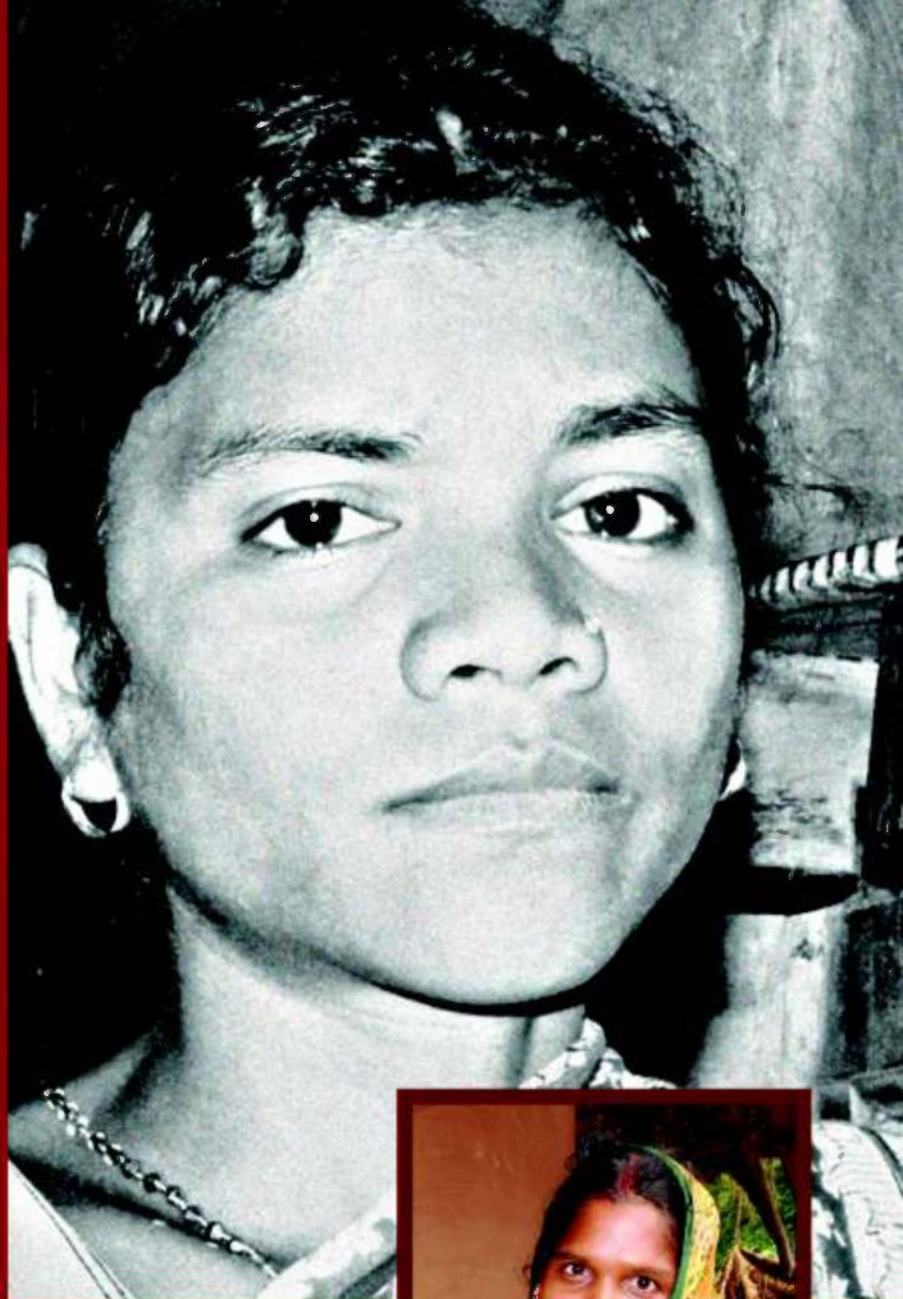


# BATHUDI



**SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE**  
(SCSTRTI) C.R.P. SQUARE, BHUBANESWAR-751003



# Preface

**B**athudi is a major Hinduised tribe of Odisha numbering 2, 17, 395 persons as per 2011 Census. Largely they inhabit the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balesore. They have synonyms like Bathdi, Bahutuli and Bathuhuli. They believe that they are one of the original settlers of Bhanjabhumi that consists of the present Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts in Odisha and partly Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. Some Bathudis say that they have migrated from Bakua in the Similipal hills.

There is nothing very spectacular about their dress and ornaments pattern. They live in uniclan and multi-clan settlements. In multi-ethnic villages they live in separate wards maintaining their cultural identity. Their houses are organized in two rows leaving a village street in between. They are settled agriculturists and supplement their income by wage earning and forest collection.

The Bathudi is an endogamous community and is divided into several totemistic exogamous clans resembling those of the Hindu castes. They do not dishonor their clan totems and do not kill or do any harm to them. They use surnames similar to those of Hindu castes.

The Bathudi family - the smallest and an important social unit is mostly monogamous, nuclear, patrilocal and patrilineal in nature. Pregnancy and child birth are welcome events in the Bathudi family. The birth pollution is observed for nine days. They have no tradition of observing puberty rites for girls.

Marriage within the same clan is strictly prohibited. In their society it is obligatory for both boys and girls to receive Karna Mantra from the Vaishnav Guru before their marriage. They consider marriage by negotiation (Sambandha) as ideal and prestigious. The other modes of marriage are by consent (bhalpai), by exchange (badal), by intrusion (dhuka) etc. Remarriage of widows and widowers and divorcees, junior levirate and junior sarorate (Sanga) are socially permitted. Cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages are strictly tabooed in their society.

Bathudi profess Hinduism with amalgamation of elements of animism. They observe local Hindu festivals and worship Hindu deities along with their tribal deities in the Sarnaor Gramthan - the sacred grove. Due to spread of education, impact of various development programmes and modernisation, visible changes are seen in their way of life at present.

