

# Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha

## Volume I (Ethnography)

### *Editors*

A.B. Ota  
S.C. Mohanty

Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Research and  
Training Institute (SCSTRTI)  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

**Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha,  
Volume I (Ethnography)**

**2015**

©: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training  
Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

**Published by:**

Director  
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training  
Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

**ISBN 978-93-80705-40-8**

**Price :**

**Printed at:**

Capital Business Service & Consultancy, Bhubaneswar  
capital.a1press@gmail.com

## FOREWORD

After a few years of independence, as a counter to the policy of segregation of tribals adopted by the British rulers, many Anthropologists advocated a policy of integration of the tribals in the national mainstream of the country. The opening of gradual access to the tribal areas all over the country and the extension of formal administration to tribal areas opened for tribals many floodgates of varied contacts with outsiders. Yet, at present, among the tribes living all over India, there are certain vulnerable groups who are relatively more isolated. The isolation leads to inability to access many public goods and services which has resulted in their backwardness, pre-agricultural level of technology, declining or stagnant population with low level of literacy in comparison to others. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Plan (1974-79) period, Government of India decided to put special emphasis on the all round development of these vulnerable tribal groups. They were designated as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) on the basis of the above cited qualifying characteristics. In course of time, 75 such groups were identified in 14 undivided States and 01 Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the purpose of receiving special attention for their sustainable development. Now, they have been re-designated as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs)** by Government of India.

Article 46 of the Indian Constitution lays down as a Directive Principle of State Policy that the State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Apart from these constitutional obligations, the Government in particular and the society in general also have a moral responsibility for the development of the backward classes of the country as a whole. Coming to Odisha, it has the largest number of PTGs among all the States of India. There are 13 PTGs living across the length and breadth of the State with an enriched cultural

mosaic of their own. They are no doubt deprived, vulnerable and technoeconomically backward. Though natural and serene, from infrastructural point of view, their habitats are underdeveloped. However, like man of nature, they perfectly adapt to their eco-system and lead a very simple life with limited needs and aspirations. Above all, in spite of certain socio-cultural changes taking place in their age old way of life under the present pressing circumstances of planned change and intervention, most of them have still kept their distinct ethnic identity intact.

Frankly speaking, tribal-ness or tribalism in itself has become a powerful factor in these days and to utilize its full potential; tribal groups at different techno-economic levels and representing different cultural ethos and patterns are to be allied at different levels, may it be political, social, cultural or ethnical. It can help to minimize the inter-tribal friction and enmity, strengthening the realm of age old tribal life style and structure. On the other hand, the inadequacy of in depth anthropological research and documentation on the colourful cultural life of the tribals has to be taken into due consideration. No doubt it is creditable that the Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of Odisha named as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) as the premier and oldest TRI of the Country has, over the decades, studied various aspects of the PTGs of the State and published very informative research articles in its sixty year old research journal 'ADIVASI' since the nineteen fifties. Besides the papers contributed by its own research personnel on the PTGs, the articles of other Research Scholars and eminent Anthropologists have also found place in this journal.

Now this institute has done a great job of compilation and republication of the important articles on PTGs of the State placed in its Adivasi journal and other publications over six decades in three volumes focusing on their ethnography, health and development. It is a superb collection of ethnographic facts in detail and also an upcoming reference anthropological literature full of relevant and useful information on various aspects of the life, culture, health and development of the thirteen PTGs

of Odisha. At the same time, it will also pay homage to those anthropologists -cum-article contributors who are no longer with us. In fact in recognition of the strength of TRI Odisha, Union Government has approved and funded the creation of a National Tribal Research Center here and this institute is expected to take up similar work for other States also.

These volumes focus on the ethnographic records of the PTGs, their health perspectives and development accounts in a very striking manner. In each of the volumes, the articles have been organized in two major sections: General and PTG Specific. Nearly one hundred fifty articles of renowned Anthropologists, Sociologists and researchers of Odisha, both from within and outside the institute, (already published in the ADIVASI journal from 1955 to 2014) have been carefully chosen, compiled and adorned in these volumes.


These volumes on the Odishan PTGs are unique in their perspective and presentation since a modest attempt has been made here to accumulate and outline the diversified yet published and unpublished data regarding the general and specific overview of PTGs and their ethnography, health and development. Mutation and permutation in the culture scope of PTGs has been very carefully focused here through weighty discourses and quality expositions of anthropological data. The objective appraisal of the old and the new, the past and the present of the PTGs underlining their unseen future prospects is found to be very edifying here. It will be a fine repository of ethnographic knowledge. An excellent exposition of pristine culture with its specificity and variety has been very deftly demarcated and discussed in this work.

I am duty bound to acknowledge the painstaking as well as praiseworthy efforts of Prof A.B. Ota, Director and Shri S.C. Mohanty, OSD (R) of SCSTRTI who have very meticulously conceived, collected, compiled, edited, organized and presented such a large number of articles in three volumes by burning their midnight oil. In the mean time, they have already published colourful Photo Hand Books on the 13 PTGs of

Odisha which have become very popular among the readers in India and abroad. Undoubtedly, both are pioneering works. Academically, the present volumes on the PTGs will certainly add feathers to the cap of the Institute. Both the editors deserve my heartiest thanks and compliments.

I hope the present book would be of massive help as a ready reference for the tribal lovers and the tribal researchers alike. I wish all who are involved in this effort a very promising future ahead.

24<sup>th</sup> January, 2015  
New Delhi

  
(*Dr. Hrusikesh Panda, IAS*)  
Secretary  
Ministry of Tribal Affairs  
Government of India

## PREFACE

Soon after independence and the adoption of Indian Constitution incorporating special provisions for welfare and development of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of Odisha took its birth in Bhubaneswar, the new capital city of the State of Odisha way back in 1952 christened as Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), in pursuance of the constitutional goals and objectives. Now rechristened as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), this institute not only has the distinction of being the premier and oldest Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of the Country, but it is also credited with the publication of a nationally reputed as well as the oldest Anthropological Research Journal of Odisha titled "Adivasi" incorporating the original articles of reputed anthropologists, sociologists, development practitioners and researchers who have worked and gained knowledge and experience in the field of tribal and non-tribal societies and cultures. Being published since 1955, almost uninterruptedly, this veteran research journal of Odisha which is nearly 60 years old, has come up with its 54<sup>th</sup> volume in this year.

Over these years it has endeavored to publish valuable research articles on various aspects of the society, culture and problems of Odishan tribes and castes and marching with the time it has gloriously entered into its 60<sup>th</sup> year of publication. Within the treasure of its published articles there are many precious articles including many old ones of the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties as well as the recent ones of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century depicting various aspects of the life and culture of the colourful Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), previously called as Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha - a distinct and fascinating ethnic category among the tribes many of whom are known the world over for their pristine culture. Considering the rapidly changing scenario of the present times in which many ethnic groups are undergoing transformation towards modernity it was felt necessary to compile the selected articles on

the PTGs of the State published in our Adivasi journal to bring their past and present in to limelight in order to show their “then” and “now”.

The novice to the concept of PTG may ask the question, what is PTG ? In simple terms the explanation is, among the hundreds of tribal communities living across the length and breadth of the country, there are some groups who are relatively more isolated, archaic, vulnerable, deprived and backward. These tribal groups are the most disadvantaged among the tribals. They live in small, scattered habitats in remote, inaccessible areas. Their livelihoods are especially vulnerable because over the years, the more dominant tribal and non-tribal groups have encroached upon the resources which they originally controlled and accessed for their survival. Despite numerous government schemes to mainstream these groups the results have fallen short of expectations.

Since the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan when the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach was adopted in the Country, they have been initially identified on the basis of certain criteria prescribed and designated as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and recently re-designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) by Government of India for the purpose of receiving special attention for their all-round development. A PTG may be a tribal community; a sub-tribe or a part of a tribe. In the present context the group of aboriginals who constitute simple and small scale societies, are culturally homogenous, have lifestyle exhibiting uniqueness and distinctiveness, live mostly in relatively isolated and inaccessible tracts of hills and forests and continue to pursue an archaic way of life and absorb the changes slowly are ordinarily distinguished as PTGs.

The State of Odisha like its oldest TRI and its oldest research journal, Adivasi, is also credited with another distinction in respect of having the largest number of PTGs among all the States and Union Territories of the Country. To be specific, in India there are as many as 75 PTGs who are distributed in 14 undivided States and 1 (one) Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Of them 13 PTGs are found



in Odisha closely followed by Andhra Pradesh with 12 PTGs. Information in this regard are given in certain articles placed in the General Section of this book.

Each of such group constitutes culturally homogeneous segment of the tribal population in the State. They live in their remote mountainous habitats in a state of relative isolation - that has helped them to preserve their cultural identities manifested in their diverse languages, unique style of personal adornments, subsistence activities, magico-religious beliefs and practices, social organization and colourful folk traditions of arts, crafts, songs, dances and music. But their pace of development has been slower than the rest of their brethren belonging to other tribal communities.

With the implementation of Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach since the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, 13 PTGs have been identified in different interior pockets in the State of Odisha and 17 Micro Projects are functioning in these areas to bring about their sustainable all round development. Since, the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan period emphasis has been given to effect planned change while conserving the best elements of their pristine culture through an innovative Plan called Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) Plan that was continued in the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan period. Hence, since then the PTGs have become the thrust area of tribal development for which the State came up with the CCD Plan, the 47<sup>th</sup> volume of Adivasi journal of 2007 containing 15 articles on the culture and development of PTGs was brought out as a Special Issue dedicated to PTGs of Odisha titled "Primitive Tribal Groups of Orissa and their Development". This issue was so popular that within few years all the copies were sold out and there were demands to reprint the volume.

During this period, this institute also published 13 colourful Photo Hand Books on the 13 PTGs which has received the same popularity from the Indian and foreign readers. Consequently, some of these have to be reprinted as they became out of stock. Considering the popular demand for the publications relating to PTGs, it was decided to

compile the selected articles published in our Adivasi journal from the nineteen fifties to the present and publish it in three volumes instead of just making a reprint of its 47<sup>th</sup> volume of 2007. In these three volumes about one hundred and fifty articles will find place classified as related to (1) Ethnography (vol. 1), (2) Change & Development (vol. 2) and (3) Bio-Cultural Anthropology & Health Care (vol. 3).

It was not an easy task. Most of the articles and especially those of the past century were prepared and printed when computer was either not in our dreams or in distant dreams. Hence, those have to be computer typed again, corrected, edited, if so required, and formatted to make it ready for reprinting. To accomplish the task, we did not have the luxury of time. This has to be done in a short span of time within a busy and hectic schedule of many other pressing engagements. At last we could put together the 1<sup>st</sup> Volume – which is the largest of all containing 82 articles covering about 900 plus pages. We are now working hard to bring out the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Volumes in the near future.

The present volume is a lovely compilation of articles presenting the general overview and ethnography of the PTGs of Odisha. It has been divided into 2 sections. The Section-I titled “**General**” contains 08 articles disseminating introductory information, general overview and ethnography of the PTGs. The Section-II titled “**PTG Specific**” presents 74 PTG wise ethnographic articles on 13 individual PTGs. Wherever introductory articles are not found among the published articles of the Adivasi journal, such articles have been brought forward from our other published and unpublished sources and placed in with the intention that one gets a holistic picture of the tribe and understands its distinctiveness.

The picture of the past life style of the tribes portrayed that the illustrious anthropologists of past century have presented in their articles may not be found in these days except in the memory of the old guards and to the present generation of the PTGs it may appear strange and outdated. But as a matter of fact, change is inevitable. Due to the powerful

impact of planned change and modernization many of the old life ways of the PTGs have become obsolete and lost in antiquity while some others are on the verge of decline. But one has to march with time but with reference to his past that gives him his cultural identity. Moreover, everything that one need to know about the PTGs of Odisha may not be found in this book but it can certainly help open a window to the tribal world and more particularly to the picturesque PTG world of Odisha and guide the readers to deepen their understanding of these distinguished and colourful ethnic groups who exhibit our diverse tribal cultural panorama.

Commitment of errors and omissions have become part our lives. This work is no exception. In spite of our sincere efforts, these lapses may be there. We apologize for that and request our kind and learned readers to bring those to our notice along with their constructive suggestions for improvement in order to enable us not only to correct our mistakes but also to learn from our mistakes.


We owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the eminent scholars whose articles have found place in this volume. Many of them belonged to us and few still belong to this Institute. Many of them who were active in the past century have taken great pains and faced immense hardships to go to the remote and Dark Continent of the PTGs, collect empirical data and prepare these articles. The phenomenon of time coupled with fate and destiny has taken its toll and many of these great souls are no more with us. But they will live with us through their works. Publication of this volume is a tribute to them.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the help and cooperation of all who have typed, read, compared and corrected the typed articles as well as the printer without whom this book would not have seen the light of the day. Of all, my special thanks are due to my co-editor, Shri S.C. Mohanty, the retired Joint Director of SCSTRTI and now re-employed as Officer on Special Duty (Research) for his singular relentless effort, dedication and engrossing involvement to conceptualize the project,

collect, select, compile, edit and format the articles and to accomplish all other tasks to produce the book in spite of his multifarious pressing engagements. This work would have remained in our dreams without him.

This book is unique of its kind as in it a humble attempt has been made to amass and streamline the fragmented data about the PTGs of Odisha of the past and present times. I hope this book would be of enormous help as a ready reference for the tribal lovers and researchers alike and all those who are interested in the subject matter of PTGs.

20<sup>th</sup> January, 2015  
Bhubaneswar



(A.B. Ota)

# CONTENTS

Foreword

Preface

## I. General

1. *A.B. Ota & S.C. Mohanty* Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Odisha and their Development 1
2. *A.B. Ota* Primitive Tribal Groups of Orissa : An Overview 17
3. *N.K. Behura & K.K. Mohanti* Vulnerable Ethno-Cultural Groups (VEGs) 26
4. *K. K. Mohanti* PTGs and Biodiversity Conservation 56
5. *K. Mohapatra* The Concept of Primitive 74
6. *Muralidhar Majhi* Customs of Tribal Marriage: A Focus on Rights of Tribal Women 78
7. *P. Samantray, S.S. Mohanty, P. Patel & M.K. Jena* Indigenous Knowledge of Shifting Cultivation: Observations on three Primitive Tribal Communities in Odisha 87
8. *K.J.N. Gowtham Shankar* Tribal Indigenous Knowledge :Its Relevance for Endogenous Development (with reference to Primitive Tribal Groups) 102

## II. PTG Specific

### (a & b) Birhor & Mankirdia

9. *A. B. Ota & S. C. Mohanty* Mankirdia 125

10. <i>N. Patnaik</i>	The Birhor	137
11. <i>D.P. Sinha</i>	The Birhor and their World View	161
<b>(c) Bonda</b>		
12. <i>A. B. Ota &amp; S. C. Mohanty</i>	Bonda	169
13. <i>B. B. Mohanty</i>	Marriage & Family : A Study on the Bondo of Orissa	174
14. <i>B. B. Mohanty</i>	Political Organisation and Administration of Justice among the Bonda	189
<b>(d) Chuktia Bhunjia</b>		
15. <i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Chuktia Bhunjia	201
16. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Social Organisation of the Chuktia Bhunjias of Kalahandi	203
17. <i>P.K. Mohapatra</i>	Cultural Conservatism among the Bhunjia	213
<b>(e) Didayi</b>		
18. <i>P. K. Mohapatra</i>	The Didayi : A Hill Tribe of Orissa	220
19. <i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Didayi : A Picturesque Tribe of Orissa	225
20. <i>Gopinath Pradhan</i>	Status of Didayi Women of Malkangiri District of Odisha	241
<b>(f) Dongria Kandha</b>		
21. <i>A.C. Sahoo</i>	Life & Culture of the Dongria Kondhs	249
22. <i>S. Panda</i>	Demography of a Dongria Kondh Village	265
23. <i>Bharati Devi</i>	How and What the Kuvi Kondhs Adorn	274
24. <i>A.C. Sahoo</i>	The Traditions and Customs of the Dongria Kandha of Orissa	281
25. <i>S. Routray</i>	Status of Women among the Dongria Kondh	290

26. <i>Florencia Bara</i>	Child Rearing Practices and Socialization Process among the Dongria Kondh	300
27. <i>A. K. Gomango</i>	Ethnic Healers among the Dongria Kondh of Orissa	314
28. <i>P.S. Das Patnaik</i>	Bejunis ; their Initiation into Shamanhood	329
29. <i>A. K. Gomango &amp; S. C. Mohanty</i>	Festivals, Rituals and Shamans among the Dongria Kandha	338
30. <i>P.S. Das Patnaik</i>	Liquor among the Dongria Kondh of Orissa	362
31. <i>P.S. Das Patnaik</i>	Duna : Its Implications in the Dongria Kandha Culture	369
32. <i>P.S. Das Patnaik</i>	Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs	375
33. <i>Arati Mall &amp; T. Sahoo</i>	A Comparative Study of Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondh and the Juang	383
<b>(g) Hill Kharia</b>		
34. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Hill Kharia : Socio-Cultural Life	417
35. <i>Nityananda Das</i>	The Hill Kharia of Simlipal Hills : A Study of an isolated food gathering Community	427
36. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Property and Inheritance among the Hill Kharias of Similipal, Odisha: A Study of Customs and Traditions	434
<b>(h) Juang</b>		
37. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Juang	450
38. <i>Ajit Ray</i>	Life-Way of the Juangs in Keonjhar	459
39. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Dormitory Organization of the Juang of Keonjhar	465
40. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Functions of Juang Dormitory in Keonjhar District	475

41. <i>T. Patnaik &amp; B.B. Mohanty</i>	The Juang Youth Dormitory: An Anthropological Outline	482
42. <i>Jagannath Dash</i>	Role of Kinship in the Social life of Juangs of Keonjhar District, Odisha	499
43. <i>Jagannath Dash</i>	Juang Kinship Terms : An Analysis	510
44. <i>T.H.R. T.I.</i>	The Juang Non-Kinship Organisation	522
45. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Economic aspects of Juang Marriage	532
46. <i>B.B. Mohanty</i>	Shifting Cultivation in Orissa with a Case Study among the Juang	541
47. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Socio-Economic Implications of Pus Puni : A Ritual of the Hill Juang of Keonjhar	556
48. <i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Folk Songs of the Juang	563
49. <i>P.K. Mohapatra</i>	Myths of Juang: An Anthropological Analysis	570
50. <i>K.C. Mishra</i>	Aspects of Juang Folklore	576
(i) <b>Kutia Kandha</b>		
51. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Kutia Kandha: A Socio-Cultural Profile	625
52. <i>D. K Joshi, Sasmita Mund &amp; M.P. Mishra</i>	Habit, Habitat & Geographical Aspect of Kutia Kandha	643
53. <i>M.K. Jena, Klaus Seeland &amp; K.K. Patnaik</i>	Ethnic Aspects of Indian Sago Palm ( <i>Caryota Urens- L</i> ) : An Ethno-Botanical Study among Kutia Kandha	650
54. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Social Position and Property Rights of Kutia Kondh Women	657
55. <i>K. Mohapatra</i>	Kedu: A Big Festival of the Kutia Kondh	666
(j) <b>Lodha</b>		
56. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Lodha	670
57. <i>P. K. Bhowmick</i>	The Lodha : Their Life and Problem	678



**(k) Pauri Bhuyan**

58.	<i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Pauri Bhuyan	699
59.	<i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Pauri Bhuiya Marriage	701
60.	<i>Siba Prasad Rout</i>	Hunting among the Pauri Bhuiyas of Kuiria, Sundergarh District	714
61.	<i>B. Choudhury</i>	Economic Activities of Pauri Bhuiya	722
62.	<i>B. Choudhury</i>	Swidden Cultivation: the Pauri Bhuyan way	731

**(l & m) Saora & Lanjia Saora**

63.	<i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Lanjia Saora : A Socio-Cultural Profile	746
64.	<i>U. N. Patnaik</i>	Saoras of Ganjam Scheduled Areas	758
65.	<i>U. N. Patnaik</i>	The Saora of Ganjam Hills	764
66.	<i>P.C. Swain</i>	Personality of a Tribal	772
67.	<i>B.B. Mohanty</i>	A Glimpse of Social Life of the Lanjia Saora	777
68.	<i>N.C. Dash &amp; P.K. Patnaik</i>	Comparative Demographic Analysis between the Traditional and the Hinduised Saora	787
69.	<i>B.K. Tripathy &amp; Abhilash Nayak</i>	The Invariants in Saora: A Critical Discussion	794
70.	<i>Nityananda Das</i>	The Birinda of the Lanjia Saoras	808
71.	<i>B. Choudhury</i>	Doripur- A Magico-Religious Ceremony for curing fever among the Hill Saoras	814
72.	<i>U. N. Patnaik</i>	A Saora House	820
73.	<i>B.B. Mohanty</i>	Material Culture and Technology of the Lanjia Saoras	823
74.	<i>P. C. Mohanty</i>	Food Habit of a Tribal Community	831
75.	<i>R.V. Sarma</i>	Hunting and Trapping in Saora Economy	838
76.	<i>P.S. Das Patnaik</i>	Pattern of Indebtedness in a Saora Village	848
77.	<i>Nityananda Das</i>	Saora and Panos of Ganjam Agency Study into Social Inter-Relationship)	(A 858

78. <i>R.P. Sarma</i>	Relational Structure of Sabara Women: a multiplex Network Analysis	867
79. <i>T. Patnaik &amp; Sarat Das</i>	Saora Women: A Study on their Socio-Economic Status	878
80. <i>H. Mahapatra</i>	Saora Riddles	886
81. <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Social Control and Traditional Socio-Political System of the Lanjia Saora of Koraput	892
82. <i>Harihar Das &amp; Devi Prasad Das</i>	Mutation and Permutation in the Culture Scape of PTGs	903

# PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PTGs) OF ODISHA

A.B. Ota <sup>1</sup>  
S.C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

Among the hundreds of tribal communities living across the length and breadth of the country, there are some groups who are relatively more isolated, archaic, vulnerable, deprived and backward. They have been initially identified and designated since the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan as **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)** and recently redesignated as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs)** by Government of India for the purpose of receiving special attention for their all-round development.

