of the Naths on Bhima Bhoi and Mahimā Dharma. In I. Banerjee-Dube, *Historian's Eye* (p. 63).
13. Banerjee, I. J. (2006). El enfoque hacia la aldea: una exploración sobre secta y comunidad en la India de hoy. In *Exploraciones sobre la India contemporánea* (pp. 195–214).
14. Beltz, J. J. A. (2001). Healing practices and Mahimā Dharma: A short note on recent fieldwork in Western Orissa. *Internationales Asienforum*, 40(41), 92–102.
15. Pāl, N. (2017). *Mahimā Alekha Purāṇa* (pp. 167–171). Dharma Grantha Store.

16. Jayakruṣṇa Bābā. (2022). Jayakruṣṇa Bhajana Mālā (Gi-97, p. 89, Ch. 1, Verse 5). Dharma Grantha Store.
17. Bhima Bhoi. (2003). Ādi anta Gītā (Ch. 12, p. 109). Dharma Grantha Store.
18. Beltz, J. J. A. (2001). Healing practices and Mahimā Dharma: A short note on recent fieldwork in Western Orissa. *Internationales Asienforum*, 40(41), 92–102.
19. Madhusudharsanan, K., & Murugaiya, S. (n.d.). Tamilnadu Land Ceiling Act of 1961 and its reflections: An assessment
20. Jayakruṣṇa Bābā. (2022). Jayakruṣṇa Bhajan Mālā (Gi-186, p. 174). Dharma Grantha Store.
21. Bhima Bhoi. (2004). Bruhat Bhajan Mālā (Vol. 2, Gi-233, p. 199, Verse 4). Dharma Grantha Store.
22. Mukundan, P. (2024). The battle for Bharat: Nationalism, culture and religion of Hindus. Universal Culture Trust.
23. Rāmsukha Dās, S. (2002). Sadhaka Sanjivani Ṭikā on Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā (Ch. 6, Verse 20, p. 441). Gita Press.