Shri Sitaram Pingua, Research Assistant who have prepared the basic draft of this book deserves my thanks. My special thanks goes to Shri S.C. Mohanty, Consultant and Shri B.K. Paikray, Research Assistant, who have rendered technical guidance to Shri Pingua and thoroughly edited the text. Hope this illustrative book will be liked by all who are interested to know about the tribes of Odisha.

**A. B. Ota**  
Director & Special Secretary





# Bathudi

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2019

# Identity

There are 62 Scheduled Tribe communities residing in the different district of Odisha. Among them Bathudi is a major tribe. They are one of the highly Hinduised tribes of Odisha. They generally inhabit the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Balesore in the State.

They are also known as Bathdi, Bahutuli and Bathuhuli. They believe themselves as one of the original settlers of Bhanjabhumi that consists of the present Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts in Odisha and partly Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. According to Raghavaiah (1972), they are born from the arm (bahu) of Lord Brahma - the Creator. Risley (1981) describes the Bathudi as a small aboriginal tribe of uncertain origin found in the tributary State of Odisha. Some Bathudis say that they have migrated from Bakua in the Similipal hills. They strongly believe that the zamindars of the community originally reigned in the Similipal range and gradually they established their citadel (garh) in Jashipur area.







## Physical Traits

By their physical traits, the Bathudis have short to medium stature with dolichocephalic head, moderately broad face and a medium nose. According to Chatterjee (1929), physically, Bathudis are long headed, of medium stature, of stout build, have deep brown (body) colour or light brown, medium nose slightly depressed at the root, stiff hair and brown eyes.

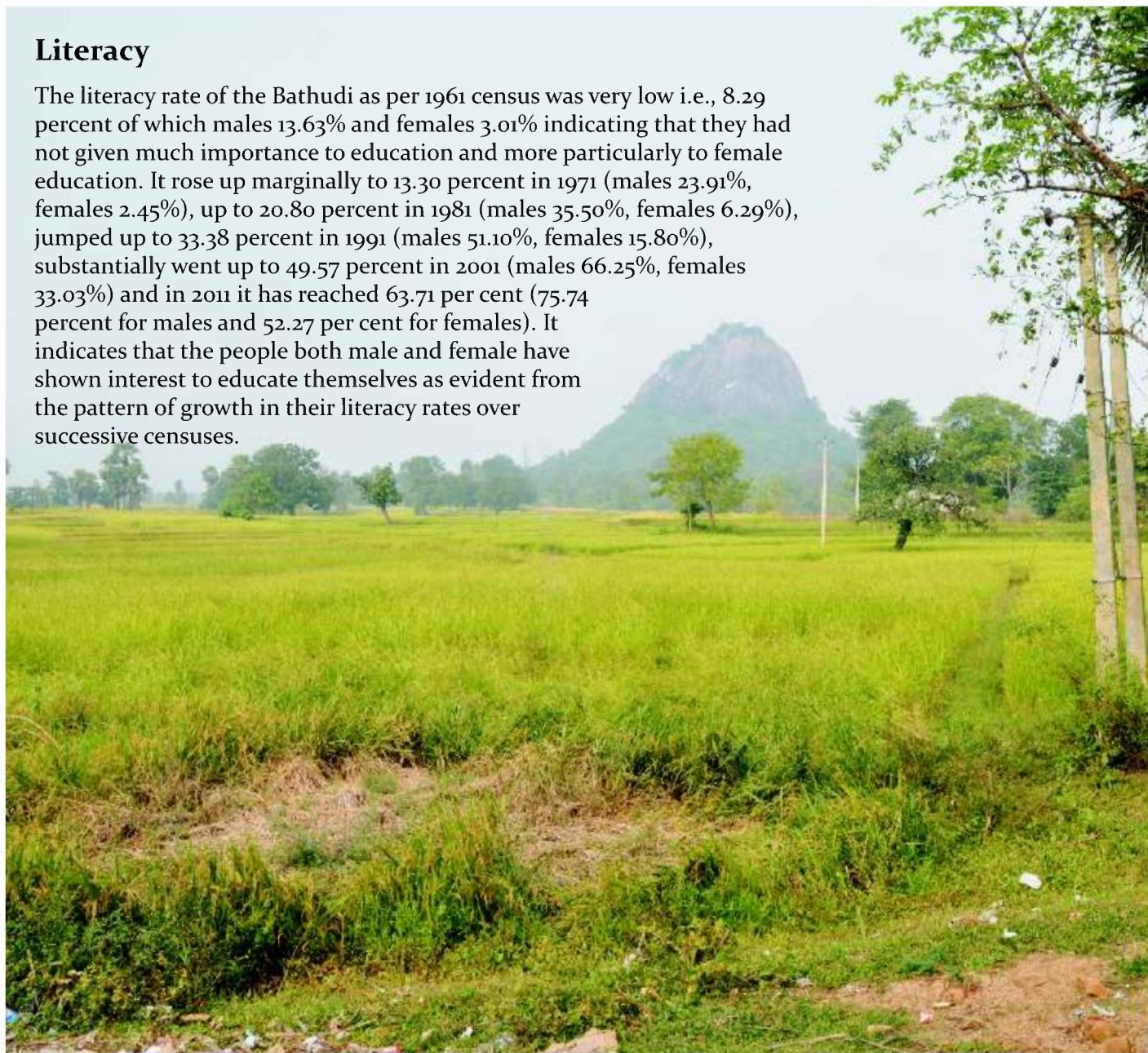
## Population and Concentration

As per 2011 Census, the population of Bathudi in Odisha is 2, 17, 395 accounting for 2.26 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the State. District wise distribution of their population shows that Mayurbhanj district has the highest concentration of 1, 18,939 Bathudis followed by Kendujhar (78,964) and Baleshwar (16,502). The overall sex ratio of their population in Odisha is 1041 females per 1000 males. Their population has registered a growth rate of 10.44 per cent during the decade (2001-2011). As compared to other States, the tribe has its largest concentration in Odisha.



