



MADIA

**Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
Research and Training Institute
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2017

FOR E W O R D

Odisha is well known for its 62 categories of Scheduled Tribes including 13 ethno-culturally vulnerable tribal groups who are officially identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Publication and preparation of the photo handbook is an honest attempt by SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar which will provide short photographic and ethnographic account of the tribes for opening the window to see their exotic and colourful life styles to the interested public. The present handbook is the photographic representation of the socio-cultural life of the tribal community known as Madia.

This little known tribe though recognized as one among the sixty two Scheduled Tribes of Odisha, their population is very small i.e., only 2243 in 2011 Census and they are found in some small pockets of concentration. They reside mainly in the hilly terrains of Balasore, Jharsuguda and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. They call themselves as Madia and the area of their domicile as "Madia Desh". The tribe is considered to be a section of the main tribe Koya with some distinct socio-cultural features.

Typical palisade bamboo fencing all around is a distinguishing feature of their settlements. Very close to their settlements one notices stone pillars and wooden posts erected in memory of their dead ancestors. The Koya tribe exhibits the same features. They worship their deities, observe rituals and festivals round the year and enjoy these occasions with song, dance and music. Though in these days changes have taken place in their way of life, they have still preserved the core of their culture.

No doubt, it can be said, that the development interventions by the Government and the prolonged culture contact with the neighbouring castes have made certain impacts in their lifestyle and brought changes in their living pattern. This change has been reflected in their cultural, social and economic life.

This book as a glimpse of lifestyle of the Madia tribe which will not only be useful to the academicians, researchers, tourists but will also be extremely helpful for the administrators, planners and development practitioners in effective planning for tribal development.

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IDENTITY

The state of Odisha is the home land of 62 categories of Scheduled Tribes. From the time immemorial, these tribes are living in the forest area with distinct ethnic characteristics in terms of social organization, culture and language. Madia is one among them. The tribe has been considered to be a section of the Koya tribe with some distinct features. Besides Odisha, this tribal community is found in Chandrapur and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra and Bastar division of Chattisgarh also.



Concentration

Madia is numerically a small tribe in Odisha found in some small concentrations. They reside mainly in the hilly terrains of Balasore, Jharsuguda and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. They identify themselves as MADIA and call the area of their domicile as Madia Desh. In other states like Chhatishgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra they like the Koya tribe are listed as a sub-tribe of

the Gond tribe and they are divided into two groups such as Bada Madia and Chhota Madia, which is based on their place of domicile. In Odisha the physical features of this tribe is similar to the Koya tribe and resembles many of their socio-cultural characteristics.

Population & Literacy:

As per the 2011 Census data the total population of the tribe in Odisha is 2243, out of which 1106 are males and 1137 are females. The sex ratio is 1028 which is in favour of the female population. There is fluctuation in their decennial population growth rates over successive censuses from 1991 - 2001 to 2001-2011 showing positive and negative trends respectively.

According to Census 2011, the total literacy rate of Madia tribe is 48.36 per cent. For the males it is 61.91 percent and for the females it is 35.43 percent.



Language:

The mother tongue of the Madia tribe called Madia belongs to Dravidian family of languages that is closely akin to "Gondi" - the language of the Gond and Koya tribes. Since, the vocabulary of the Madia language is very limited, they usually depend on the major lingua franca of the region where they live. Hence, in Odisha most of the Madia people have acquired proficiency in Odia language for inter-community communication.



Dress and Ornaments:

Unlike some other primitive tribes, the Madias, who reside in Odisha, do not have any significant or specific dressing pattern to distinguish themselves from others. Their dressing pattern resembles to the simple dresses (both for male and female) used by the other tribal communities. Some male members also wear Dhoti, Banyan, Shirt or Pajama. The women folk usually wear saree, petticoat and blouse. Most of the Madia women wear few ornaments made of silver and other cheap metals. The old women like to make various types of tattoos on their arms and on the feet. Now-a-days, tattooing has gone out of fashion.



SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING PATTERN

In general, the Madia tribe likes to stay in the hilly tracks or hilly terrains adjacent to the plain areas of the districts indicated above. They prefer to live in uni-ethnic villages, but now-a-days they have also settled down in multiethnic villages. The area of their habitation has moderate climate with humidity and medium rainfall.

As found in most of the tribal settlements, they prefer to live in separate hamlets in multiethnic villages maintaining their socio-cultural identity. The Madia villages are mostly connected with narrow footpaths to the main roads. The villages do not have a specific boundary and the houses are built in a scattered manner.





Like that of the Koya tribe, the settlement pattern of the Madia does not follow a specific design throughout the locality. Typical palisade bamboo fencing all around is a distinguishing feature of their settlements. Very close to their settlements one notices stone pillars and wooden posts erected in memory of their dead ancestors.



