

THE BONDO

Popular Series on Tribes-I

THE BONDO

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**TRIBAL AND HARIJAN RESEARCH-CUM-TRAINING
INSTITUTE, H. & T. W. DEPARTMENT
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FOREWORD

The objective behind the publication of a popular series of booklets on the various tribal communities is to make known their particular socio-economic characteristics and cultural profiles to the general public. These booklets are meant for those who are not very well informed about the Scheduled Tribes but are keen on knowing about such communities. Keeping such a target group in view, it was felt that the ethnographic and developmental accounts of these tribes should be presented in such a manner as would create and sustain interest in the readers without being too scholastic or technical.

Demographically, some tribal communities are very large and some, very small. In the matter of development also, there are large variations-some of them are quite progressive while a few small communities are still at a primitive stage. These booklets would cover both the numerically large groups as well as the small communities which are presently recognised as primitive tribes.

The Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI) of the Government of Orissa in

the Department of Harijan & Tribal Welfare has prepared these booklets. The booklets being published now on the Bondo, the Juang, the Saora and the Kondh tribes are the beginning of a series of such publications on various tribal communities of Orissa.

Bhubaneswar
23rd Dec., 1988

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PREFACE

During the past few years, particularly ever since the approach of Tribal sub-plan was put into action, the tribal development has been a matter of great concern to us. The matters concerning the tribal life and culture, their welfare and future are much more talked over now than ever before. The layman who is otherwise intelligent and receptive hears or comes across news and views about tribal communities now-a-days almost every day and therefore he is inquisitive to know more about them.

Among those who have little contact with tribal communities and are not sufficiently acquainted with literatures on tribal life and culture, it is the general belief that the tribals are a single entity in respect of their language and culture; religion and society; occupation and mode of life. In fact, as is well known, it is not so. The tribes of India possess a variety of culture. Every tribal group has a specific pattern of culture, artistic tradition and habits and customs.

The people of a particular tribal group follow such occupations which their geographic surroundings and cultural background and their degree of progress give them the utmost satisfaction and greatest chance of survival. Thus

different tribal groups have their own special ways both of working and living and hundred and one such factors distinguish them in many different ways from one another.

The most important implications of this cultural relativism is that different tribal communities follow different ways of living as dictated by their cultural background and geographical conditions and the conclusion which flows from this premise is that the strategies and the plans need to be community-specific as well as location-specific so that the target group can make full use of the developmental programmes with greatest ability and efficiency.

At this point what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said comes to our mind. In one of his speeches regarding tribal development he said "You may talk here day after day about development programmes in regard to schools and other matters, but you will fail completely if you do not touch the core of the problem. The problem is to understand the tribal people, their culture and ways of living and make them understand us and create a bond of affection and understanding between us."

The best way of achieving a better understanding of the tribal communities is to live with them and work with them. It may not be possible

for all people. In that case the other way is to study standard literatures about tribal life and culture. But such reference materials on many of major and minor tribal communities are lacking. Some years back, Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs has decided in a meeting of the Directors of Tribal Research Institutes that separate tribe-wise popular write-ups should be prepared for those who are not too well-informed about the Scheduled Tribes of the country, but are otherwise interested and inquisitive to have information about them. The Ministry has entrusted the Tribal Research Institutes wherever they exist in the country with the task of preparing popular monographs on both advanced and primitive and large and small tribal groups. The publications of popular series on the Bondo, the Juang, the Kondh and the Saora which are brought out by the Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute are in response to this task.

The ethnographic materials which have gone into these popular write-ups were collected both from the tribal people by the senior research staff of the Institute during their field work and also from many secondary sources. On the whole, all these four publications are the product of joint efforts of a team of officers and staff of the Institute.

Dr. Ch. P. K. Mohapatra and Shri B. Choudhury Deputy Directors have respectively revised and

re-written the first drafts which were prepared by Shri P. S. Das Patnaik, Research Officer on the Kondh and the Bondo. Smt. Kiran Bala Debi, Deputy Director and Shri B. B. Mohanty, Research Officer have prepared the popular series on the Juang and the Saora respectively. These write-ups were finally edited by the Director of the Institute. The photographs which are included in the publications were prepared by Shri S. K. Roy, Photographer of the Institute. One word more, Shri B. B. Mohanty, Research Officer has done the laborious task of proof reading and Shri Karunakar Mishra, superintendent was at it at every stage and saw through the release of these works in time.

T. H. R. T. I.
January, 1989

N. Patnaik
Director

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INTRODUCTION

In the district of Koraput there are a many plateaus of the Eastern Ghats which are inhabited by many Sch. Tribes of both the Austro-Asiatic (Mundari) and the Dravidian linguistic families. Among the major Mundari speaking groups are the Gadaba, the Bondo, the Didayi and the Saora while the Dravidian speaking groups are represented by the Kandh, the Paroja and the Koya. These tribes are distinguishable from each other in their mother-tongue, attire and ornaments and several other cultural traits. Some of these communities occupy specific regions of the district and are found no where else in the country. The Bondos with a population of 5,895 (1981) are one of such tribes, found only in Malkangiri sub-division of Koraput district.

Because of their long occupation of this region, their habitat is known as the Bondo country and the hill ranges of this area are commonly referred to as Bondo Hills.

The Bondos belong to proto-australoid racial stock and speak 'Remo', a speech which belongs to South Munda groups of Austric family. They are sometimes referred to as the Bondo and also as the Bondo Paroja,

Except stray references in their legends, the origin and affiliations of the Bondos have remained obscure. According to a Gadaba story quoted by Dr. Verrier Elwin (1950) the Bondos were the descendants of the first Gadaba couple. Legends associated with the Bondos reveal that the origin of the tribe may be dated back to "Tretaya Yuga" of the Hindu mythology. According to a legend the Bondos were occupying the present Bondo hills when Lord Rama, Lachman and Sita passed through this region during their 14 year long period of banishment. Here Sita was taking bath naked in a place called 'Sita Kunda, which is located in one important Bondo village called Mudulipada. On seeing Sita naked the Bondo women who come over there to fetch water, laughed at her. Sita felt insulted and in anger cursed them to go naked with shaven head so that the outsiders would laugh at them and make fun of them.

The Bondos are economically at the pre-agricultural level of technology. Their primary source of livelihood is shifting cultivation supplemented by occasional hunting and food gathering. The hill Bondos who are otherwise known as Bara-Jangar Bondos consider Mudulipada as their central village around which all other villages are located. Originally there were only 12 Bondo villages all situated up-hills in isolation. In course of time as population increased new settlements came up and the Bondos spread out in a large territory. During the feudal regime the Bondo hills were under the jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Jeypore and the Bondos were his *parajas* or tenants.

Close to the Bondos, live another tribe called the Gadaba. The Bondo villages which are situated adjacent to Gadaba villages have been influenced by the Gadaba culture and have developed a kind of identity of their own. These villages are situated around Andrahal which is located at a distance of 14 Kms. from Mudulipada. Thus in the Bondo hills there are two central villages viz : Mudulipada around which the Bara-Jangar group of villages not influenced by Gadaba culture are located and Andrahal around which another group of Bondo villages which are influenced by Gadaba culture are located. In addition to these, there are several villages in the plain area, where the Bondos have considerably changed being influenced by the neighbouring castes and tribes.

The Bondo population was 2,565 in 1941 census as quoted by Elwin (1950) and increased to 4,677 in 1961 and then to 5,338 during the 1971 census and 5,895 in 1981. The growth rate of their population during the decade 1971-1981 was 10.43 per cent in comparison to the growth rate of 16.68 per cent for the total tribal population in the State during the same period. Educationally they were far behind their tribal brethren. In 1961 the percentage of literacy was 2.1 as against 7.3 per cent for the total tribal population. In 1971 it reduced to 1.4 per cent in case of the Bondos although the tribal population as a whole improved their literacy status to 9.46 per cent. But during 1981 the Bondos raised their literacy to 3.61 per cent as against 13.96 per cent for the total tribal population in the State. The standard of education among the Bondos is so deplorable that there may be one or two persons in the whole community who have gone upto Matriculation.



THE BONDO HILLS

The Bondo hills lie to the east of the Malkangiri plains and south-east of the Machkund river valley. The easiest approach to the Bondo country is through the meandering rugged road which is newly constructed by the Bondo Development Agency to connect Mudulipada with the Block headquarters at Khairput. At the thirteenth kilometre point on the Khairput-Mudulipada road, there is the Banapacheri, a hill range signifying the legendary stone wall from which the Bondo country starts. After crossing the Banapacheri, the journey becomes somewhat smooth and one comes down to the table land dotted with Bondo villages amidst jackfruit, tamarind and mango groves.

The Bondo country is full of mountain ranges rising in most cases to 3,000' in height above the sea level and covered with thick vegetation. The soil is of black cotton type found in the valleys used for growing rice and of brownish type in the hill slopes where the age-old shifting cultivation is practised.

A number of small perennial hill streams flow in between the hill ranges. Among them the river Biswakunda and the Banapacheri nalla are important as these streams provide drinking water to a number of Bondo settlements and irrigate the rice fields lying along their courses.

The climate of the Bondo country is characterised by pleasant summer, cold winter and heavy rains during monsoon. The average annual rainfall recorded at Patraput (near Machkund) is 2,096 m.m. (84") with 81 rainy days.

The Bondo country is subject to large-scale deforestation resulting from the practice of slash and burn type of cultivation and expansion of human habitation. Except some trees like date-palm, mango and jackfruit there are no valuable timber in the forests. In some places there are patches of bamboo forests and some other places have enough *siali* creepers and broomstick and thatching grasses.

The animals common in the forest are wild dog, wild bear, leopard, bear, tiger, sambar, deer, monkey and jackel. The wild bear and monkeys cause damage to the standing crops and the wild dogs, tiger and leopard pose a menace for the cattle and the goats. Birds like peacock and wild fowls are abundantly found in the forests. But due to large-scale deforestation resulting from shifting cultivation the food seeking activities such as hunting and food gathering have been reduced to a minimum.

Based on the location of Bondo settlements the Bondo villages may be divided as mentioned earlier into three groups. The Bara-Jangar group comprises of 14 hill Bondo homogeneous villages except two villages having a few Dom, a Sch. Caste households. These villages are located around Mudulipada. The Gadaba group of Bondo villages are heterogeneous comprising castes like the Dom, the Bisoe and tribes like the Gadaba and the Didayi. These villages lie around Andrahal. The lower Bondo villages, 23 in number are situated in the plains and are more heterogeneous in composition than the Gadaba group of villages.



MATERIAL EXISTENCE

The typical Bondo villages are situated on hill-tops or hill-slopes with forests all around. The houses are half hidden under the overhanging branches of mango, jackfruit and tamarind trees and any place in the Bondo country with a number of these trees invariably the location of a Bondo settlement or an abandoned village site.

A Bondo village consists of four to five wards belonging to different clans and situated close to each other or dispersed within a short distance. Other communities, if any living in the village occupy a separate ward, completely detached from the Bondo wards. The village is the largest corporate territorial unit having a well delineated

boundary within which its inhabitants exercise right of exploitation of natural resources on equal terms.

The houses in a village are scattered here and there conforming to a pattern of shapeless cluster. The criss-cross foot paths link the individual houses with one another. These foot paths get muddy during rains and added to it the habit of throwing garbage and household wastes over the foot paths makes the village filthy and dirty.

The Bondo hut is of gabled shape having a roof sloped on four sides. A verandah runs on all sides of the house. It is divided into two apartments having a large and small room. The large room is about 8' in length and 6' in width with one or two clay platforms raised to 4'' to 5'' in height from the ground to keep cooking utensils and water containers. This room is used for sleeping and cooking. The small room attached to the large room is about 5' in length and 4' in width. It is used as the granary for storing crops of all kinds. A passage is provided in the common wall to link both the rooms. A verandah of 5' in width runs round the house and it is in the front part of the verandah that the members of the house and others spend time gossiping during leisure hours. When the guests and relatives visit they used the space in front verandah for sleeping. The front verandah is enclosed with a wall to keep privacy of the inmates. The walls are made of bamboo splits

woven together and plastered with mud. The roof is thatched with a kind of grass locally known as *pir*. Where space is available, the house is fenced all around with thorny twigs. Excepting the entrance door, the house is not provided with any door and windows.

A cowshed is made separately in front of the house. But the goat pen and the pigsty are provided in the back verandah. The fowls are kept in a fowl-pen made of bamboo splits.

Each house is constructed by the family members themselves. As soon as a son gets married, he builds his own house taking the help of his parents and if required the help of neighbours on giving food and drink in return. The women prepare the floor, make the walls and do the plastering of mud whenever necessary. The men construct the roof-frame and thatch it with grass. Before the construction of a new house, the *Dishari* (village priest) selects the new site through grain-divination. *Muldei*, the central pillar of four feet in height symbolizing the abode of the ancestral spirits is first erected. Before occupying a new house, the *Dishari* is invited to perform necessary rites soliciting the blessings of the ancestral spirits for the welfare and well-being of the family members.

A Bondo house is properly maintained and timely repaired. Normally the roof is rethatched in



Home - Sweet home

every alternate year. Walls are plastered once in a month or on festive occasions. The floor of the house is plastered once in a week but swept twice or thrice in a day. Cowshed and the courtyard are cleaned every day while the pigsty is occasionally cleaned. It is the job of the Bondo women to keep the house and its surrounding clean.

As regards the possession of household equipments and tools, the Bondos own such items which are essentially required in their day to day life. Each household possesses a few earthen or aluminium cooking pots, earthen jars (*gendakoing*) and gourds (*anka*) for fetching water, a few brass and aluminium plates and pots for taking food, a few bamboo baskets and winnowing fan, a carrying pole with strings, a pestle for husking paddy, a slab of stone for grinding spices and several broom sticks. Each household possesses two to three mats of date-palm leaves for sleeping though carpoys are seen in few houses.

Their agricultural implements include wooden plough and yoke, leveller, spade, hoe, sovel and digging stick. Bows and arrows and knife and hand axe which are constant companion of a Bondo male when he goes out are very commonly seen in the Bondo houses. These weapons are used in hunting and also protecting oneself from attack by any wild animal and also human beings. Axes of different sizes, adze,

griller, chisel and hammer are the important tools used in carpentry.