## The Concept of Primitive

In common parlance the term '**primitive**' means simpleness and antiquity. The commonly agreed cultural traits of primitive people are (1) homogeneity, (2) small population, (3) relative physical isolation, (4) social institutions are cast in a simple mould, (5) absence of a written language (6) relatively simple technology and (7) a slower rate of change. In the present context the group of aboriginals who continue to pursue an archaic way of life and absorb the changes slowly are distinguished as **PTGs**.

## General Characteristics of PTGs

"In general terms, it is essential to note some basic characteristic features of primitive tribal groups. They constitute simple and small scale societies. A primitive tribal group may be a tribal community (Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Juang, Kharia, Lodha, Mankirdia and Saora); a sub-tribe or a segment or a part of tribal communities (Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora and Paudi Bhuyan). They are culturally homogenous and have simple social organisation. Each group in its lifestyle exhibits uniqueness and distinctiveness. Their economy is simple and generally subsistence-oriented. Through simple

---

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI

<sup>2</sup> O.S.D., SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

economic pursuits, they struggle hard for basic survival. They live mostly in relatively isolated and inaccessible tracts which are eco-inhospitable. They usually inhabit in the areas full of mountains, hills, forests, terrains and undulating plateaus. In terms of their economic status, they are regarded as the weakest of the weaker section of communities. But they maintain a high profile in so far as their rich heritage, tradition and culture are concerned. They have their own ethos, ideologies, world view, value orientations etc. which guide them for sustenance amidst challenging situations and various oddities.” (Mohanti, 2007)

### **Problems of PTGs**

These ‘Primitive’ (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal) people are diverse in character and live in different environments of more interior and less accessible pockets and their traditional sources of sustenance are declining. As such, they languish in very fragile conditions of backwardness and deprivation. This has made them more vulnerable to food insecurity, malnutrition and ill-health. Their socio-economic and educational conditions are much worse than other tribal groups. Besides, their remote habitat lacks the required minimum administrative set up and infrastructure back up. Their needs and problems are different from other scheduled tribes and hence deserve special attention. With the adoption of the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach since the 5th Five Year Plan, Government of India has been taking steps to identify the **PTGs** in different parts of the country and implement special projects and programmes for their development.

### **The Criteria for Classification and Identification of PTGs**

Now Government of India has adopted the term **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group** by replacing its earlier nomenclature **Primitive Tribal Groups** while keeping the abbreviation the same i.e., **PTG** for the purpose of classification and identification of a tribe or a section of it on the basis of the main criteria, like:- (i) Stagnant or diminishing population, (ii) Very low level of literacy, (iii) Low level of techno-economy i.e., subsistence level of economy associated with pre agricultural stage of hunting, foods gathering and shifting cultivation (iv) relative physical isolation,

### **PTGs in India**

In India there are as many as 75 PTGs who are distributed in 14 undivided States and I (one) Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands as given below. As per the estimate of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment they number about 1.36 million, which account for 2% of the total S.T. population of India in 1991.

State	No. of PTGs
Andhra Pradesh	12
Bihar	9
Gujarat	5
Karnatak	2
Kerala	5
Madhya Pradesh	7
Maharashtra	3
Manipur	1
<b>Odisha</b>	<b>13</b>
Rajasthan	1
Tamil Nadu	6
Tripura	1
Uttar Pradesh	2
West Bengal	3
<b>Union Territory</b>	
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>

(Source: Annual report (2001-2002), Govt. of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs)

All India State and Union Territory wise list of PTGs has been given in *Annexure - I*

#### PTGs in Odisha

Odisha has the distinction of having the largest number of PTGs among all the States and Union Territories as evident from the above Statement. In Odisha there are 13 PTGs namely, **Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kondh, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora.** 17 Micro Projects are functioning in different parts of the State to take care of their problems of development.

#### DISTINGUISHING SOCIO-CULTURAL FEATURES

**BONDA** # autochthons of Bondo hills in Malkangiri district # speak *Remo*, a Munda language # distinguished appearance of women with shaven heads # wear a short hand-woven bark cloth, *ringa* and bead necklaces and ornaments covering neck and throat # men keep long hair and armed with axe and bow and arrow # known for their aggressiveness # expert hunters, gatherers, shifting

cultivators and streambed rice growers # have scattered housing pattern # have dual social organization, otherwise known as moiety system # do have girls' dormitory, *Selani dingo* and boys' dormitory, *Ingersing dingo* # each village has a community centre, *Sindibor* # observe *Patkhanda Jatra* every year.

**BIRHOR/ MANKIRDIA** # distributed in and around Similipal hills # speak a form of Munda language # semi-nomadic hunters and food-gatherers # catch monkeys and eat their meat # make *Siali*/jute ropes # wander inside forest in small bands, *Tanda* # live in temporary dome shaped leaf huts, *Kumbha* # have girls' dormitory, *Kudi-ada* # shuttle between market and forest # observe *Hera* or *Chaita parab*.

**CHUKTIA BHUNJIA** # inhabitants of Sonabera plateau in Nuapara district # speak Gondi, a Dravidian language # have linear housing pattern # *Sunaderi* is their supreme deity # build kitchen separately a little away from the main dwelling, for they consider it to be the most sacred seat of their ancestors # socially divided into two exogamous moieties # settled cultivators and dependent on forest produce # have village councils and inter village councils which are functional # their main festival is *Chaitra jatra*.

**DIDAYI** # small hill tribe of Malkangiri district # speak *Gata*, a Munda language # primarily shifting cultivators but depend on forest produce # have scattered house pattern # have *gulisung*, a central place in the village for communal activities # grouped into five exogamous totemic clans # traditional village council, *lepar* continues to be functional # the two main festivals are *Lendi pande* and *bhairo puja*.

**DONGRIA KANDHA** # autochthons of the Niamgiri hill ranges in Rayagada district # speak *Kui*, a Dravidian dialect # shifting cultivators and expert horticulturists # grow pineapples, banana, oranges, turmeric and a variety of cereals and pulses in their swiddens # have linear housing pattern in the Dravidian style # organized into strong territorial clan groups # follow clan exogamy and practise polygyny # girls' dormitory, *dashbeta* is functional # observe *meria* or *kedu* festival sacrificing buffaloes # worship earth goddess, *Dharnipenu* and *Kateiwalli* # their community house is called *Sadar* # one of the feuding tribes of India .

**HILL KHARIA** # a primitive section of the Kharia tribe # inhabitants of the Similipal hills # speak Kharia, a Munda language # live in small forest settlements with scattered housing pattern # subsist on hunting and gathering # expert in collection of honey, arrowroot and resin.

**JUANG** # autochthons of the Gonasika hills in Keonjhar district # speak Juang, a Munda language # primarily shifting cultivators but depend on forest collections # live in uniclans village settlements # traditionally organized into strong corporate groups - *Barabhai*, at the village level, *pirha*, at the regional level # practise village exogamy # youth dormitory-cum-community centre is called *Manda ghar / Majang*.

**KUTIA KANDHA** # inhabitants of Belghar-Lanjigarh highland of Phulbani and Kalahandi districts # speak *Kui*, a Dravidian dialect # have linear housing pattern in the Dravidian style # boys' and girls' dormitories are found functional # primarily shifting cultivators but depend upon forest produce # mainly grow turmeric and a variety of cereals and pulses in their swiddens # organize themselves into strong clan groups # *Sopangada* is regarded by them as their place of origin and therefore the main sacred center # observe *kedu* festival by sacrificing buffaloes.

**LODHA** # known as an ex-criminal tribe # inhabitants of Suliapada and Moroda Blocks in Mayurbhanj district # speak Lodha, a form of Munda language # earn livelihood from rice cultivation, raising silk cocoons, selling firewood and making ropes of *Sabai* grass.

**PAUDI BHUYAN** # a hill dwelling section of the Bhuyan tribe # inhabit the Bhuyan *Pirhas* of Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Dhenkanal districts # speak Oriya as their mother tongue # shifting cultivators but depend on forest produce # have youth dormitory and community center, *Darbar*, in the village # the corporate body of traditional village council still effective # known for their special *Changu* dance.

**SAORA / LANJIA SAORA** # inhabitants of the highlands of Rayagada, Gajapati and Ganjam districts # speak *Sora*, a Munda language # have scattered housing pattern # the village guardian deities are represented by wooden posts installed at the entrance of the village # pursue shifting cultivation and prepare terrace fields for rice cultivation # have their typical labour cooperatives, *ansir* # presence of lineage organization called *Birinda* # famous for their attractive wall paintings, *Initial* # observe *Guar*, the secondary burial ritual to commemorate the dead by sacrificing buffaloes.

*In Odisha, there are 13 identified PTGs. However, Birhor and Mankirdia as well as Saora and Lanjia Saora are culturally the same.*

## LOCATION OF PTGS

The Map of Odisha showing the location of PTGs is given in *Annexure-II*

## DISTRIBUTION

### In different Geo-physical Zones of Odisha

Odisha has four distinct geo-physical zones viz, (i) Northern Plateau or low lands (covering 25% of the State's area), (ii) Central Table Land (23%), (iii) Eastern Ghats or uplands (34%) and (iv) Coastal Tract (18%). The Northern Plateau and Eastern Ghat Regions occupying 59% of the total area of the state are highly concentrated with tribal population including the 13 PTGs.

Northern Plateau (6 PTGs) - Juang, Paudi Bhuyan, Lodha, Mankirdia, Birhor, Hill-Kharia.

Eastern Ghats Region (7 PTGs) - Saora, Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Bonda, Didayi, Chuktia Bhunjia.

All the 17 Micro Projects working for their development are situated in the remote PTG concentration pockets at an elevation of 100 ft to 5000ft above the mean sea level.

### In different Geographical Regions of Odisha

- In Western Odisha (5 districts) - Kalahandi, Nuapada, Angul, Sundargarh and Deogarh
- In Northern Odisha (2 districts) - Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar
- In Southern Odisha (5 districts)- Malkangiri, Rayagada, Phulbani, Gajapati and Ganjam

**Total- 12 districts**

### In TSP & Non-TSP Areas

(Ref; *Annexure-III*)

- The largest number of PTGs, i.e., ten (Bonda, Birhor, Didayi, Hill Kharia, Mankirdia, Dongria Kondh, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, and) out of total 13 are concentrated in the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) areas,
- Two (Paudi Bhuyan and Saora) are found both in the TSP areas as well as outside the TSP areas.



- Only one PTG (Chuktia Bhunjia) lives outside the TSP area.
- Accordingly, out of 17 Micro Projects for development of the PTGs in Odisha, 13 lie within the TSP area and rest 4, outside the TSP area.

**In Hamlets/ Villages, GPs, Blocks & Districts**

(Ref; *Annexure-IV*)

As per the Socio-Economic Survey conducted by SCSTRTI in the 17 Micro Project areas during 2001-02, the PTGs inhabit in 547 Hamlets / Villages distributed in 69 Gram Panchayats (GPs) under 20 Blocks in 12 districts as mentioned above

**DEMOGRAPHY**

(Ref; *Annexure-I*)

**Household, Population, Household Size & Sex Ratio**

<i>Number of Households</i>	<i>Population</i>			<i>Sex Ratio</i> (Number of females per 1000 males)	<i>Household Size</i>
	Male	Female	Total		
19 842	40 151	43 500	83 651	1083	4.2

**Literacy**

Male	Female	Total
41.81%	24.78%	33.38%

**ETHNO-LINGUISTIC IDENTITY**

The PTGs of Odisha are distributed ethno linguistically into three linguistic groups like **Indo-Aryan**, **Dravidian** and **Austro-Asiatic /Munda**.

Linguistic Groups	Ethnic Speakers
• <b>Austro-Asiatic / Munda</b>	Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Juang, Saora, Lanjia Saora, Mankirdia, Hill Kharia, Lodha.
• <b>Dravidian</b>	Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh,
• <b>Indo – Aryan</b>	Paudi Bhuyan.

### Techno-Economic Stages

The PTGs belong to four techno-economic stages of development.

<b>1. Hunter-Gatherer</b>	Birhor, Mankirdia, Hill-Kharia,
<b>2. Shifting Cultivators</b>	Bonda, Didayi, Juang, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Paudi Bhuyan.
<b>3. Terrace Cultivators</b>	Saora, Lanjia Saora
<b>4. Settled Cultivators</b>	Lodha, Chuktia Bhunjia.

### Economic Existence

The PTGs basically thrive on a land and forest based economy. Except the Birhor/ Mankirdia and Hill-Kharia who are exclusively dependent on forests for their subsistence, the rest are primarily farmers of one kind or other. The Birhor / Mankirdia are semi -nomadic monkey catchers and *siali* rope makers. Similarly, the Hill-Kharia live by their skills in collection of honey, resin, arrowroot and other minor forest produce. The Bonda, Didayi, Juang, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora are traditionally Shifting Cultivators. They have also taken up Settled Cultivation in these days. Among them the Saora and Lanjia Saora are Terrace Cultivators and the Dongria Kondh are horticulturists. All of them supplement their livelihood by forest collections.

### Traditional Skills, Art and Crafts

Sl. No	PTGs	Skills, Art and Crafts
1	<b>BIRHOR/ MANKIRDIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basket, rope and sling making out of <i>siali</i> fiber, <i>sabai</i> grass and jute</li> <li>• Monkey catching</li> </ul>
2	<b>BONDA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Khali stitching and pressing</li> <li>• Weaving of handloom clothes</li> <li>• Bead necklaces making</li> <li>• Carpet weaving</li> <li>• Broomstick making</li> <li>• Vegetable cultivation</li> </ul>
3	<b>DIDAYI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Archery</li> <li>• Bamboo basketry</li> <li>• Weaving of handloom clothes</li> <li>• Archery</li> <li>• Broomstick making</li> </ul>

---

4	<b>DONGRIA KONDH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embroidery</li><li>• Wood carving and decorating,</li><li>• Wall painting</li><li>• Comb making</li><li>• Pineapple cultivation and fruit processing</li></ul>
5	<b>HILL KHARIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collection and processing of honey, resin, arrowroot</li><li>• Broom making</li><li>• Mat making</li><li>• Khali stitching and pressing</li></ul>
6	<b>JUANG</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wood carving</li><li>• Comb making</li></ul>
7	<b>KUTIA KONDH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broom making</li></ul>
8	<b>PAUDI BHUIYAN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broom making</li><li>• Mat making</li><li>• Basketry</li><li>• Litchi cultivation</li><li>• Tussar rearing</li></ul>
9	<b>LANJIA SAORA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Icon (wall painting)</li><li>• Wood carving</li><li>• Stone Terracing &amp; Water management</li><li>• Cashew plantation &amp; processing</li></ul>
10	<b>SAORA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Icon (wall painting)</li><li>• Wood carving Carpet weaving</li><li>• Mulberry cultivation</li></ul>
	<b>LODHA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sabai rope making</li></ul>

---

The selected indigenous skills are being upgraded and promoted for income generation activities and improvement of their quality of life.

**Economic Profile**

- Total Cultivable Land - 24744.57 Acres
- Land Holding per Household (average) - 0.65 Acres
- Landless Households - 5126
- Annual Income per Household (average) - Rs. 45,877/-
- Monthly Income per Household (average) - Rs. 3,823/-
- Annual Expenditure per Household (average) - Rs.36,307/-
- BPL Households - 80.95%

PTGs	BPL Households	Landless Households
Bonda	89.82%	24.15%
Chuktia Bhunjia	51.21%	36.48%
Didayi	97.74%	56.25%
Dongria Kondh	96.33%	67.23%
Hill Kharia & Mankirdia	100%	37.25%
Juang	100%	5.88%
Kutia Kondh	45.92%	16.00%
Lanjia Saora	47.03%	7.88%
Lodha	89.55%	-
Paudi Bhuyan	91.36%	31.79%
Saora	75.40%	10.85%
<b>Total :</b>	<b>80.95%</b>	<b>26.43%</b>

(Source-Socio-Economic Survey by SCSTR TI 2010-11)

**Quality of life**

The quality of life of PTGs remains around the subsistence level. People have a little assurance on their daily consumption pattern. Being backward, disadvantaged and with little resources at their command they struggle to make both the ends meet. They spend more than 65% of their income on food. During lean periods their living conditions become worse. In absence of adequate and affordable health care facilities, their declining health conditions add salt to the injury. However, some improvements are visible in their quality of life after the development intervention made through the official and non-official agencies and particularly the Micro Projects.

**Identification of PTGs and Grounding of Micro Projects for their development in Odisha during different Plan Periods – Annexure-V**

*Annexure-I*

**Name of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGS) (Earlier Called as Primitive Tribal Groups) State / UT Wise.**

<b>Name of the State /UT</b>	<b>Name of PTGs</b>
1. Andhra Pradesh (12)	1. Bodo Gadaba 2. Bondo Poroja 3. Chenchu 4. Dongria Khond 5. Gutob Gadaba 6. Khond Poroja 7. Kolam 8. Kondareddis 9. Konda Savara 10. Kutia Khond 11. Parengi Poroja 12. Thoti
2. Bihar (9) (including Jharkhand)	13. Asurs 14. Birhor 15. Birjia 16. Hill Kharia 17. Korwa 18. Mal Paharia 19. Parhaiyas 20. Sauria Paharia 21. Savar
3. Gujarat (5)	22. Kathodi 23. Kotwalia 24. Padhar 25. Siddi 26. Kolgha
4. Karnataka (2)	27. Jenu Kuruba 28. Koraga
5. Kerala (5)	29. Cholanaikayan (a section of Kattunaickans) 30. Kadar 31. Kattunayakan 32. Kurumba 33. Koraga
6. Madhya Pradesh (7) (including Chhattisgarh)	34. Abujh Maria 35. Baiga

	36. Bharia 37. Hill Korba 38. Kamar 39. Saharia 40. Birhor
7. Maharashtra (3)	41. Katkaria (Kathodia) 42. Kolam 43. Maria Gond
8. Manipur (1)	44. Marram Nagas
9. Odisha (13)	45. Birhor 46. Bondo 47. Didayi 48. Dongria Khond 49. Juang 50. Kharia 51. Kutia Kondh 52. Lanjia Saora 53. Lodha 54. Mankirdia 55. Paudi Bhuyan 56. Soura 57. Chuktia Bhunjia
10. Rajasthan (1)	58. Seharias
11. Tamil Nadu (6)	59. Kattu Nayakan 60. Kota 61. Kurumba 62. Irula 63. Paniyan 64. Toda
12. Tripura (1)	65. Reang
13. Uttar Pradesh (2)	66. Buxa 67. Raji
14. West Bengal (3)	68. Birhor 69. Lodha 70. Toto
15. Andaman & Nicobar Islands (5)	71. Great Andamanese 72. Jarawa 73. Onge 74. Sentinelese 75. Shom Pen

(Source : Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India)

Annexure-II

# Location of PTGs in Odisha



## Annexure-III

## Distribution &amp; Location of PTGs &amp; Micro Projects in Odisha

PTG	MICRO PROJECT	DISTRICT	TTDA -TSP / Non TSP Area	PART OF BLOCKS COVERED	NO OF GPs	No. of Village/ Hamlet
1. Bonda	1) B D A, Mudulipada	Malkangiri	Malkangiri	Khairput	4	30
2. Chuktia Bhunjia	2) CBDA, Sonabeda	Nuapada	Non TSP area	Komna	2	14
3. Didayi	3) D D A, K. Guma	Malkangiri	Malkangiri	K. Guma & Khairput	4	37
4. Dongria Kondh	4) D K D A, Parsali	Rayagada	Rayagada	K. Singhpur	2	39
5. Hill Kharia	5) D K D A, Chatikona	Rayagada	Gunupur	Bisankatak & Muniguda	5	62
6. Mankirdia 7. Birthor	6) HK & MD A, Jashipur	Mayurbhanj	Karanja	Karanja & Jashipur	12	18
8. Juang	7) J D A, Gonasika	Keonjhar	Keonjhar	Banspal	6	35
9. Kutia Kondh	8) K K D A, Belghar	Kondhamal	Baliguda	Tumudibandh	2	68
	9) K K D A, Lanjigath	Kalahandi	Th. Rampur	Lanjigath	3	16
10. Lanjia Saora	10) L S D A, Putrasing	Rayagada	Gunupur	Gunupur	1	20
	11) L S D A, Seranga	Gajapati	Patlakhemundi	Gumma	3	21
11. Lodha	12) L D A, Moroda	Mayurbhanj	Baripada	Suliapada & Moroda	8	12
12. Paudi Bhuyan	13) P B D A, Khuntgan	Sundargarh	Bonai	Lahunipada	5	22
	14) P B D A, Jamardih	Anugul	Non TSP area	Pallahara	4	25
	15) P B D A Rugdakudar	Deogarh	Non TSP area	Barkote	8	32
13. Saora	16) S D A, Chandragiri	Gajapati	Patlakhemundi	Mohana	10	32
	17) T D A, Thumba	Ganjam	Non TSP area	Patrapur	3	58
Total : 13 PTGs	17 Micro Projects	12 DISTRICTS	TSP -13 Non TSP - 4	20 Blocks	82 GPs	541 Villages