## Literacy

The literacy rate of the Bathudi as per 1961 census was very low i.e., 8.29 percent of which males 13.63% and females 3.01% indicating that they had not given much importance to education and more particularly to female education. It rose up marginally to 13.30 percent in 1971 (males 23.91%, females 2.45%), up to 20.80 percent in 1981 (males 35.50%, females 6.29%), jumped up to 33.38 percent in 1991 (males 51.10%, females 15.80%), substantially went up to 49.57 percent in 2001 (males 66.25%, females 33.03%) and in 2011 it has reached 63.71 per cent (75.74 percent for males and 52.27 per cent for females). It indicates that the people both male and female have shown interest to educate themselves as evident from the pattern of growth in their literacy rates over successive censuses.







## Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dress pattern of Bathudi is plain and simple. The old men wear small dhoti or a napkin and aged women wear a saree which reaches up to the knee. These are purchased from local weavers or from local markets. The young boys wear long dhoti, shirt, shorts and even shoes and young girls wear the blouse and petticoat. Little children below seven years of age go naked.

When men and women are working they wear small clothes. Now-a-days, due to external contact, modern dresses like shirts, banyans, pants for males and blouses, coloured sarees, ribbons, etc for females are being used. Women love to adorn themselves with varieties of ornaments for beautification. The Bathudi women wear glass or metal bangles around the wrist, rings in the fingers, toes rings (Jhuntia), studs on nose and ears, necklaces and chains around the neck, anklets on legs, clips and flower designs in the head hair bun. Those ornaments are made of copper or brass. They purchase all the ornaments from the local markets or weekly fairs. The well-to-do Bathudi women wear gold ornaments.



# Settlement and Housing

The Bathudi settlements are mostly uni-clan and homogenous. Multi-clan settlements are also found. In multi-ethnic villages they live in separate wards maintaining their cultural identity. Their houses are organized in two rows leaving a village street in between.

Usually, individual houses have two rooms and are generally made of mud walls supported by wooden poles, bamboo frames and country tiles etc. having rectangular gabled roofs. Most of their houses are thatched with paddy straw. They do not construct windows in any room for ventilation. They build high verandahs enclosed by mud walls in front and rear side of the house. Each house has two doors out of which one door opens to the courtyard and the other to the back yard. The bigger room is partitioned with a wall of which the bigger one is used as living room and the smaller one as kitchen.

They construct a shelf with wooden planks supported by mud wall to store their household utensils and agricultural products in one side of their living room. The walls are polished by their women by using white or red soils mixed with lime. Now a days, some well-to-do families build multi-roomed houses consisting of living room, store, dinning, kitchen and cowshed, etc.

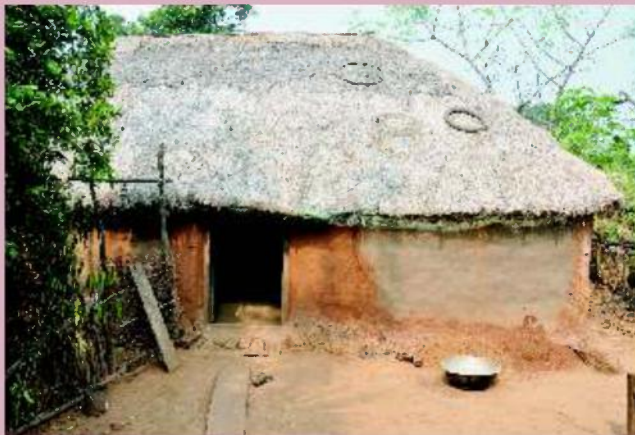
They build separate sheds for cattle, poultry and goats in the rear side of their house. They also raise kitchen gardens in back side of their houses for producing different kinds of green vegetables for their household consumption.















## Household articles

The Bathudis possess very few household articles. They use handmade wooden framed cots and mats made of wild date-palm leaves for sleeping purpose. They rarely use wooden furniture. Most of the Bathudis use earthen pots for storing drinking water and aluminum vessels for cooking. The aluminum plates are used for taking meals. They use handmade bamboo baskets for storing their grains. They also have few agricultural implements, hunting weapons and fishing nets etc.





## *Social Life*

The Bathudi is an endogamous community and is divided into several totemistic exogamous septs (Gotra or Khili), viz. Saluka (wood husking), Kusmardia (wild grass), Nag (serpent), Thariyar (a wild fruit), Panipuk (a water insect), Sankhiyar (conch), Dhanphul (paddy flower) and Parasar, Kashyap, Bharadwaja (all Rishis), Shalya (Army General), etc. somewhat similar to those of the Hindu castes. They do not dishonor their clan totems and do not kill or do any harm to them. They use surname similar to those of Hindu castes such as Nayak, Giri, Bishal, Rout, Khawli, Bansori, Patra, Mundiya, Khandai, Sangia, etc. that relates to the particular military or domestic service rendered by the ancestors to the then Zamindars.

In Bathudi community family is the smallest and an important social unit and it is predominantly monogamous, nuclear, patrilocal and patrilineal in nature. They mostly prefer to live in nuclear family. Joint and polygynous families are rarely found.

Inheritance of paternal property follows the rule of equigeniture in male line only and in the family having no male successor the married daughters inherit the ancestral property. Issueless families can also adopt a male child from the nearest patri-lineage who latter on inherits the family's property. The eldest son succeeds to father's social position.



# LIFE CYCLE

## Pregnancy and Child birth

The pregnancy of a married woman is a joyous event in the Bathudi family. They observe pre-delivery ritual (sad bhaskhan) in the 9th month of pregnancy. The woman's parent's family presents sweet meats for their pregnant daughter followed by the lineage members and relatives.

They engage an experienced woman of their own community as dhaito assist for easy and safe delivery of the child. They use a corner of their living room as the lying-in-chamber. Except women, male members are not allowed to enter into the chamber.