For catching fish they have fishing rod and traps made of bamboo splits. The Bondo musical instruments include different kinds of drums such as *tamak*, *dhol* and *kusang* and string instruments called *tolia*, and trumpet made of buffalo or bison horn. A small Jew's harp made of bamboo or iron and a string is the most favourite musical instruments of the girl.

In addition to these household appliances and tools the well-to-do Bondos now possess modern articles like padlock, cell light, cotton umbrella, radio and wrist watch. All varieties of utensils, earthen pots, baskets and iron parts of all implements and the modern articles are purchased from the other communities or from the market.

A Bondo woman in particular is quite distinguishable from the women of other communities. The bands round her shaven head, lavish ornamentation of her neck and bosom and a self-made narrow skirt put on round the waistband are the distinguishing features of Bondo women. The Bondos both men and women use scanty clothes which are of bare necessity to cover the lower part of the body leaving the upper part exposed. Gosi, a loin-cloth about three feet in length and one and half feet in breadth

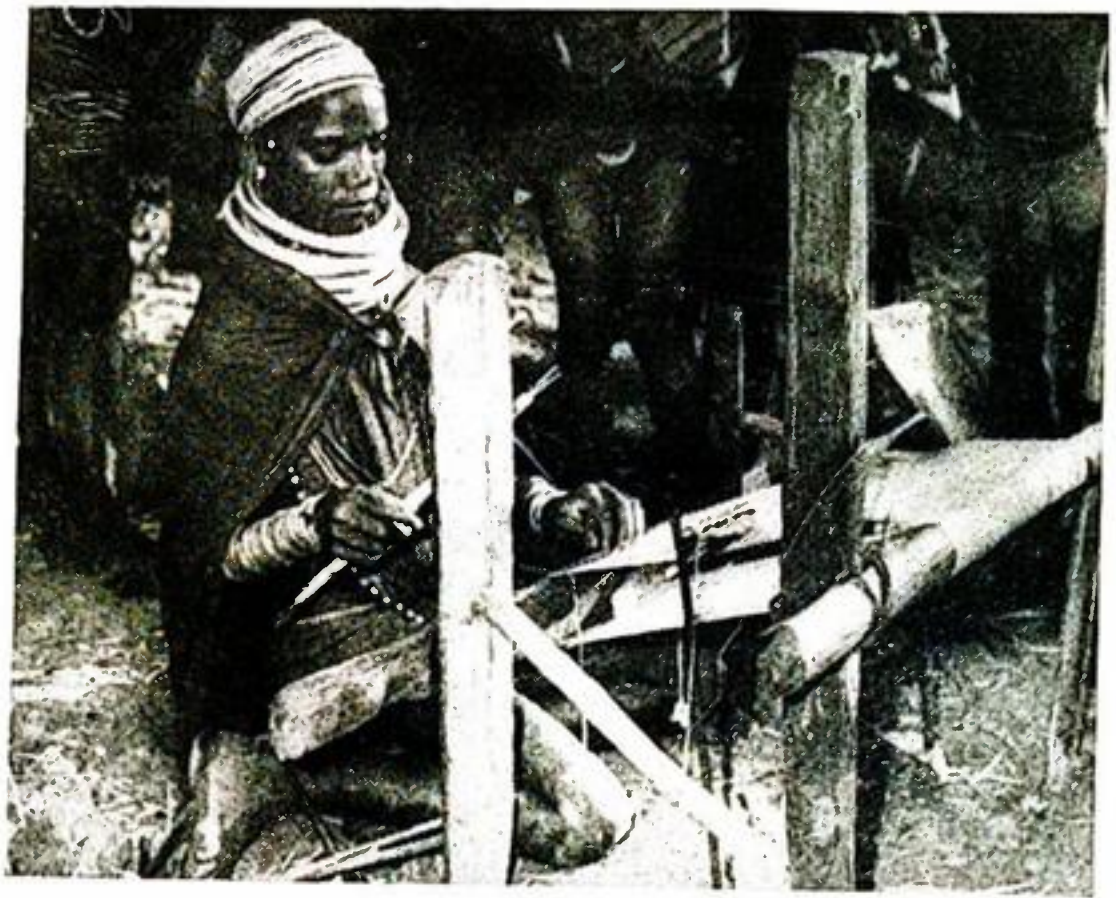
with red border is their traditional cloth for an adult male. Some of them have started wearing shirts and covering the body with a wrapper while going out to the town and market. The male child upto the age of five years remains nude and puts on a piece of loin cloth called *langota* till the age of nine to ten years when he starts using *gosi*. Women generally put on a typical self-made skirt called *ringa* or *nadi*. It is a stripped coloured piece of cloth about three feet long and one foot in breadth woven by themselves from fibres with the help of an indigenous loom. It is wound round the waist along the waist-string to which it is attached. It hardly reaches the thigh and even not of sufficient length to go round the waist. The female child starts wearing a smaller size *ringa* when she becomes five to six years of age. During winter women use saris as wrapper to protect themselves from cold.

The loin cloth of the male and the skirt of the female and the clothes used by the children are woven by women from the yarn prepared from the bark of a plant locally known as *kode* or *insive*. At present cotton threads of different colours are purchased from the market for this purpose and fibres strands are no longer used to weave cloths as before.

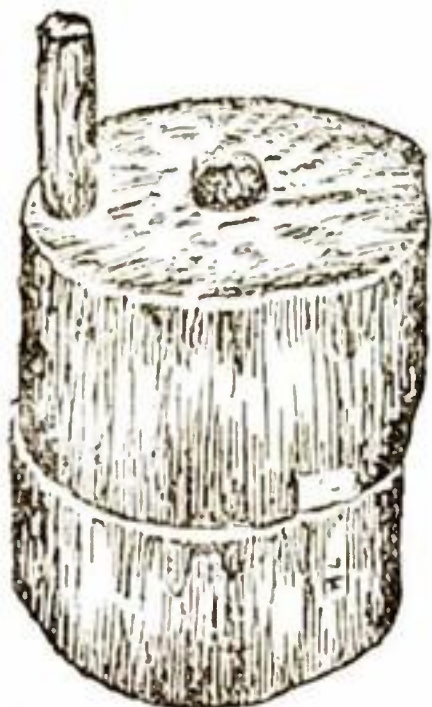
The Bondos irrespective of age and sex adorn themselves with different varieties of ornaments and the women in particular compensate their nudity by

ornamentation of their neck. Round the shaven head, the Bondo women use two types of head-bands, viz *turuba* or *kurtop* made of grass and *lobeda* made of beads. They wear eight to ten aluminium bands (*khagala*) along with 100 or so necklaces of beads of different colours and strings of shells round the neck which also serve the purpose of covering the bosom in the absence of upper garment. They do not use nose ring and anklets and are not fond of using ear rings. Brass bangles (*sungri*) five to six in number are used as wristlets in both the hands. Aluminium rings (*orti*) are used in fingers.

Boys at the age when they attend dormitory become very careful to have long hair dressed attractively. They put on head-bands (*ornagoboh*) made from the leaf of a tree called *ariei* around the head as the women do as long as they are bachelor. Some of them continue to use such head-bands for a few years after marriage. They also put on one or two aluminium bangles (*sungari*). They wear brass ear rings, bracelets (*sanbah*) round the arm and nose ring called *sungrynih*. After marriage however a man discards slowly the practice of ornamenting his body. Women consider their ornaments as the most valuable property which are inherited only by daughters or returned back to her parental house after her death if there is no daughter to inherit. Other than head-bands other types of ornaments are purchased from the market or visiting pedlars. ●



Having a yard of Loin - cloth



ECONOMIC LIFE

The Bondos, particularly those who are up in the hills are at the pre-agricultural level of technology. Their primary source of livelihood is shifting cultivation combined with rice cultivation in the valleys and food gathering and hunting to an extent possible in the denudated forests. The economic life of the Bondos revolves round agriculture. The Census of 1981 reveals that 99.12 per cent of the total workers are engaged as cultivators and agricultural labourers. They carry on shifting cultivation in the swiddens, cultivate undulating up lands at the foot of the hills and grow rice in irrigated terraced lands in the valleys. In addition to the agriculture, they carry on food gathering and hunting in the forests to supplement their income. Both men and women

among the Bondos have rudimentary knowledge of household crafts. Women weave their traditional cloths and make mats from date-palm leaves and broomsticks from wild grass. Men make ropes and fashion wooden household and agricultural implements. They keep cattle, goat, pig and poultry birds. They use cattle for ploughing the fields and sacrifice other animals and birds on festive occasions. They eat all kinds of meat—beef, mutton, pork and chicken and are also fond of fish particularly dried fish.

The daily routine of work of the Bondos are controlled by seasons. Both the sexes are in the habit of leaving their bed when the cock crows. While men light their country made cheroot and proceed to the sago-palm tree in the swidden before finishing morning ablution. Women husk paddy required for the day with help of husking pestle and process other food stuffs, clean the house and the cattle sheds. Then they go to the stream to finish ablutions, come back with water and prepare food. Children usually get up late in the morning and ask for gruel to break their fast. All the female members and children with food for the male members proceed to the place where they would be doing field work. Men drink sago-palm juice to their hearts' content, finish ablutions near the hill stream and then proceed to the field or swidden and start work. The females

reach there with children and food for breakfast and lunch and join the work. They work in their fields for the whole day. If, time permits or there is no work in the field the women in a group go to the nearby forest after lunch to collect forest produce.

In slack seasons, when there is no heavy pressure of agricultural work, men and women go to the forest to collect fuelwood, thatching grass, timber, tubers, roots and fruits. The males retire from work earlier than the females and they longing for their drink every morning and evening drive from the field at sunset to come to sago-palm trees where they spend sometimes enjoying its sap. On the way back, if time permits, both men and women take bath and bathe the children too. Reaching home, the men take care of their cattle and give them feed. After that menfolk spend some time at the *sindibor* gossiping and discussing about any important events of the day till the food is ready. On return from the outdoor works women hurry up to the stream to fetch water for cooking. As soon as food is ready the housewife serves it first to the male members and children and then she herself takes her meal. Unmarried boys and girls go to their respective dormitories to sleep at night. The housewife washes the utensils and sweeps room. Then all retire to bed. Sometimes the unmarried boys and girls

in groups visit other villages separately to spend the night dancing and singing with their counterparts and develop intimacy.

Division of labour according to sex and age is not strictly prescribed but is followed according to tradition. Most of the individuals of the same sex and age group do the similar types of activities in the absence of occupational specialities and diversification in economic activities. There are certain works which can be done by both sexes and there are other items of work which are performed either by man or by woman. Such divisions are based on tradition and physical ability. Except a few restrictions both men and women participate in almost all types of economic activities. An adult male usually performs heavier and arduous works while an adult female does lighter but tedious jobs of longer duration. In specific terms a man does hunting, trapping, snaring, ploughing, levelling, terracing, climbing, thatching, watching standing crops at night whereas women do all sorts of household chores, forest collection, weeding, transplanting and reaping besides child caring and rearing. Comparatively men enjoy more leisure than women who toil hard from morning till night attending to works both in the house and outside in the field.

Their adoption of wet cultivation is a graduation from shifting cultivation, food gathering

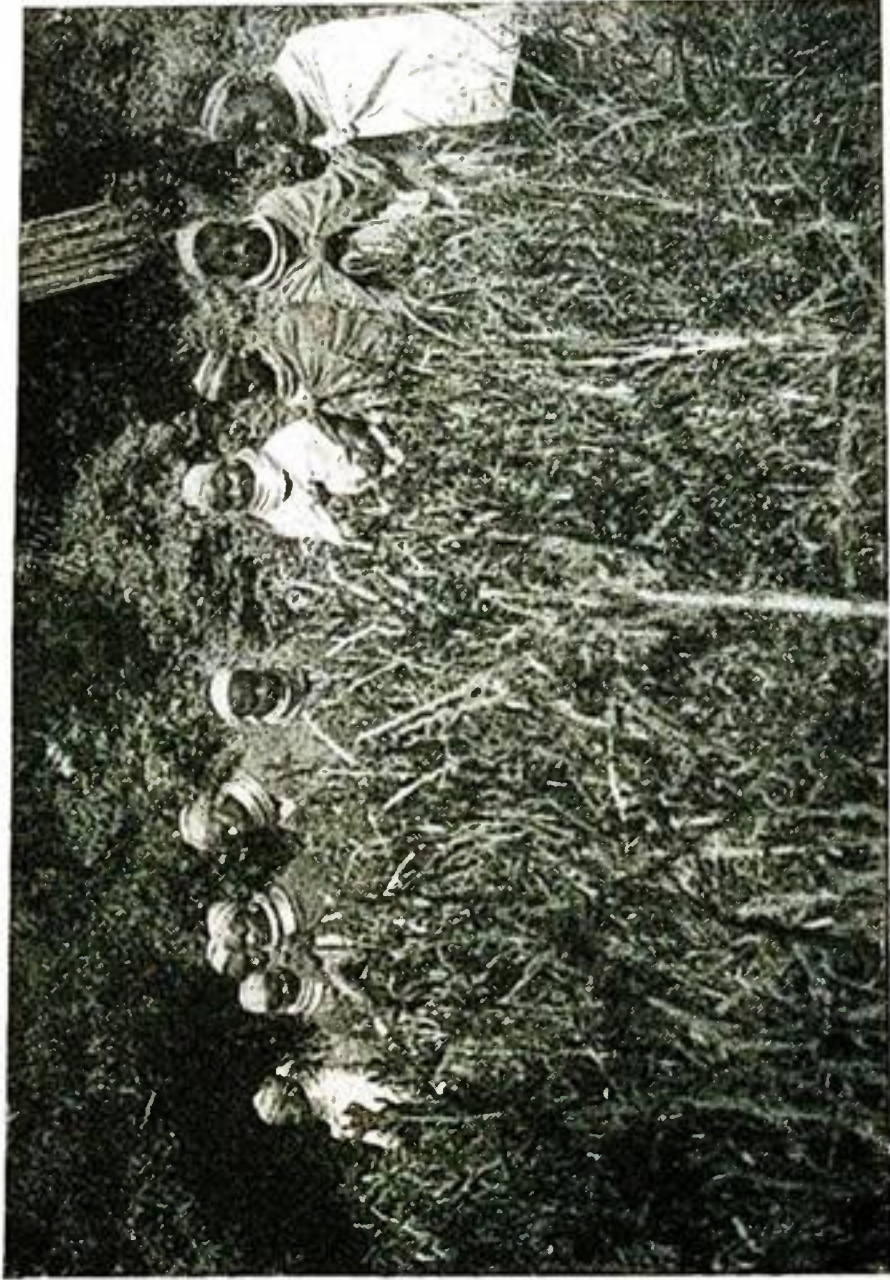
and hunting which they still carry on to an extent possible. They cultivate four types of land, viz; wet land (*jhola* or *lieang*) in which they grow rice and wheat, up land (*pada*) for growing millets and pulses, hill slopes (*dongar*) for shifting cultivation and the kitchen garden (*dinabut*) located near homestead lands. Wet land, up land and kitchen garden are individually owned while the swiddens are owned collectively by the clan groups in the village. Since the Land Survey and Settlement has not been done in all the villages of the area, reliable data on size of holding is not available. However, the Bondo Development Agency has estimated that on an average a cultivating household owns 0.37 hectares of land which consists of 0.12 hectares of wet land, 0.23 hectares of up land and 0.02 hectares of homestead land and kitchen garden.