(Source – Mid Term Review of CCD Plan (2010-11))



## Household, Population &amp; Literacy of PTGs in Micro Projects

PTG	MICRO PROJECT	Households	PTG Population			Literacy Rate (%)		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. Bondia	1) B D A, Mudulipada	1780	3092	3584	6676	19.60	8.98	14.10
2. Chuktra Bhunjia	2) CBDA, Sonabeda	614	1220	1158	2378	62.54	42.91	52.98
3. Didayi	3) D D A, K.Guma	1723	3394	3856	7250	25.09	16.75	20.07
4. Dongria Kondh	4) D K D A, Parsali 5) D K D A, Chatikona	631 1430	1097 2545	1487 3457	2584 6002	33.42 46.57	20.16 23.42	25.78 33.68
5. Hill Kharia 6. Mankudia 7. Birhor	6) HK & MDA, Jashipur	706	1060	1051	2111	47.66	36.41	42.41
8. Juang	7) J D A, Gonasika	1836	4196	4396	8592	40.62	17.52	29.75
9. Kutia Kondh	8) K K D A, Belghar 9) K K D A, Lanjigarh	1331 632	2800 1362	3153 1321	5953 2683	44.48 53.72	22.42 25.56	34.31 36.25
10. Lanjia Saora	10) L S D A, Putasing 11) L S D A, Seranga	1012 1427	2927 2760	3340 2793	6267 5553	63.26 42.41	41.52 23.86	55.81 33.19
11. Lodha	12) L D A, Moroda	1083	1591	1521	3112	31.62	20.18	26.03
12. Paudi Bhuyan	13) P B D A, Khurgan 14) P B D A, Jamaridihi 15) P B D A Rugdakudiar	1079 1258 1001	2060 2950 1889	2066 2873 1941	4126 5823 3830	23.68 47.39 29.54	12.39 30.00 21.79	18.03 30.00 25.61
13. Saora	16) S D A, Chandragiri 17) T D A, Thumba	1225 1129	2666 2152	2887 2163	5553 4315	53.00 42.58	42.58 34.16	34.16 38.36
Total : 13 PTGs	I7 Micro Projects	19 897	39 761	43 047	82 808	41.81	24.78	33.38

**Annexure-V**  
**Identification of PTGs and Grounding of Micro Projects in Orissa during different Plan Periods**

Five Year Plan	PTG	Micro Project	Grounding Year
5 <sup>th</sup> (1974-78) Plan Holiday (1978-80)	Bondia	Bondia Development Agency (BDA), Mudulipada, Malkangiri district	1976-77
	Juang	Juang Development Agency (JDA), Gonasika, Keonjhar district.	1978-79
	Dongria Kondh	Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA), Kuri, Rayagada district	1978-79
	Paudi Bhuyan	Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency (PBDA), Khuntgaon, Sundargarh district	1978-79
		Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency (PBDA), Jamaridhi, Anugul district	1978-79
6 <sup>th</sup> (1980-85)	Lanjia Saora	Lanjia Saora Development Agency (LSDA), Seranga, Gajapati district	1978-79
	Saora	Saora Development Agency (SDA), Chandragiri, Gajapati district	1978-79
		Tumba Development Agency (TDA), Ganjam district	1978-79
	Kutia Kondh	Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA), Belghar, Phulbani district	1978-79
7 <sup>th</sup> (1985-90)	Lanjia Saora	Lanjia Saora Development Agency (LSDA), Puttasing, Rayagada district	1984-85
	Didayi	Didayi Development Agency (DDA), Kudumulgumma, Malkangiri district	1986-87
	Hill-Kharia Mankirdia	Hill-Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj district	1986-87
8 <sup>th</sup> (1992-97)	Lodha	Lodha Development Agency (LDA), Moroda, Mayurbhanj district	1985-86
	Kutia Kondh	Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA), Lanjigarh, Kalahandi district	1986-87
	Dongria Kondh	Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA), Parsali, Rayagada district	1987-88
	Paudi Bhuyan	Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency (PBDA), Rugudakudar, Deogarh district	1993-94
	Chuktia Bhunjia	Chuktia Bhunjia Development Agency (CBDA), Sunabeda, Nuapada district	1994-95

# PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUPS (PTGS) OF ORISSA: AN OVERVIEW <sup>1</sup>

A.B. Ota <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

There are certain tribal communities who have declining or stagnant population, a pre-agricultural level of technology, are economically backward and have low literacy level. Seventy-five such groups/communities have been identified and designated as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in the entire country. This PTG concept for the first time got introduced during the fifth five year plan period. Most of these groups are small in number, have attained different levels of social and economic progress and generally, live in remote habitats, with poor administrative and infrastructure back up. In fact, the Primitive Tribal Communities are considered as a special category in view of their distinctly different social, cultural and occupational practices and traits. Primitive Tribes are distinguished from other tribal communities with regard to their pre-agricultural economy, extremely low level of literacy, isolated habitation etc. During the fifth five year plan, it was decided by Government of India to plan and implement specific development programmes focused on the all-round development of the primitive tribes. The focused programmes mainly addressed to deliver packages of services consistent with their cultural, social, educational and occupational background with a view to facilitate and gradually align them with the mainstream of society and enhance their social and economic status.

With the vision of comprehensive development of the PTGs, the concept of micro level planning was introduced in the country in the year 1975-76. This envisages integrated and comprehensive development of the Micro Project areas in which various programmes irrespective of the sources of funding can be

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, No.1&2, 2007, pp.41-47

<sup>2</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

implemented in unison to achieve the common goal of bringing the area at par with other areas and to improve the quality of life of the primitive tribes.

### **PTGs of Orissa and the Micro Projects (Distribution)**

Orissa has the distinction of having 13 Primitive Tribal Communities (which is the highest number in the entire country) namely the Bonda, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kondh, Hill Kharia, Mankirdia, Birhor, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Paudi Bhuyan and the Saora. While, Bonda was declared as a PTG during the fifth plan period (1974-78), during 1978-80 as many as 7 tribal communities were declared PTG and they are Juang, Lanjia Saora, Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kondh, Saora, Paudi Bhuyan and Birhor. Similarly 4 tribal communities (namely the Didayi, Hill Kharia, Mankirdia & Lodha) during the seventh five year plan period (1985-90) and Chuktia Bhunjia during the 8th five year plan (1992-97) were identified and declared by Government of India as Primitive Tribal Groups. The PTGs of Orissa are localised groups, which are found in specific compact areas spread over 12 districts of the state namely Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Angul, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Gajapati and Ganjam.

Ever since the fifth five-year plan during which the concept of PTG was introduced by Government of India, a number of special development interventions are being extended for this vulnerable section of the tribes through the specially set up Micro Projects. There are 17 Micro Projects set up in Orissa for effective implementation and all-round development of the 13 PTGs. While 13 of these special projects are located in Scheduled Areas, the remaining 4 are located in the non scheduled areas.

As regards their distribution, while 6 PTGs such as Birhor, Mankirdia, Hill-Kharia, Juang, Lodha and Paudi Bhuyan are located in the Northern Plateau, the remaining 7 PTGs such as Bonda, Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh, Didayi, Lanjia Saora and Saora reside in the Eastern Ghat region of the state. The PTGs live in their remote mountainous habitats in a state of relative isolation - that has helped them to preserve their cultural identities manifested in their diverse languages, unique style of personal adornments, subsistence activities, magico-religious beliefs and practices, social organization and colourful folk traditions of art, crafts, songs, dance and music. On the other side, their pace of change has remained slower and their level of development, lower than the rest of their brethren belonging to other tribal communities. This situation calls for special attention in respect of their development.

When the geographical distribution of the PTGs are further analyzed on the basis of different geographical regions, it is observed that the PTGs are distributed in 5 districts of Western Orissa (Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sundargarh, Deogarh and Angul); 2 districts of Northern Orissa such as Mayurbhanj and five districts of Southern Orissa such as Malkangiri, Raygada, Phulbani, Gajapati and Ganjam. The analysis of the PTGs on the basis of their distribution in TSP and Non TSP areas further reveals that while only one PTG namely Chuktia Bhunjia reside in Non TSP area and two PTGs namely Paudi Bhuyan and Saora inhabit in both TSP and Non TSP areas, the remaining 10 PTGs are found to be distributed in TSP areas. When the state is taken as a whole, the PTGs are observed to be distributed in 547 villages covering 69 villages, 20 Blocks, 10 ITDAs and 12 districts.

### **Demography**

Demographic profile of the Primitive Tribal Communities of Orissa inhabiting in the 17 Micro Project areas shows many interesting features. According to a Household survey conducted by SCSTRTI, the PTGs in the 17 project areas are 78,519 in number. One of the most interesting aspects of these people is that the sex ratio favours the female population and in fact, the sex ratio indicates that there are 1069.9 females against 1000 males. Similarly, the total literacy rate among this vulnerable section of tribal population is 26.32 percent, which is very low compared to the average literacy rate for the state or for the country. The female literacy rate, which is so very important an indicator for judging human development, is abysmally low among the PTGs and this stands at a staggeringly low rate that is 15.92%. When the literacy rate is further analysed among different PTG communities, it is observed that in case of two communities such as Didayi and Bonda, it is even less than 5% and in case of Chuktia Bhunjia and Dongria Kondh, it is less than 10 percent. However, there are some PTGs among whom the female literacy rate is significantly higher than the rest and the statistical figure reveals that among Lanjia Saoras and Saoras, the female literacy rate is more than 25 percent. Since family among the Primitive Tribal Groups, like the other ST Communities gets fragmented after the marriage of the son resulting in small sized households, the average size of the household of the PTGs is around 4.25.

### **Economic Profile and Existence**

This vulnerable section of the community, which are 13 in number in terms of variety, can be classified and grouped in to 4 techno economic stages and they are: Hunter-Gatherers, Shifting Cultivators, Terrace Cultivators and

Settled Cultivators. While 3 PTGs such as Birhor, Mankirdia and Hill Kharia are included under Hunter-Gatherers group; eight PTGs such as Bonda, Didayi, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh, Juang, Lanjia Saora, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora belong to the Shifting Cultivator category. Similarly, while two PTGs such as Saora and Lanjia Saora belong to Terrace cultivator along with Shifting Cultivator category, Lodha and Chuktia Bhunjia PTGs belong to the Settled Cultivator category. PTGs basically thrive on a land and forest based economy. A good section of them depend on this for their survival.

As discussed earlier and as seen at the ground level, the Birhor and the Mankirdia are semi-nomadic monkey catchers and *siali* rope makers and the Hill Kharia are collectors of honey, resin, arrowroot and other minor forest produce for their survival. On the other hand, the rest of the PTGs are primarily farmers of one kind or the other and depend on this to eke out their living. The Bonda, Didayi, Juang, Dongria, Lanjia Saora, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora as explained above are traditionally shifting Cultivators, but they have also taken up settled farming these days. Among them, the Saora and Lanjia Saora are Terrace Cultivators and the Dongria Kondh is a horticulturist. All of them supplement their livelihood by forest collections. Another interesting aspect of the PTGs as revealed from the empirical survey is that as high as 79.08 percent of the households belong to the BPL category and 37.02 percent households are landless.

### Art and Crafts

Although languishing amidst poverty, the traditional arts and crafts of most of the Primitive Tribal Groups in Orissa are extremely beautiful, rich, and artistic and have great potential for sale. But the pity is that no special effort has been made for a long time in respect of promotion of these products, for marketing and also to ensure income generation for the PTG people from these products. Some of the typical traditional skills possessed, arts and crafts practiced by the Primitive Tribal Groups are indicated below:

Sl. No.	Name of the PTG	Traditional Skills, Arts and Crafts
1	Birhor/Mankirdia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basket &amp; Rope making out of <i>siali</i> fiber, <i>sabai</i> grass &amp; jute</li> <li>● Khali stitching and pressing</li> <li>● Monkey catching.</li> </ul>
2	Bondo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weaving of Clothes &amp; Carpet</li> <li>● Bead Necklaces making</li> <li>● Broomstick making</li> <li>● Stream bed Paddy Cultivation, Vegetable cultivation,</li> <li>● Archery</li> </ul>

3	Chuktia Bhunjia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settled cultivation</li> <li>• Bamboo basketry</li> <li>• Bead Necklaces making</li> </ul>
4	Didayi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bamboo basketry</li> <li>• Weaving</li> <li>• Broomstick making</li> <li>• Archery</li> </ul>
5	Dongria Kondh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embroidery</li> <li>• Wood carving &amp; decorating</li> <li>• Wall painting</li> <li>• Comb making</li> <li>• Pineapple cultivation &amp; fruit processing</li> </ul>
6	Hill Kharia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection and processing of honey, resin, arrowroot</li> </ul>
7	Juang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wood carving</li> <li>• Comb making</li> <li>• Shifting cultivation</li> <li>• Changu Dance</li> </ul>
8	Kutia Kondh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broomstick making</li> <li>• Khali stitching &amp; pressing</li> <li>• Shifting cultivation</li> <li>• Cultivation of turmeric, mustard, etc.</li> </ul>
9	Lanjia Saora and Saora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Icon (wall painting)</li> <li>• Wood carving,</li> <li>• Stone Terracing &amp; Water Management</li> <li>• Cashew plantation &amp; processing</li> </ul>
10	Lodha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sabai (grass) Rope Making</li> <li>• Bamboo craft</li> </ul>
11	Paudi Bhuyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broomstick making</li> <li>• Mat making</li> <li>• Basketry</li> <li>• Litchi cultivation</li> <li>• Tussar rearing</li> <li>• Changu Dance</li> </ul>

In recent times, special effort has been made by government through SHGs to promote such vanishing and little known arts and crafts of the PTGs in a manner which can earn them a descent earning and also conserve the cultural arts and artefacts from getting vanished.

### **Assistance for the PTGs**

Government of India as well as the state government has taken a number of initiatives for overall development of the PTGs. Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Government of India (GoI) is providing assistance under Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding as Grant-in-Aid meant for the over all development of PTGs. The funds provided by MoTA under the scheme are exclusively utilized for various developmental activities of the PTG such as for Health & Sanitation, Education, Drinking water supply, supply of non-conventional energy like solar home light, street light, supply of mosquito nets, and construction of WHS/Check Dams etc. One of the important schemes that have been extended for the PTGs is Janashree Bima Yojana (JBY) of L.I.C of India Ltd which was introduced from the financial year 2004-05 under Central Sector Scheme for Development of PTGs with 100% Grant-in-Aid by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India for insurance coverage of PTG families of the state. Besides many other efforts, through SCs & STs Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), skill up-gradation training is provided to artisans belonging to PTGs so that they can make their arts and crafts market oriented.

### **Critical Areas of Concern**

Although several schemes and programmes have been extended for the PTGs through the micro-projects from the fifth plan period onwards, empirical studies have shown that the pace of development has been exceedingly slow and the achievement level is far low than the set objectives. Government of India and Planning Commission has fully realized the situation and accordingly have changed the strategy during the 11th Plan Period for the development of the Primitive Tribal Groups through an innovative mode captioned Conservation-cum- Development Plan (CCD Plan).

However, it needs to be spelt out very clearly the various critical issues that plague the people belonging to the Primitive Tribal Groups and which need to be addressed for ensuring sustainable development of these vulnerable groups are indicated below:

- Poverty and consequent malnutrition
- Nutritional Deficiencies and Diseases, especially among women and children leading to high IMR and MMR
- Inadequacy of safe drinking water
- Poor sanitation and poor hygiene
- Inadequate and inaccessible health care services



- Vulnerability to specific and endemic diseases like G-6 PD deficiency, Yaws, Malaria etc.
- Deforestation and loss of traditional rights on forests
- Socio-Economic exploitation
- Land alienation, indebtedness and debt bondage
- Rehabilitation of Displaced tribals
- Decline of Pristine Culture
- Low literacy and alarmingly high drop out rates.

### **Special Approach of State Government for Development of PTGs during the XIth Plan**

In fact after assessment of the progress of development of PTGs and the strategy adopted by the previous plan periods, it was felt that there needs to have a relook at the strategy in vogue and on the basis of this, Government of India has taken steps for developing a five year prospective development plan for the PTGs with focus on conservation of culture. As such both conservation of culture and development have been carefully balanced in the development approach during the IIth plan period for the PTGs. On the basis of this, Government of India in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has instructed to formulate a CCD Plan for each PTG. In line with the directives of the Government of India, Government of Orissa also has come up with a CCD Plan.

The CCD Plan during the IIth plan period (2007-2012) is a modest attempt for the holistic development of the PTGs. It aims at addressing the critical felt needs of the PTGs by improving infrastructure and provide basic facilities within their easy reach with a view to eliminate poverty, increase literacy level, ensure improved health status, overcome problem of food insecurity and above all bring improvement in the quality of life and conserve their traditional culture. However, the basic approaches of the CCD Plan are:

- Total development through an integrated approach by pulling resources from Central Government and State Government
- Bring about GO, Gram Panchayats and NGO partnership to address the development needs of the PTG.
- Encouraging people's participation in development process through the involvement of traditional institutions, like labour cooperatives, youth dormitory, SHGs etc.

- Provision of basic infrastructure and amenities like health, education, drinking water and also all weather roads to all the PTG villages
- Restoration of Hill slopes ravaged by shifting cultivation by way of raising horticultural plantations thereby protecting natural environment and providing employment and income to the PTGs
- Assistance for conservation and promotion of PTG traditions, like labour cooperatives, traditional skills, Art and Craft, Dance and Songs.
- Ensuring social security through the provision of fireproof houses, grain banks and coverage of all families under Janashree Vima Yojana.

The five year prospective plan (2007-2012) for the PTGs termed as CCD Plan for Orissa has been done for a total estimated cost of Rs.84.25 Crores out of which Rs.64.46 Crore has been posed to Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GoI for financial assistance over a period of five years. The remaining 19.80 Crore rupees will be placed by various other line departments. Government of India has already released 10 Crore rupees towards the CCD Plan for the 1st year. However, the following are some of the brief approaches envisaged in the CCD Plan for the PTGs:

### **Education**

The PTGs are very backward, educationally. Their total literacy till today is estimated at less than 20 percent. Their female literacy is very low, which is less than 10 percent. Their children of school going age prefer to do, indoor and outdoor, works rather than going to schools because they are expected to help their family in subsistence activities. Therefore, development of education for the PTGs is imperative to bring them at par with non-tribals. It can be achieved by improving educational infrastructure and persistent awareness campaigning to reduce dropouts in primary and upper primary level. Opening of educational complex for ST girl students is the key to achieve this goal besides giving stress on pre-primary education by strengthening the existing Gyanmandirs.

### **Infrastructure**

By and large, the interior pockets inhabited by the PTGs are relatively inaccessible, isolated and for that matter, under-developed for want of minimum and basic infrastructures. Therefore this action plan has incorporated adequate provisions to create and up-grade essential infrastructures like roads, drinking water, electricity, educational complex, community centre etc. for giving a face lift to the villages inhabited by the PTGs. This will be extremely helpful in improving the quality of living of the people belonging to the PTGs.

### **Connectivity**

In the CCD Plan, construction of village link roads along with small bridges and culverts has been kept which are expected to provide communication facilities to most of the PTG villages. Similarly, supply of light vehicles and mini trucks to SHGs also have been kept in the Plan, which will provide employment to tribal youths and will facilitate easy transportation of people and goods.

### **Agriculture and Horticulture**

PTGs are primarily agriculturists. There is scope for introduction of gainful modern agricultural and horticultural practices for optimum utilization of the available farmland. To meet the challenge, a comprehensive programme for development of agriculture in the core sector of income generation has been put in the CCD Plan. Available lands suitable for terrace cultivation will be developed by scientific methods of soil and water management. It has been proposed in the Plan for land development by way of stone wall terracing of sloppy lands along with development of valley lands and to enhance agricultural production and income, modern methods and practices will be introduced through crop demonstration with the provision of required input /assistance in the shape of improved high yield variety of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.

The geo-climatic conditions provide excellent scope for promotion of horticulture as an alternative to shifting cultivation. Some patches are still available for raising mixed orchards. A number of such programmes for mixed orchard and vegetable cultivation and backyard/kitchen garden plantation have been suggested through SHGs. One of the major highlights of this CCD Plan is that a number of activities to promote and conserve culture of the PTGs have been incorporated and a balance has been maintained in the plan by introducing a development cum preservation approach in such a manner that the development interventions will not infringe the culture of the PTGs, rather they will complement and protect their culture.