The birth pollution continues for nine days. During the pollution period the mother is restricted to enter into the kitchen and cook food for the family or touch the cooking pots and utensils. On the 10th day after the pollution period is over they clean the house with water mixed with mud and cow dung. The mother takes the purificatory bath in the nearby pond or hill stream anointing her body with turmeric paste and mustard oil and then she resumes her routine household chores. The family members take purificatory bath. The barber pairs the nails of the mother and cuts hairs of the father. The washer man cleans the clothes of the family members. In the evening the family hosts a feast to the lineage members and the new born baby is presented to them for their blessings and prayer for his/her bright future. They observe the tonsure ceremony (Ekosia) on the 21st day and on that day the new born baby is given a name by rice divination method.



## Puberty

They do not observe puberty rite for their pubescent girls on attainment of their first menarche.

## Marriage

Bathudi is exclusively an endogamous community which is divided into several exogamous clans. Marriage within the same clan is strictly prohibited in their society as clan members consider themselves as brothers and sisters for they consider themselves to be the descendants from a common ancestor. In their society monogamy and adult marriage is the rule. Usually a boy gets married at the age of 18-24, and the girl, at the age of 15-18 years. The child marriage is strictly prohibited in their community. In their society it is obligatory for both boys and girls to receive Karna Mantra from the Vaishnav Guru before their marriage. Marriage is a very expensive affair in their community.

They consider marriage by negotiation (Sambandha) as ideal and prestigious. The other modes of marriage are by consent (bhalpai), by exchange (badal) by intrusion (dhuka) etc. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees, junior levirate and junior sororate (Sanga) are socially permitted. Cross-cousin and parallel cousin marriages are strictly tabooed in their society.





The marriage proposal generally comes from the boy's side. It is finalised through negotiations and mutual consent. Two to four family relatives are engaged as dandia (go-between) for negotiation. They consult an astrologer before taking the final decision.

Traditionally, they have the institution of bride price (kanya pan). The minimum amount of bride-price is Rs 200 to 300 in cash, 75 kg of boiled rice, 30 to 60 kg of paddy and a he-goat. The amount of bride price depends upon the economic condition of the bridegroom's family. Now-a-days the dowry system has been introduced.

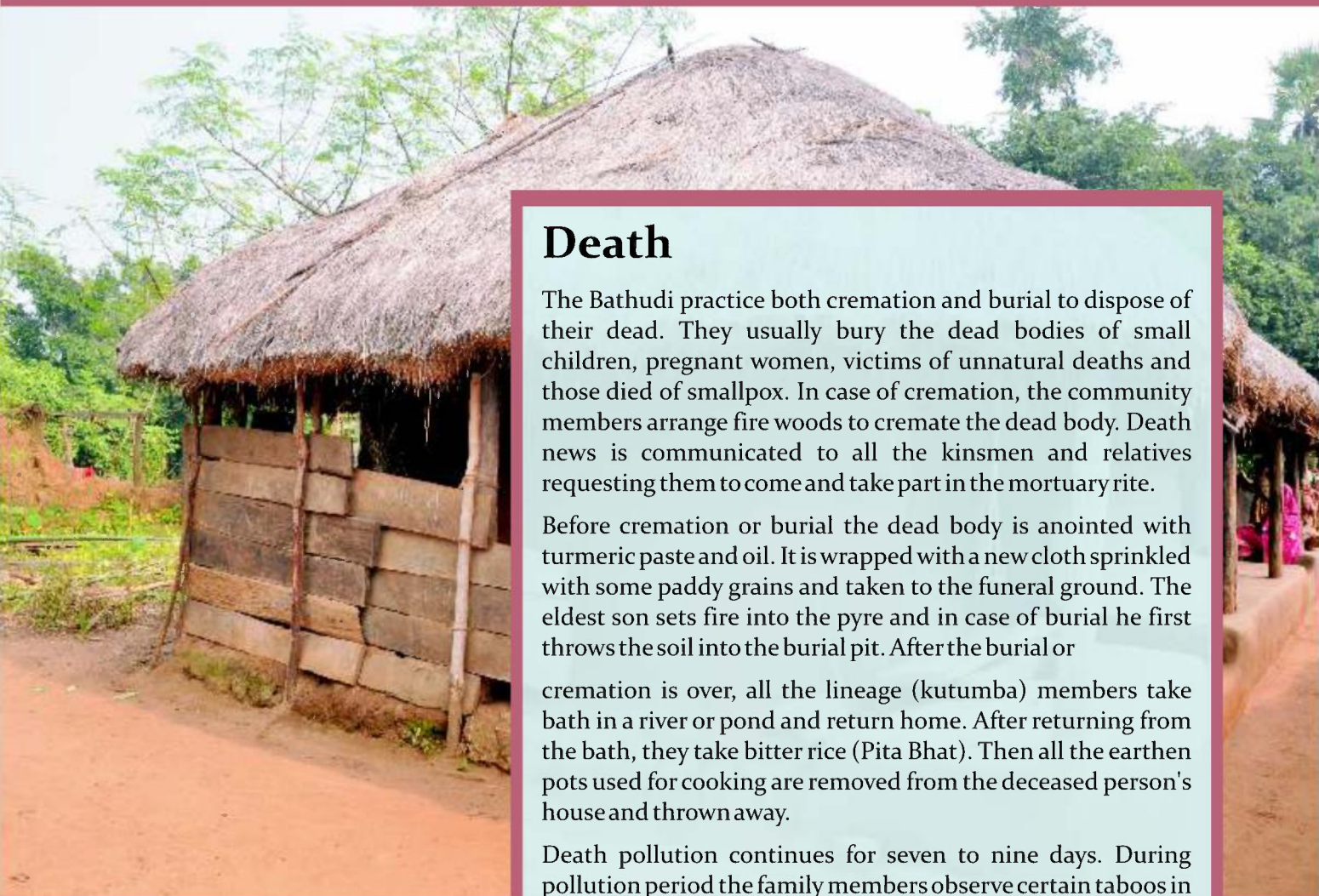


They perform the marriage rites engaging a Brahmin priest following the Vedic traditions of the neighbouring castes. The bride after a week of her marriage cooks food for the family which the newly wedded couple offers first to the family ancestors and then the family members take it.