Each Madia house consists of one or two small huts, which are used as sleeping rooms. The walls of the houses are made of tree branches and bamboo, which are thickly plastered with mud. The gable shaped roofs are thatched with a type of jungle grass locally known as Sindi that they collect from nearby forest. In the modern days bricks are used for making walls and roofs are made with tiles by some people.



Mostly, the houses have a rectangular shape and do not have any windows for passage of light and air. The hearth is built in one corner of the house. Each house is enclosed by a boundary wall made of neatly woven bamboo splits. In addition to the living space for the human beings each house also has small sheds for sheltering pigs, goats and fowls. There is a small kitchen garden within the boundary wall.

Household Articles:

Like most of the tribal communities, the household asset possessions of the Madias are very few and reflect a poor picture of their economy. The household articles normally constitute utensils made of earth or aluminum plates of different sizes for their daily use. They keep bamboo baskets of various sizes for storing food grains. They also have stone implements like the grinding stone (sila). Further, their household belongings include plough, leveler, yoke, spade (kodi) and crowbar (gauti) for digging bamboo basket (dola) and carrying pole (bhara). To undertake fishing and hunting activities they also keep different types of fishing and hunting implements such as fishing traps, bird traps, rabbit traps and nets, bow and arrows, etc.



SOCIAL LIFE

As has been described earlier the Madia tribe is socially divided into two groups such as Bada Madia and Sana Madia. The former group asserts social superiority over the latter. The tribe as well as its two groups are endogamous who are further subdivided into a number of exogamous totemic clans (Bansas) namely Maria, Madakam and Madiam etc. The clan names are used as surnames by the concerned clan members.



Family

The family in Madia society is patriarchal and patrilineal in nature where father is the head of the family and descent, inheritance and succession goes along the male line. Property of the family is equally divided among the sons but the eldest son gets an extra share (Jesty Bhag). Though daughters do not usually get any share from paternal property, they usually get some shares from mother's ornaments. Father is regarded as the authority of the family and after his death, the elder son succeeds him.



Status of Women

Though, women are allowed to participate in various social, economic and religious activities, their participation in decision making and political activities is limited. However, the husband consults his wife in all important family matters. Women keep themselves engaged in all sorts of household chores like fetching water, cooking for the family, cleaning the house and cowshed and entertaining guests etc. Apart from these activities, they also collect firewood, look after the domestic animals, help the male members in the agricultural operations. Beyond this, if required they also supplement the family income by working as daily wage labourers. In real practice, the Madia women control their family expenditures.

Interestingly, in comparison to some of the tribes and backward castes, the status of women in Madia community is better. A Madia girl has the freedom to have premarital intimacy with her lover and to choose her husband. As a married woman, she has also been given freedom to divorce her husband for ill treatment and impotency. She is free to spend her own earnings. A husband normally does not have the right to interfere in her legitimate affairs.



Life Cycle Rituals:

Pregnancy and Child Birth

Pregnancy is an important part of life of every woman and the Madia women are no exception to it. But some pre and post delivery restrictions in their diet and movement are strictly imposed on them by their society. A pregnant woman is not allowed to visit the cremation ground and come out of the house during eclipses. She is also forbidden to enter into the shrine during an advanced stage of pregnancy. Restriction is also imposed on taking dry fish.

During delivery a professional midwife called dhai is called for facilitating the child birth. A bonded of sign twigs are hanged at the entrance door of the house to indicate birth pollution.

After birth of a child, pollution is observed for a period of 21 days for the whole family. Pollution is partly eradicated on the seventh day which is known as uthiari, when the mother and baby are shifted to another room. The delivery room is cleansed with a plaster of cow dung and old earthen pots are replaced by new ones.

The final purificatory rite is observed on the 21st day. Their traditional priest (Perma) is invited to perform the ritual and name giving ceremony. He selects a name for the baby in consultation with the parents, maternal uncle and other kinsmen. After the ritual, the invited kinsmen are entertained with special dishes like khiri (rice porridge), pitha (locally prepared cake) etc.



Puberty Rite

The puberty rite of a girl is observed like other tribal communities as soon as the girl attains her puberty (etarta). She is kept confined in a room for seven days so that no male members can see her face. In the early morning of the seventh day the girl takes full bath after anointing her body with turmeric paste and puts on new cloths. No village or family feast is hosted in this occasion.



Marriage

The Madias prefer adult marriage and monogamy. But a second marriage is allowed in case of barrenness of the first wife. But in such cases the consent of the first wife and the approval of the community council are mandatory. In such a situation the husband is also allowed to marry the younger sister of his wife (sorrorate). The married women use vermilion on the forehead and lac bangles or shell as the symbols of their marital status. Well-to-do Madia males, who could afford the cost of marriage, are allowed to have more than one wife.