It is hoped that the Conservation cum Development Plan will be extremely productive and it will be result oriented and pave the way for sustainable development of the Primitive Tribal Groups in the state of Orissa during the 11th plan period, which is 2007-2012.

# VULNERABLE ETHNO-CULTURAL GROUPS (VEGs) <sup>1</sup>

N. K. Behura <sup>2</sup>  
K. K. Mohanti <sup>3</sup>

## PROLOGUE

The term 'tribe' refers to two realities or two fields of facts which are different, but linked. However, everyone uses it to distinguish a type of society from others. It refers to a specific mode of social organization, which is different from other modes of social organization. This does not mean that there is complete socio-cultural unanimity amongst them. Anthropologists employ a set of criteria to define and categorize tribal societies. The other reality is that it refers to a stage of evolution. The link between these two realities is very clear, because according to evolutionist's view point, each stage of evolution is characterized by a specific mode of social organization (Godelier, 1973).

The term 'tribe' comes from the word 'tribus', which designates a particular kind of social and political organization existing in traditional societies of Africa, America, Oceania and Asia. In such societies there is an internal relationship, real or implied, between kinship and political organization. This internal relationship can be understood better if one analyzes the nature of social groups, designated as clan, phratry, genos and tribe. Till anthropology became a scientific discipline, these terms had been used indiscriminately by administrators, missionaries, geographers and others. But it was Morgan, who for the first time delineated tribal forms of social organization in his write up in his: *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871). He demonstrated that the types of social relations which predominate the

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVIII, Nos. I&2, 1998, pp. 1 - 24

<sup>2</sup> Former Professor & Head of the Department of Anthropology (Retd.), Utkal University, UGC Emeritus Fellow, A/147, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, 751007

<sup>3</sup> Former Director, SCSTRTI, (Retd.), A/152, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, 751007

organization of tribal societies are based on kinship. He showed that the kinship relations could be better understood by studying rules of marriage, descent and kinship terminologies. Morgan typified tribe as a completely organized society. A tribe is an aggregate of clans. A clan is a consanguineal group, real or fictive, of relatives, and all the members believe to have descended from a common ancestor or ancestress. Morgan demonstrated this in his trend-setting contribution, *Systems of consanguinity and Affinity of Human Family* (1871). Each tribe culturally homogeneous and is individualized by a common appellation, by a separate dialect or language, by a law-enforcing mechanism, by professing animism, and by possession of a common territory, which it claims to be its very own. In other words, a tribe may be described as a system of social organisation with a common territory, a tradition of common descent, common language, a common name and a common culture.

With the emergence of structural-functions theory tribal societies were no longer considered as representatives of stages of evolutionary order, but certainly as a type of society. Most of the functionalists regarded social systems as wholes. Internal linkages exist through group sentiments, fostering of common ideology, speaking of a common language, and practice of boundary maintenance rules. These criteria together with some others branded an ethnic community as a tribe. Tribal societies exhibit three types of internal political relations, namely, (i) non-segmentary acephalous, (e.g. Eskimo, African Ibo, etc.); segmentary acephalous (Nuer of Sudan, Dobu of Oceania, etc.) and (iii) the centralized (Tonga, Mossi, etc.) (Honigmann, 1964).

Sahlins (1961) and Service (1962) attempted to redefine tribe as a type of society, and presented a scheme of social evolution in four stages: the band, the tribe, the chiefdom and the State, whereby 'civilization' finally emerged in the historical process. This scheme exemplified evolution of societies from simple to complex. In 1968 Sahlins in his book *Tribesmen* changed this scheme into a succession of three stages; band, tribe, and state.

Tribal societies have two functioning features in common: (i) the existence of elementary social units- primary segments possessing the form of multi-familial local groups, and (ii) the multi-functionality of kinship relations which shape these familial groups. There is 'structural equivalence' of 'primary segments' in tribal societies; and this means that they are functionally equivalent, that is, economically, politically, culturally and ideologically equal. Each local community or segment is like another, and does for itself what another does. In many cases local communities are segments of lineages claiming descent from a

common ancestor or ancestress. The concept of 'tribal society' encompasses a concatenation of features found in the functioning of many simple societies, the segmentary character of elementary socio-economic units, the real or apparent nature of 'kinship groups in these socio-economic units and the multifunctional nature of these kinship relations (Godlier, 1973) : The term 'tribe' is both a structural and cultural concept.

## INDIAN SCENARIO

Indian society is a plural one, and hence Indian civilization is a conglomeration of traditions. Indian society consists of three broad segments, namely, folk (tribal societies), peasants (caste communities) and urban conglomerates. In Indian context the term 'tribe' refers to the indigenous *janas*. They are variously designated as *adivasi* (original settlers), *giriijan* (hill-dwellers), *vanyajati* (forest-dwellers) *adimjati* (primitive castes), *janajati* (folk communities), and *anusuchit janajati* (scheduled tribes), and also by their respective ethno-cultural nomenclatures. Each tribe has a sense of its own identity, each tribe functions as a distinct socio-cultural entity. Different tribal communities living side by side do not have a sense of communality and a sense of interdependence.

The colonial government assigned a separate identity to the tribes in India and treated them differently. In 1874 the British enacted the Scheduled Districts Act in order to keep large tracts of tribal areas outside the jurisdiction of normal administration (Act XIV of 1874). For, these areas special Executives or Agents were appointed with wide powers, who established linkages with local tribal chiefs and appeased them. In 1935 the 'Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Act' was enacted, which made non-applicable any legislation brought-about by the Provincial Governments to tribal areas except without the approval of Government of India. The colonial government categorized all these simple ethnic communities as tribes, and treated them as distinct from caste communities. This categorization reinforced the ethno-cultural identities of the tribal communities. The tribal population is too much differentiated to be lumped together as distinct ethno-cultural category. Linguistically they belong to four language families: (i) Indo-Aryan, (ii) Austro-Asiatic, (iii) Tibeto-Burmese, and (iv) Dravidian. Racially they are at great variance. Different tribal communities exhibit various Asiatic, (iii) Tibeto-Burmese, and (iv) Dravidian. Racially they are at great variance. Different tribal communities exhibit various racial elements in varying proportions. The racial elements found amongst them

are: Negrito, Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Mongoloid and Europoid (Alpine, Armenoid, Dinaric and Nordic).

Tribals do not have ethnic consciousness, but have a perception of bio-cultural distinctiveness. But as perception is influenced by mutual interaction, culture and genetic endowment, it takes the coverage of ethnicity. Each tribe has its own boundary maintenance rules. Each lays emphasis on its boundary maintenance so as to promote the unity and integrity of the ethno-cultural entity. Ethnicity refers to a social group with common heredity and cultural tradition. In other words an ethnic group is social group based on common descent and sharing of a common culture. According to Barth (1969) ethnic group refers to a population which is part of a plural society, and yet it is self-perpetuating biologically and shares a common culture and a language. Its membership is ascriptive and is identified by others as a distinct category.

### TRIBES AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Niharranjan Ray, the famous Historian and Indologist, in his quest for the meaning of the term *jana* found in ancient literature suggest that it refers to the tribal communities. He says that the terms *jana* and *jati* are both derived from the Sanskrit root *jan*, which means 'to be born' or 'to give birth to' and thus has a biological connotation. He states that the term *jana* in ancient times referred to these people who are autochthones and who have been residing in forest and hilly areas. Till independence most of the tribal communities led a life of seclusion. The colonial government tried to keep them separate from others and designated them as 'tribes'. By classifying them as tribe, the colonial government foisted on them a common identity. Of course" the category of tribe has today become a part of the established order but more as a political as a social fact. Having become established, that identity is now in the process of being reformulated, with a distinct tendency to describe the tribal population as a whole and irrespective of its location as the indigenous people of India (Beteille, 1995).

The term "indigenous" has acquired wide currency throughout the world during the present decade at the initiative of I.L.O. and other international agencies. This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences. It is needless to say that any population or part of it is indigenous to some area. In India, the idea of designating the tribe as indigenous people is grotesque because it may lead to controversies. In India if tribes are considered as indigenous people to the exclusion of other sections of population, it would lead to anarchy. "As a matter of historical fact, several of the contemporary tribes of India moved into the

country across its north-eastern frontier long after the areas into which they moved had been settled by peasants who are not now designated as tribals" (Beteille, 1995). Information on population movements in India is inadequate. Population movements have taken place both among tribals as well as non-tribals it may be true that movement of non-tribal population has led to the displacement of tribal population, and it is also true that displacement of advanced tribal population has led to the displacement of weaker ones. Thus the fact that tribes are the primordial people of India is not acceptable, though they are techno-economically backward and have no written literary tradition.

In the past, most of the tribal communities remained shut off from other sections of population and led a life of isolation; whereas some others marginally interacted with caste communities living in their neighbourhood. Tribals were known to the caste communities by their respective ethnic identities, although terms like *adivasi*, *adimjati*, *vanyajati*, *vanavasi*, *girijan*, etc. were in vogue for all of them irrespective of their individual tribal identities. This was so because tribal communities share some common features. Naik enlists seven features, such as, (1) a tribe has least functional interdependence within the community; (2) it is techno-economically backward; (3) it is geographically isolated from other peoples; (4) its members speak a common unwritten language or dialect; (5) it is a political unit under a common authority; (6) its members practise animistic faith; (7) it regulated itself with customary laws (1968: 84-97).

It is apt here to analyse some definitions of tribe offered by anthropologists. Dube delineates the characteristic features of tribes as follows

1. Their roots in the soil dates back to a very early period : if they are not the original inhabitants, they are at least some of the oldest inhabitants of the land.
2. They live in relative isolation of the hills and the forests.
3. Their sense of history is shallow for, among them, the remembered History of five to six generations tends to get merged in mythology.
4. They have a low level of techno-economic development.
5. In terms of their cultural ethos, language, institutions, beliefs and customs, they stand out from the other sections of the society.
6. If they are not egalitarian, they are at least non-hierarchic and undifferentiated (1977: 2).



Bailey states, "There is no single or accepted criterion by which to distinguish a tribe from a caste" (1960: 263). According to Sinha (quoted in Vidyarthi, 1971) they are "isolated in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social behaviour from other ethnic groups". Vidyarthi opines, "The tribals as a whole are technologically and educationally backward" (1972: 33). Bailey further emphatically states, "Tribal people live in the hills they are not Hindus, but Animists; they are economically backward; they are autochthones they speak tribal languages. But none of these criteria are in themselves satisfactory, and even taken together they will not include all the people who are labeled as tribes by the Administration or by ethnographers (1960: 263). Professor Ghurye observes that the tribal people are neither aborigines nor *adibasis*. They are "the imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu society" and may be called 'Backward Hindus' (1959: 19). According to Professor Majumdar, the tribe may be defined as, "...a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialisation of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance from tribes or castes, but without any stigma attached in the case of a caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of a homogeneity of ethnic or territorial integration". (Naik in Vidyarthi (ed) 1968: 86). Professor Ehrenfels hints on smallness, isolation, common dialect, common belief, common occupational practices, feeling of belonging to a group, own customary laws and practices etc. as characteristic features of tribe (Naik, 1968: 88-89).

A community to be classified as a 'tribe' should have all these characteristics. But, if all these parameters are applied to all the 'Scheduled Tribes' in the country, many would be disqualified. The Government have categorized 283 communities till 1971 as Scheduled Tribes in accordance with the Provisions of the Constitution of India as laid down under Article 342. In order to overcome this dilemma Stephen Fuchs tones down the qualifying criteria. He writes : "As far as Indian tribes go, the essentials seem to be only a comparatively simple and primitive economy, combined with a certain degree of residential instability, a simple though not always, classless social organization, and especially that feeling of being a different and separate social unit-apart from the majority communities of India. The Social and Political solidarity expressed either by a common Hams a common distinct language or dialect, endogamy, similar customs and traditions of a social and. religious nature appear less important' (1973: 23-24).

The Constitution of India does not state anywhere as to how a community can be identified as a tribe. However, Government of India stipulates

criteria, such as indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness for inclusion of any community in the list of Scheduled tribes. Out of the above criteria, the second, third and the last seem to be appropriate in the context. But no satisfactory definition of term 'tribe' is available anywhere. Oxford Dictionary states that a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. These criteria are good enough for recognizing a tribal community.

All the tribal communities are not on the same level of the socio-economic parameter. They are at different levels of socio-economic scale. Development of the tribal communities is a national concern and this has been reflected in the Constitution. The country is committed to the all-round development of tribal communities. Right from the First Five-year Plan special effort is being made for the development of all the tribal communities. In the Fifth Five-year Plan the instrument of Tribal Sub-plan was developed on the basis of the concentration of Scheduled Tribe population residing in scheduled areas. This ensured the flow of benefits from all sectoral programmes. This enabled various State Governments, with sizable tribal population, to formulate mechanisms for quantifying funds from identifiable programmes, and for tailoring funds to the needs of, the tribal people. During this period too 75 Vulnerable Ethno-cultural Groups (VEGs) were identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and micro-projects were launched for each of them. Each micro-project covers about 500 families living in a group of adjoining villages. Funding for micro-projects is done in the form of Special Central Assistance in accordance with Article 275 of the Constitution of India.

#### **VULNERABLE ETHNO-CULTURAL GROUPS (VEGs)**

Tribal communities, who carry on pre-agricultural activities for their survival, have been classified as so called Primitive Tribal Groups, Government of India have selected four criteria for identifying Primitive Tribal Groups. The criteria are: (I) pre-agricultural level of technology and economy, (ii) very low rate of literacy, (iii) declining or near stagnant population, and (iv) general backwardness due to seclusion, and consequential archaic mode of living.

The so called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) are indeed vulnerable and techno-economically backward. Their habitats are natural and serene. Development of infrastructure in their habitats is utterly inadequate. They have

perfectly adapted to their eco-system, and lead a very simple life like natural men. However, it is ridiculous to brand them as "primitive". This epithet is value-loaded and means primeval, or aboriginal and archaic. When the mankind is at the threshold of Twenty-first Century there should be rethinking about these Colonial and Imperial jargons. "Primitive" is the word commonly used to describe the tribes with whom anthropologists have been traditionally concerned.

During 1950s Evans-Pritchard, the famous British anthropologist, while attempting to answer three pertinent questions, such as, (i) what are primitive societies ? (ii) why do we study them ? and (iii) what do we study in them ? These questions provide clues for understanding the term "primitive". Evans-Pritchard clarifies the meaning as follows: "The word 'primitive', in the sense in which it has become established in anthropological literature does not mean that the societies it qualifies are either earlier in time or inferior to other kinds of societies. As far as we know primitive societies have just as long a history as our own, and while they are less developed than our society in some respects they are often more developed than others. This being so, the word was perhaps an unfortunate choice, but it has now been too widely accepted as a technical term to be avoided "(1972: 7). As the term conveys inferior and spiteful meaning it ought to be eliminated from anthropological literature. "The word" "primitive" came into use when anthropological theory was dominated by an evolutionary approach that equated living peoples, outside the stream of European culture, with the early inhabitants of the earth". These early inhabitants or primeval men - the first human beings - may justifiably be regarded as "primitive" in the etymological sense of the word. It is quite another matter to call present-day peoples by the same term. In other words, there is no justification for regarding any living group as our con-temporary ancestors (1956: 70 - 71). Therefore, the term "primitive" be replaced by the term "vulnerable".

Etymologically the term 'primitive' as an adjectival one is related to the earliest stage of development, implying rude, uncivilized, archetype, etc. Denotatively speaking the term 'primitive' means ancient, thing of the past, olden, primal, obsolete, ancestral, backward-looking, etc. Therefore, it is fallacious and erroneous to designate them as primitive. They are certainly defenseless against rapacious exploitation and unhealthy cultural invasion. Their traditional natural resource base has been denuded. They are not poor because they do not have the concept of poverty. They through experience know that nature is bounteous and nature will sustain them. Imposition of several restrictions on their free use of natural resources has marginalized them, and has made them defenseless too. Leading a free life in the ever munificence of nature they

used to lead a mirthful life. The tendency to acquire durable assets as a sort of guarantee against food insecurity never entered into their mind. But now the deprivation of resources has made them insecure and vulnerable. Of course the special micro projects, which are in operation, are helping them to overcome their crises. However, they continue to possess those characteristic features which Evans-Pritchard had earmarked for simple societies more than half a century ago. The features are:-

1. Small in scale with regard to numbers, territory and range of social contacts
2. Posses simple technology and economy
3. Little specialization of social functions
4. Absence of literature, and hence of any systematic art, science or theology
5. Structurally so simple and culturally so homogeneous, that they can be directly observed as wholes and
6. Otherness in their way of life.

In addition to above-stated basic criteria for the identification of the so-called Primitive Tribal Groups, certain general characteristic features of these groups are to be taken into consideration not only for identification but also for the implementation of development programmes among them. They may be stated as follows: -

1. Such communities are considered as the most vulnerable Ethno-cultural Groups.
2. Some of them are on the verge of extinction.
3. Some groups are struggling hard for their basic survival.
4. Their health condition and nutritional status are extremely low and some groups show internal genetic imbalances.
5. They are living in the most remote, inaccessible and eco-inhospitable areas.
6. They are not poor, but experience relative deprivation causing economic backwardness.
7. They have less command over resources and lack means for resources mobilisation.
8. They are characteristically isolated with unique and simple life-style.
9. They represent small societies with cultural homogeneity.
10. Their economy is purely subsistence-oriented and less monetized.
11. They mostly constitute preliterate societies with shallow history.
12. They still depend upon pre-agricultural modes of production, food-gathering and hunting
13. Some groups are nomads or semi-nomads without any permanent or sedentary settlement.

14. Their material culture status is simple with crude and hand-made tools, implements, weapons and appliances.
15. Their traditional politico-jural mechanism is simple with Headmen, both secular and sacerdotal, who look into the internal and external affairs.
16. The land utilized for swidden cultivation showed communal ownership rather than individual record of right.
17. Their social organisation is simple.
18. They are polytheists and some groups practise magic, witchcraft and sorcery.
19. Notwithstanding all such characteristic features of simple societies, they have their own rich cultural heritage with ethos, ideologies and worldview reflected in myths, legends, tales, riddles, oral literature, art, performing art, song, dance, music, etc.
20. They have - their unique aesthetic sensibility, ethno-scientific knowledge, ethno-medicine, ethno-linguistics, ethnomusicology, etc.
21. The problems faced by each of the vulnerable groups are unique in nature, and therefore, the concerned Micro-Projects prepare ethnic group specific projects so as to assist them to overcome their plight and tribulations.

#### PROFILE OF VULNERABLE ETHNO-CULTURAL GROUPS OF ORISSA

In Orissa State, as many as 13 vulnerable ethno-cultural groups have been identified as the so called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) such as the Birhor, Bondo, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kandha, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora. We may discuss their socio-cultural profile briefly as follows:-

##### **Birhor :**

The Birhor as a scheduled tribe is not only found in Orissa but also in the neighbouring States of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. In Orissa, they are chiefly distributed in the districts of Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Balasore, Cuttack and Ganjam and their population is estimated at 142 as per 1981 Census. They belong to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic group and the meaning of the term Birhor in their language is *Bir* (forest) and *Hor* (men) i.e. the men of forest. They are traditionally semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers and their economy is subsistence-oriented. They have two sections, such as the *Uthlas* and the *Jagi*, the former is nomadic whereas the latter have settled habitation. The wandering group has temporary habitation, known as the *Kumbha*, made of twigs and leaves and a cluster of *Kumbhas* for 10--15 households gives rise to a temporary camp site, known as the *Tanda*. Besides their expertise in food-gathering and hunting, they

have skill in rope-making and basket making. The forest and the Birhor are inter-connected since time immemorial as their basic survival is dependent upon forest eco-system. Their social organisation is simple with a number of clans. Since the *Tanda* is multi-clan, there is no restriction for marriage in a *Tanda*. The *Tanda* membership is not birth ascriptive and compulsory. Each *Tanda* has a headman who plays simultaneously secular and sacerdotal roles. Any breach of customary law results in social excommunication and imposition of fine in cash and/or kind. The Bihors are polytheists as they believe in and perform rituals for a number of deities and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. They worship ancestral cults at regular intervals for their safety and social security.

The Birhor is interchangeably known as the Mankirdia and Mankidi, as they are expert monkey catchers. In Kalahandi and Sundargarh districts they are called Mankidi whereas the name Mankirdia is used in Sambalpur and Mayurbhanj districts. Because of their pre-agricultural economy and low literacy, they have been identified as one of the Primitive Tribal Groups and since the Fifth Plan period special efforts are made by the Union Government to bring them under the planned development intervention through cent per cent funding for implementation of various schemes for their all round development by micro-projects managed by the State Government. It is significant to note that although in a limited scale, efforts are made to bring them to sedentary settlement from nomadic / semi-nomadic habitat. Moreover, during the current Ninth Plan period special emphasis, considering their limited population size, has been given on habitation development, a mini-micro approach.