## Divorce

The divorce (charachari) is permitted in the Bathudi society and either party can divorce his/her spouse on the grounds of misunderstanding, misbehavior, impotency, cruelty, poor maintenance, adultery and suffering from incurable diseases etc. The cases of divorce are decided by their traditional community council. If divorce is granted, the bride-price must be refunded to the husband.





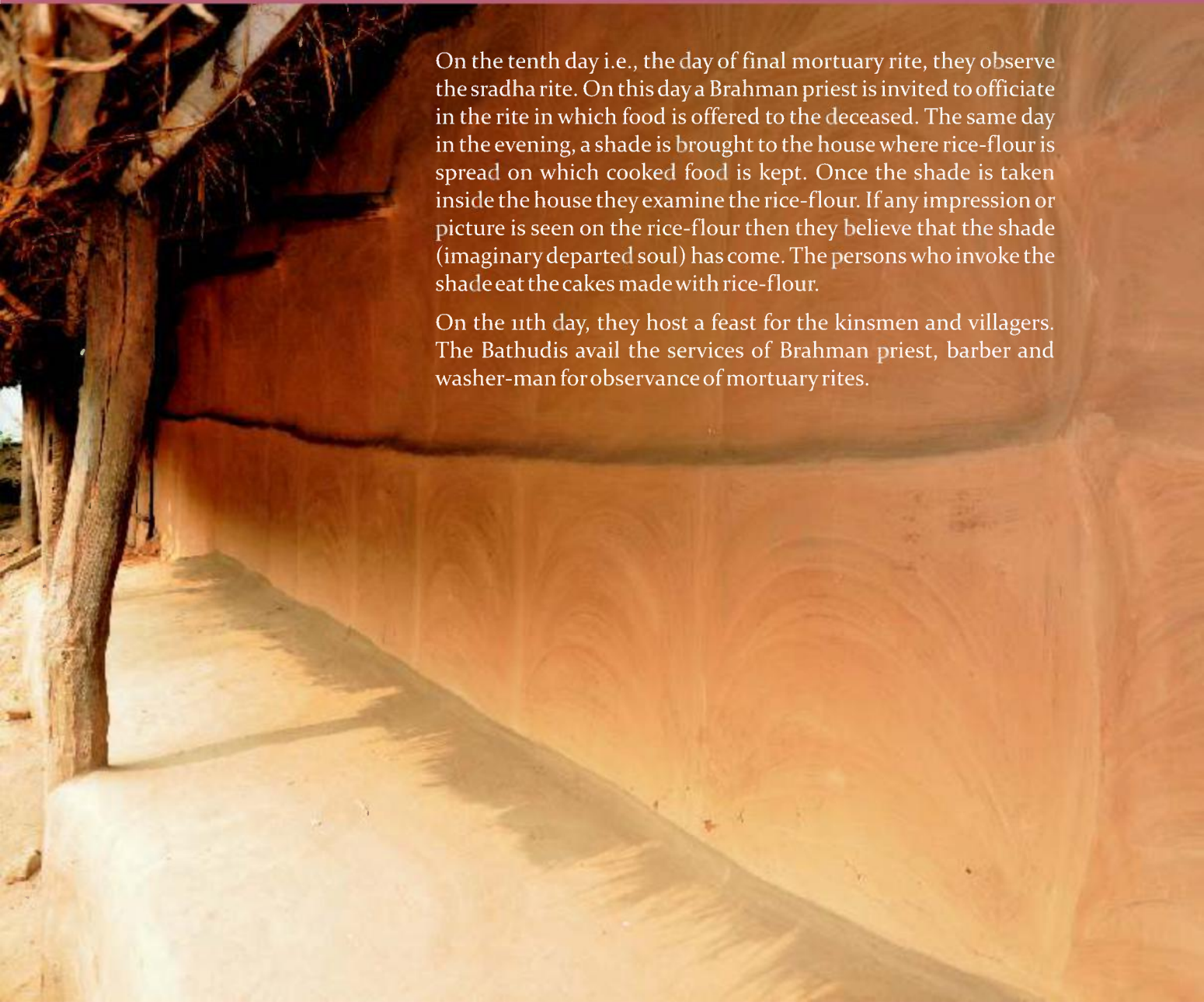
## Death

The Bathudi practice both cremation and burial to dispose of their dead. They usually bury the dead bodies of small children, pregnant women, victims of unnatural deaths and those died of smallpox. In case of cremation, the community members arrange fire woods to cremate the dead body. Death news is communicated to all the kinsmen and relatives requesting them to come and take part in the mortuary rite.

Before cremation or burial the dead body is anointed with turmeric paste and oil. It is wrapped with a new cloth sprinkled with some paddy grains and taken to the funeral ground. The eldest son sets fire into the pyre and in case of burial he first throws the soil into the burial pit. After the burial or

cremation is over, all the lineage (kutumba) members take bath in a river or pond and return home. After returning from the bath, they take bitter rice (Pita Bhat). Then all the earthen pots used for cooking are removed from the deceased person's house and thrown away.

Death pollution continues for seven to nine days. During pollution period the family members observe certain taboos in respect of their food and activities. Relishing non-vegetarian foods, giving alms to beggars, worshipping deities, observances of rituals and festivals, use of oil, visiting sacred places and sexual union etc. are tabooed during this period. Some Bathudi families observe the first purificatory rite (Pitabad) on the third day.