In the past the bride price in cash or kind was very much in vogue in their society as a social custom. But nowadays, this system has been reduced to a symbolic gesture. Also, due to the increased cultural contact with the neighbouring caste societies, the custom of bride-price is slowly giving way to the system of dowry nowadays.

Marriage is one of the major social functions performed in the Madia community. The marriageable age has been fixed by the community, which for boys varies from the age of twenty to twenty five and for girls from eighteen to twenty five years. The consanguinal marriage with



maternal uncle's daughter is accepted and allowed by the community. The types of marriages prevalent in the Madia tribe, in general, are marriage by (a) negotiation, (b) mutual consent, (c) elopement and (d) service. In case of marriage by negotiation, the traditional council plays a vital role and the concerned family is required to take the concurrence of the traditional council.

The marriage ceremony known as pendul is an important social function, without which a man or woman lose their identity in the society. They accept marriage as a necessity in their community as they have to continue the line of reproduction to their next generations. In the Madia society, wife is the indispensable partner in all spheres. An

observation and analysis of the daily work culture of the Madia men indicates to the fact that a Madia man cannot do anything without the help of a wife in his ordinary daily walks of life. The criteria for an ideal wife are her sound health and ability to undertake arduous labour in economic as well as social activities. The criteria for a good husband lie in the fact that the male is physically tall and healthy. Also, his capability to support the family is seen as a major criterion.

Divorce is allowed on the grounds of marital incompatibility and maladjustment with the approval of the traditional council headed by Pedda, the village head man.



Death

The Madia practise burial for disposal of the dead. The eldest son, who throws soil into the pit, first, becomes the chief mourner. The mortuary rites in the Madia community are strictly observed by all the concerned members. The death pollution is observed up to the eleventh day. Normally the ritual starts from the fourth day. During this ritual, the house of the deceased is smeared with cow dung water and all the old earthen pots are replaced by new ones and cloths are washed. All the male members of the family get shaved and women get their nails pared. Perma, the traditional village priest is called for to perform the purificatory ritual on the tenth day. On the eleventh day a community level ritual is performed and the community members are entertained with a feast. Very close to their settlements one notices stone pillars and wooden posts erected in memory of their dead ancestors.

LIVELIHOOD

The Madias are primarily settled cultivators and wherever there is the need and scope, they practice shifting cultivation to certain extent. It is supplemented by animal husbandry and seasonal forest collections. They domesticate fowls, cows, goats and pigs to cater to their protein dietary requirements, to sacrifice in their rituals and to entertain their guests with non-veg dishes.





They collect and sale various types of seasonal forest produce like honey, tamarind, Kendu leaves (used in manufacturing of a kind of cigarette), the Sal leaves and Siali leaves used in making leaf plates (khali), a particular kind of grass used in making broom sticks and the forest fruits like mango, tamarind, Kendu, Char, Mango, Jackfruit, Amla etc., are generally sold in the open market. They also gather palm fruit, the whitish juicy kernels of which is a popular food during summer and even many non tribal people like to consume them to beat the heat.



As petty traders they usually market either their own surplus produce or carry the produce of others from their community or neighbouring communities for sell in the local weekly markets. Some of them also are artisans who are experts in various bamboo crafts including mats for fencing, dust bins and baskets.



Under the changing circumstances of the present times, slowly the Madias have started using some modern methods of cultivation like the use of high yielding variety of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. They are also using some of the modern agricultural tools like power sprays and electric motors to irrigate their lands. But their population growth puts a pressure on the land available to them for cultivation. Hence, their land holdings are getting smaller and smaller day by day and most of the Madias have become small and marginal farmers. Their occupational pattern has changed over the years from the agriculturists to other avocations like small trading, wage earning and service.



Food Habit:

They usually grow Paddy, Maize, Jowar, Ragi, Bajra and other kind of millets in their fields which constitute their cereal food items. Tubers and roots such as tella chenna gadda, kirismatilu and edible green leaves such as clencheli, doggali, gumuru, thota kura, boddukura are also consumed. As usual they are very fond of and also most often use various seasonal fruits available in the forest area. In festive occasions they prepare khiri (rice porridge) and pitha (local cake) etc. Consumption of pulses, vegetables and fruits has increased and in recent times some Madia families are also taking chapattis (wheat bread) at night instead of rice.

In addition to these foods, mostly the men folk like to take handia (rice beer), kushno modo (Mahua liquor) and Todi (Palm wine) as their drinks. They grow "Salap" trees - a kind of palm tree that grows tall with leaves at their zenith. They extract from the tree a whitish sap that is known as 'kallu' which is a popular intoxicant consumed by them. Besides, they take tea, smoke tobacco and chew betel. Both men and women use 'gurakhu' (tobacco paste) for cleaning their teeth.



RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES

The Madia believes in animism and polytheism. Over period of time some elements of Hinduism have entered into their belief system and as a result they have incorporated some Hindu Gods and Goddesses into their pantheon. Mostly the deities called Bura and 'Buri are revered as family deities. They worship Mother Earth as their village deity.



Their important festivals are Bija Pandu, Kurum Pandu, Dusshera, Itt Pandu, Ikk Pandu, Sikul Pandu, Bimud Pandu, Karta Pandu etc which are observed with full devotion by them. On these festive occasions, their houses are cleaned and walls and courtyards are decorated with ikon / jhoti (design drawn with pounded rice solution). Special delicious dishes are prepared and offered to the deities on these occasions. The Perma (village priest) is invited to perform the ritual. They offer sacrifices of eggs, pigeons, pigs, fowls, goats and buffaloes to appease their deities and spirits and solicit their blessings.

Nowadays, they have accepted certain changes in their religious domain. They participate in local fairs and festivals like Rather Yare, Dessert and Dole Yare etc.



Dance:

Folk dance and music in general is the expression of the ethos of the tribal communities. The Maida tribe has imbibed the same trend. For them dance is one of the most accepted and practiced form of amusement and they are very fond of this art. They have some specific traditional folk songs for different festive occasions and marriage ceremony. Their traditional form of folk dance is performed both by men and women.

They dance usually with a Gondi chorus and the villagers dance round a fire in some open space near the hamlet usually in the night. Their most favorite dance is performed with a peculiar rippling step forward with the foot dragged. The dance does not look so graceful when done by a single individual, but when performed in unison by the dancers in a circle singing a're-la', 're-la', chorus to which the step match, the dance looks simply marvelous. In some villages, where the headman is an enthusiast for the pastime, a trained band performs weird and wonderful step dances to the sound of the drum. At a big dance, the trained band occupies the inner ring round the fire, while the common folk, men and maids in separate rings move round in great circles in opposite ways. All are dressed for the occasion in their best, bearing in their hands weird ornaments of wicker work, with garlands of flowers on their necks and in their hair. Also, feather ornaments are humorously or coquettishly worn. Usually, men and women dance in separate circles but in some specific dance occasions the young men choose their brides, both the boys and girls dance in couples.

Now-a-days, Sankirtan, a popular pastime devotional musical performance staged in the villages during evening by the caste people, has been adopted by this community and they also participate in this event freely with their caste neighbours in the village. Musical instruments like kholo (Murdang) madal (Big drum), gini and bansi (flute) etc are used for Sankirtan.



SOCIAL CONTROL

In the Madia society, the mechanism of social control has been structured in a two-tier system, one at the village level and another at the regional level. At the village level, the Pedda is the head of the Jati Sabha (Traditional Village Council) who is assisted by the Dakua - the messenger. Elderly persons of the village act as the members of the council. The main function of the council is to regulate marriage and other matters concerning the village and to settle disputes arising there in.



The relatively modern regional council known as Mahasabha is headed by office bearers having modern designations like Sabhapati (President), Sampadak (Secretary) and Treasurer who handles the financial matters of the council. The posts of the traditional village headmen and messengers of different villages are hereditary whereas the offices of regional council are filled up through an electoral process, mainly by voice vote.

Severe punishment is imposed on the offenders by these forums in cases of adultery, incest, breach of norms and customs, killing of cows and for disobedience to the authority of caste council etc. The offenders in such cases are punished with heavy cash fine and or jatibahar (social boycott). With the introduction of Gram Panchayat system by the Government after independence, the importance of the traditional council is gradually declining.



DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

After independence, the Government has also taken various measures for overall development of the Madia community. The core economic programmes implemented by the government and Non-Government agencies are development of land, agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, irrigation and education. The Madias have been benefitted by these programmes. The overall strategy of these programmes focuses on empowering the Madias and enabling them to improve their living conditions along with food security. Emphasis is being given to increase their level of income and improve their overall quality of life through more efficient natural resource management.

The programmes for the development of the Madia tribe also gives emphasis on the possibility of exploring the existing scope in addressing the broader issues of sustainable livelihood including savings and credit, access to common property resources, off-farm/non-farm activities, issues related to non-timber forest products and community infrastructure of the community.





Under horticulture development programme, the Madias have taken up plantation of economic species in hill slopes as well as backyard plantations of guava plants, banana suckers in their courtyards supplied free of cost.

Under the composite land based scheme, small irrigation projects, water harvesting structures, lift irrigation points have been constructed for providing irrigation along with the provisions for land development, land shaping and agricultural inputs for improving the farm output. Besides, they are being encouraged to use high yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides and practice rotation of crops, mixed and doubles cropping by adopting modern techniques of cultivation.

The programmes for development of education, health and sanitation, communication, provision of safe drinking water, housing and electricity etc. has made positive impact in their way of life. The recent development interventions through the SHGs of men and women have brought significant changes in the socio economic life of the Madia families.

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