**Bondo :**

The Bondo, as an ethnic group is only found in Orissa State and nowhere else in India. They are the speakers of the Remo language which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family. There are three sub-groups, such as the Bondo highlanders, Lower Bondo and the Gadaba-Bondo group. The Bondo villages are found in hill tops and hill slopes, as well. The Bondo economic life pre-eminently centers round cultivation, both shifting and settled and it is remarkable to note that they practise multi-cropping and broadcasting method in the former and mono-cropping and transplantation method in the latter type of cultivation. Besides, they also engage in collection of minor forest produce, stock raising, hunting, fishing and wage-earning in order to earn their livelihood. In so far as their social organisation is concerned the Bondo constitute a simple society and it consists of social institutions, such as the clans, lineages, extended families and nuclear families. There are a number of village functionaries, both secular and sacerdotal, namely the Bodo-Naik, Naik, Chalan Pujari or Sisa

(priest), Dishari (medicineman), Gurmai (Shaman), etc. to look into the politico-jural and religious functions in their society. The Patkhanda Mahaprava is their presiding deity and a number of deities and spirits are also worshipped from time to time. Although liquor is prohibited for use in various religious rituals animal sacrifice is not tabooed. They observe a number of rituals and ceremonies throughout the year. The Bondo use scanty clothes and especially the women folk traditionally use country-made *ringa* of *kerang* fibre and a number of coloured bead necklaces hanging from the neck to the naval and in addition there are bangles, neck and head bands, anklets, rings, etc.

The Bondo, both men and women have shown increasing interests in participating in the ongoing development processes.

### **Chuktia Bhunjia :**

The Chuktia Bhunjia is one of, the sections of the Bhunjia tribal groups, chiefly concentrated in the Sonabera plateau of Kalahandi district. Currently, the Sonabera plateau which has an altitude of 3000 feet approximately above the sea level is situated in the Komna block of Nuapara district. The area is full of high and undulating hill ranges intercepted by a number of hill streams. There is tropical dry mixed deciduous type of forest cover in the region. It is a sparsely populated area with dispersed and small villages and hamlets. Because of the peculiar topographical features there is the absence of adequate road communication. Their erstwhile practice of shifting cultivation has been affected recently and they earn their livelihood through the collection and sale of minor non-timber forest produce. The Chuktia Bhunjias, unlike their plains counterpart, called the Chinda, are hills men with low economic status or, in other words, have just subsistence level of survival.

The Chuktia section of the Bhunjia is more conservative, tradition-bound and inward looking. In so far as their social organisation is concerned, beyond the family level they have a number of exogamous units or clans which regulates their marriage. The simple/nuclear family with monogamous form of marriage is found in their society. Their kitchen shed is considered sacred and the entry of married daughters is strictly forbidden.

Traditionally, the socio-political system recognised the village council with elderly members as the basic unit and there existed the inter-village council at the apex. Recently, Grams Panchayats have made inroads and operate with elected people's representatives as ward members.

The Bhunjias worship the Sunadei as their supreme deity and their priest is the Pujari. Besides, a large number of deities are propitiated by them for their well-being and prosperity, prevention of and cure from diseases, good crop etc.

**Didayi :**

As the denizens of the Eastern Ghats, the Didayi is an ethnic group who inhabit the Kondakamberu hill ranges interspersed by the Machhkund River. Their habitat constitutes a veritable topographical scenario embracing riverine plains, undulating plateaus and rugged mountainous terrains. Their demographic features are remarkable since they constitute a conspicuously small group with 1,978 souls in 1961 which subsequently increased to 2,164 in 1971 and decreased to 1,977 in 1981 census; during the two decades the growth rate was estimated at -(+) 84 per cent (1961-71) and (-) 83 per cent (1971-81) ; and the percentage of literacy which is proverbially low has been estimated at 272 per cent, 078 per cent and 32 per cent during 1961, 1971 and 1981, respectively. The Bondo, another PTG happens to be their neighbour.

Their economic pursuits, mostly subsistence-oriented, are tuned with the environment and ecology and they earn their livelihood through food-gathering, hunting, fishing, domestication of animals, cultivation, both settled and shifting and wage-earning. In their politico-jural set up, the Naik officiates as the secular chief of the traditional village Panchayat. They believe in a lame number of gods and goddesses, demi-gods and spirits and the Palasi is their sacerdotal chief. The Didayis are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal and their simple social organisation comprises clans, which are characteristically totemistic and include lineages, consisting of a number of families. Although monogamy is the rule, polygynous unions are practised as per need and the cross-cousin marriage is a preferential form of marriage among them. Notwithstanding the marriage by negotiation as the most prestigious one, other ways of acquiring mates, such as the marriage by mutual consent and elopement (*udlia*), marriage by capture, (*cubboi*), marriage by intrusion (*gaisamuddi*) and marriage by service (*garijya*) are also prevalent. The bride-price is, although not uniform in all cases of marriages paid to the bride's parents. The divorce is socially permissible and remarriages of widow/widower, divorcee/separated are also allowed. They speak a language which is classified under the Austro-Asiatic language family.

**Dongria Kandha :**

The Dongria Kandha, a section of the Kandha tribe of Orissa are found in the Niyamgiri hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats and their chief concentration is in Bissam-Cuttack, Kalyansingpur, Muniguda and Biswanathpur blocks of



Rayagada and Koraput districts. They speak a language, called the *kuvi* which is classified under the Dravidian linguistic stock. The Dongria Kandhas are expert horticulturists and grow jackfruit, mango, pineapple, banana, orange and lemon, ginger, turmeric, etc. Besides, they earn their livelihood through shifting cultivation along hill slopes, collection of materials from forests, animal husbandry and wage-earning. The Dongria Kandhas are patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal and they have nuclear families, extended families, lineages and clans. Although marriage by negotiation appears to be more prestigious, other ways of acquiring mates, such as the marriage by capture, marriage by exchange; marriage by service are prevalent.

The Dongar (hill) is the environmental niche which is their habitat; their economies centre round the *dongar*; the *dongar* is the abode of their deities and supernatural beings; it provides them the picturesque, sylvan and emotional set up for courtship culminating in marriage and the ethos, ideologies, values and worldview of the people contain the replica of the *dongar*.

It is significant to note their politico-social organisation and various mechanisms of social control and the Jani combines the secular and sacerdotal chieftainship roles and traditionally enjoys the confidence and esteem of his fellow villagers. The Bismajhi, Barika, Pujari, Disari, Bejuni, Jhateni and Gouda are the other village functionaries with specific roles to play in various contexts. Currently, under the provisions of the Panchayat Raj System there is onslaught of modern leadership pattern with elected people's representatives to look into matters within the decision-making process.

The theological pantheon of the Dongria Kandha has the 'Darni penu', the earth goddess at the apex and in addition there are a large number of village deities, ancestral cult, household deities, spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. They propitiate deities and spirits for their blessings and observe rituals and ceremonies throughout the year. -They have the traditional knowledge of the causes and cure of diseases and ailments and follow their Disari, the medicineman at the time of need.

#### **Juang :**

The Juang is a unique tribal group which is found only in Orissa State and nowhere else in any other State or Union Territories of India. They are chiefly concentrated in the districts of Keonjhar (The *Thaniya* section) and Dhenkanal (the *Bhagudiya* section). Gonasika which is situated in Keonjhar district (21° 10' N lat and 85° 37' E long) is said to be the principal seat of the tribe. The Gonasika area constitutes sedentary landscape with hills, hill slopes,

ridges, valley bottoms etc. The vegetative cover in the area ranges from barren to thin forest and there is the influence of sub-tropical monsoonic climate. The Gonasika (nostril of a cow) is the place wherefrom the river Baitarani originates.

The erstwhile ethnographers, such as E. A. Samuells (1856), Dalton (1872), Risley (1891), Hunter (1877), N. K. Bose (1929), O' Malley (1941), Elwin (1948), etc. have documented the contemporary life-style, society and culture of the Juangs. Samuells' account identified them as the 'Puttooas' for their leaf-costume in the recent past. They speak a language which can be classified under the Munda belonging to the Austric subfamily of the Austro-Asiatic language family.

They have patrilineal and totemistic septs/clans (b'ok) which have two broad divisions, namely the Kutumb/Bhai septs (non-intermarrying / consanguine) and the *Bandhu* septs (intermarrying/affinal). Their secular and sacerdotal chiefs are the 'Pradhan and Nagam/Boita, respectively. They are polytheists and the two principal deities are the Dharam Deota/Mahapuru and the Dharti Mata/Basuki. The Rushi (benefactor) and the Rushiani (benefactress) are considered as the deified tribal heroes (Elwin, 1948) and there are deities presiding over villages/hills/rivers/forest and ancestral cults. In their society, there is absence of the queer practice of witchcraft and sorcery.

They have a distinct culture of their own and they consider the Bhuyan, a neighbouring tribal group as their brothers. They observe a number of rituals, ceremonies and festivals throughout the year. Further, they have their distinct ethos, ideologies and worldview.

#### **Kharia :**

The Kharias are not only found An Orissa, but in the neighbouring States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and there are mainly three sections of the tribal group, such as the *Pahari* (Hill) Kharia, Dudh Kharia and Dhelki Kharia. The Pahari/Hill Kharia is considered as the most backward insofar as their economic status is concerned. The Hill Kharias are the autochthonous inhabitants of the Similipal hill ranges of Mayurbhanj district. In 1981, their population was estimated at 1, 44,174 and the females outnumbered males (1013:1000) and the percentage of literacy was 17.9. They live in small villages consisting of roughly 20 households and their villages are found scattered in hill tops, hill slopes and foot hills. The subsistence economy of the Hill Kharia centres round the collection of minor forest produce, such as resin, honey, bees wax, lac, tasser-cocoon, etc. and hunting.

The Kharia family is patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal and there is preponderance of nuclear families. The marriage by negotiation is considered as the most prestigious one and there is the prevalence of the system of bride-price and widow remarriage and divorce are socially allowed.

The Hill Kharias consider the earth goddess, Thakurani as their supreme deity. Besides, they also believe in a number of deities and spirits and propitiate them through performance of rituals. The traditional socio-political organisation is simple and is headed by the Pradhan and they have both village-level and inter-village level councils to look into the internal and external affairs of the community.

They speak a language which could be classified under the Mundari, i.e., Austro-Asiatic language family.

**Kutia Kandha :**

The Kutia Kandha is a sub-section of the Kandha tribal group of Orissa State and they are mainly concentrated in Belghar area of Balliguda subdivision in Phulbani district. Their habitat is located in the north-eastern fringe of the Eastern Ghats and contains hills, rivers and streams and the area is approximately 3,000 feet above the sea level. The forest-clad hills have tropical evergreen and deciduous tree species, such as Sal, Piasal, Bamboo, Asan, Cane, broomstick, grasses, etc.

The Kutia Kandha villages which were initially unclan have turned to be multi-clan in course of time. In their society there is prevalence of patrilineality, patriarchy and patrilocality. They have nuclear and extended families, lineages and clans and clan exogamy regulates marriage. The secular functionaries, such as the Mutha Majhi, Pat Majhi, Bis Majhi and Chhatia and the Jani, the sacerdotal head are found in their society. They have their traditional village councils and recently there are elected people's representatives under the Panchayat Raj system.

The Kutia Kandhas are polytheists and believe in large number of deities, spirits, supernatural elements, both benevolent and malevolent. They propitiate their deities and spirits through performance of adequate rituals for their blessings. They observe various ceremonies and festivals all-round the year and perform magico-religious rituals as per the prescription of the Jani.

The techno-economic base of the Kutia Kandha is very simple and centers round the sylvan forest eco-system. They collect edible and non-edible

minor forest produce for their sustenance. The forest provides them food, shelter and the emotional framework for their survival and resources means for achieving ends. They practise slash and burn type of cultivation, otherwise known as '*podu chas*' and grow several crops of short duration in the shifting cultivation plots in hill slopes. Besides, they have wet land cultivation, horticultural plantations, animal husbandry and wage-earning to earn their livelihood. The Kutia Kandha women play a very significant role in socio-economic, socio-religious and socio-cultural nexus.

**Lanjia Saora :**

The Lanjia Saora is a section of the Saora, a major tribe in Orissa State, mainly inhabiting Gajapati and Rayagada districts. Among all sections, the Lanjia Saora is considered as the most backward section in so far as their economic status is concerned. They speak a language known as the 'Sora' which could be classified under the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family (Mundari) and recently they have developed written script of their own. They are the inhabitants of remote, inaccessible and interior areas in forest clad hills. In addition to the shifting/slash and burn cultivation, they also practise settled/wet land and terrace cultivation. The Saoras are noteworthy for their indigenous ingenuity in terrace cultivation. The lower terraces are utilised for paddy cultivation and the upper for growing *biri*, *ragi* and *kulthi*. In addition, they collect various items, both edibles and non-edibles, under minor non-timber forest produce for their subsistence.

The Saora tribe as a whole is conspicuous by the absence of clan system, which is a unique feature of their social organisation. Instead, they have another institution, called the *Birinda*, a patrilineage which performs the functions of the clan. Moreover, the Birinda is exogamous and regulates marriage, inheritance and succession. A Saora woman's Birinda does not change consequent upon her marriage and it is a remarkable feature and after the death of a woman, her Birinda members claim to perform her death rituals culminating in the institution of the *Guar* ceremony, the ultimate passage to the departed soul. They are mostly monogamous, but polygynous unions are not entirely ruled out.

The Saora religion is characterised by polytheism and there is a galaxy of supernatural elements, deities, spirits, both benevolent and malevolent and belonging to both sexes. They have priests and shamans, both males and females. A cursory look into their sociopolitical and religious organisation reveals that they have secular and sacerdotal chiefs, such as the Gomango and the Buyya, respectively.

It is remarkable to note that they are very ceremonious and show aesthetic sensibilities reflected in their dance, music, wall-painting and *iditals* (ikons) which have very deep rooted meanings in socio-religious contexts.

**Lodha :**

In Orissa, the Lodhas are concentrated in two blocks, namely Morada and Suliapada in the Sadar subdivision of Mayurbhanj district. As per 1981 census, their population has been estimated at 5,088 and the literacy was only 83 per cent. They are originally a Mundari speaking tribe. Their economy is subsistence-oriented and they depend upon the collection of minor forest produce in and around their forest habitat and wage-earning and agricultural labour in plains areas. In addition, stock-raising, petty trade, rope-making, mat-making, weaving, etc. supplement their earning.

The Lodha social organisation has patrilineal and totemistic clans and most of the families are nuclear. Their marriages are usually post-pubescent and monogamous, although polygyny is not totally ruled out. The divorce and re-marriage are socially permissible. In the socio-political nexus, the Mukhia/Sardar plays the role of headman and the traditional village Panchayat is called, Desh.

The Lodhas are polytheists who strongly believe in the Bhagaban, Dharam Devata and Basumata. In addition, there are village deities, tutelary deities, ancestral cult, benevolent and malevolent spirits and all of them constitute the supernatural constellation. They observe a number of rituals and festivals throughout the year with emotional attachment to gain favour of spirits and the blessings of deities for their overall well-being.

**Mankirdia :**

The Mankirdia is another nomenclature of the Birhor tribe inhabiting Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts. Mohanty observes, "It may be noted that the local people used to call the Birhors in different ways. In the districts of Kalahandi and Sundargarh they are named as Mankidi whereas in Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts they go by the name Mankirdia. In fact both the Mankirdia and Mankidi are one and the same and both are none but the Birhors" (1990: 76). We have discussed briefly the society and culture of Birhor elsewhere.

**Paudi Bhuyan :**

The Bhuyan is one of the major tribes of Orissa and they are not only found in Orissa State but also in other States such as Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. The Pauri/Paudi Bhuyan is considered as the most backward and

primitive section of the tribe. They are found in the districts of Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur and chiefly concentrated in the Bhuyan *pirh* of Keonjhar district and Bonai subdivision of Sundargarh district. Their habitat constitutes hill terrains and valley bottoms.

They practise slash and burn type of cultivation (Kamani) in hill slopes, settled cultivation in wet land and vegetable cultivation in kitchen gardens. The rituals and ceremonies are observed throughout the calendar of agricultural activities. They also collect food materials, fuel wood, honey, resin, *lac*, medicinal plants and herbs from forest. Other economic pursuits among them include animal husbandry, basket-making, wage-earning in house/road construction work, mining, plantation activities etc.

Although monogamous union is the common practice polygyny is not entirely ruled out. The marriage by negotiation is prestigious and other forms of acquiring mates among them are marriage by mutual consent and elopement, marriage by ceremonial capture, etc. There is the prevalence of bride-price which is paid to the bride's father in cash and/or kind. Their family which is the smallest social unit is characterised by patriarchy, patrilocality and patrilineality. They have lineages and clans.

The village head among them is called the Naik / Padhan, who presides over the village assembly or Darbar and the inter-village traditional political organisation is known as the 'Bar' in Sundargarh district and 'Pirh' in Keonjhar district.

The Dharam Devta and Basukimata, who represent Sun and Earth, respectively are at the apex of their pantheon. Besides, a number of deities and spirits are also propitiated from time to time for their blessings. The Dihuri is the sacerdotal chief, who performs all rituals connected with worship of deities. In matters of the cure of diseases, they apply magico-religious methods through Raulia, the witch doctor and utilise medicinal plants and herbs.

#### **Saora:**

The Saora is one of the major tribes of Orissa and their population in 1981 was estimated at 3,70,061 and they constituted 6.26 per cent of the total tribal population of the State. The females outnumbered males (1030: 1000) in 1981 census. Compared to the percentage of literacy of total tribal population (13.96% in 1981) their percentage of literacy (14.47%) was slightly more. They speak a language, 'Sora' which can be classified under the Austro-Asiatic language family. Various earlier ethnographers and recently anthropologists have discussed on the

socio-cultural life of the Saora. They are found in almost all districts of the State, but chiefly concentrated in Gajapati and Rayagada districts. The Saoras have been classified into various sections and according to Thurston (1900) there are Savara, Jati Savara; Arsi/Arisi/Lombo Lanjiya, Laura/ Muli, Kindal, Jadu, Kumbi, Sudho and according to Sitapati they are sub-divided as Arsi sor, Jadu sor, Kindal sor, Kumbi sor, Laura sor, Kampu sor, Sudha sor, Kudumbha sor, Jati sor, Bobili sor, Lamba Lanjia sor/ Malua sor and other subdivisions are Based sor, Bimma sor, Dandiya sor, Gantra sor; Jara sor, Jurai sor, Kimsod sor, Luang sor, Mala sor, Mara sor, Mani sor Muli sor, Mulfa sor, Sarada sor and Tenkali sor (see Mohanty, 1990 : 249-50). The Lanjiya Saoras are the most primitive group and the Sudha Saoras are a Hinduised acculturated group.

The Saora family is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Unlike other tribal groups the Saora do not have clan system and the 'Birinda' as a maximal patrilineage plays its role in the social organisation. Although monogamy is the rule, polygynous unions are also prevalent. Besides the regular way of acquiring mates through negotiation is considered the most prestigious one, the marriage by ceremonial capture and by service are also prevalent in their society. The sororal polygyny and leviration are socially permitted. They observe various life-cycle rituals as per their customs and the Guar ceremony as a death ritual is significant among them.

They practise both shifting, terrace and settled cultivation and in addition, they collect minor forest produce and also pursue animal husbandry, horticulture, wage-earning to earn their livelihood.

In the traditional socio-political sphere the Gamango and the Buyya are the secular and sacerdotal chiefs, respectively. The socio-religious aspect among the Saora is very elaborate. There are male and female shamans who play their role in magico-religious rituals and some of them also act as Medicinemen-cum-diviner. The Saoras propitiate a large number of deities and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent, in order to have their blessings. The Saoras are also significant for their iconography, craftsmanship and they possess rich cultural heritage.

The tribal development strategy, envisaged during the Fifth Five Year Plan period paved the path of planned development intervention inculcated new hopes and aspirations and during this period, as early as in 1977-78 micro-projects started functioning for the all-round development of the so called primitive tribal groups. We may briefly outline salient features of such micro-projects functioning in Orissa State, as follows:-

**I. BONDHO DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (BDA) : Mudulipada, Malkangiri District.**

The Bondho Development Agency with its headquarters at Mudulipada in Khairput Block of Malkangiri district started functioning as a micro-project in the financial year, 1976-77. A Project leader and other personnel looked into the administrative and management aspects for successful implementation of various development programmes in 32 villages inhabited by the Bondho. The total population of the Bondho in the micro-project area was estimated at 5034 (1985-86) of which there were 2463 males and 2571 females. The total percentage of literacy was 3.61 of which male and female literacy percentage stood at 6.81 and 0.711, respectively. The annual growth rate of population in the micro project area comes to (+) 1.041 per cent. The average annual expenditure incurred from its inception till 31st March, 1993 was estimated at Rs. 8,48,866 which comes approximately to Rs. 170 per head. The Bondho still depends upon pre-agricultural mode of production to a large extent.