The Bondos have developed an excellent adaptive strategy by which the local resources are utilized by means of their own skill for their survival. They have converted the lands by the side of the small hill streams into fertile terraced fields with provision of irrigation throughout the year. In such terraced lands they grow long duration rice of fine quality once yearly by transplantation method. The agricultural operations start with the preparation of seed beds in January or February. Preparation of the fields for transplanta-

tion is done with the help of bullock driven ploughs and levellers and transplantation of seedlings is done by women in the month of March or April. This is followed by weeding which is also done by women. By the month of November or December, harvesting is completed. At present some of them have started growing wheat as a second crop in such type of land with the assistance and guidance provided by the Bondo Development Agency.

In the upland around the settlements and some located at the base of the hills away from the settlements they grow minor millets, pulses and oil seeds. This type of land is cultivated for consecutively three to four years by rotation of crops and thereafter left fallow for two to three years to recuperate. In the first and second year they grow minor millets and blackgram respectively and in the subsequent two years they grow niger. Whenever any plot of this type of land is manured with cowdung and compost, cultivation may be continued every year. In such cases the plots which are located close to the settlements are usually given first preference.

The kitchen gardens which are situated in close proximity to the houses are cultivated every year as fertility is maintained therein by applying cowdung and compost. In this type of land, they grow maize, tobacco, vegetables and chilly during



Wheat cultivation - an innovation we are proud of

the rainy season. Some of them with assistance from the Bondo Development Agency have adopted the use of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers for growing ragi, maize, paddy and pulses. Some of them now grow ginger, turmeric, potato, cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, brinjal, etc., some of which were unknown to them. Grafts of lemon, orange, guava, suckers of banana and cocoanut plants are also distributed by the Agency for backyard plantation.

The swiddens in which shifting cultivation is practised are held in common by different clan groups in the village. Each household of a particular clan is free to clear a patch of any size according to its capacity within the area demarcated for the group. The process starts with the ceremonial cutting of trees in the swiddens first by the village priest after performing the connected rituals. Thereafter others follow him and make clearings in their respective areas.

A patch of swidden is cultivated for three years consecutively by rotation of crops and is left fallow till it recoups for use again. Except the fruit trees all other plants and trees are cut leaving stumps of about three to five feet in height.

The next stage of operation is to collect branches from the nearby forests and these are heaped in

the clearing. For several weeks the felled materials are left to be dried. These are collected and heaped together at different places in the plot and fired. The ashes are scattered all over the plot. Before the first shower of monsoon they once again cut the grasses and sprouted bushes.

The third operation which consists of digging and sowing begins after performing a magico-religious rite at the family level for better production. Different types of millets like ragi, suan, kangu are mixed up and sown broadcast. Some vegetable seeds are also sown in selected parts. In the second successive year they generally grow pulses or oil seeds.

The next stage is weeding which falls on the shoulder of the women. Thereafter field huts are constructed for constant guarding of the crops by the male members against the damage caused by birds and wild animals. Reaping and harvesting are done timely and these works are done by both men and women. Except sowing which is the main work of the men other works connected with shifting cultivation are done by both men and women.

Like many other tribal communities the Bondos are also dependent on forest which provides them with food, fuel, fodder and construction materials. They collect a number of

edible roots, shoots, leaves, fruits, flowers and mushrooms in different seasons. For construction of their houses they get wood, creepers, bamboo and grass from the forest. They collect *keranga* fibre for weaving *ringa*, the traditional waist cloth used by women, fibres for making ropes and leaves for making mats, rainhats and leaf-plates and cups. They grow sago-palm trees in the forest to get sap which is their favourite alcoholic drink. The roots and barks of plants which are dipped in sago-palm juice to enhance its alcoholic content are also collected from the forest.

Besides seasonal collection of forest produce, the Bondos go for hunting and bird-catching in the jungle to supplement their diet with non-vegetarian food items. In hunting they kill junglefowl, peafowl, deer, porcupine, hare, wild boar, wild goat and rabbit. Hunting of bigger animals is a team work under the leadership of an expert hunter. On special or ceremonial hunting expeditions whenever any game is bagged, they equally share it after necessary magico-religious rites are performed and a limb is reserved for the hunter whose arrow or any other weapon hits the animal first.

They employ several methods in group hunting. After performing the magico-religious rites, they go to the forest for hunting. The weapons

used for hunting include bow and arrow, knife and heavy axe. Dogs also accompany the hunting party. They have different devices for hunting different games. Sometimes they encircle the area where animals are expected to have taken shelter. Some of them will beat the bushes and drive the prey while others will remain alert to shoot the animal. Whenever an animal is wounded, they follow it till it is bagged.

They also employ various methods of trapping. They use different snares, traps and other typical mechanisms to catch different animals. For catching a big animal a pit is dug. A number of pointed iron rods are fixed in the pit which is covered with leaves and twigs. Paste-balls prepared from clay mixed with salt are placed around the pit as baits to attract the animals. Once the animal crosses the pit, its body is pierced with the iron rods. The hunters who must be lying in ambush nearby rush towards the pit to kill the animal with their weapons. Traps made of bamboo splits or strong sticks and ropes are also set to catch bigger animals like wild boar, goat and deer. During their ceremonial hunting in March-April elaborate arrangements are made at the village level. At the time of hunting the hunters are restricted to take alcoholic drink and also to put on white dress.

For killing birds which is an individual pursuit, they commonly use bow and arrow with a sharp iron or wooden head. Birds are shot at just when they have perched or are ready to fly. The milk of jackfruit tree or other shrubs is used as sticky gum to fix the point to the shaft of the arrow. A number of bamboo splits smeared with this gum are fixed on the ground near the source of water or in agricultural fields with ripen crops or on branches of big trees where birds perch at certain time. Whenever birds come in contact with these sticky splits they get stuck and are caught.

Both men and women are engaged in the collection of minor forest produce, but it is incidental in the case of former whereas it is main occupation of the latter. Hunting, catching birds and collection of timber and fibre for house construction are the main job of the male members. Depletion of forests due to shifting cultivation and continuous exploitation of vegetation since long to meet their requirements is reducing their dependence on forest. Now they are becoming conscious of this and are allowing suitable patches for natural growth so that they can get their requirements at the time of need more often when natural calamity like failure of crop is faced.

The Bondos are fond of fish which they catch whenever they find opportunity to do so.

During the rainy season, both men and women catch fish from the hill streams and paddy fields. In such cases they use different types of traps made of bamboo splits, creepers and nets tied to bamboo frame. Occasionally they use hooks. Other methods of fishing include such devices as the construction of weirs to trap fishes and to allow the water to dry up so that fishes can easily be caught. Sometimes they poison the stagnant water with traditional herbs to make the fishes benumbed so that they are easily caught. Many people catch fish by hand. In summer, some of them go in a group for fishing in the rivers and rivulets situated in Machkund and Chitrakonda areas. Crabs which are relished much by them are also caught.

Wage earning is not a substantial source of income. The well-to-do Bondos who employ labourers to carry on agricultural operations pay them in kind. A type of permanent labour practice called *goti* is seen in the area. The labourer is bonded to the creditor for the loan taken by himself or by his father or grand father to meet the expenses of a marriage or of a criminal case. The *goti* stays with the family of the creditor as a family member and takes food and gets cloth for the works he does. He can get married and stay separately with his own family near the creditor's house.

Their economy is still essentially a barter economy. Most of their marketable surplus of agricultural and forest produce are brought to the weekly markets at Mundiguda, Govindapalli, Mathili and Onakadally. Broom sticks, jackfruits, mango, date-palm and berries collected from the forest and banana, tobacco, chilly, brinjal and other vegetables, ragi, niger and other oil-seeds and grams are brought to the market for exchange to get things like salt, kerosine oil, dry fish, ornaments and clothes.

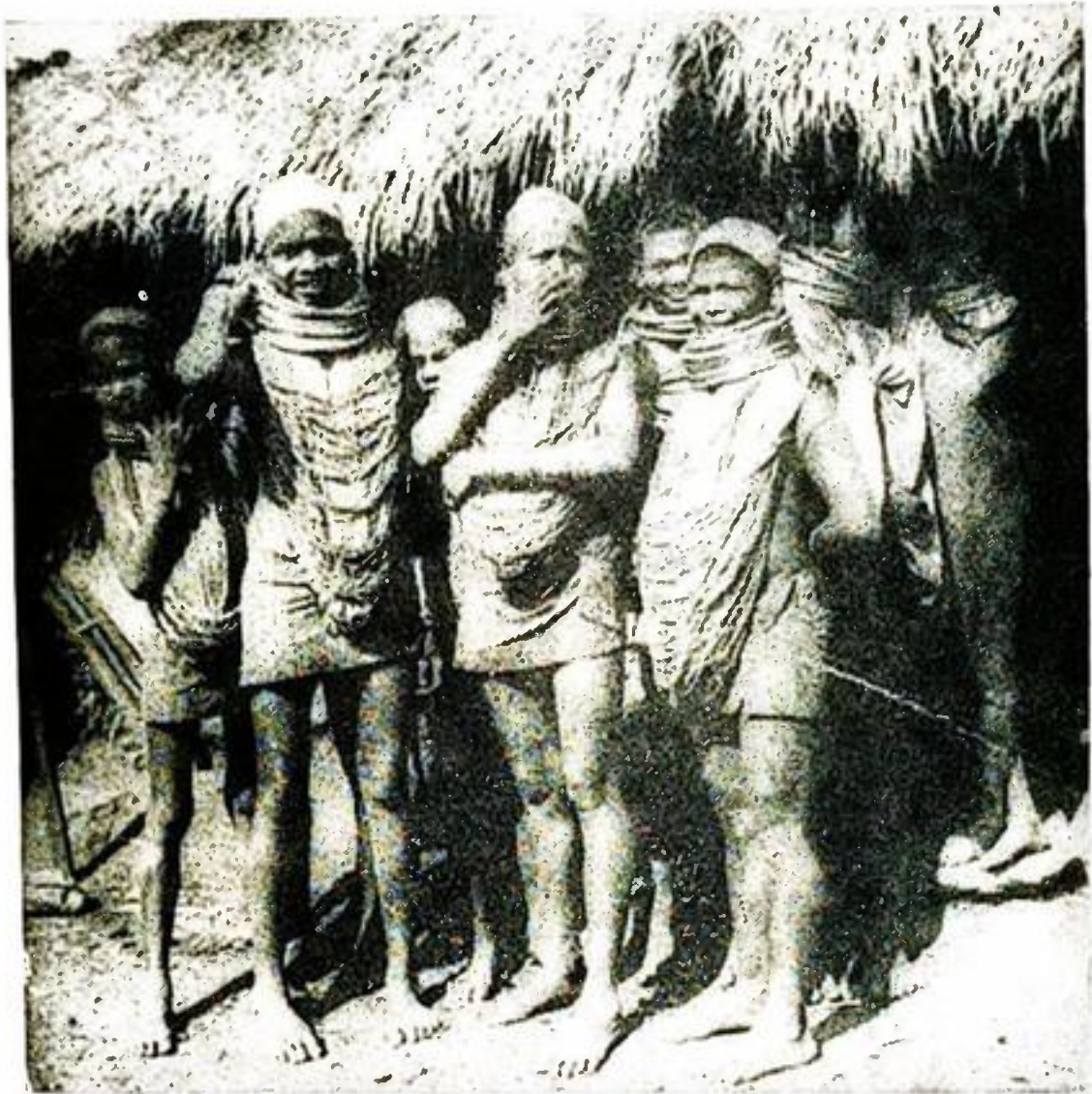
They are no longer self-sufficient as they were in the past and are in dire want of food and other necessities of life. Excepting a few well-to-do family, most of them need credit in the shape of food stuff for consumption, seed and also cash for agriculture and domestic animals for payment of bride-price.





SOCIAL GROUPING

The Bondo social system is characterised by patrilineality and patrilocality combined with the presence of village exogamy, exogamous clans and moieties which divide and control the whole group. The family which is normally monogamous consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. It is the smallest social unit. Soon after his marriage a boy builds a separate hearth and home to live independently. A daughter after her marriage goes to stay with her husband. Theoretically the father being the eldest male member of the family is bestowed with authority to control his family affairs, but normally he does not totally ignore the views of his wife who is generally older in age. Further the husband has to maintain a cordial relationship with his wife who toils hard



Amazingly delightful

both at home and outside. From practical point of view both husband and wife enjoy equal position in the family.

Next to the parents, father's brothers and sisters are important kins who are highly respected. These paternal relatives play important role at the time of marriage and death rites in the family. So far as maternal relatives are concerned, no significant role is played by them as it is seen among many other tribal societies.

The parental properties are equally shared by the sons after the death of the father. In cases of conflict and quarrel among married sons and father partition of the properties take place among the sons even during the life time of the father. The ornaments of the mother are equally shared by all daughters.

The next bigger social unit is the *kuda* or exogamous clan which comprises a number of families who are believed to have descended from a common ancestor. These clans are named after the functionaries of the village such as the *Bad-naik*, *Challan*, *Dhangra Majhi*, *Mudli*, *Kirsani* and *Sisa*. There are also a few more *kudas* such as *Dora*, *Jigri* and *Mandhara* which might have originated due to the inclusion of some other communities as a consequence of marital union.