On the tenth day i.e., the day of final mortuary rite, they observe the *sradha* rite. On this day a Brahman priest is invited to officiate in the rite in which food is offered to the deceased. The same day in the evening, a shade is brought to the house where rice-flour is spread on which cooked food is kept. Once the shade is taken inside the house they examine the rice-flour. If any impression or picture is seen on the rice-flour then they believe that the shade (imaginary departed soul) has come. The persons who invoke the shade eat the cakes made with rice-flour.

On the 11th day, they host a feast for the kinsmen and villagers. The Bathudis avail the services of Brahman priest, barber and washer-man for observance of mortuary rites.



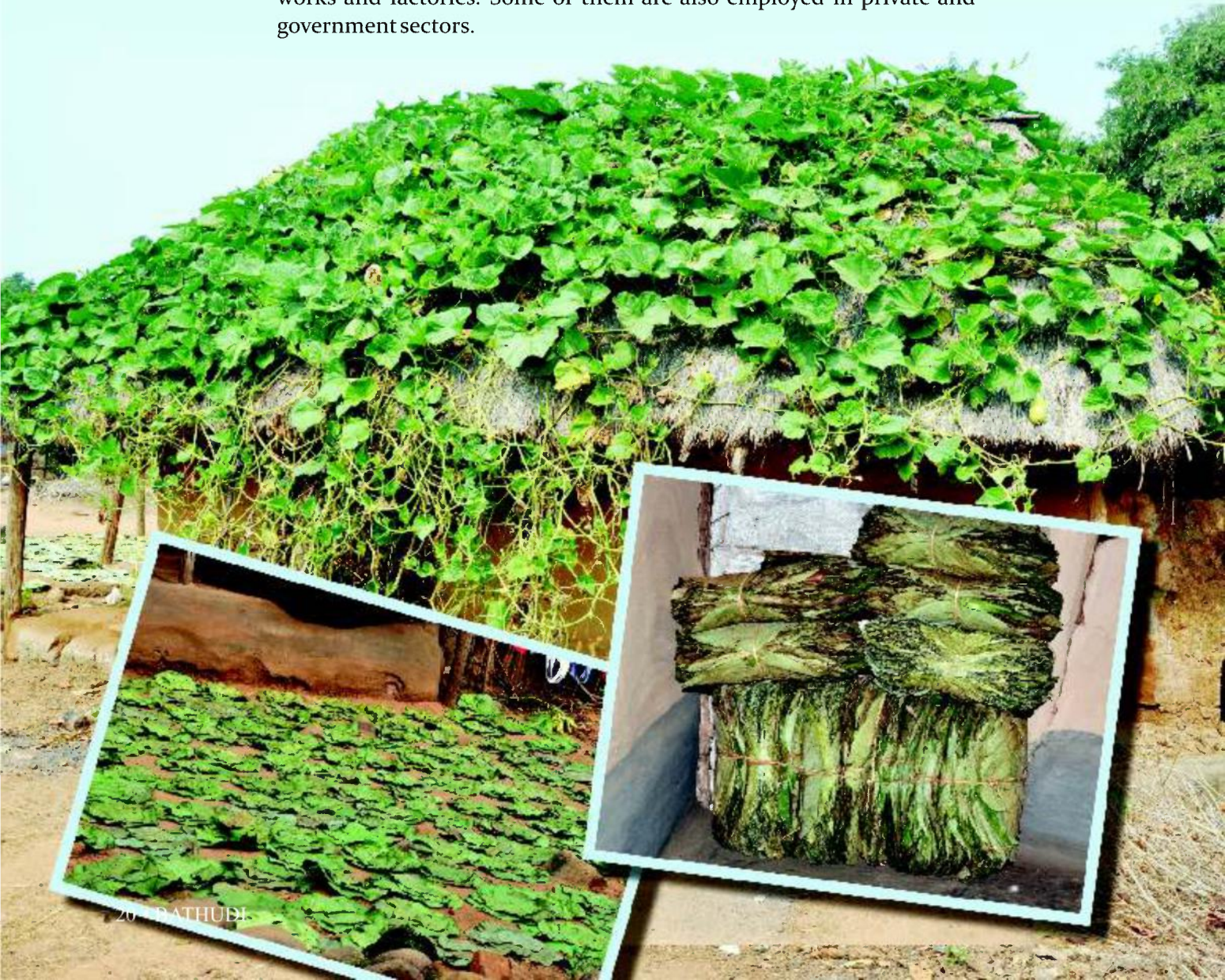
# *Livelihood*

The Bathudis are agriculturists. Their primary occupation is settled agriculture. Paddy is their major crop which they grow in their wet lands. They grow different varieties of paddy. In their upland they cultivate cash crops such as pulses, sweet-potato, groundnuts, jowar, mustard and different kinds of vegetables. Most of the Bathudi families do not possess enough cultivable lands for cultivation. They are mostly landless or marginal farmers. Landless persons work as wage labourers in agriculture, construction sites or take up petty-business to earn for their livelihood. They also collect minor forest produce from the nearby forest like fuel wood, timber, siali leaves, fruits, roots, mushrooms and green leaves etc. Very few families collect gold dust from the Suvarnarekha River.





Now-a-days due to impact of urbanization and industrialization, many of them have migrated to the urban areas and live in slums and have employed themselves as daily wage labourers in different construction works and factories. Some of them are also employed in private and government sectors.







## Food Habits

The Bathudis are non-vegetarians. They relish mutton, chicken, fish, dry fish, eggs etc. but abstain from eating beef and pork. They take termite and red-ants. Normally, they eat rice, pulses, roots, tubers and locally available leafy vegetables. During festive occasions, their menu is added with non-veg items like chicken and mutton curry. They use mustard and mahua oil for cooking.

They drink mahua liquor, rice beer (handia), tea and milk. Both male and females chew tobacco and betel and smoke bidi.