**2. CHUKTIA BHUNJIA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CBDA): Sonabeda, Komna, Nuapada District.**

The Chuktia Bhunjia Development Agency as a micro-project for the allround development of the Chuktia section of the Bhunjia tribal group started functioning since 1994-95. There is one Special Officer at the apex of the administrative system of the micro-project and he is assisted by a number of other personnel for implementation of various development programmes/ projects in the area under the jurisdiction of the micro-project, which consists of 9 villages. The micro-project is situated outside the tribal sub-plan area of the State. The total population of the Chuktia Bhunjia comes to 1579, which included 304 families. The total percentage of literacy is estimated at 8.01.

**3. DIDAYI DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (DDA) : Kudumuluguma, Malkangiri District.**

The Didayi Development Agency which was initiated during the financial year 1986-87 covers 38 Didayi inhabited villages with total population of 4460 of which there are 2167 males and 2293 females. The percentage of literacy among them comes to 3.19, of which males and females constitute 5.99% and 0.50% respectively. The annual growth rate of population has been estimated at (-) 0.86%. The average annual



expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 13,28,031 which approximately comes to Rs. 300 per head. The Didayi still practise shifting cultivation as one of the means of subsistence in the project area.

**4. DONGRIA KANDHA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (DKDA) : Kurli, Bissam-Cuttack, Rayagada District.**

The micro-project started functioning during the financial year, 1978-79 with 63 Dongria Kandha villages and the total population of the micro-project area is 5199 of which there are 2115 males and 3014 females. The annual growth rate of population comes to (+) 0.92. The percentage of literacy among the Dongria Kandha of the project area is 16.02 of which the male literacy is 30.92 per cent and the female literacy is 5.57 per cent. They are reputed as good horticulturists and nearly two-third of them practise swidden cultivation. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 is estimated at Rs. 8,66,731 which approximately comes to Rs. 170 per head.

**5. DONGRIA KANDHA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (DKDA) : Parsali, Kalyansingpur, Rayagada District.**

The micro-project started during the financial year, 1987-88 with 48 villages and with total population of 2044 souls of which there are 938 males and 1106 females. The average annual growth rate of population has been estimated at to (+) 0.88 per cent. The percentage of literacy in the micro-project area comes to 14.48 per cent. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 10,42,265 which is approximately Rs. 510 per head.

**6. JUANG DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (JDA): Gonasika, Keonjhar District.**

The Juang Development Agency started during the financial year, 1978-79 with its headquarters at Gonasika in Keonjhar district. There are 32 villages in the micro-project area with total population of 5774 persons, of which there are 2808 males and 2966 females. The percentage of literacy comes to 12.24, out of which the male literacy is 22.29 per cent and the female literacy is 2.73 per cent. The average annual growth of population of the micro-project area is estimated at (+) 2.60 per cent. They are still dependent upon the pre-agricultural mode of production for their livelihood. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 8,56,637 which is approximately Rs. 150 per head.

7. **HILL KHARIA AND MANKIRDIA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (H.K & M.D.A.) Jashipur, Mayurbhanj District.**

The above-mentioned micro-project was established during the financial year, 1986-87 with 21 villages consisting of the total population of 1568 persons, of which there are 787 males and 781 females. The average annual growth rate of population in the micro project area has been estimated at 1 per cent. The total percentage of literacy was 25.06, of which the male literacy was 28.80 per cent and the female literacy was 21.16 per cent. They earn their livelihood through employment of pre-agricultural mode of production and a majority of them are food-gathers and hunters. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 is Rs. 17,39,998 which is approximately Rs. 1110 per head.

8. **KUTIA KANDHA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (KKDA) : Belghar, Phulbani District.**

The Micro-project was grounded during the financial year 1978-79 with its headquarters at Belghar in Balliguda sub-division of Phulbani district. It includes 68 villages mainly inhabited by the Kutia Kandha. The total population of the micro-project is 4013, of which there are 1922 males and 2091 females. The total percentage of literacy is 12.00 per cent and that for females is 3.00 per cent. The average annual growth rate of population is (+) 1.36 per cent. They still depend upon pre-agricultural mode of production for their basic subsistence. The average annual expenditure for the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 is estimated at Rs. 5,86,238/-, which is approximately Rs. 150/- per head.

9. **KUTIA KANDHA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (KKDA) : Lanjigarh, Kalahandi District.**

The Kutia Development Agency started functioning during the financial year 1986-87 with 17 villages and with total population of 2073 persons, out of which there are 1042 males and 1031 females. The total percentage of literacy is 16.82, of which male literacy percentage comes to 28.29 and the female literacy percentage is 5.48.

The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 6,52,778/- which is approximately Rs. 315/- per head.

**10. LANJIA SAORA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (LSDA) : Serango, Gajapati District.**

The micro-project intended for all round development of the Lanjia Saora, a section of the Saora tribe started functioning during the financial year, 1978-79. It includes 21 villages with the total population of 4707 souls, out of which there are 2333 males and 2371 females. The total percentage of literacy of the micro-project area comes to 19.69 and the male literacy percentage is 27.65 and the females literacy percentage is 11.85. The average annual growth rate of population is estimated at 0.66% (+). The average annual expenditure of the micro-project since its inception till the 31st March 1993 is Rs. 7,16,0157/- which approximately Rs. 150/- per head.

**11. LANJIA SAORA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (LSDA) : Puttasing, Gunupur, Rayagada District.**

The micro-project was established during the financial year 1984-85 with 19 villages and with the total population of 3544 persons, of which there are 1826 males and 1718 females. The percentage of literacy for the total population in the micro-project area comes to 33.86. The average annual expenditure incurred in the micro-project from its inception, till the 31st March 1963 comes to Rs. 10,06,111/- which is approximately Rs. 285/- per head.

**12. LODHA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (LDA) : Morada, Mayurbhanj District.**

The Lodha Development Agency started functioning since the financial year, 1985-86. The micro-project includes 8 villages inhabited by the Lodha with the total population of 2952, of which **there are** 1077 males and 975 females. The total percentage of literacy is 22.7, out of which the male literacy percentage comes to 25.89 and the female percentage of literacy is 6.77. The average annual expenditure from the inception of the micro-project till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 2,42,346/- per head.

**13. PAUDI BHUYAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (PBDA): Jamardihi (Pallahara), Angul District.**

The micro-project was established during the financial year, 1978-79 with 27 villages inhabited by the Paudi Bhuyan. The total population of the micro-project area is estimated at 4733, out of which there are 2430 males and 2303 females. The total percentage of literacy comes to 31.06, of which the male percentage of literacy is 41.44 and the female percentage of literacy is 20.10. The average annual growth rate of population is (+) 2.80 per cent.

The micro-project is situated outside the Tribal Sub-Plan area of the State. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March, 1993 is estimated at Rs. 6,85,961/-, which is approximately Rs. 145/- per head.

**14. PAUDI BHUYAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (PBDA) : Khuntgaon, Sundargarh District.**

The Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency with its headquarters at Khuntgaon in Sundargarh district started functioning since the financial year, 1978-79. It includes 21 villages with total population of 3310 persons, of which there are 1632 males and 1678 females. The average annual growth rate of population of the micro-project area is 1.6%. The total percentage of literacy 18.09 and the male literacy comes to 28.12 per cent and the female literacy is 8.3 per cent. The average annual expenditure of the micro-project from its inception till the 31st March 1993 comes to Rs. 6,70,229/- which is approximately Rs. 200/-per head.

**15. PAUDI BHUYAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (PBDA) : Rugudakudar, Barkote, Deogarh District.**

The micro-project which was initiated during 1993-94 and which is situated outside the Tribal Sub-plan area of the State includes 19 villages with total population of 2467 persons, of which there are 1215 males and 1252 females. The total percentage of literacy comes to 14.07 out of which the male literacy percentage is 20.91 and that among the females is 7.43 per cent.

**16. SAORA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SDA) : Thumba, Patrapur, Ganjam District.**

The Micro-project, also known as the Thumba Development Agency started functioning since the financial year, 1978-79 with 56 villages, inhabited by the Saora. The total population of the micro-project comes to 3018 persons, of which 1520 are males and 1498, females. The average annual growth rate of population is (+) 0.72%. The average annual expenditure incurred from the inception of the micro-project till the 31st March 1993 is estimated at Rs. 5,97,248/- which is approximately Rs. 200/- per head.

**17. SAORA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SDA) : Chandagiri, Gajapati District.**

The micro-project started functioning since the financial year, 1978-79 and includes 25 villages. The total population comes to 3420, out of which there are 1744 males and 1676 females. The total percentage of literacy is

estimated at 20.02, of which the male percentage of literacy is 32.11 and the female percentage of literacy is 7.39. The average annual growth rate of population in the micro-project area comes to (+) 1.01. The average annual expenditure for the all-round development in the micro-project area from its inception till the 31st March, 1993 is estimated at Rs. 7,11,093/- which is approximately Rs. 210/- per head.

It is worthy to mention here that the ministry of welfare, Government of India have put much emphasis and taken expeditious steps through an approach of a new scheme, styled as "Habitat Development of the PTGs" during the 9th plan period and the prioritization of schemes / programmes thrusts on Health, nutrition and drinking water facilities, vocational training for women and pre-schooling for tribal girl children, economic development programmes etc.

## RESUME

In India the colonial British Government introduced the term 'tribe' to designate 283 diverse and tech no-economically backward ethno-cultural groups who used to lead partial or completely isolated life from the encysting peasant communities. Their latent objective was to keep these communities separate from the rest and thereby impair the body politic of the country. Their ulterior motive was to keep these ethno-cultural groups perpetually backward. The colonial Government prepared a catalogue or inventory of all such communities in 1901, and the list was refined in 1931 on the basis of census enumeration. And further, the colonial Government scheduled these communities under the Government of India Act, 1919 and 1935 only to keep them separate from the rest of population for administrative and political purposes.

After independence, when the Constitution of India came into operation on the 26th of January, 1950 the term "Scheduled Tribe" found enshrined in it under Part XV which deals with Special Provisions relating to certain classes, and Articles 330, 332, 335, 338, 339, and 342 specify the categories of people to whom the provisions will apply. Article 342 lays down that the President may "by public notification specify the tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled tribes...". The scheduled communities were duly specified by the President through the Scheduled Tribes Order, 1950. The tribes or parts of tribes or of group so specified in the order number 283 till 1971. In Orissa the number of such communities is 62, and the number may be less if the list is rationalized. However, these communities are referred to in the Constitution of India as

'Scheduled Tribes. For legal, political and administrative purposes they are also referred to by this nomenclature. The total population of all these ethno-cultural communities as per 1991 census is 67.8 million constituting about 8 per cent of the total population of the country. They are predominantly found in Madhya Pradesh (154 lakh), Maharashtra (73.17 lakh), Orissa (70.32 lakh), Bihar (66.16 lakh), Gujarat (61.63 lakh), Rajasthan (54.74 lakh), Andhra Pradesh (41.99 lakh), West Bengal (38.06 lakh), Assam (28.00 lakh) and in the entire north-eastern region, and sparsely, in other States and Union Territories. Together they comprise an important component of the Indian society. Their culture constitutes a significant dimension of the Indian civilization.

Tribal societies have some special features, such as, society is kin-based, relatively closed, homogeneous, segmentary, isolated from others, simple technoeconomy, lack of motivation to generate capital and make profit, ideological order is charged with animistic and fatalistic orientation etc. Therefore, Morgan (1871) looked at the concept of 'tribe' as a form of social organization. Whereas, the Marxists perceive it as a stage in the evolutionary order.

In the spatio-temporal context the folk or tribal societies are found to be in direct interaction with the peasant societies or village communities. They are dependent on the latter for several purposes although they are relatively isolated from others and self-sufficient. The tribal people are primary producers and they either sell or barter their produces, with the peasants for buying their necessities. The peasants on the other hand provide their produce to the urbanites and buy from them finished goods. They too look forward to the urbanites who are considered as literati, for guidance in the moral sphere and for enlightenment. Thus, the spatial continuum of folk, peasant and urban segments in Indian society is reflected in its temporal continuum and unity. However, socio-culturally tribal societies constitute a type. However, during the post-independence period through planned development intervention tribal societies are significantly undergoing change. In some cases they have registered more changes than the peasant societies. Therefore, now it is time to rethink and redefine the terms 'Primitive' and 'Tribe'. Along with socio-economic development tribal people are also advancing in literacy and education front. No longer have they lead a life of isolation although some of them continue to be small in size.

Tribal societies during the colonial period, were branded as "Primitive", because they were non-literate, lacked abstract thinking, economically self sufficient, lack of motivation to generate capital for commercial gains, lack of rational approach and belief in superstitions, and had a sense of togetherness'.

Mutuality and reciprocity are not measured by any common denomination of value. The basic sanctions of life are understood by all and deviation from accepted modes of conduct is not appreciated, rather criticism is leveled against the deviant, custom is crucial and central as regards conduct. The social structure is tightly knit and family relationships are vital. The sacred and secular domains are clearly distinguished from one another. Similarly consanguines are discriminated against affines. These are some of the characteristic features of the folk (tribal) societies. There is no justification, whatsoever, for designating folk societies as 'primitive'. Taking their religion into consideration folk societies in India have been classified as 'tribes', but it is true that a clear-cut line of demarcation cannot be drawn between some caste categories of the Sudra *varna* and some so-called tribal societies.

The Indian Census during the colonial administration started classifying them under the religious heading of 'Animism', though some of the Commissioners were not satisfied with the procedure. J. A. Baines, the Commissioner of the Census of 1891 considered the distinction between tribal people, who were Hinduized and those that followed their tribal form of religion as futile (Ghurye, 1959: 2). Ghurye also writes that Enthoven, the Superintendent of Census of 1901 for the province of Bombay, Gait, the Commissioner of Census of 1911, Tallents, the Superintendent of the Census of 1921 for Bihar and Orissa "acknowledged the difficulty of distinguishing a Hindu from an Animist to be very great and the hopes of demarcating a satisfactory boundary to be very much less. The difficulty of distinguishing the religion of such persons from the lower type of Hinduism has always been experienced at every Census" (1943: 2-3).

A close scrutiny now indicates that several of these communities have lost their so-called aboriginal characteristics. Most of them have undergone a rapid process of modernization as a result of their exposure to electronic media, universal literacy drive, modern transport system and participation in the democratic political process. Apart from these factors, planned development intervention has also accelerated the process of modernization. Economic liberalization has infused a sense of consumerism amongst the youth. Nowadays the well-to do amongst several of them engage Brahman priests and other ritual servants to perform their life-cycle rituals. In several cases they have adopted certain Hindu customs and participate in local and regional festivals, and make offerings to certain Hindu deities while adhering to their animistic beliefs and practices.

In the past these ethno-cultural communities had remained in backward condition chiefly for historical and political reasons. The British had colonised

the country for about 200 years, and prior to that socio-political situation was also not congenial for all the sections of Indian society to advance at equal pace. In the adverse circumstances the worst sufferers were these small and politically weak ethno-cultural communities. They had been subject to a simple life replete with malnutrition, chronic diseases, illiteracy and exploitation. But after independence things have changed for better so far as these communities are concerned. The Constitution of India has elevated their status to the level of all other citizens of the country and has assured them of protective measures. They are citizens of honour now and not of despise. A member of any of these communities can aspire for and hold the highest political position in the body politic of the country. Such peoples cannot be referred to as 'primitive' or 'tribe' because they are small in scale and possess simple technologies. These terms are not appropriate at the fag end of the twentieth century, because, as Beattie says "in the temporal sense no existing society can be said to be more primitive than any other...nor can we suppose that present day 'primitive' societies represent the rudimentary phases, the infancy and childhood, of human society. It is more plausible to speak of such societies as 'simple' ones' (1964:4). In true sense they are not simple as we envisage because their social and cultural institutions are complex as those of others.

In view of the above facts we suggest that these communities be better designated as "simple" 'ethno-cultural' societies so as to eschew ethnocentric attitude and foster greater social cohesion and national fraternity. This approach is culturally appropriate and politically congruent. From the point of view of promoting a healthy national 'society it is desirable to eschew the derogatory appellations like 'primitive and 'tribe'. These are obnoxious value-loaded terms which imply false vanity therefore, there is no anthropological justification to use these abhorrent terms which alienate rather than forge amity among people.

### *References*

1. Bailey, F.G. 1960 *Tribes, Caste and Nation*, Manchester Univ. Press.
2. Beattie, J. 1964 *Other Cultures*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
3. Barth, Fredrik 1969 *Ethnic Group and Boundaries*, George Allen & Unwin, London.
4. Behura, N.K. 1993 *Tribes, Their, Development and Quality of Life*. Calcutta: Indian Science
5. Ibid 1998 *Primitive Tribal Groups: Their Problems and Development in BANAJA*. Bhubaneswar: Academy of Tribal Dialect and Culture (ATDC).



6. Behura, N. K. & K.K. Mohanti 1980 *Social Change: A Study of Tribe/ Caste integration in Orissa*, Class Relations In Indian Society. Satanetra Publication. B. Sahoo (ed), Bhubaneswar.
7. Dube, S.C. (ed) 1977 *The Tribal Heritage of India*, Vol.I, Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction. Vikas Publishing Houses Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.
8. Evans Pritchard, E.E. 1972 *Social Anthropology*, Routlidge & Kegan Paul Ltd. London (1951)
9. Fuchs, Stephen 1973 *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*. 2nd Edn, Macmillan India, Delhi. (First Published 1973), Second Edition.1982.
10. Ghurye, G.S. 1959 *The Scheduled Tribes*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot.
11. Godelier, M. 1973 *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, Cambridge, London, Cambridge University Press.
12. Govt. of India. Ministry of Welfare (TD) 1990 Compendium of Circular/ Guidelines on Tribal Development.
13. Govt. of Orissa, Welfare Dept. 1994-95 Action Plan for the Primitive Tribal Groups during the Eighth Plan Period (Unpublished).
14. Govt. of Orissa. H&TW Dept. 1990 *Tribes of Orissa*. Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI), Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
15. Herskovits, M. J. 1940 *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples*. New York: A.A. Knopf. Economic Anthropology, New York: 1952
16. Honigmann, J.J. 1964 *Dictionary of Social Science*
17. Hsu, L. 1964 "Rethinking the concept of 'Primitive'" Current Anthropology, Vol. 5, No.3
18. Mohanti, K.K. 1989 *Spatial Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Orissa*. Naba Krushna Choudhury Center for Development Studies, Orissa. Bhubaneswar.
19. Mohanti, K.K. & B. Choudhury 1990 "Tribal Society, Culture and Educational Development", *ADIBASI*, Vol. XXX, Nos. 2&3. June-September. 1990, THRTI, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
20. Sahlins. M. 1968 *Tribesmen*, New York : Prentice Hall
21. Sinha, Suresh K. (ed) 1972 *Tribal Situation in India*, Indian institute of Advanced Study, Simla.
22. Vidyarthi, L.P. 1972 *Tribal Ethnography in India - A Trend Report*, in A Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology, Vol.III. Popular, Bombay, (ICSSR).
23. Vidyarthi, L. P. (ed) 1968 *Applied Anthropology in India*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad.

# PTGs AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION <sup>1</sup>

K.K. Mohanti <sup>2</sup>

Indian society is multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural. It has three broad segments, such as (1) folk (tribal communities) (2) peasant (rural caste communities) and (3) urban (town/city dwellers). Each segment is complementary and mutually inclusive. Each segment has unique characteristic features. People of the first segment interact with the second and both segments interact with the third. Thus, they constitute a continuum, which is known as '*folk-urban continuum*'. Amidst a number of diversities, India has preserved its unity over time. Tribal communities scheduled in the constitution as per Article – 342 have recorded their population as 84.3 million which is 8.20 percent of the total population (2001 Census) of the Country. They were regarded as autochthonous inhabitants of India and were known with different appellations, such as *adivasi*, *adimjati*, *janjati*, *vanyajati*, *vanavasi*, *girijan*, etc. Currently, they are called, *Scheduled Tribes* or *anusuchit janajati*.

In Odisha, there are 62 tribal communities with 112 sub-tribes / sections recognised by Government of India. They are classified under 3 broad linguistic groups, such as Austro-Asiatic (Munda), Dravidian and Indo-Aryan. They constitute 22.13 percent of the total population of the State, as per 2001 Census. Each tribal community has distinctive characteristic features reflected in their social, economic, political and religious sub-systems. Each possesses its own unique culture which differentiates one from the other. For instance, in economic considerations all tribal groups do not enjoy the same status. They earn their livelihood through settled cultivation, shifting cultivation, collection and sale of minor forest produce, food-gathering, hunting, fishing, manufacture of handicrafts and art objects, labour in agricultural as well as non-agricultural sectors, service in government and non-government organisations, petty business, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour, etc. Therefore, their economic condition is not uniform. Generally,

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, No.1&2, 2007, pp.13-24

<sup>2</sup> Former Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

speaking, their economy is mostly subsistence-oriented. Some communities have better economic status whereas others are backward and still others are very backward. Thus, those tribal communities which are economically the most vulnerable require special attention in the realm of planned development intervention.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Plan (1974-79) period, Government of India decided to put special emphasis for all round development of the most economically vulnerable tribes. These communities were designated as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). In course of time, 75 such groups were identified in our country. They are enlisted in a statement in the next page:

Out of them the maximum number of groups (13) is found in Odisha. They are the Birhor, Bondo, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kandha, Juang, Hill Kharia, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora. The Four basic criteria stipulated by Government of India for their identification are as below:

- 1) Pre-agricultural level of technology and economy;
- 2) Low literacy rate,
- 3) Declining or stagnant / near stagnant population and
- 4) Backwardness, seclusion and archaic mode of livelihood pattern.