In the past the Bondo villages were probably mono clan, i.e. families belonging to a particular clan occupying one village. But in later stage when there occurred population movement in the Bondo country, the villages might have lost the clan homogeneity and members belonging to several clans came and settled down in the same village. In such cases members of each clan live separately from each other in the village and maintain their identity by adding the name of their clan as surname. Each clan owns certain patches of swiddens collectively within the village boundary. No member of any other clan can cultivate any patch of swidden without the permission of the head of the clan that owns it.

Each clan in a village acts as a cohesive group in many socio-cultural and economic activities. The members of a clan in a village reciprocate help in one another's agricultural activities and participate in social ceremonies and ritual performances connected with birth, marriage and death and magico-religious rites. The representatives nominated by each clan participate in the meeting of the village panchayat and assist the village priest at the time of religious festivals observed in the village. Each clan has a separate burial ground where menhirs in honour of the dead are erected. A woman after marriage

changes her clan and takes up her husband's clan till her death.

Over and above the clan there is territorial exogamy at two levels i. e. individual village and groups of villages. To them village is an almost a sacred entity which is maintained by all male members who share *soru*, a sacred food offered to deities at the time of village festivals. All members of the village treat one another as brothers and sisters and that is why prohibit any sexual relationship and matrimonial alliances among the residents of a village is forbidden. All people make united effort to maintain peace and security of the village and protect its boundary.

In addition to village exogamy, there is the Bara-Jangar group formed by 12 villages around Mudulipada the residents of which consider themselves brothers and sisters. Thus marriage between the girls and the boys of these 12 villages is prohibited. This group solidarity is maintained by celebrating the Patkhanda festival collectively by all these villages in honour of Patkhanda Mahaprabhu and sharing the *soru*, the sacred food prepared on this occasion, by the members of all of these 12 villages.

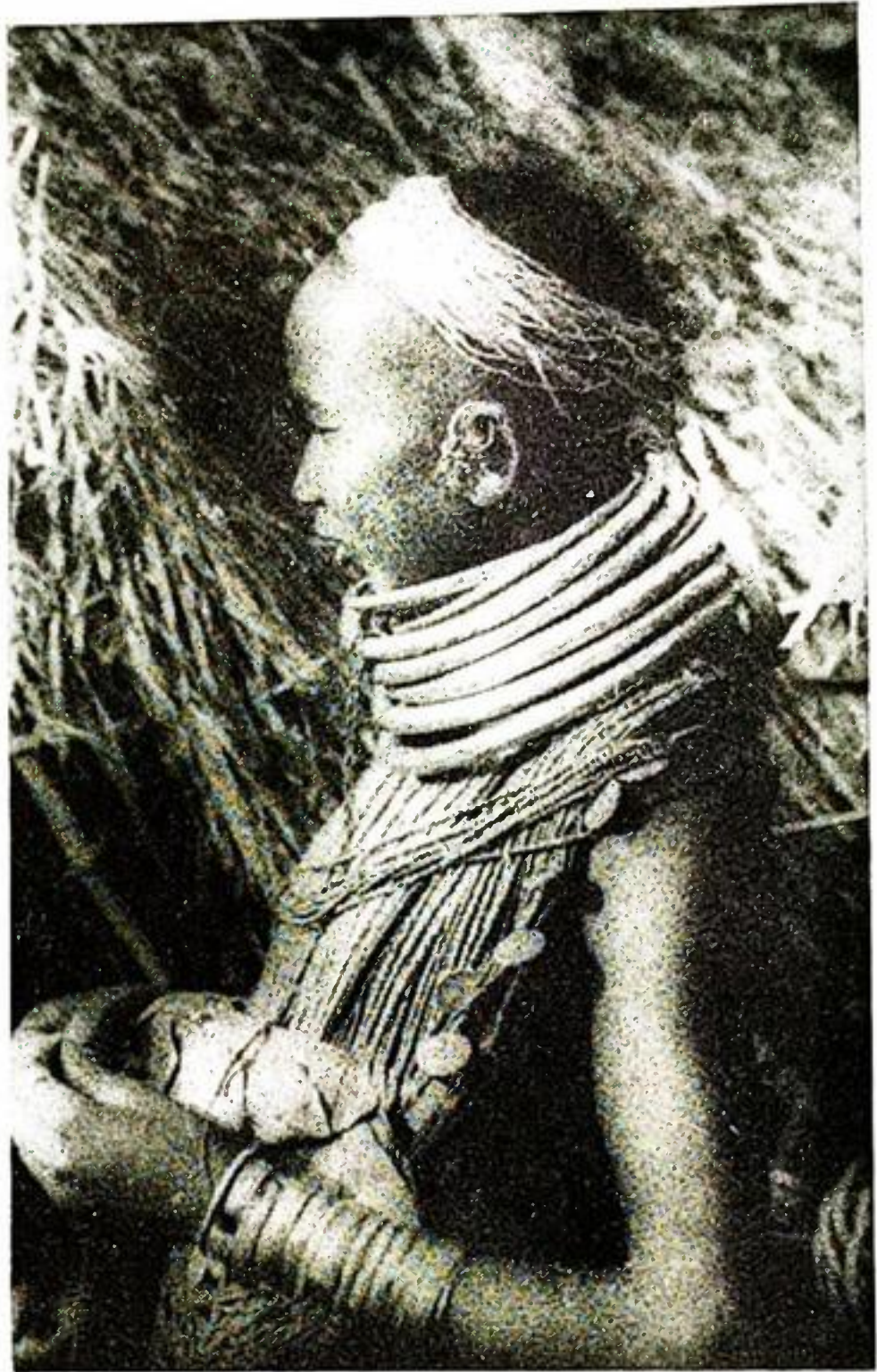
The next wider unit is the moiety or *bonsa* which divides the entire Bondo tribe into two

broad groups, viz; the *hantal* (cobra) and the *killo* (tiger). Among them the *hantal* moiety is most numerous. Each moiety has a myth behind its origin. The moieties as their names signify are totemistic.

The members of a moiety have developed a special attitude of reverence and gratitude towards the animal that stands for the *bonso*. Each *bonso* has a number of clans. This dual organization has been weakened due to unequal distribution of population in the two divisions. The *hantal* group which is larger could not find adequate number of persons of *killo* division for their children to marry as a result of which marriage within the same moiety is now taking place.

The kinship terms used by them reveal as to how various types of kins are grouped together and called by single classificatory terms. For example, the term *ba* is used for father, father-in-law, husband's elder brother and wife's mother's brother. Similarly the elder sister, mother's mother, wife's elder brother's wife and husband's elder brother's wife are known as *ming*.

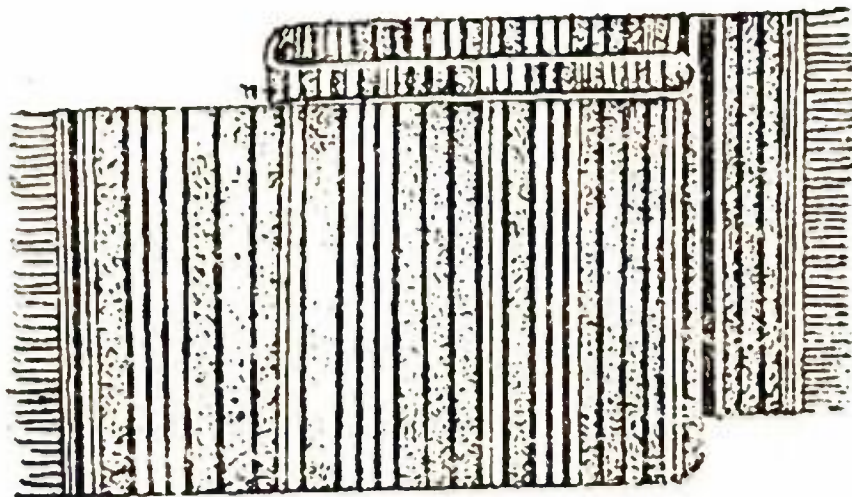
Joking relationship exists between a woman and her husband's younger brother and sister, between a man with his wife's younger sister and brother and between the persons with their grand children. Avoidance relationship among the kins



Natural grace

is more or less lacking except between a woman and her husband's elder brother.

Besides affinal and consanguinal kinsmen the Bonds have another type of relationship established by ritual and bond friendship which is known as *moitra*. Persons of the same sex and age group belonging to the same community or different communities may develop intimacy and bind themselves by bond friendship in a ritual performed by the village priest. Once such friendship is established it is obligatory for both the friends to attend socio-religious ceremonies held at each other's family and exchange gifts. No matrimonial alliance is possible between the siblings of these two families as they are considered brothers and sisters to each other.





MECHANISM OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The Bondos have not yet been the victim of disintegration as their society still sticks to many of their customs and cultural traditions. All the members of the community function as a cohesive unit and abide by a set of uncodified customary laws, and moral standards which are not compliance of these customs and usages are ensured through informal social pressure from their panchayat. There are some norms supported by supernatural sanctions and any violation of these

norms is followed automatically by evil consequences.

The organizations by which the unity and law and order in their society are maintained are present both at the village level and at the cluster of villages level. The Bondo village is a socio-political unit acting in conformity to the dictates of traditional panchayat. There are various categories of functionaries in the panchayat who are responsible to maintain peace and harmony in the village.

The Bondos who are very much individualistic and go by their independent views are also democratic in spirit. The elderly men of age and experience also exert a lot of influence to enforce law and order of the village. They actively participate in the panchayat meetings for adjudication of disputes. Public opinion and group conscience work most powerfully towards conformation of social norms and cultural traditions and arriving at correct decisions in matters concerning the tribe. The Panchayat assembles at *sindibor* (place of village assembly) whenever cases of serious breaches of tribal laws and customs are noticed. The decisions arrived at the panchayat are generally unanimous and strictly adhered to by all concerned.

The secular headman is known as the *Naik*. Though the post is not hereditary, the *Naik* offici-

ates for a period of three years after which a fresh selection is made by the village elders to appoint another person or to allow the old *Naik* to continue if his performance in the previous term is satisfactory. He presides over the village assembly and adjudicates the cases concerning the village. He is in charge of collection of land revenue and depositing the same in the Revenue Office. He collects the subscriptions for the village festivals and fines imposed on the accused by the panchayat and keeps the amount with him. For his service he enjoys half an acre of low land of the village. He is assisted by the *Challan* who is also selected by the village elders. His post is hereditary. He announces the decisions of the panchayat. The *Barika* who generally belongs to the Domb, a Sch. Caste is the messenger of the village. He is a migrant and resides in the village. Whenever a meeting of the panchayat is held the *Barika* summons the villagers to *sindibor*. He informs the police in case there is a murder case in the village. When the villagers go for communal hunt in the month of March-April, the *Barika* organizes the group and leads them to the forest. He acts as a liaison agent in between the Bondos and the outsiders. He keeps contact with the police and forest officers on behalf of the village, so that the villagers are not put to harassment. He keeps the Bondos informed about the progress of the cases booked by the police and forest departments. His post is hereditary. Unlike other

tribal communities the Bondos do not give any laxity to the Domb encouraging him to bring his kinsmen to reside with him in the Bondo villages. Thus one can find only one or two Domb families in a Bondo village. For his services the *barika* gets four kgs. of minor millets from each household of the village and Rs. 5/- from each landless household annually.

Every village has a priest known as *Pujari* (*sisā*) who officiates in communal worships at the time of religious ceremonies. His post is hereditary. He gets fifteen kgs. of food grains at the time of harvest from each household annually. The *Dishari* is the astrologer-cum-medicine man of the village who selects auspicious days for the celebration of religious festivals. He is a specialist in herbal medicines and performs magical rites for curing diseases.

Over the village panchayat there is a supreme body of the tribe, dominated by the Bara-Jangar group of 12 Bondo villages around Mudulipada under the banner of Patkhanda-Mahaprabhu.

They uphold common laws and norms of the whole society under the leadership of a *Bada Naik* selected from among the *Naiks* of the twelve villages, for a period of three years on the day of *Magha* festival in January. On the appointed day

the *Naiks* of twelve villages gather at Mudulipada near the seat of Patkhanda-Mahaprabhu and select the *Bada Naik* in the presence of the village elders. After selection of the *Bada Naik* the *Naik* of Mudulipada puts a vermilion mark on the forehead of the new *Bada Naik* and other *Naiks* tie pieces of red cloth each on his head. The *Bada Naik* then sits on a thorny chair and poses himself as the *Raja*. The *Naik* of Mudulipada village waves a burning lamp and incense, before him being the customary oblations befitting on the occasion of incarnation of Patkhanda-Mahaprabhu. A goat is sacrificed and feast follows. If the *Bada Naik* fails to discharge his duties to the satisfaction of the *Bondos* he can be removed even before the completion of his term and another *Bada Naik* is selected on the next *Magha* festival. So long as he is in the office he enjoys one acre of low land earmarked for him. His functions are varied. All important cases relating to village boundary, adultery, divorce and such other social offences are decided by the *Bada Naik* in the presence of all the *Naiks*. He collects the fines and keeps the funds with him.

Even though the *Bondos* have their own judiciary system, the cases of murder and assault are reported to the police. The *Bondos* in general exhibit a kind of personality which is characterised by aggression and criminal propensity. The village officials do not have any control over such

cases of murder and the tribal political system does not seem to have any responsibilities in the matter of bringing about any reform in the homicidal activities of the people. The general social control works only to the extent that the murderer is excommunicated and handed over to the police for trial. Even the ward members of statutory panchayat follow the traditional norms and values of the society. As pointed out above the Bondos are so much individualistic that the society as a whole fails to exercise on them any influence for a change in their temperament from aggression to peacefulness.





FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE

The major ceremonial occasions in an individual life cycle covering childhood, adulthood and old age contain certain important features which distinguish the Bondos from other neighbouring tribes. The normal attitude of the Bondos towards pregnancy after marriage is that of rejoicing and when it occurs she is greatly loved and the whole family awaits eagerly to welcome the arrival of the new member with happiness. For the woman it is also a matter of pride. If a woman

fails to conceive after marriage a *Dishari* is consulted and necessary magico-religious rites are performed and herbal medicines are applied to effect conception. If pregnancy does not occur even after such measures, a man may think of having a second wife. A child irrespective of sex is welcome.