# Social Control

Bathudi have their traditional community council (Jati-Samaj) both at the village level and at the regional level. The village level council composed of some influential community members is headed by the village chief called 6adanaik. Other important village functionaries associated with the traditional council are the sacerdotal head, Dehri and the village messenger, Dakua, Desh-Chatia or Chowkhia. The council deals with their customary affairs. The regional council is known as Desapadhan in Mayurbhanj and Mahanaik in Keonjhar. It deals with cases those could not be decided at the village level.

The caste councils (Jati-Samaj) adjudicate cases pertaining to family disputes, illegal pregnancy, theft, rape, adultery, divorce and cattle killing as well as violation and modification of their community's norms and customs, etc. and their verdict is final. It is empowered to punish the offender both by cash and kind or excommunicate the culprit from the society by judging the gravity of the crime he/she has committed and can readmit an offender into society after his/her due penance. The village council also organizes the village level rituals and festivals. All the office bearers of these councils are highly respected in their society.

Under the Influence of modernization now they follow the Panchayatraj system. So their traditional political system is gradually declining. The office bearers of the statutory Panchayatraj institutions are elected representatives of the people such as Ward Members, Sarpanch, Chairman of Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad etc. They look after the planned development programmes in their villages. Also some of the Bathudi persons have been elected as MLAs and Sarpanchs of the Gram Panchayats.

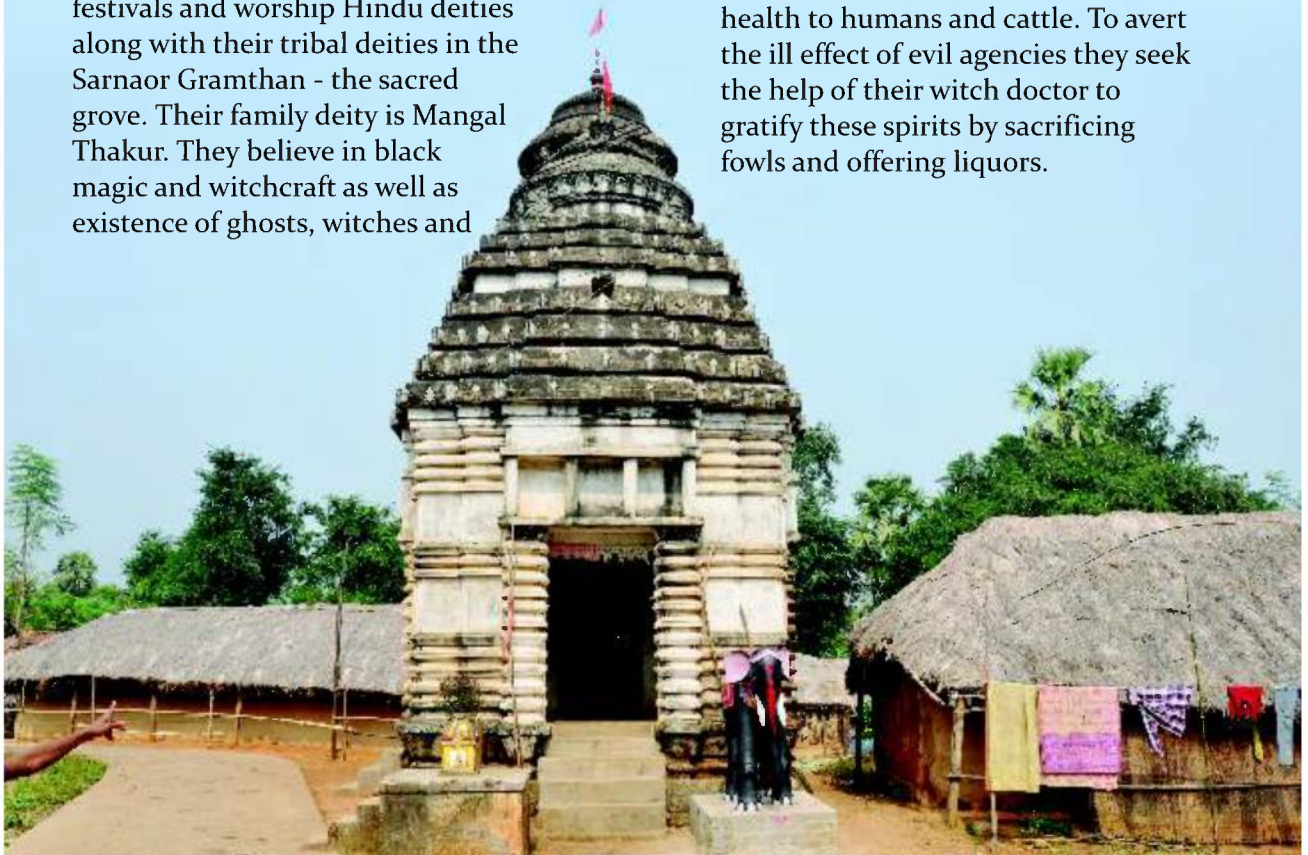




# *Religious Beliefs and Practices*

Bathudi profess Hinduism with amalgamation of some elements of animism. They observe local Hindu festivals and worship Hindu deities along with their tribal deities in the Sarnaor Gramthan - the sacred grove. Their family deity is Mangal Thakur. They believe in black magic and witchcraft as well as existence of ghosts, witches and

evil spirits among whom some are benevolent and some are malevolent. The latter can effect calamities and ill health to humans and cattle. To avert the ill effect of evil agencies they seek the help of their witch doctor to gratify these spirits by sacrificing fowls and offering liquors.



The Bathudi observe a number of festivals in a year namely Basuli, Raja, Baramand Nuakha and worship Kalimuhi, Sitala and Manasa deities. During Nuakha festival ancestor worship is performed. Their traditional priest Dehury worships village deities during new eating of rice, ploughing, transplanting paddy seedling, etc.



They pay reverence to Lord Jagannath, Siva, Laxmi, Kali and all other Hindu Gods and Goddesses and observe all Hindu Festivals such as Raja, Rathajatra, Gahma, Dasara, Diwali, Makara Sankranti, Holi etc. They make pilgrimage to Puri to worship Lord Jagannath.