In general terms, it is essential to note some basic characteristic features of primitive tribal groups. They constitute simple and small scale societies. A primitive tribal group may be a tribal community (Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Juang, Kharia, Lodha, Mankirdia and Saora); a sub-tribe or a segment or a part of a tribal community (Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora and Paudi Bhuyan). They are culturally homogenous and have simple social organisation. Each group in its lifestyle exhibits uniqueness and distinctiveness. Their economy is simple and generally subsistence-oriented. Through simple economic pursuits, they struggle hard for basic survival. They live mostly in relatively isolated and inaccessible tracts which are eco-inhospitable. They usually inhabit in the areas full of mountains, hills, forests, terrains and undulating plateaus. In terms of their economic status, they are regarded as the weakest of the weaker section of communities. But they maintain a high profile in so far as their rich heritage, tradition and culture are concerned. They have their own ethos, ideologies, world view, value orientations etc. which guide them for sustenance amidst challenging situations and various oddities.

**(A) Andhra Pradesh (12)**

1. Bodo Gadaba
2. Bondo Paroja
3. Chenchu
4. Dongria  
Khond
5. Gutob Gadaba
6. Khond Paroja
7. Kolam
8. Konda Reddy
9. Kutia Khond
10. Konda Savaras
11. Parengi Paroja
12. Thotis

**(B) Bihar (9)**

13. Asurs
14. Birhor
15. Birjia
16. Hill Kharia
17. Korwas
18. Malpaharias
19. Pahariyas
20. Sauria Paharias
21. Savar

**(C) Gujarat (5)**

22. Kathodi
23. Kotwalia
24. Padhar
25. Siddi
26. Kolgha

**(D) Karnataka (2)**

27. Jenu Kuruba
28. Konaga

**(E) Kerala (5)**

29. Cholanaikayan
30. Kadar
31. Katunayakan
32. Kurumba
33. Koraga

**(F) Madhya Pradesh (7)**

34. Abhuj Marias
35. Baigas
36. Bharias
37. Hill Korbas
38. Kamars
39. Saharias
40. Birhor

**(G) Maharashtra (3)**

41. Katkaria  
(Kathodia)
42. Kolam
43. Maria Gond

**(H) Manipur (1)**

44. Marram Nagas

**(I) Odisha (13)**

45. Birhor
46. Bondo
47. Chuktia  
Bhunjia
48. Didayi
49. Dongria  
Kandha
50. Juang
51. Kharia
52. Kutia Kandha
53. Lanjia Saora
54. Lodha
55. Mankirdia
56. Paudi Bhuiyan
57. Saora

**(J) Rajasthan (1)**

58. Saharias

**(K) Tamilnadu (6)**

59. Kattu  
Naickans
60. Kotas
61. Kurunbas

62. Irulas
63. Panians
64. Todas

**(L) Tripura (1)**

65. Riangs

**(M) Uttar Pradesh (2)**

66. Buxas
67. Rajis

**(N) West Bengal (3)**

68. Birhor
69. Lodhas
70. Totas

**(O) Andaman &  
Nicobar Islands (5)**

71. Great  
Andamanese
72. Jarwas
73. Onges
74. Sentinelese
75. Shompens

Gradually they are losing their command over natural resources and suffering from relative deprivation and they are neither poor nor impoverished. They do not halt at any economic stage, but possess economies to cater to their basic needs. Amidst existing eco-cultural nexus, they develop coping mechanisms for adaptation and need development *in situ*. Their technology is usually simple. The tools, implements, weapons, utensils, devices and articles, which they utilise for various purposes are either indigenously manufactured by themselves or through local artisans and craftsmen. Their labour is inalienable and division of labour is simple and based on age and sex. The concept of capital is conspicuously rudimentary in their communities. Their economy has been monetized, but barter system also continues in interior areas. The production decision is house hold or kinship oriented and entrepreneurship is very much lacking. They do not tolerate very long gestation period in the production process. From the very beginning they believe in and practise cooperation, community-orientation instead of individualised way of life. Their social organization is simple and kinship plays the pivotal role. The kinship nexus is also reflected in their economic, political and religious activities. Their communities are replete with segmentary structures, such as clans, lineages, extended families and nuclear families. In addition, they have non-kinship organisations, such as youth dormitories, known as Manda ghara, Majang, Dhangada basa, Dhangdi basa, Dinda ghar, Kude, Ingersin, Salan dingo etc. where youths before marriage are organised, socialised and encultured to emerge as responsible persons in future. They have traditional politico-jural mechanisms, tribal councils, village headman etc. Currently, however, under Panchayati Raj system, elected people's representatives have assumed responsibilities and the traditional secular heads are losing their importance. As polytheists, they believe in a number of deities, ancestor cult, spirits and propitiate them at regular intervals for their blessings. Their supernatural domain not only includes religions beliefs and rituals but also magical beliefs and practices. They are the practitioners of indigenous medicine or ethno-medicine and they have traditional healers for diagnosis, treatment and cure of diseases and ailments. Now-a-days, pluri-medicinal practices, such allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic have also entered the interior tribal areas. Earlier they were treated as pre-literates, but due to spread of literacy and education, the situation is improving. But literacy among women and girl child is proverbially low, compared to their male counterparts. The status of women is not low in spite of the fact that tribal communities are patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. They have their languages for communication, but lack written scripts. They have vast oral literary traditions,

such as legends, myths, folk-lore, folk-tales, riddles, anecdotes, songs, etc. In addition, they have a treasure of creative talents reflected through art objects, crafts, dance, music, performing art etc. Their aesthetic sensibility is of high order. Their cultural efflorescences are transmitted from generation to generation despite socio-economic constraints.

Primitive Tribes celebrate a number of festivals and ceremonies throughout the year to remain little away from sheer mundane realities of life. The festivals have manifold objectives, such as promotion of economic pursuits, enhancement of social solidarity, appeasement of supernatural elements and the like. During festivals they rejoice and engage in merry-making in order to make their life colourful. Besides festivals, a number of rituals are observed through ceremonies including life-cycle rituals, such as child birth, marriage and obsequies. Mother Earth and the Sun God are two significant elements for whose honour festivals are celebrated. Juangs, for instance, observe *Nuakhia* (first eating) ceremonies for paddy and mango, *pus punei*, *chait parab*, etc. The Juang *changu* (tambourine) dance is famous. Among the Lanjia Saora, a number of festivals are celebrated right from the sowing of seeds till harvesting of crops. On certain festivals the entire community participates whereas some others are performed at the household level. Some special features of festivals are; (1) artistic manifestations through bichrome and polychrome wall paintings (2) making of bamboo and wood crafts with attractive designs. (3) Wearing of colourful costumes, (4) beautification of body and personal adornment; (5) use of special costumes in dance including attractive headgears, (6) feasting and consumption of special cuisines including indigenous beverages; (7) playing of different types of musical instruments; (8) performance of dance with songs and musical accompaniments, (9) special offerings to deities and spirits. The Juang wooden comb and wooden pillars are engraved with artistic designs with human and animal figurines, linear diagrams, etc. which show their workmanship. The aesthetic efflorescences of the primitive tribes are really wonderful. The Saora icons in wall paintings are superb. The tattoo marks on the forehead and other parts of the body, hair-style through decorative buns often fitted with flowers, peacock plumes and hairpins. Dongria Kandha embroidered scarfs and clothes etc are but some examples.

In the contextual frame of integration and mainstreaming of the most vulnerable ethno-cultural groups, the initial contemplation of Government of India was to make intensive efforts through micro project approach, so that they are socio-economically rehabilitated. Besides multi-sectoral package for socio-economic development they were to be protected from exploitation of

predators. Therefore, provisions under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution are to be followed meticulously. Further, for the implementation of developmental schemes/ projects cent percent grants under Special Central Assistance were ensured for primitive tribal groups since the Fifth Plan period.

Planned development intervention for primitive tribal groups gave rise to micro project approach. Its goal was all round development through multi-sectoral socio-economic programmes meant for a small group of people in a limited area. In Odisha, there are 17 Micro Projects for 13 PTGs identified from time to time, as per government of India norms. The first Micro Project was established for the Bondo/Bonda in 1976-77 in Malkangiri district in the southern part of Odisha. Out of 17 Micro Projects, 4 are found outside the tribal sub-plan (TSP) area. Out of the 4 Micro Projects 2 are meant for the Paudi Bhuiyan and 1 each for the Lanjia Saora and Chuktia Bhunjia. Rest 13 Micro Projects are established within the TSP area. The number of villages covered under micro projects is ranged from 8 to 69. The total population in micro project areas is ranged from 1579 to 5990. Over the period from the Fifth Plan to the Tenth Plan, there has been positive enhancement of their quality of life, although there is hiatus between our aspirations and achievements. Dispassionately speaking, still we have miles to go in our endeavour for their overall development. In the development path, there are missing critical socio-economic infrastructure in the areas inhabited by primitive tribes. These infrastructures include provision of safe drinking water, housing facilities, assurance for basic subsistence, educational as well as health care facilities, viable economic alternatives for pre-agricultural pursuit, environmental conservation and mobilisation of local natural resources, up gradation of human resource through capacity building, provision of eco-friendly schemes/ projects for sustainable development by ensuring people's participation etc.

As all humans are cultural beings, primitive tribes are no exceptions. Their culture sets necessary designs for living and ensures cultural continuity and change as every society is static, yet dynamic. In course of development intervention, in addition to governmental efforts, the help of voluntary organizations, who put their endeavour in interior tribal areas, may be taken. In the epistemological context, the advantages of their indigenous knowledge and traditional wisdom may be availed. Promulgation of PESA Act and implementation of the provisions under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution will empower tribals including primitive tribes. Time is not very far, the primitive tribes will gradually become self-reliant and stand on their own and will not require any external help for development. While upholding their

socio-cultural identity they will be able to promote their self dignity and ensure freedom from servitude.

Through the passage of time, the primitive tribes have come up to a particular stage when they face challenges through the different processes of socio-cultural change and modernization and they have been showing responses for acceptance and rejection in varying degrees. They have shown positive signs to accept new traits in their way of life to enjoy the outcomes of development. It is also seen that they are eschewing superstitions and embracing rational way of thinking. It may be concluded here that they are generally in favour of retaining essential features of their culture and simultaneously elevate their status through development intervention.

#### **Towards a Definition of PTG:**

A Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) refers to a tribal community or a section/ a part/ a segment or a sub-tribe in our country; designating a stage of evolution of societies (Sahlins, 1968); containing a population which is largely biologically self perpetuating (Barth, 1969); having a simple mode of social organization with multi-functional kinship relations (Godelier, 1973); a structurally-culturally homogenous group (Behura, 1998); exhibiting a type of socio-political organization (Barth, 1969); a local group with intense interpersonal relationship; having a definite social identity; having an appellation for self definition and another for non-self definition of the group; constituting the most vulnerable group-economically, politically and genetically; possessing all characteristic features of small and simple society; belonging to a linguistic category; representing a distinct religious faith and rituals; a non-hierarchic and undifferentiated group (Dube, 1977) and containing a vast repository of cultural heritage and efflorescence despite relative deprivation, isolation/ seclusion/ encystation and marginalization. The above working definition which is enumerative and descriptive may require refinement from epistemological points of view.

It may be stated here that the maximum number of PTGs are found in Odisha, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. For 13 PTGs in the state 17 Micro Projects are functioning for planned development intervention. The earliest micro project was established for the Bondo/ Bonda, styled as ***Bonda Development Agency*** at Mudulipada in Khairput Block of Malkangiri district; whereas the latest one is for the Chuktia Bhunjia, located at Sunabeda in Komna block of Nuapada district. Some details of micro projects are stated below.



List of PTGs &amp; Micro Projects and their Locations with Population &amp; Literacy

Sl No	Name of the PTG	Name and address of the Micro Project	Establishment year of Micro project	ITDA covered (TSP area)	Part of blocks covered	No. of villages/hamlets	No. of house-holds	PTG Population (2001)			Literacy rate (%) (2001)
								Male	Female	Total	
1.	Bonda	1) Bonda Development Agency, Mudulpada, Malkangiri district.	1976-77	Malkangiri	Khairput	38	1493	2563	2967	5530	6.35
2.	Chuktia Bhunjia	2) Chuktia Bhunjia Development Agency, Sonabeda, Nuapada district.	1994-95 dt. 30.9.94	Non TSP area	Komna	12	519	1085	1089	2174	34.87
3.	Didayi	3) Didayi Development Agency, Malkangiri district.	1986-87	Malkangiri	Kudmul-guma & Khairput	37	1320	2706	2903	5609	5.84
4.	Dongria Kondh	4) Dongria Kondh Development Agency, Parsali, Rayagada district.	1987-88 dt. 7.12.87	Rayagada	K. Singpur	40	551	996	1379	2375	9.26
		5) Dongria Kondh Development Agency, Kurla, Chatikona, Rayagada district.	1978-79	Gunupur	Bissam Cuttack & Munguda	62	1253	2462	3115	5577	8.19

5.	Hill Kharia	6) Hill-Khadia & Mankirdia Development Agency, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj district.	1986-87	Karanjia	Karanjia & Jashipur	182	561	919	897	1816	31.1
6.	Mankirdia	7) Juang Development Agency, Gonasika, Keonjhar district.	1978-79 dt. 10.3.78	Karanjia	Banspal	35	1496	3501	3619	7120	19.12
7.	Birhor	8) Kutia Kondh Development Agency, Belghar, Phulbani district.	1978-79	Baliguda	Tumudi- bandh	67	1148	2527	2714	5241	17.13
8.	Juang	9) Kutia Kondh Development Agency, Lanjigarh, Kalahandi district.	1986-87 dt. 13.8.86	Thuamul- Rampur	Lanjigad	17	557	1240	1202	2442	30.55
9.	Kutia Kondh	10) Lanjia Saora Development Agency, Puttasing, Rayagada district.	1984-85 dt. 1.4.84	Gunupur	Gunupur	21	767	2221	2326	4547	30.99
10.	Lanjia Saora	11) Lanjia Saora Development Agency, Seranga, Gajapati district.	1978-79 dt. 31.3.79	Parlakh- mundi	Gumma	21	1241	2502	2612	5114	23.90

I1.	Lodha	I2) Lodha Development Agency, Moroda, Mayurbhanj district.	1985-86	Baripada	Suliapada & Moroda	8	695	1312	1158	2470	13.68
I2.	Paudi Bhuyan	I3) Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency, Khutgaon, Sundargarh district.	1978-79 dt. 25.5.79	Bonai	Lahuni - pada	22	918	1873	1893	3766	12.64
		I4) Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency, Jamardih, Anugul district.	1978-79 dt. 17.5.78	Non TSP area	Pallahara	27	1192	2593	2445	5038	29.60
		I5) Paudi Bhuyan Development Agency, Rugudakudar, Deogarh district.	1993-94 dt. 1.5.93	Non TSP area	Barkote	32	851	1714	1687	3401	20.46
I3	Saora	I6) Saora Development Agency, Chandragiri, Gajapati district.	1978-79 dt. 11.4.78	Parlakhe-mundi	Mohana	32	949	2335	2379	4714	27.90
		I7) Tumba Devt Agency, Tumba, Ganjam district.	1978-79 dt. 20.5.78	Non TSP area	Parrapur	58	850	1876	1847	3723	22.13
	<b>Total : I3 PTGs</b>	<b>17 Micro Projects</b>		<b>TSP -I3, NonTSP-4</b>	<b>20 Blocks</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>16361</b>	<b>34425</b>	<b>36232</b>	<b>70657</b>	<b>19.08</b>

Source : Baseline Survey of SCSTRTI (2001)

It transpires from the above statement that the maximum number of villages (67) covered in the micro project is in the Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA), Belghar in Tumudibandha block of Baliguda ITDA in Phulbani district and the minimum number of villages (8) in Lodha Development Agency at Muruda in Suliapada and Muruda blocks of Baripada ITDA in Mayurbhanj district. In so far as the population 2001 is concerned the highest is found in the Didayi Development Agency (5609) and the lowest in the Hill Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency (1816).

**Community Conservation Practices:**

There is need to revamp the community conservation practices of PTGs. Their tradition and culture are replete with such conservation practices since time immemorial. It is a dire need to come in intimate contact with them to learn out of their revelations, which contain enlightening experiences in the context of such practices. The zeal for community conservation is reverberant in their way of life or in other words, their customs and manners. It requires a critique's retrospect to get acquainted with such practices for revitalisation and for improvement of well-being of humans. The inherent community capacities are to be taken care of and analysed for further capacity building in tune with emerging challenges. The resource base of PTGs in their habitat requires thorough study for optimum utilisation of resources, so that both over-exploitation and under exploitation are curbed.

The PTGs have shown enough instances of rationality and regulated behaviour in conservation of natural resources and maintenance of biodiversity. The traditional resource exploitation of PTGs, i.e. the methods adapted by them is no less scientific. Since they are intimately interrelated with the ecosystem their approach is eco-friendly and any action leading to ecocide is beyond their imagination. The attitude of conservation by the PTG community is deeply ingrained in their culture and social, economic, political and religious aspects of life. We are aware of the sacred groves, sacred trees and plants, medicinal herbs and plants, pregnant animals (even-wild) and birds, etc. which are beyond the pale of destruction. Sustainable conservation of biodiversity is reinforced through religious prescriptions and any deviation may lead to supernatural vengeance reflected in crop failure, natural catastrophe, spread of incurable diseases and the like. Further, prevalence of social taboos and sanctions help maintenance of eco-equilibrium. Nature worship, sacralisation of plants, trees, animals and birds and installation of deities in nature are practised by PTGs.

Deviation of social taboos and non-conformist behaviour often lead to punishments by the community.

In the context of ecological equilibrium, Dr. B.D. Sharma states,

“In the beginning tribal communities are in a state of ecological equilibrium with their environment. The numbers are small and natural resources abundant. The level of technology is low. These communities initially sustain themselves as food gatherers and hunters. As the numbers grow, some primitive form of cultivation like cultivation by burn and slash is adopted. In the normal course of development, with the growth of population, the group should take to settled cultivation and thus use natural resources more intensively. The stages beyond settled cultivation are well known.” (1978:5). Further, according to him, eco-disequilibrium is caused due to some change in group’s lifestyle, resulting in over-exploitation of natural resources.

Currently PTGs are no longer isolated and they come in contact with neighbouring population with different cultures, for more than one purpose. New changes are noticed consequent upon implementation of planned development interventions since little more than three decades. Their limited world view has expanded to certain extent with change in their age-old perception and value orientations. Amidst existing eco-cultural nexus, they develop coping mechanisms for adaptation and need development *in situ*.

There is need to revitalize the traditions of PTGs in the context of biodiversity conservation. Gadgil and Berkes (1991) suggest 4 important aspects, such as (1) provision of protection to some biological communities or habitat patches; (2) provision of total protection to certain selected species; (3) protection of critical life history stages; and (4) organization of resource harvests under the supervision of local experts (c.f. Madhav Gadgil in Kothari, A (eds), 1998: 221-22). The state-sponsored conservation practices and the community-based conservation practices are altogether different from each other. The former is based on codified laws whereas the latter operates through un-codified customs or customary laws. The latter is operated through efforts of local people, whereas the former through centralized bureaucratic machineries. The PTGs are to be relied upon and treated as custodians of biodiversity conservation practices. It will boost their role performance in a desirable manner. However, the experts in the line will be associated with the people in the beginning for providing technical know-how. Thus, the biodiversity conservation, maintenance and management will be successful at a relatively low cost. The local communities, who are promoters and not destroyers of their own

destiny, and who are intimately interlinked with their habitat and natural resources are to be trusted and empowered. There is need to look into biodiversity conservation with holistic perspective and especially the PTGs are to be motivated for the purpose. With little incentive and rewards, the PTGs are to be encouraged for biodiversity conservation in a sustainable manner. Their performance may be assessed annually. The practice will be compatible as they are economically and socio-culturally homogenous.

Biodiversity conservation and life support system in the mother earth are synonymous and also complementary to each other. Biodiversity conservation boosts global economy, ensures food security, safeguards health of all organisms in the living kingdom and holistically promotes lifestyle of all animates. Biodiversity issues are international as they affect all nations. All attempts at destruction of biodiversity are to be curbed at any cost. Both local and global efforts for supporting the cause of biodiversity conservation are to be taken up in a holistic manner. It may be mentioned here that the United State Agency for International Development has developed the Biodiversity Support Programme (BSP) and funded two institutes, such as Nature Conservancy and World Resources Institute. Further, it reminds us of the global awareness on biodiversity conservation crisis giving rise to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro (June, 1992). It, inter alia, states interlinkages of indigenous knowledge, biodiversity conservation and development. It further stresses the importance of local level innovation promoted through indigenous knowledge base. The PTGs in Odisha and elsewhere have expert farmers, ethno-medicine men, floriculturists, horticulturists, pastoralists, artists, craftsmen, cuisiners, etc. and their age-old experience and expertise are to be understood and utilised in right perspective.