Pre-marital pregnancy of a daughter does not cause any concern for the Bondo parents. In such cases, which may occur due to the free mixing of boys and girls of marriageable age group in the youth dormitories, the boy who is responsible for this is forced by the village panchayat to marry the girl.

A woman during pregnancy has to observe certain restrictions in respect of her movement, diet and contact with outsiders. She should not go to the burial ground and should not touch the corpse. She should not come out from the house during solar or lunar eclipse or thunderstorm or lightening. She should take light food and avoid eating brinjal, mango and jack fruit. The father should abstain from eating the head or feet of the sacrificial animals.

The birth of a child normally takes place in the living room of the household under the guidance of the mother-in-law assisted by other experienced women of the clan. Whenever a pregnant

woman feels the pang of delivery pain she is taken to the place of confinement. The delivery takes place in sitting posture, the expectant mother holding a rope hanging from the roof for support. If the delivery is delayed the woman is given hot rice gruel to drink and in case of difficult labour the Dishari is immediately called in to propitiate the evil spirits for smooth delivery. At the time of delivery no male member is allowed to enter the room.

Soon after the child is born, the umbilical cord (*lundi*) is cut with the help of a knife or sharp edge of an arrow. A paste prepared from turmeric and leaves of wild creeper called siuta is applied on the naval stump to check bleeding and help in healing. The placenta and the cord are collected in an earthen pot and buried in a pit dug close to the door step of the room of confinement. One of the attending women cleans the baby by anointing castor oil mixed with turmeric powder and paddy husk. Thereafter both mother and baby are bathed in tepid water. The child is given tepid water to drink on the first day and mother's milk from the second day onward. The mother is given hot rice gruel mixed with turmeric and vegetables to eat till the purificatory rites are performed on the ninth day.

During the period of impurity one of the women who assisted during delivery attends both

mother and baby. The mother is not allowed to touch hearth and utensils and does not go out to work.

On the day of purificatory rites chicken is sacrificed and tobacco, cooked rice and liquor are offered to the ancestors by the head of the family. The *Dishari* is invited to perform the ritual in which chicken is also sacrificed. He collects a few drops of sacrificial blood in a leaf-cup in which a handful of unboiled rice is put to soak by steering a piece of mango bark dipped in it, two to three blood marks are given on the walls of the lying-in-room to make it pollution free. A piece of the same bark is stuck in the roof over the front door to prevent entrance of evil spirits. Then another piece of bark is burnt to ashes which is mixed in water. This ash mixed water is sprinkled over all relatives to make them pollution free. Thereafter the assembled guests and relatives are entertained with food and drink.

After nine days, though the mother assumes all her normal household duties she is not allowed to go out of the village till the ceremony 'dubokaige' is performed on the 15th day of the birth of the child. On this occasion the father of the child along with an unmarried boy visits the child's maternal grandfather and informs him of the birth of the child. Following the tradition of the tribe a cock in case of a male child or a hen

in case of a female child and a basketful of paddy are offered by the maternal grandfather on receipt of the news to the visitors. They carry these home where it is shared by all the clan members of the child. On this day the house is thoroughly cleaned and plastered. The mother and the baby are fully purified from this day onward and the former can resume her duties.

Name giving is a simple matter having no ceremony connected with it. Generally a child is named after the day on which it was born. In some cases, the child goes without any name up to the age of five to six years. Such children are called by the term Domb (a Scheduled Caste community living in the Bondo hills) until the baby is named. On the day of name giving a Domb is called in to name the child by presenting an ear ring, a piece of cloth and other requirements to the parents of the child and performing a magico-religious rite. This makes the child defiling and keeps the baby safe from being bewitched. The Domb gets a cow for a male child or an ox if it is a female child for his service. When the child becomes three years old the first hair cutting is done. Any male member of the paternal lineage shaves the baby by means of a new razor and leaves a small plait of hair as pigtail at the back. The women who helped the mother at the time of delivery and other clan members of the child's father are entertained with festive meals. On the

occasion of ear piercing ceremony which normally takes place during infancy, the maternal grand mother bores the helix of each ear of the child with a needle. A knife also touched on the forehead of the child to protect it from causality of murder in future. A pig is sacrificed in honour of ancestral spirits and the occasion is celebrated with festive meals and alcoholic drink.

The child grows under the parental care, acquires knowledge and gains experiences by imitating the elders of the family. A child upto the age of three to four years clings to the mother more than the father. But the mother who shoulders greater responsibility and remains busy all the time hardly gets time to look after the baby properly. During the period of suckling the baby is carried everywhere at the mother's back and is exposed to the rains, chilly weather and scorching sun. As a result the child very often suffers from illness leading to high rate of infant mortality. After weaning period is over the child is left most often with the elder siblings when the mother is out. Improper care and mishandling make the child restless and irritated. The mother shows her love and affection to the baby only when she gets time. Even if it is restricted to take the child to the forest till the age of one year, the baby goes out at the back of the mother right from the age of five months if there is none at home to look after it. All these practices play

negatively and are responsible to make the child ill-tempered and hard-hearted right from the early stage of socialization.

As the child grows the male child spends most of his time with the father and the female child with her mother. The boy is made self-reliant even at the tender age. The father gives toy bows and arrows to the child to play with. The boy even does not hesitate to hold sharp knife in his hand to play with. He goes with his father out to the swidden and starts learning the techniques of hoeing. He also imitates the technique of ploughing. Thus, from early childhood the boy is left alone to stand and struggle and develop a spirit of independence. Both the physical environment and social factors are therefore, responsible to make the Bondo boys tough, sturdy and aggressive. On the contrary, a girl who is all along attached to her mother acquires efficiency in domestic works like, husking food grains, fetching water, collecting firewood and sometimes assisting mother in cooking. Her frequent contact with mother makes her sober, gentle and polite.

There are no specific puberty rites for the girls when they experience their first menstruation and for the boys when they step into adulthood. The life of the Bondo boys and girls revolves around the dormitory house. When they become nine to ten years of age both boys and girls

become the formal members of the dormitory. Among them two separate dormitories one for the girls *selani dingo* and the other for the boys *ingersin* are in existence. Since the boys and girls of the same village are considered brothers and sisters, they go to other villages in a body and receive similar visitor from other dormitories. The youth dormitory occupies the core of village life. It regulates the relation of every man and woman with the members of the community and forms a framework for the numerous obligations between individuals and groups. It strengthens the sense of social unity and cohesiveness and solidarity. Its main social function is to impart training to youths in dance and music and in the traditional lore of the Bondos.

In the boys' dormitory, they exchange greetings, make feast and dance together and individual boys enter ceremonial friendship pacts with the dormitory boys of other villages. In the girls' dormitory, the inmates always appear on most friendly terms with each other. They work together, sing together and strive to be always together. It is a place where mates are also finally selected and marriage is solemnized.

The boys' dormitory affords sleeping accommodation for the unmarried boys, for the widowers, visiting guests and relatives. After becoming members of the youth dormitory and

after associating with its senior members, the younger members are trained to direct their energy for successful adjustment with the people in social, economic, religious and other aspects of life. The process of socialization also goes on through the senior-junior relationship of the dormitory members. The junior members are taught how to obey their superiors. The dormitory is the store of all musical instruments which are kept hanging on the walls and represent different deities like, *Uga* and *Singaraj*. It is also used as kitchen on the occasion of feasts. Meals are cooked for the visitors in the dormitory in day time. For the Bondos, life in the youth dormitory is considered the best period of their life. It still provides a mechanism for initiating the growing generation of the Bondos into their cultural heritage.

In order to keep the continuity of family bond and ancestral worship, it is a moral duty of every Bondo to marry. Marriage brings recognition to a Bondo as a fullfledged member of the community. Considering from the economic point of view a Bondo gets a life long partner by paying bride-price to help him in all economic pursuits.

The tribe is endogamous. The hill Bondos have marriage ties with the plain Bondos though the latter have started disfavouring it. Further, marriage within the village is not possible even

though each village is inhabited by several intermarrying clans, because the inhabitants of a village irrespective of its homogeneity or heterogeneity in composition treat each other as brothers and sisters. Each clan being exogamous, suitable mate is selected outside own clan and that too, outside the own village.

Though monogamy is the rule polygamous marriages are not totally absent. In case of barrenness disability and doubtful chastity of a woman a second wife is brought home. Generally no trouble arises in a family when a man is married second time even when his first wife is alive and lives with him.

In the Bondo society the husband is younger in age than the wife. Marriage mates are selected only when the boy attains 10 to 12 years of age and the girl attains 15 to 20 years of age. There are cases of girls of 30 to 35 years of age marrying boys of 15 to 18 years of age. The common explanation for this peculiar custom is that the husband will have vigour and vitality and working capacity to maintain his wife at her old age when she should have been incapable to work.

The existence of youth dormitory separately for boys and girls plays an important role in the selection of mates both for boys and girls for

marriage. In these institutions the unmarried boys and girls of different villages spend their leisure hours in dancing and singing. In course of contact they develop friendship and love for each other and select their life partners. Once the decision is final the boy puts on a brass-ring in the fore finger of the girl in the presence of other members of the dormitory and gives a formal declaration of his marriage with the girl. If the choice is not acceptable to the girl she may throw away the ring soon after it is put on her finger. If there is more than one suitor for a particular girls even after the presentation of the ring, the girl may be captured by the boy's party. In that case the girl is followed by her parents and other elderly members of the village who demand compensation from the boy's parents for this act of immorality. Consequently the girl's party is consoled by negotiation, request and flattery and by providing food and drink in plenty. Finally the girl goes back to her parental home. After payment of the bride-price, the girl is sent back for the marriage rites.

In fact the parents never object to love marriage. They rather support it whole heartedly and get ready to materialize the marriage finally. In case of capture, the element of love is not there. So it is not preferred. In the Bondo society therefore, love marriage is very common and in rare cases negotiation is initiated for marriage. Even if it is a marriage by love or any other type



Waiting for my beloved

of marriage, the payment of bride-price is indispensable. The bride-price is paid in the form of either cows or bullocks or buffaloes with payment of one or two rupees in cash. Some of the poor people who cannot afford to pay the bride-price arrange it by serving as bonded labourers.

After everything is settled, the boy's father with a group of clan members goes to bring the girl to his village. Until the marriage is over the boy's father does not dine in the girl's house. The girl with one of her close friends comes to the boy's house on a four day visit to give test of her physical capacity. In return the boy too, goes to the girl's house after four days and proves his physical capabilities.

Finally the marriage takes place in the month of *push* (January-February) when all crops have been harvested and the people are relatively free from routine field work. On an auspicious day fixed by the *Dishari* a group of women belonging to the boy's clan go to the bride's village to bring the bride. On arrival, they are entertained with food and drink. On the following day they come back with the bride and other members of her family and village. The drumbeaters too, accompany her. While coming the bride is given a basketful of cooked rice and meat for distribution among the members present in the boy's village. On arrival at the house of the boy, the girl is co-

rdially taken in and the boy's mother sprinkles turmeric water on her feet and gives mark on her forehead with a paste made of unboiled rice. The *Dishari* and the shamans available on the spot attend the ceremony to bless her.

After the reception is over a group of boys forcibly carry the groom and put him inside a room. Similarly the bride is also forcibly carried by a group of girls to the same room which is then bolted from outside and reopened only when the bride cries out loudly. This custom of temporary confinement is an important part of the marriage ceremony which gives social recognition to the boy and the girl as husband and wife after they come out of the room.

Form there the birde is taken to the kitchen where she cooks rice in a new earthen pot. The *Dishari* offers the cooked food to the ancestral spirits and the bride is recognized as the housewife henceforward. There after she cooks rice and serves to clan members of the boy's side. All the guests and relatives present there bless her and accept her as a member of the bride-grooms' clan. They too, offer gifts to the bride. All the gifts become the personal property of the bride which is utilized when a new house is constructed.

In some cases the bride-price is paid after a few days but not on the day of marriage. On

the third day the couple pay a visit to the girl's house. On this occasion a feast is arranged by the bride's father. The dormitory members assemble to participate in the feast. On the fourth day the groom alone returns home leaving behind his wife to be escorted back again after a fortnight or so when the groom makes a second visit to his father-in-law's house.

In the Bondo society widows generally remarry the widowers. A young widower may marry a virgin girl if he so likes by paying bride wealth at a higher rate. In such cases no special rites are performed. Divorce on reasonable grounds like adultery, laziness and unfaithfulness is socially approved.

To the Bondos, death is believed to be the work of the evil spirits, black magic and witchcraft. They practise both cremation and burial. Loud cries of the family and clan members rent the air till the dead body is taken out to the cremation ground. The corpse is wrapped with a white cloth over which a mat is covered and laid on the bier made of two long wooden or bamboo poles set in position by means of *siali* ropes woven in a criss-cross way. Some tobacco and a few dried *siali* leaves are kept on the bier as a token of love for the deceased. While taking out the corpse finally from the house, the eldest son or any male member of the clan carries a

bundle of straw from the deceased hut. This indicates that the departed soul takes a share of his or her own house in this form. The soul may not come back again dissatisfied to create trouble for those whom he left behind.

The corpse is carried by clan members. Only men accompany the bier. Some persons go earlier to prepare the pyre. Nails and hairs of the corpse are cut and collected in a *siali* leaf cup and placed with the corpse. The mourners place the corpse on the funeral pyre. Some of the articles like bow and arrow, knife, cloths and a few items of ornaments used by the deceased are kept on the pyre with the corpse. Keeping all these things together, the eldest son or any male agnate of the deceased set fire to the pyre. While the pyre is in blaze, the mourners come to the stream to take bath without looking behind to the pyre. It is believed that they may be bewitched as the spirit of the dead still hovers round until *dasha* or final purificatory rites are over.

The neighbours feed the mourners when they return from the cremation ground. In the evening rice is cooked in a new earthenpot by the deceased family. Some lineage members go to the burial ground at night with cooked food to offer to the deceased. After they return an egg is offered to the ancestral spirits by the eldest son. The contents of egg is mixed in water and sprinkled

with the help of a mango twig over the roof of the deceased house and over those of the consanguineal relatives living nearby. This is the preliminary stage of purification of the death pollution.