## Dance and Music

Bathudi have a rich oral tradition of folk tales, folk songs, folk dances, riddles and proverbs etc. They are expert singers, musicians and dancers. They perform dance on special occasions when crops ripen. After harvest they indulge in merry making by participating in dance with music to forget their hardship and woes. During festive occasions both the males and females participate in the festivals and perform chhaudance, changudance and paikdance. The females dance merrily with the melodious tune of music provided by the males by their musical instruments.

# Development and Change

The Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) functioning in the Bathudi habitation areas are implementing various socio-economic development programmes for development and modernization of horticulture, agriculture communication and irrigation for the sustainable development of the Bathudi. So now they have gradually adopted modern agricultural practices by using high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and better irrigation facilities. Some of them have adopted horticulture, poultry and fishery schemes for their livelihood enhancement.

The programmes of the STs and SCs Development Department have helped to reduce the burden of poverty of the Bathudi. Since education is the most important input for the socio-economic development, the STs and SCs Development Department have established a number of educational institutions like EMRS (Ekalavya Model Residential Schools), Higher Secondary Schools (Science and Commerce), High Schools, Girls High Schools, Residential and Non- Residential Ashram and Sevashram Schools in their area. This has brought noticeable changes in their life style, dress pattern and belief system. Under various socio-economic development schemes the Bathudi women now form SHGs which have also played a major role for the upliftment of their economic and social life.







Development of infrastructure facilities, construction of Aganwadi Centers, PDS Centers and provision of houses under IAY and Mo KudiaYoiana, electricity under KutirJyoti and BiiuGramyaJyotiYoiana, provisions for safe drinking water, Mobile Health Unit along with subsidy linked loan, vocational and orientation training to the tribal youths in the area has brought visible change in their way of life.

Implementation of PESA Act in their area has also brought a lot of changes in the quality and pattern of leadership among the Bathudi. The occupational pattern of the Bathudi and their means of subsistence have been changed. Change is observed in their living pattern, social customs, food habits and dress pattern.

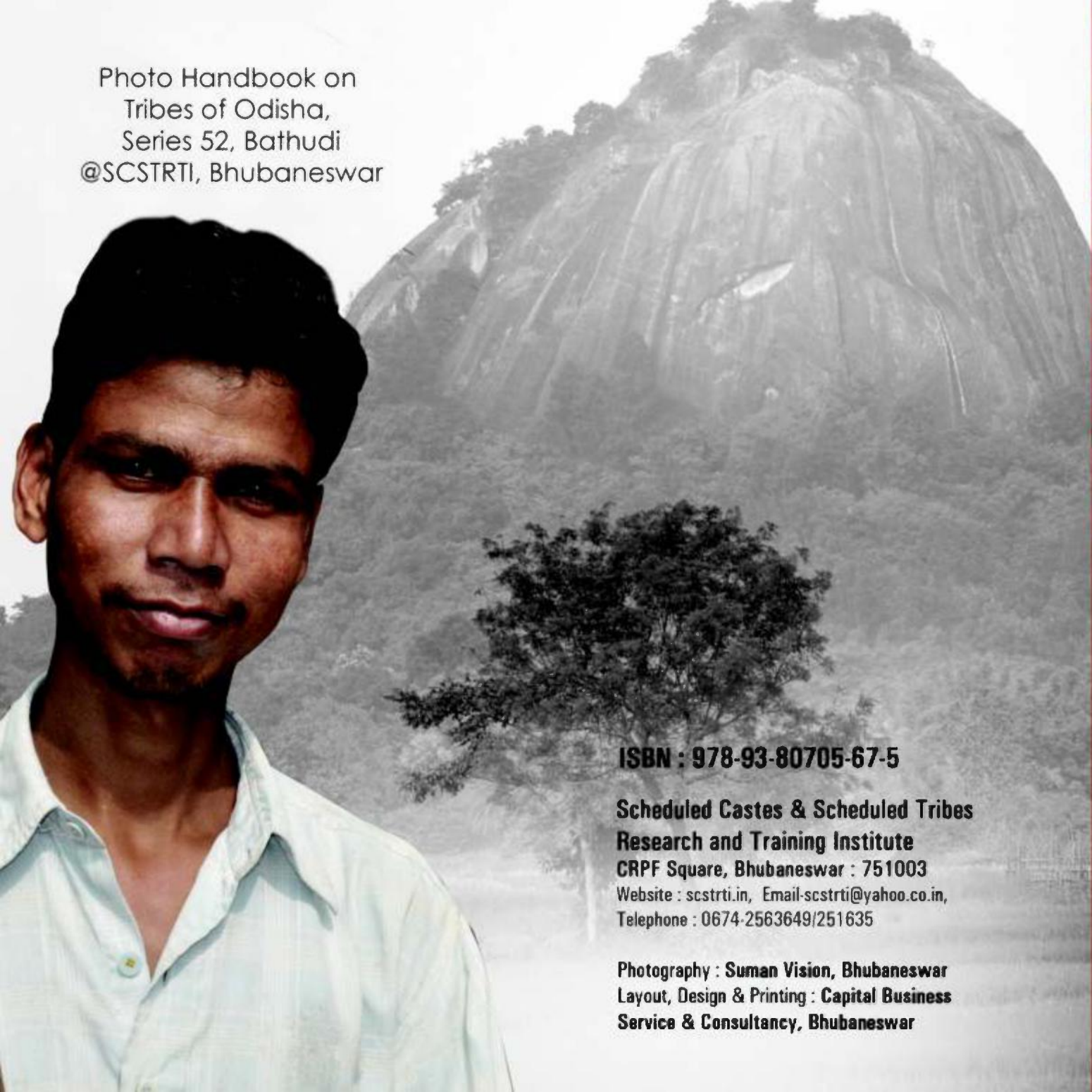


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