Bud ceremony is observed on the third day to ascertain whether the death is normal or caused by sorcery. On the third day the female relatives of the deceased along with other elderly women of the clan go to the burial ground and collect a piece of bone with the help of a bamboo split. If the bone is bristle the death is normal, if not, the death is considered abnormal. They bring a little ash wrapped in a *siali* leaf which they throw in the stream on their way. They are received with a pitcherfull of water and an egg at the door step. Each one of them tramples over the egg. Water is sprinkled over them and over the roof by the shaman so that no malevolent spirit can enter the deceased house.

Ningdak ceremony or concluding purificatory ceremony is held on the tenth day. On this occasion relatives and friends assemble. Rice and beef are cooked and served at the burial ground to the deceased and in the house to the ancestral spirits. The eldest son of the deceased along with some male members of the clan goes to the burial ground to wash the ashes of the deceased. Further, to make the young girls of the family spirit free *orpa* rites are performed near the water

source. On this occasion cooked food is offered to the spirit. If, after all these purificatory rites any member is haunted by the spirit of the deceased a memorial stone called *gurom* is erected close to the deceased house observing elaborate rituals at high cost.





MAN AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The religious beliefs and practices of the Bondos may conform basically to animism but it is currently influenced to some extent by Hinduism. They believe in the existence of supernatural powers superior to man, who are believed to direct and control the course of human life and their attitude towards them is one of reverential fear. They have evolved rites and rituals, ceremonies and festivals which they perform with the sole objective of propitiating and supplicating the deities, ancestral spirits and other supernatural beings so that

no mishap befalls, crops grow in plenty, health and welbeing of the people is kept up unaffected by evil spirits.

In the Bondo pantheon Patkhanda Mahaprabhu is an important deity. He is known as Singi-Arka (Sun-Moon) and represented by a sword of 3 feet in length and 6 inches in width, placed in the hollow of a banyan tree in the sacred grove of Mudulipada village. He is the Supreme being, fully benevolent and creator of this world. According to a story current among them, the sacred sword was given to them by Lord Ramachandra. It is said that on His return journey after completing 14 years of His banishment Lord Rama halted for sometime in the Bondo hills. The forest then in this place was very dense and was full of wild animals which were the greatest sources of danger to the people. The Bondos who offered hospitality to Him, His wife Sita and His brother Lachman begged of them some weapon by which to protect their life from the attack of the wild animals. Lord Rama fulfilled their prayer by giving them a sword which represents the Patkhanda and eventually became the Supreme Deity to the tribe.

Not only the sword is sacred but also the banyan tree in which the sword is kept is considered equally sacred. *Hundi* or *Bursung*, *Kepurchuan* and *Singraj* are installed as village deities while *Uga* and *Renungbar* are forest deities. There

are many hills, such as *Boliparbat*, *Biniparbat*, *Baubar Parbat*, etc., which are considered to be the abode of several deities named after the hills. *Dhartani* is the deity of cowshed. *Lamtachuan Doliang*, *Garbada*, *Kaliarani*, *Kinding Sagar* preside over stream, mango tree, paddy field, a hill and musical drum respectively. There are evil spirits such as *Gunam*, *Kamini*, *Raskoda Devta*, etc. who are malevolent bringing sufferings to the living generation.

The Bondos believe in the transmigration of the soul. It is their belief that after the death of a person the soul departs its body and is subjected to the scrutiny by the *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* for its existence after life. The *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* takes into consideration the nature of life it led, decides whether it would merge in the realm of ancestral spirits or it would lead the life of a ghost or demon or any other type of evil spirit. The person which lived a peaceful life without breaking any social norm is considered good and the soul of this person becomes one of the ancestral spirits. In contrast the soul of the person who was in the habit of breaking the social norms and did not lead a peaceful and happy life due to his deviant behaviour turns into a ghost.

The spirits of the dead ancestors are placed in a separate class and are known as *Muldei* having their abode in the first wooden post which

is fixed onto the ground at the time of constructing a new house. The ancestral spirits are normally well wishers of their descendants. It is believed that the spirit of the deceased father or grand father often visits to see their children when they are sick. At the same time they get angry if it finds them not sticking to the social norms and neglecting their duty of offering food to it in festivities. In such cases the inmates of the house suffer from illness, animals face unnatural death and crops fail. On festive occasions the *Dishari* is invited to conduct the worship and to offer ritual objects to the spirits on behalf of the family members.

The main religious functionaries found among the Bondos include priest (*Pujari* or *Sisa*) astrologer-cum-medicine man (*Dishari*) and shaman (*Gurumai*). Among them the position of the *Sisa* is very high as he is responsible for worshipping *Hundi* and *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* and other deities. His post is hereditary and he gets 15 kgs. of food grains per family annually at the time of harvest for his services.

Next comes the *Dishari*. His duties are to fix auspicious time and date for the performance of village level festivals. He is also consulted for appointment of auspicious time for marriage and other ceremonial activities. Normally the post of the *Dishari* is hereditary, but where the descendants

of a *Dishari* have not been able to learn the works of a *Dishari* any other person of the village having requisite knowledge is selected for this purpose. He is paid in cash which varies from Rs. 1 to Rs. 10 depending upon the nature of the worship. The *Dishari* is always of the male sex.

There are also shamans and shamanins in the Bondo society to cure diseases through magico-religious spells and rites. Sometimes they get spirit-possessed and prescribe remedial measures for curing a patient.

✓ These ritual and magical functionaries are believed to have power of vision of the deities and spirits and are most knowledgeable about the methods of propitiation for the wellbeing of the people. Generally the Bondos pay their obeisance to the deities by bowing and genuflecting at the time of worship. Sun-dried (*arua*) rice is the main consecrated food item offered to the deities. Liquor is not offered to the deities in any ritual excepting in magico-religious rites performed by the shamans. Various animals like buffalo, goat, lamb, pig and fowl are sacrificed to appease the deities and the spirits. Ghosts and demons are satisfied by offering eggs and fowls. ✓

There are rituals performed in the Bondo society for securing favour and blessings round the year. Each festive occasion has got two aspects,

the ritual aspect concerning sacrifice of animals and offering of food to the deities and ancestors and the recreational aspect which provides entertainment and enjoyment. The important festivals observed by them starts with the *Chait Parab* in the month of *Chait* (March-April), *Banda-pun* in June-July, *Dasora* in August-September, *Diwali* or *Gewarsung* in October-November, *Push Parab* in December-January and ends with *Magho Parab* in January-February.

The celebration of the *Chait Parab* in the month of *Chaita* (March-April) marks the beginning of the year. On this occasion adult males go for annual hunt and eat new mango for the first time and start sowing paddy and minor millets. It is observed elaborately from the second Tuesday of the month or from any date fixed by the *Dishari*. On this occasion eleven pairs of mangoes are tied at different places of the house particularly over the oven, near the *Muldei*, in the courtyard, backyard and entrance. Such food items as crab, dry fish, *aru*, rice are cooked in a new earthen pot by the head of family after taking bath. When the cooking is over two pairs of mangoes are peeled and mixed with the food prepared and are offered in *siali* leaf plates to ancestral spirits. Two more shares are served from the same stock-one for the spirit residing at the front door and the other for the spirit residing in the public street of the village. A red coloured

fowl is sacrificed at the *Muldei* and blood is sprinkled over the food offered. The fowl is cooked along with *arua* rice and shared as a ritual food by the members of the house. Mango is eaten only after this ritual.

In the afternoon, the village leaders including the *Naik*, the *Pujari* and the *Challan* assemble at *Sindibor* and play *Dhola* (drum) and *Turi* or *Singhar* inviting the adult male members of all households of the village to assemble with hunting implements to go for hunting. The expedition may continue for several days till games are bagged. The party returns to the *Sindibor* only when some animals are killed. On the day the party returns, game is not immediately distributed but preserved for the next day. The *Pujari* performs a ritual to appease the forest deity by sacrificing a fowl. *Arua* rice mixed with the blood of the sacrificial animal is thrown over the head of each individual present. After appeasing the deity the game is dressed and equally distributed among the hunters. No communal feasting takes place. Dancing and singing continue till the concluding day of the festival, when seeds of different crops like paddy, ragi and *Suan* are carried in a basket by the head of each household to their respective fields. The *Pujari* along with the shamans visits each plot and places a heap of *arua* rice in the portion of the swidden cleared with cowdung. The shamans ward off the evil spirit by spreading a

bundle of peacock feathers in the field. The *Pujari* offers an egg and throws it over the seeds in the basket and on the heap of rice offered to the forest deity. After this ritual, some of the seeds are ceremoniously sown over the patch of the swidden and the rest is mixed with other seeds to be sown later on.

Bandapun Parab (*kuree*) is celebrated in the month of *Sraavan* (July-August) before *kangu*, pumpkin (*kunda*), orange (*panglung*), arum (*sariap*) and wild roots (*lohi*) are eaten for the first time. *Bursung*, the Earth-Goddess, is worshipped on this occasion collectively in the village. In front of the village deity. *Hundi*, a small clay platform with thatched roof, is made by the villagers with the building materials brought by three unmarried girls. Sheaths of *kongu* are heaped over the roof and other items are kept under the roof. The *Pujari* and the shamans officiate on this occasion and invoke all the forest deities and spirits with long incantations. For each deity or spirit, one joss-stick is offered and inserted in the heap and the shamans present at the spot go into trance one by one until the *Pujari* himself goes into trance being possessed by *Bursung*. After regaining senses, a white fowl is sacrificed and sacrificial blood is put on the forehead of each individual present at the place of worship.

Each household head is given one handful of *kangu* to be mixed with other *kangu* seeds

kept ready for sowing. At night cakes are prepared in individual houses and the night is spent in merry making.

The festival of *dasara* otherwise known as *Kumbuguda* is celebrated only for a day on any Monday in the month of *Aswin* (September-October). They communally worship *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* in the morning in a congregation. The *Pujari* brings down the sword (representing *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu*) from the banyan tree, washes it with turmeric water and anoints vermilion. The priest stands facing north and invokes *Mahaprabhu* and *Durga* with folded hands while another person sprinkles turmeric water with the help of a mango twig over the sword until the priest completes uttering spells. Then follows the oblation of a lighted lamp and offering of coconut to the sword. The villagers individually offer sweets, molasses, banana and coconut to *Mahaprabhu*. The consecrated foods are distributed among all present. The *Pujari* places the sword again in its original place and the audience disperse. In the afternoon, some of them go to witness *dasara* festival at *Khairput*.

Gewarsung or *Diwaliparab* is observed communally in the month of *Kartik* (October-November) to solicit blessing from *Bursung* for the welfare of the villagers and for bumper crop. On this occasion the priest worships the deities.

A small platform is made and cleaned with cow-dung water. Mango twigs are tied around the bamboo posts planted at four corners of the platform. The priest places only one heap of *Arua* rice in the middle of the platform. At the end individual households offer banana, molasses and sweets and finally a goat is sacrificed. The blood of the sacrificial animal is sprinkled over the altar and the deity. The same procedure is also adopted to appease other deities. But instead of a goat, a pig is sacrificed. Here the priest utters the names of Kali, Durgamai, Banadevi, etc., and invokes them with folded hands. Thereafter the sacrificial animals are dressed and cooked and shared by all persons including the females.

Push-Parab is celebrated elaborately in the month of *Push* (December-January) to appease *Burusung* to save the standing crops from the depredation of the wild animals. It starts on a Tuesday and continues for three days. For this purpose houses are cleaned and people put on new or clean dress. Rice, *Siadi* fruits, beans and various wild roots are cooked in a new earthen pot and offered by the male head of the household in eleven leaf-cups at eleven places of the house to appease the ancestral spirits for their blessings. A red fowl is sacrificed in honour of the ancestral spirits. The ritual foods are shared by the members of own clan only and never given to any outsider.

In the afternoon, all assemble at the *Sindibor* when a call is given by the *Pujari* by blowing a *Turi* (*Bugule*) twice. When the bugle is blown second time all male members hurry up to collect sago palm branches stripped of their leaves. Soon after their return they stand two by two and they start beating each other with the sago-palm branches. It is believed that the touch of such branches makes them disease free. It is alarming to see that even if the persons sustain injury in the fighting but remain quite gay and cheerful and excuse each other sportively. The winners too reconcile by offering *Pandom* (grain-beer) to the losers. This continues till evening. The night and the following day are spent in rejoicing and dancing. The winners offer grain-beer to the victims.

On the third day, the village leaders viz, *Naik*, *Challan*, *Pujari* and *Barik* distribute grain-beer to the villagers. The entire cost is borne by these village officials. Thereafter the meeting of the village panchayat is held to adjudicate cases, if any and also to castigate those found guilty of breach of their customary laws and tradition. All are called upon to maintain the unity of the village and also to keep up the tribal solidarity. In the evening the young boys of the village entertain the village leaders. They along with the shamans go from house to house along with the drum beaters. The *Shamans* chant spells and

touch the roof of each house in the village with a bundle of peacock feather to ward off evil-spirits and to protect from fire accident.

Magha Parab (susk) is observed in the month of *Magha* (January-February) when all the crops are harvested and stored in the house. It is an important festival, observed collectively by the *Barajanagar* group of villages to mark the first eating of new rice. Eight days prior to the observance of the festival, all the *Naiks* of twelve villages come to *Mudulipada*, with about 4 kgs. of paddy and a fowl each. These are handed over to the *Naik* of *Mudulipada*. The priest of the *Mudulipada* village called *Patakhandu Pujari* gives a vermilion mark on the forehead of each *Naik*. Besides the rice and fowls presented by the *Naiks*, other costs of the worship are borne by the villagers of *Mudulipada* from the common fund collected for the purpose. They supply a brown coloured goat, a fowl and other ritual objects.

Men and women of all the villages of the *Barajanagar* group assemble at *Mudulipada* along with their *Naiks* with incense powder, mango twigs, banana, sweets and coconuts. The vow makers bring with them sacrificial animals like fowl and goat. After they arrive, musicians and drum beaters start playing musical instruments. The priest after a purificatory bath cleans the

front yard of his house with cowdung and places a heap of about 8 kgs. of paddy at that place. Two lumps of *arua* rice representing Patkhanda and *Hundi* are placed over *siali* leaf on both sides of the bigger heap. The priest stands with folded hands and chants incantations for an hour or so to solicit blessings from Patkhanda. The shamans too, circumambulate the heap with spells while waving the peacock feathers to ward off the evil spirits. After this is done twelve fowls are sacrificed one after another to appease *Hundi*. The sacrificial blood is sprinkled over the heap of paddy. The *Badnaik* gives one leaf-cup full of consecrated paddy to each *Naik* who in turn distributes to all the households of his village. This is mixed with the seed kept in their houses and sown afterwards when sowing operation takes place. Immediately after the departure of the *Badnaik* from the place the women and the children rush to the spot joyously to collect the left over paddy. It is believed that the consecrated paddy, if eaten, promotes sound health. Thereafter the priest along with the drum beaters proceeds to the seat of Patkhanda Mahaprabhu. It is on this occasion that, all *Naiks* select an able bodied man to be their *Badnaik* or *Raja* in case the present one is to be replaced. People are also asked to give their opinion about the performance of the Patkhanda *Pujari*. If the *Pujari* is found misfit he is replaced by a new one who is selected unanimously on this occasion.

The newly selected *Pujari* climbs up the banyan tree, brings down the sword and places it at the trunk of the tree. The sword is washed with turmeric water and twelve marks of vermilion representing twelve disciples of Patkhanda are given on it by the *Pujari*. The paddy collected from each *Naik* is heaped at the hilt of the sword. The shamans in a group rubs a handful of *Arua* rice over the winnowing fans, a magical act favouring them to hold communion with the spirits and go into trance. Some of the shamans start dancing wildly when others are spirit-possessed. When this is over, the *Pujari* of Baunsapada village kills a goat and places the head over heap of paddy. The vow-makers too sacrifice their animals and sprinkle blood over the heap of paddy to satisfy Patkhanda Mahaprabhu. At the time of worship, some of them blow conch shell and play on their traditional musical instruments. At this stage the priest sacrifices a fowl and sprinkles the sacrificial blood over the shamans present. Thereafter the *Badnaik* distributes the consecrated paddy among all household heads for their use at home. A feast with rice and flesh of the sacrificial animals is prepared by the unmarried boys and all persons irrespective of age and sex partake in it. The priest and the *Badnaik* cook their food separately and eat. The evening is spent in dancing and singing. All suspend their works on the following day and spend the time dancing, singing and feasting.



LIVING CONDITION

The Bondos are not particular about keeping their habitation neat and clean. The household refuses are collected and thrown in the backyard. Heaps of household refuses added with the excreta of pig, goat and fowl become the breeding grounds for flies and mosquitoes. During the rainy season the streets and the surroundings of the houses become muddy and produce foul smell. Added to this the Bongo houses are not only poor in quality but also unhygienic. In the same room they store their belongings, cook food and sleep. Shelters for their domestic animals and birds are constructed close to their living houses which are without windows, making the rooms dark and suffocating and congested.

As regards their personal hygiene they are also not careful. They do not take bath regularly and their women go without bath days together. They do not brush their teeth daily nor do they wash their mouth properly after taking food. After defecation, they manage with tender leaves if no water is available. In doing their hair, the Bondo males particularly the unmarried boys take much care. They keep hair long and dip it and clean it with soap or fruits of a forest plant called *Sowa*. They also shave beard and moustache twice thrice a month. Both males and females use scanty clothes, occasionally wash them with ashes in boiling water. Use of soap for cleaning the body or the clothes is not generally seen among them.

They use the running water of the hill streams and the rivers for drinking, cooking, bathing and washing after defecation. If required, cattle are also scrubbed in such streams and rivers. Cremation grounds for different clan groups are located on the banks of these water sources and after cremation the ashes of the corpses are thrown into water of these sources. This way the water is contaminated and the use of this polluted water cause naturally several kinds of stomach trouble.

The gruel prepared from ragi and other minor millets is their staple food, although they

like to take rice which in fact, they do particularly on festive occasions. Ordinarily they take gruel with boiled green leaves or vegetables or roasted dried fish as a side dish. Sometimes they add onion, chilly, mango or tamarind to the main food when vegetables etc., are not available. In addition to these, they collect seasonal flowers, roots, fruits, bamboo shoots and mushrooms for food purposes. Most of them primarily depend on jack-fruit and mango for several months in the summer season. They are fond of non-vegetarian items like fish and meat. They catch fish in the streams for their own consumption and hunt animals and birds in the nearby forests. They eat beef, buffalo flesh, mutton, pork and chicken on festive occasions. They do not milch cow nor do they take milk or milk products. Normally adults take two principal meals in a day-one at mid day and another at night. But they take one extra meal in the morning during busy agricultural season.

Their dietary habit of the Bondos is influenced by seasonal variation. The items and quantity of food intake vary from season to season depending largely on availability of different types of food stuff and festivals observed. Except on festive occasions when they take rice with a non-vegetarian dish, dal or vegetable curry, they generally take millet gruel with boiled green leaves.

They generally adopt very simple methods for preparation of different items of food. Food

grains, fruits, green leaves, shoots, roots, vegetables, etc., are boiled while fish and meat are roasted in burning amber. In the preparation of a side dish they use turmeric, chilly, salt and castor or mohua oil. They eat both green and dried maize roasted in burning amber. Sometimes they prepare cakes from the maize flour. Unripened jackfruits are processed and boiled for consumption. The kernel of the mango is also eaten when there is no sufficient food stuff. Flesh of animals and fish are dried and preserved for eating during rainy and winter seasons.

They observe several food taboos. No body should eat new wild fruits before the celebration of Pus Parab, mango and jackfruits before the Chait Parab and new rice before the Magh Parab. The vegetables which drop down from the plants on the ground are not eaten.

They usually prepare and take four types of alcoholic drinks. These are, Safung (Sago palm juice), Pandom (beer prepared from cereals), Boun Sagur (a spirit of Mahua flower) and Ulinsagur (spirit prepared from mango). Of these drinks, Safung (Sago palm juice) which is the most common and favourite drink is taken both as a beverage and as a food. Sago palm trees (*salap*) are planted and owned as private property by the respective families. It is seen that each family owns a number of such trees which can provide alcoholic drink round the year. At the time of

partition, such trees are distributed among the sons and sometimes sold or mortgaged. When some body is caught red handed at the time of stealing the juice from the pot on the tree, the owner usually loses his temper and sometimes kills the offender by shooting arrows.

For luxuriant growth of a sago palm tree and also for better flow of juice, they observe several magico-religious rites at different stages like, plantation, first tapping of juice and also at the time when there is insufficient flow of juice. At the time of planting a new plant the priest is invited to perform the worship with a sacrifice of a fowl to *Barsung* (Earth Goddess) near the pit. A similar ritual is also observed when juice is to be tapped for the first time or when there is irregular flow of juice. In order to increase the alcoholic content of the juice barks of various plants called *Achki*, *Artun*, *Gosangte*, *Tangri*, *Pitamari* and *Ukusi* are kept dipped in the sago palm juice in the pot.

Pandom is the beer prepared from rice or minor millets. The method of preparation of such beer is very simple. First grains are cooked and spread on a mat to cool. The fermenting agent prepared from the root of a plant called *Chitrama* or from the bark of a plant known as *Kudei* is mixed with the cooked grain. Thereafter these are collected in an earthen pot with little quantity of water being added to it and kept undisturbed

four to five days when it is ready to be taken. It is a rare drink prepared by those who have sufficient quantity of rice or millets.

Bound Sagur (Mahua liquor) and *Lilinsagur* (liquor from mango juice) are prepared through the process of distillation near the hill streams with the help of indigenous equipments. Comparatively adult males are habituated to take all types of alcoholic drinks while females and children may take sago palm juice and grain beer but not the mahua liquor. Whenever liquor is taken a person has to drop a little quantity from the cup on the ground in honour of Earth Goddess and then drinks.

Liquor is enjoyed in a group irrespective of status. Behaviour under intoxication is very rough. It may lead to the act of criminality. The Bondos under the spell of liquor commit murder.

The Bondos both male and female, young and old are inveterate tobacco smokers. Tobacco powder rolled in dried sal leaf like a cheroot is smoked. Many of them also chew tobacco. Children above 8 to 10 years of age are found smoking and chewing tobacco.

The Bondos, though they look healthy and strong suffer from various diseases due to their unhygienic habits and insanitary conditions. Incidence of such diseases as yaws, leprosy, filaria,



Far from medical aid

veneral diseases, etc. is not reported. Epidemics like cholera and smallpox very rarely break out in the Bondo hills. The common ailments among them are malaria, skin and eye diseases, gastrointestinal disorder, worm infection, cuts and wounds and bronchitis. They have their own concepts about the causation of diseases. Most of the sufferings are ascribed to the wrath of the supernatural powers, witchcraft and sorcery. They believe that persons who do not follow the customary usages and those who break taboos and ignore and neglect their supernatural powers are bound to suffer from various diseases.

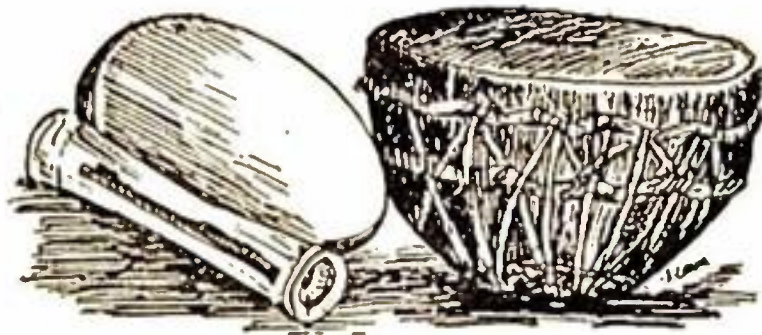
For treatment of these diseases they mostly take recourse to their traditional methods of treatment. An adult Bondo has rudimentary knowledge about treatment of some minor ailments with the help of medicinal plants found in the forest. For a minor cut followed by bleeding, they apply the powder of the green coating of the bamboo shoots diluted in luke warm castor oil or ashes of a piece of cloth burnt. To heal up a burn injury or frostbite a paste prepared from the bark of a plant called *Jagal* is applied. For soothing effect in the case of insect bite the broth prepared by boiling *Kangu* (a minor millet) is applied. The patient suffering from fever is given a mixture of leaves of a creeper called *Harat*, bark of a tree called *Raugh*, the fruits of a tree called *Bilatchili* and salt thrice a day. For the treatment of cold and

body aching the fruits of a tree called *Bilaichili* and mustard or seasamum are grinded and given to the patient to eat. For indigestion a paste of the the bark of a plant called *Dana* is baked in *siali* leaf and anointed over the abdomen. For tooth ache the paste of the roots of a creeper called *Rupa* added with seven grains of *arua* rice is given to the patient to eat. A paste made from the leaves of the *Gunduri* tree added with turmeric is applied to cure scabies after a wash with tepid water. Whenever the preliminary treatment is found ineffective and illness prolongs or when a person suffers from a complicated disease, they believe it to be caused by some supernatural power. In such cases they consult with their traditional astrologer-cum-medicine man (*Dishri*) or the shaman (*Gurumai*). The former examines the pulse, eyes and affected part of the patient's body to ascertain if it is caused by natural factors or by a supernatural power. If it is due to any natural cause he prescribes herbal medicine and gives advice to observe certain restrictions. If it is due to the machination of some evil spirits he detects the agency responsible for the suffering by a grain divination method and performs the appropriate rites which include offering of sacrificial animals to appease his guardian spirit and the sprit which brought the sufferings. ✓

✓ The shaman does not prescribe any medicine but treats the patient by magico-religious rites in

a different way. He goes into trance and along with his assistants who will be waving bundles of peacock feathers and chanting magical spells in a group dance to the beat of the drums and carry on conversation with this guardian spirit to find out the cause of the suffering and its remedy. If an ailment is caused by a sorcerer or by witchcraft, the shaman tries to cure the patient by putting the person responsible for it into various troubles by adopting magical procedures. If all such treatments fail the patient is destined to die as a punishment accorded by supernatural power for his or her unforgivable sin. The treatment by the shaman or the medicine man is very expensive as this involves offering of sacrificial animals and other ritual objects besides the payment of remuneration to the shaman or to the medicine man which ranges from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 200/- or so. ✓

After the establishment of the Bondo Development Agency some changes have occurred in the sphere of treatment of diseases along with the changes in other spheres of life. Initially some of them were persuaded to use modern medicine provided to them in the Dispensary at Mudulipada. Now the Agency distributes allopathic and ayurvedic medicines among the Bondos as advised by the doctors. Several lady social workers are now posted in different villages to make them aware about modern medical practices and get them to use such practices. ●



DANCE AND MUSIC

Like many other tribal communities the Bondos have retained their dance and music which are not very colourful and elaborate as are so among some other tribes. To them dance and music are group activities forming integral part of the celebration of religious festivals and wedding and also for courtship, enjoyment and relaxation. They have specific dances performed on specific occasions and accordingly these are named after such occasions. Besides songs each variety of dance is accompanied by an orchestra which consists of flutes, buguls made of bison-horn or buffalohorn and bamboo clappers. On most of festive occasions, dances are performed by all irrespective of age and sex while the accompanying orchestra is provided by the male members.

Courtship dance are regularly organized by the inmates of the dormitories. These types of



Bosom friends

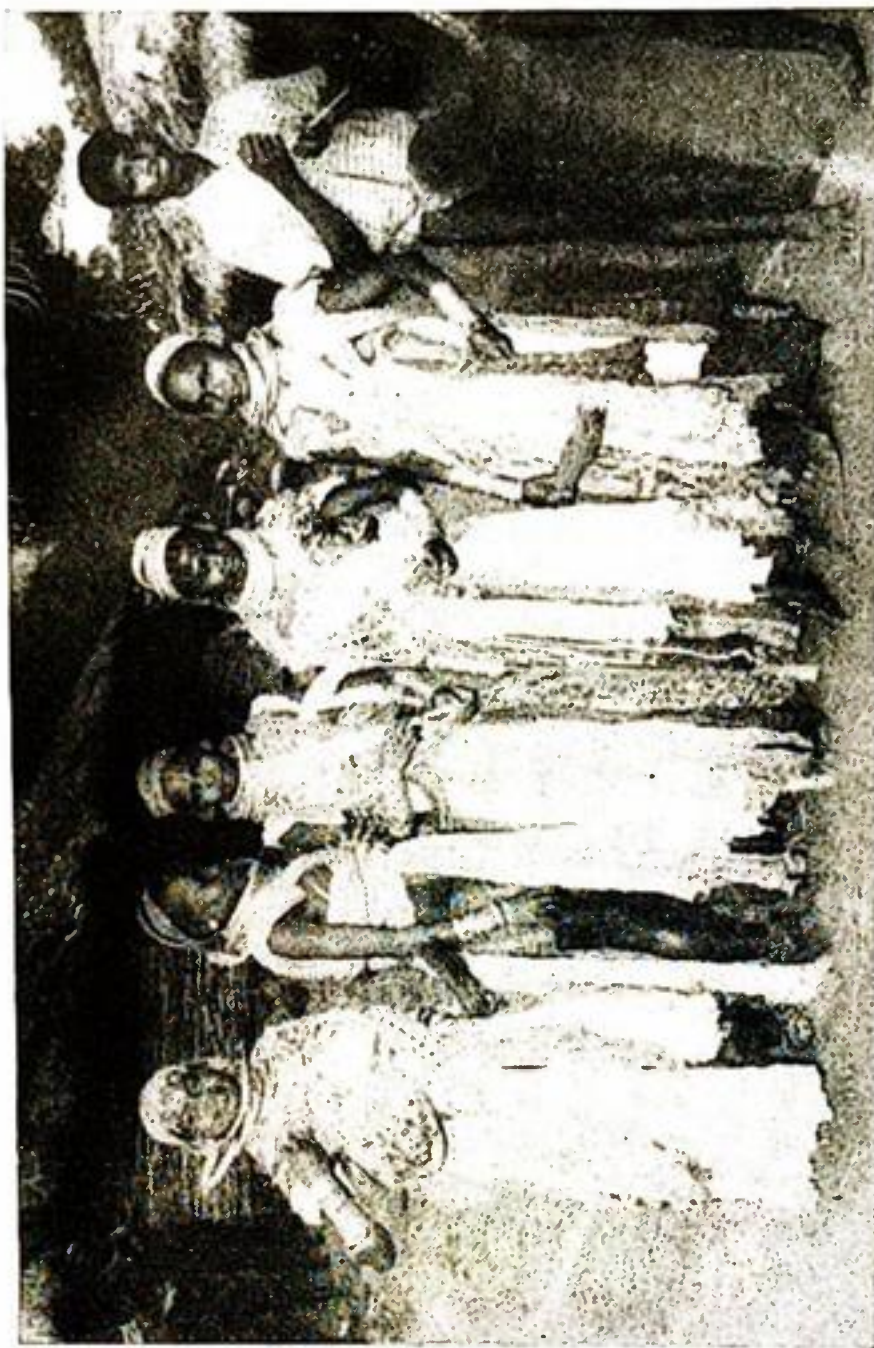
dances are generally organized during winter and summer seasons. A group of boys with their musical instruments and gifts go to dance with girls of another village. Similarly the girls of that particular village pay a return visit. In this way the boys and girls exchange visits. On such occasions the visitors are entertained with food after which singing and dancing continue till late in the night. Both boys and girls get opportunity to mix freely. They exchange gifts and select life partners. Sometimes it so happens that a boy may forcibly take away a girl of his choice from the dancing arena and marries.

The songs are composed befitting to the occasion. Some times songs are also composed spontaneously by the singers. Dance and music are learnt under the guidance of the senior members of the dormitories. In courtship dance which generally takes place near the dormitory, the boys and girls sing and dance to the music provided by a group of boys. The primary impulse of this dance is the rhythm. In such type of dance, the dancers link arms and dance around the orchestra. In their movement the dancers bend forward and go four steps forward and then move two steps backward. Sometimes they also move sidewise in a linear fashion.

On festive occasions dances take place at *Sindibor*. Mainly two dances are very picturesque. These are *Atailumeme* performed on the occasion

of the *Chaita parab* and *Pusakarki meme* during *Pusparab*. In the case of the former only women dance in small groups to the orchestra provided by five to six boys. In the case of the latter the males only participate. They form a big circle with their bows and arrows hung from the left shoulder and axes and long sticks kept on the right shoulder and dance to the tunes of the orchestra provided by the males and songs sung by a group of girls standing at a distance. *Susumeme* is performed on the occasion of *Magha parab* and this is similar to that of the *Pusakarki meme*. War dances take place when the boys accompany the hunting expedition during *Chaita parab*.





Grace - unparalleled



DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

The Bondos have several problems peculiar to them and to their habitat. They are relatively in greater isolation which has arrested their progress and development in almost all aspects of their life. Ignorance and illiteracy, ill health and addiction to drink and homicidal character have all contributed to their inability to forge ahead and achieve development. Deficiency of food grains and short supply of edible forest produce resulting from denudation of natural vegetation has added misery to their life. Most of the hills have become barren and in near future would be almost out cropped.

Unlike other tribal groups such as the Saora and the Khond which are exploited by

non-tribal communities the Bondos are free from exploitation by any outside agencies. But exploitation goes on among themselves, the rich Bondos exploiting the poor Bondos and keeping them in debt bondage in perpetuity. A Bondo needs cash for the payment of bride-price, for meeting the expenses of murder cases and for treatment of diseases. A poor Bondo having no means goes to a rich Bondo and gets a loan at a high rate of interest and serves him as a bonded labourer. In some cases lands, palm-trees and fruit trees are mortgaged to the well-to-do Bondos to get the loan of required amount.

Until the beginning of the Fifth Five-Year Plan very little developmental programmes which are worth mentioning were launched for the development of the Hill Bondos. Whenever any case of murder took place the Police Officials visited the area to investigate the matter and to arrest the persons involved in such cases. Other departments had rarely any contact with the Bondos. A number of primary schools existed in the area in paper and the teachers are not to be seen in the schools. The Block headquarters at Khairput is located at a distance of 13 kms. away from the Hill Bondo villages and very little activities of the Block are met with.

In sharp contrast to all other tribal communities the Bondo lay major emphasis on individual

and its character and personality. They live in a hard unyielding hilly region and exhibit a great skill in keeping themselves to themselves. They love independence to the core of their heart and hold courage, freedom and equality above all other virtues. Although they are individualistic, which gets more pronounced in their material possessions, they become democratic when the question of tribal solidarity comes in the wake of internal or external interferences. Their democratic spirit is also marked in the meetings of the tribal councils, hunting expedition, communal festival and their dormitory life.

They have retained some of their traditional institutions and organizations in tact. The traditional panchayat at the village level is still powerful and people abide by the decisions taken at the village assembly. The traditional leaders, whenever freshly elected, are required to take an oath before the village deities to keep the tradition in tact.

There are dormitories one for the girls and one for the boys in each village. The dormitories play an important role in shaping the character and personality of the Bondos and in conditioning them to social values. In addition to merry-making and free mixing among the boys and girls which usually culminate in marriage, the boys in particular lead a very disciplined life in the

dormitory. The boys of the younger age group are bullied, kicked and given hardest works and kept under suppression by older mates. In contrast the spinsters irrespective of their age behave in a friendly way with one another and spend time in singing and dancing. Among them it is commonly seen that a boy of younger age group who is barely acquainted with sex-play is married to a woman of older age-group having sufficient orgiastic experience.

The swiddens in which shifting cultivation is carried on and where a number of fruit trees are left uncut are collectively owned by the members of a clan. This is a vitalising factor for inspiring and persuading them to take up forestry and horticultural programmes in the swiddens to wean them away from shifting cultivation.

During the Fifth Five-Year Plan when the tribal Sub-Plan came into operation a concerted attention was given to bring about all round development of the Bondos. Under the new strategy for the development of the tribals a Micro Project was launched in the Bondo area in the year 1976-77 which covered all hill Bondo villages and a few Didayi villages. The entire burden of bringing about awareness among the Bondos about various development programmes and improved ways of life rested with the Project.

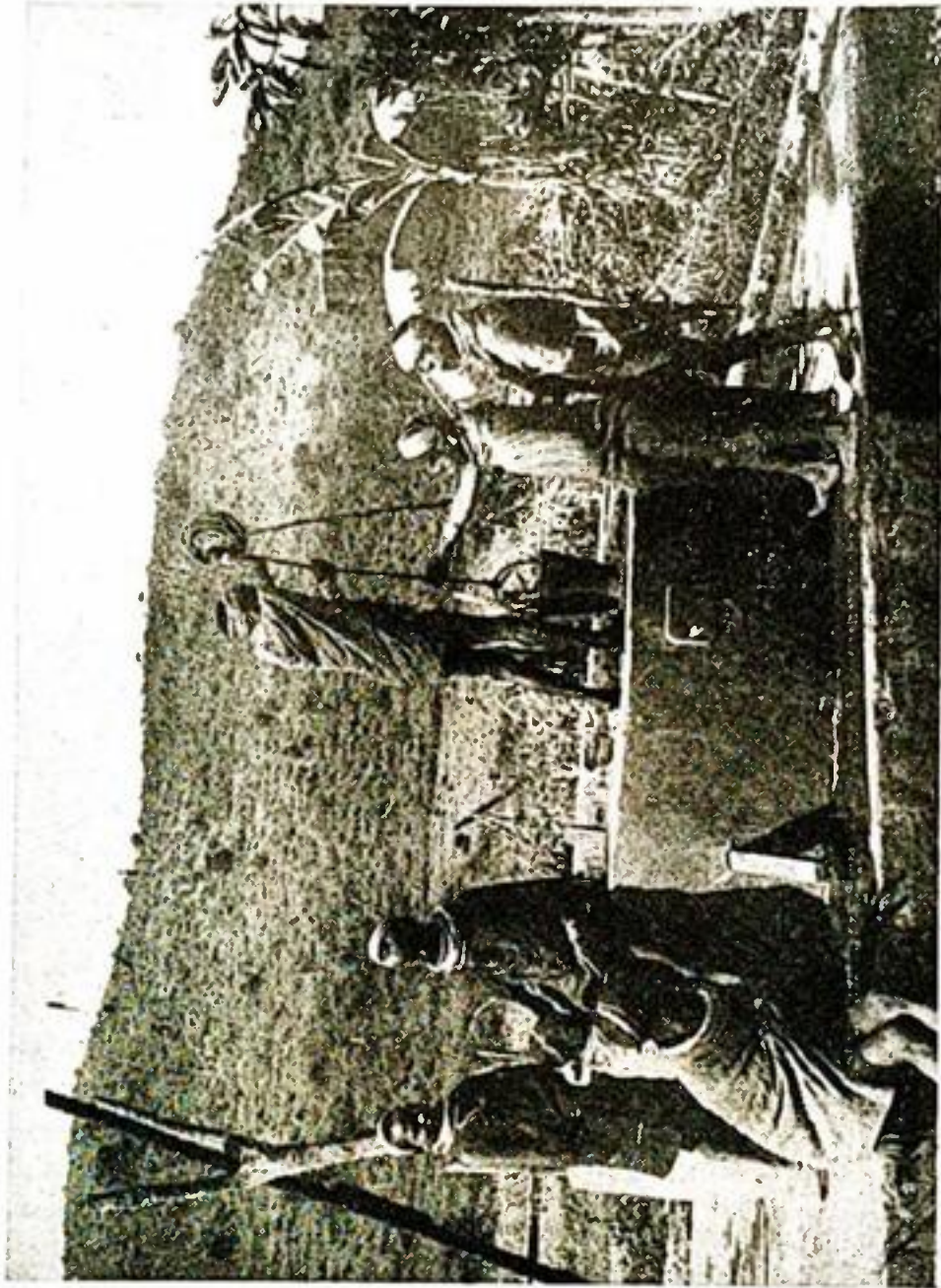
The staff of the Project have tried to understand first the Bondo socio-cultural practices and in fact this basic knowledge about the Bondo society and culture stood them in good stead in their task of implementing various developmental schemes in the project area. They did not follow the stereotyped models of development. Instead, they acted according to the felt needs of the people and potentialities of natural resources.

With the sincere attempts made by the Micro-Project the Bondos have become change-prone and have adopted many developmental schemes for their development. Changes are also perceptible in the social aspects and in the realm of inter personal relationships, Thus a transformation from the stage of stagnation to the present process of dynamic changes has come about. Visitors to the Bondo villages can now move about in the area and mix with the Bondos freely without fear. Various changes have occurred in different spheres of their socio-economic life. They have learnt to grow several new crops like potato, wheat, pulses, ginger and vegetables. They are now not only using improved seeds, but also have adopted improved techniques of cultivation. Use of chemical fertilizers, rotation of crops and mixed and double cropping with the help of irrigation facilities provided by dugwell or cross-bunds has become common among the Bondos. In this respect measures like crop-demonstration, timely

supply of inputs and constant guidance were found most useful.

Traditionally the Bondos are fond of fruit trees most of which now found in the area were grown by their forefathers. The Project made them more enthusiastic about plantation of new fruit bearing trees. Many households could be successively induced to grow improved varieties of mango, banana, guava, lichu, sappota, orange, lemon and coconut trees in their backyards.

The Bondos have been exposed to many new things most of which they have adopted to improve their economic condition. Now they need this and need that and express their eagerness to have them. Frequent contacts which have been taking place with the outsiders have also influenced their religious beliefs and practices. Changes are also taking place in their dress and material possession. A Bondo woman who has become a Sarpanch puts on sarees when she goes out. Provision of medical facilities has created a great deal of interest among them in modern curative and preventive practices. Similarly the Bondo are now very much interested in giving education to their children. In order to meet this need some schools have been set up in Bondo villages and informal education is imparted to the Bondo children by a group of dedicated lady teachers.



A change from hill - stream to Well

The new strategy for development of the Bondos should try to revitalize the indigenous tribal institutions and make use of these in the development process. The problems which need urgent attention in the context of present day tribal development are to identify attitude-based and location specific developmental schemes and devise simple methods for implementation of these schemes through people's participation. Some of the important developmental programmes which should be given top priority are : Intensification of wet cultivation and dry farming; Horticultural plantation and social forestry plantation in the selected patches of the swiddens, Goat and sheep rearing; Eradication of such practices as debt bondage; Introduction of improved looms and techniques of weaving cotton fabrics; Tackling the problems of mal nutrition and malaria in the area; and sustained efforts to spread education through well equipped and better staffed schools and adult literacy classes. Voluntary agencies may prove better in weaning the Bondos away from their drinking habits and bringing about change in their homicidal propensities.

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