#### **Policy Issues and Options:**

Community based biodiversity conservation has evoked certain matters of crucial concern in so far as the PTGs are concerned and have direct bearing on policy issues and options. In case of PTGs, the erstwhile inaccessibility, encystation, isolation etc. are gradually on the wane, consequent upon directed socio-cultural change through planned development intervention. They are showing their eagerness to accept higher level of technology and expand their indigenous knowledge base. At this critical juncture, efforts are necessary to help them, choosing the befitting ones out of a number of alternative choices. In this context, we may briefly discuss the policy issues and options, as follows:-

1. Keeping in view the man-nature relationship and social dynamics of PTGs, the onus of biodiversity conservation shall lie with the community.
2. In consonance with the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Constitution of India and with a view to a committed decentralized governance and democratic devolution of power and also promulgation of the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, the PRIs shall assume larger role in safeguarding natural resources in PTG inhabited areas.
3. The State-sponsored biodiversity conservation functionaries, especially in PTG areas, shall play catalytic role in monitoring, coordinating and facilitating the activities of the communities.
4. Optimum utilisation of natural resources, rationality in resource harvest and necessary efforts towards value addition shall generate additional income for the PTGs. Further, decentralised and controlled marketing system, shall protect them from predatory market forces and ensure social justice.
5. The PTGs shall be motivated to maintain their prudence in biodiversity conservation practice ingrained in their culture, e.g. protection to breeding animals and birds and also to sacred groves.
6. PTG empowerment (realistic instead of cosmetic) shall be ensured and promoted for biodiversity conservation in and around their habitat. Further, empowerment shall boost their confidence in the role performance as biodiversity custodian.
7. State efforts at natural resources mobilization shall create additional resources for human use and restrain them for biodiversity destruction.
8. State may promote eco-landscape / sacred landscape in PTG inhabited areas already in existence or earmark new areas accepted to local people for protection of biodiversity.
9. There is need for capacity building of PTGs and it requires join-handed efforts of experts in forestry, ethno-botany, wildlife wardens, sanctuary managers, bird fanciers, etc.
10. The Task Force in PTG areas for biodiversity conservation may be given some incentives in cash and / or kind in order to ensure decipherable accountability. There shall be provision of prizes and rewards for illustrious

performance over a region, so that the Task Force Groups may compete among themselves.

- II. The PTGs shall be assured of their entitlements so that their relative deprivations are eschewed and they will have access to basic amenities, like education, health care, housing, etc. for better life style. Thus, bio-cultural diversity conservation will be promoted.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, J.N. 1973 *“Ecological Anthropology and Anthropological Ecology”* in J.J. Honigmann (ed, Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Rand Mc Nally, Chicago, pp. 143-178
- Barth, Fredrik 1969 *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, George Allen & Unwin, London.
- Baviskar, A. 1998 *“Tribal Communities and Conservation in India”*, in Ashish Kothari et al (eds), 1998.
- Behura, N.K. 1993 *“Tribes, their development and quality of life”*, Calcutta, Indian Science Congress.
- Behura, N.K. & K.K. Mohanti 1998 *“Vulnerable Ethno-Cultural Groups (VEGs)”*, *Adivasi*, Vol. XXXVIII, Nos. 1 & 2, Jan-June, 1998, SCs and STs Research and Training Institute, Orissa, Bhubaneswar, pp. 1 - 24.
- Behura, N.K. & K.K. Mohanti 1980 *“Social Change : A study of Tribe / Caste Integration in Orissa”* in Class Relations in Indian Society, Satanetra Publications, Bhubaneswar.
- Evans Pritchard, E.E. 1972 *Social Anthropology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London (1951).
- Fuchs, Stephen 1973 *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Edition, Macmillan India Limited, Delhi, 1982.
- G.O.I., Ministry of Welfare (TD), Divn Research, Unit. 1990 Compendium of Circulars/ Guidelines on Tribal Development, New Delhi.



- Gadgil, M. 1998 “*Grassroots, Conservation Practices: Revitalizing the traditions*” in Ashish Kothari et al (eds), 1998.
- Ghurey, G.S. 1959 *The Scheduled Tribes*, Bombay, Popular Book Depot.
- Godelier, M. 1973 *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, Cambridge, London, Cambridge University Press.
- Hardesty, Donald L. 1977 *Ecological Anthropology*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Harris, M. 1968 *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York.
- Kaplan, D. and R. Manners 1972 *Culture Theory*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
- Kothari, Ashis et al (eds) 1998 *Communities and Conservation Natural Resource Management in South and Central Asia*, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi – 110048.
- Kreg Lindberg & Deonel E. Hawkins(eds) 1993 *Ecotourism- A Guide for Planners and Managers*, Natraj Publishers, 17, Rajpur Road, Dehra Dun (In two Volumes)
- Mohanti, K.K. 2005 “The Didayi Development Perception”, *Adivasi*, Vol. 45, No. 1, June, 2005, SCs and STs Research and Training Institute, Bhubaneswar, pp – 27-36.
- Mohanti, K.K. 2005 “Primitive Tribal Groups : Issues, Priorities and Prospective”, presented in the National Workshop organised by S.C. & S.T. R. & T. I, Orissa, Bhubaneswar (July 21-23, 2005), Unpublished.
- Mohanti, K.K. 2006 “*Anthropological Economics of Food, Clothing and Shelter : Some Reflections on Tribal Orissa*”, Globalization, Economic Growth and Human Development, Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi – 110002.
- Mohanti, K.K. & N. Patnaik, 1989 *Spatial Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Orissa*, Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanti, K.K. & B. Chowdhury 1990 “Tribal Society, Culture and Educational Development”, *Adivasi*, Vol. XXX, Nos. 2 & 3, June-Sept., 1990, THRTI, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

General

- Mohanti, K.K. (ed) 1996 *Development Hand Book for the Bondo of Bondo Development Agency Area, Mudulipada, Malkangiri district, Orissa*, S.C. & S.T. R. & T. I, Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanti, K.K. (ed) 1996 *Development Hand Book for the Kutia Kandha of Kutia Kandha Development Agency, Belghar, Phulbani district, Orissa*, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanti, K.K. (ed) 2005 *Development Hand Book for the Juang of Juang Development Agency, Gonasika, Keonjhar district, Orissa*, (An Action Plan Based on Techno-Economic Survey), S.C. & S.T. R. & T. I, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanti, K.K. (ed) 2004 *Collection and Sale of Minor Forest Produce among the Tribes of Orissa – A Socio-Structural and Economic Analysis*, S.C. & S.T. R. & T. I, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanti, K.K., & N.K. Behura 2005 “Tribes of Orissa : An Inquiry into Anthropological Ecology”, *Adivasi*, Vol. 45, No. 2, Dec., 2005.
- Nayak, Prasanna K (ed) 2003 *From Bondage to Rural Enterprise- A Situational Analysis and Participatory Strategies with the Bondo Highlanders* (An ILO-INDISCO Study), Govt. of India Ministry of Tribal Affairs, New Delhi.
- Patnaik, N. et al 1984 *The Bondos and Their Response to Development*, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Patnaik, N. et al 1980 “Hand Book on the Pauri Bhuiyan” *Adivasi*, Spl. No. Vol. XIX, Nos. 1-4, April, 1979-January, 1980, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Ramakrishnan, P.S. 1998 “*Conserving the sacred: Ecological and Policy Implications*”, in Ashish Kothari et al (eds), 1998.
- Rout, J.P. 2005 “Shifting Cultivation and Tribals of Orissa : A study”, *Adivasi*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2005, SC & ST R&TI, Bhubaneswar, pp . 45-55.
- S.C. & S.T. R. & T. I, Bhubaneswar 2004 *Tribes of Orissa* (First Published in 1990).
- Sahlins, M. 1968 *Tribesmen*, New York, Prentice Hall.
- Sahlins, Mashall D. 1977 “*Culture and Environment – The Study of Cultural Ecology*” in Sol Tax and Leslie G. Freeman (eds),

- Horizons of Anthropology, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago (1964), Second Edition.
- Sharma, B.D. (Dr.) 1978 “*Development of small Tribal Communities – A Theoretical Frame*”, Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.
- Sinha, Suresh K. (ed) *Tribal Situation in India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla.
- Steward, J.H. 1955 *Theory of Culture Change*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Vayda, Andrew P. & Roy A. Rappaport 1968 “*Ecology, Cultural and Non-Cultural*” in Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, edited by James A. Clifton, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, U.S.A.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. (ed) 1968 *Applied Anthropology in India*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad.
- W.W. World Wildlife Organization - “*Biodiversity Conservation*”.
- Warren, Michael D. - “*Indigenous Knowledge, Biodiversity and Development*”, Centre for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development, Iowa State University, U.S.A

# THE CONCEPT OF PRIMITIVE <sup>1</sup>

Kulamani Mohapatra <sup>2</sup>

This paper is concerned with the concept of 'Primitive' as it is employed in anthropology and to certain extent in sociology as well. This is a topic which is both preliminary and fundamental for understanding the problems of the primitive tribes. Even at the present stage of maturity of the scientific study of the tribal problems there is a lot of controversy about the definition of the term 'primitive'. As yet the concept lacks precision and there is a lot of confusion in the fields of sociological as well as applied research. It is therefore necessary that the topic should be discussed at some length.

The idea of the 'primitive' is as old as civilization. The civilized man in his efforts at discovering his own genesis has always tried to locate or imagine a way of life completely different from his own which he has termed as 'primitive'. Conversely primitive societies on their part have not generated what may be termed as a definite idea or conception of civilization. This is not because the primitive people have no sense of history and development. They have certainly very clear notion of development and progress. But as Stanley Diamond observes "...history to them is the recital of sacred meanings within a cycle as opposed to a lineal perception of time. The merely pragmatic event, uninvolved with the sacred cycle, falls as it were outside history, because it is of no importance in maintaining or revitalizing the traditional forms of society.... The primitive people have no secular sense of history and no lineal idea and hence no prophetic ideal of social progress". (Diamond, 1964, V).

There are certain commonly agreed characteristics which are associated with the primitive people. These are (1) absence of a written language, (2) a relatively simple technology, (3) social institutions which are cast in a simple mould, (4) smaller numbers, (5) relative isolation and (6) societies whose

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XIV, No. 1, TRB, 1972-73, April, 1972, Pp.7-10

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Director, Tribal Research, Bureau (TRB), Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

cultures are in general characterized by a slower rate of change. There is hardly any controversy as far as these characteristics are concerned. Controversies abound when the basic differences between the primitive and the civilized are sought to be thrashed out with the implicit belief that these differences are absolute and insurmountable. It is therefore necessary first to give a historical sketch of the concept of primitive, as it has developed in anthropology and then to discuss a dominant sample of the controversial themes.

The early anthropologists, who were strongly influenced by the evolutionist theory of the unilinear school, worked under the belief that primitives represented the back waters in the stream of evolution. This notion was upheld with regard to the culture and, sometimes in addition to it, to the biological status of the primitive people. After the turn of the century and anti-evolutionist trend was perceptible and anthropologists like Elliot Smith attempted to explain almost all cultural elements from one source-Egypt. This extreme form of diffusionism was succeeded by the Kulturkeries School. Anthropologists of this school consider the peoples of the world as products of several core culture which spread over the entire world after attaining essential characteristics in the Old World, especially in Asia. As these basic cultures spread, new elements were added and others lost, but in every case enough of the original complex remained so that each could be identified.

The American Historical School “emphasized the study of non-literate cultures from within, from the view point of the members of the society rather than from that of the observer.” (Dozier, 1956, 191). The concept of the non-literate as mentally inferior and as an individual incapable of surmounting his “lowly level” was specifically challenged by Franz Boas in “The Mind of the Primitive Man”. Boas demonstrated that the lowly position is merely the result of an ethnocentric comparison on the basis of one standard, i.e. the anthropologist’s own culture.

The views of the British anthropologists are almost similar to their American counterparts but they also differ on some vital points. Contrasted with the American School, they deal with a narrower range of cultural phenomena with a structural-functional framework. They are gradually becoming conscious of history, yet their analysis is still devoid of historical depth.

After the historical reviews I will conclude the paper after a brief discussion of the most dominant tendency usually associated with the concept of

'Primitive' i.e. the unsurmountable difference between the civilized and the primitive.

The idea of a 'primitive mentality' inferior to that of the civilized was developed by Levy Bruhl. Though controverted by empirical findings over fifty years the idea is still in vogue, especially among administrators and the lay public. Levy Bruhl spoke of a "prelogical mentality" of primitive people whose life is supposed to be determined by the law of participation- a concept which he had taken over from Durkheim. According to him the members of primitive societies, do not regard themselves as separate individuals; they and the objects of their world appear to them sometimes as the same, sometimes as others.

Again Heinz Werner explains the concept of 'primitive' in terms of developmental psychology. According to him 'primitive' does not simply mean that which chronologically comes first. Primitive is that which lacks greater differentiation and is comparable to childhood phenomena. The equating of childhood phenomena with primitive is completely erroneous as findings in the ontogenetic development of human beings cannot be compared with those in phylogenetic sequences. Werner made comparison of phenomena observed in different stages of development, isolatedly, thus neglecting the very essence of comparison.

Another mistaken notion of 'primitive' is to assume the lack of abstract behavior among the primitive people. The normal behavior of human beings is characterized by two kinds of approaches to the world- the concrete behavior and the abstract behaviour. This can be illustrated by an example. When we feel sleepy and go to bed we act concretely, often without being aware of what we are doing. The reaction is based on the after effect of previous equal situations. If however, we reflect that by going to sleep early we might embarrass someone who had to read late into night and thus refrain from going to bed, we approach the situation abstractly. The initiation of any performance presupposes the abstract attitude. Again if anything goes wrong in the concrete activity, the abstract attitude is taken to correct the mistake. Patients with impairment of abstract attitudes show definite failures in all situations to which one can come to terms only by the abstract approach. It, therefore, goes without saying that a society cannot survive if all the members show concrete behavior alone. Some scholars like Arieti have tried to explain that the lack of abstract behavior in primitive societies is compensated by the support of the authority of the tribe. This authority consists of codes of conduct so elaborate that the individual has no need of any abstract behavior. But the framing of such an elaborate code of

conduct pre-supposes a superior mentality with abstract capabilities. Besides living by concrete behavior alone is not possible - however rich the background may be. It is therefore, established that both in civilized and primitive societies, concrete and abstract behaviour are necessary components of human nature. But there is a difference. The abstract attitude finds its expression in primitive society in the formation of a permanent structure of society, in civilized life in certain formations under special conditions.

The forgoing discussion shows that the notion of regarding the primitive people as intrinsically inferior to the civilized should be eradicated from the concept of primitivity. Inferiority is confined to one sphere alone, i.e. technology. It is true that certain forms of social organization and mental states are associated with primitive technology but it has never been shown that these are un-surmountable differences. Nor has it been shown that any specific social organization or mental state has any intrinsic demerits. Rather it has clearly been demonstrated that any type of social organization or technology is capable of producing values, codes of conduct and social ideals which stand against the flux of time.

### References

- |                      |      |                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boas, Franz          | 1938 | 'The Mind of Primitive Man'                                                                                   |
| Diamond Stanley (ed) | 1964 | 'The Uses of Primitive in Primitive Views of the world'                                                       |
| Dozier, Edward P.    | 1956 | 'The Concept of Primitive and Native in Anthropology in <i>Current Anthropology</i> ', Ed. Williams L. Thomas |

# CUSTOMS OF TRIBAL MARRIAGE: A FOCUS ON RIGHTS OF TRIBAL WOMEN <sup>1</sup>

Muralidhar Majhi <sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This paper deals with the marriage patterns and socio-legal aspect of tribal marriage prevalent in Odisha. Marriage among tribal people in Odisha is not associated with any kind of legal involvement. It is rather governed by their customs and usages. They practise marriage by elopement, capture and are treated as husband and wife in their localities. The protection of the rights of tribal women is neither confined to the area of international concern, nor do these mere issues require special consideration in any platitude. The article argues that the fundamental right of access to justice for tribal groups essentially implies the fundamental right to the customary legal systems of the tribal communities. There is an urgent need to enact law to undermine evil spirit of customary practices of tribal marriage. A suitable course is to be followed to strike a balance between the tradition and modernity.

## INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities in India are anthropologically a special set of people with unique cultures, traditions and practices. They have their own way of living and different socio-cultural and eco-geographical settings. Marriage as an institution is recognized by all the tribes and there are different ways and means of acquiring a mate in tribal society. The tribal marriages are accompanied with certain unique customs and practices as compared to Hindus and other religions. Marriage not only unites two persons of opposite sex but also two social groups in the wider context. Marriage is a social institution determined by culture and is based on the complex of social norms. Tribal women in general, enjoy better status in the society than general caste people because they play a decisive role in the family, society and economy. However the ideological devaluation of

---

<sup>1</sup> An article contributed for ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXI, 2011 (unpublished)

<sup>2</sup> HOD, Economics, Govt. Women's Junior College, Jeypore, Dist: Koraput, - 764001



women's contribution and reorientation of gender and sex have brought about concomitant and drastic changes in the status of women in tribal communities (Balgir 2009). The status of tribal women in matrilineal societies has been observed to be somewhat better than that of women in a patrilineal society e.g. their legal status is much higher than that of their counterparts in patrilineal societies and they have a significant role in the tribal economy. Lack of proper education, traditional belief system and customary rules aggravate the socio-legal status of tribal women to be miserable. Their empowerment in different dimensions of deprivation and exploitation has imposed restrictions on their day to day life. Protecting their rights invites attention in the interest of justice, equality and dignity. In this context, the protection of the rights of tribal women, which are neither confined to the area of international concern for debate, nor these issues merely require special consideration in any platitude.

Tribal development and real empowerment of tribal women remains a historic challenge for the entire nation. There have been a number of studies on the tribes, their culture and the impact of acculturation on the tribal society. But the culture-legal aspects of tribal marriage have not been properly focused in relation to the tribal women. It becomes important because the problems of tribal women differ from a particular tribe to another tribe owing to their geographical location, historical background and the processes of social change. There is a greater need for undertaking a tribe specific study on the socio-legal aspect of tribal marriage and status of tribal women which can throw up evidence that will make planning for their welfare more meaningful and effective. The article argues about the fundamental right to the customary legal systems of the tribal communities. Further it argues that the content of fundamental right of access to justice is premised on a positivist framework of the court system and requiring tribes to participate in dispute resolution within these formal structures is to effectively deny them their fundamental right of access to justice that may be considered a subset of the fundamental right to conserve culture under Article 29(I) of the Indian Constitution (Dam 2006).

In the light of above observation, this article intends to raise the rights of tribal women on the specific issue of gender bias. The present paper is an attempt to introspect a brief socio-legal review of marriage laws in India and rights of tribal women in tribal districts of Odisha in particular. The tribal dominated districts in Odisha are the most backward part of India, where the violation of civil right of tribal women can be perceived by any one, who is concerned with human rights and dignity.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is mainly focused on seven aboriginal tribes of Odisha, namely **Bonda, Hill Kharia, Didayi, Juang, Kutia Kandha, Koya** and **Saora**. It relies heavily on both primary and secondary data. [Primary data comprises of data collected afresh that are original in character; secondary data comprises of findings of scholars on similar themes published in different journals.] Several methods are used to collect primary data such as the observation method and the interview method. In the interview method mostly unstructured interviews had been resorted to. Since the tribes under study are mostly illiterate and speak their typical native languages, the assistance of a person who knew their language and was acquainted with their culture was taken to elicit responses. The researcher also met the traditional head of tribal villages and their replies were transcribed in field diary. No prior intimation was given to them, but on arrival in their villages they were intimated regarding our purpose. Factors like sex, age, and education were given due weightage during our field work.

## CUSTOMS OF MARRIAGE AS LEGAL & CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION IN INDIA

Custom is an established mode of social behaviour within the community (Mohanti 2004). Customs transform into customary law and gradually emerge as law in the true sense of the term. The law includes custom or usage that is ancient, well-established and has the force of law. Emphatically it can be stated that custom is the fountain head of law, especially in tribal societies. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British rulers passed several laws to protect customs and traditions while abolishing detestable practices like Sati. Some such revolutionary laws were Hindu Widows Remarriage Act 1865 and the Brahmo Samaj Marriage Act 1872, the forerunner of the present Special Marriage Act. With the passage of time and in the context of socio-cultural change, state intervened the time honoured customs concerning marriage. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 was promulgated with the intention of preserving and protecting the legal rights of marriage partners. The 1954 Act induced the state government for a Gazette notification in specifying the application of customs prevalent in a tribe, community, group or family, without contravention of public policy. The Special Marriage Act 1954 also includes other marriage customs connected with marriage as the restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation, conditions of declaring marriage as void, legitimacy of offspring of void and voidable marriage, decree on divorce, granting of permanent alimony and maintenance. Regarding application of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 under section 2, sub section 2, it is mentioned that “Notwithstanding contained in

Sub Sec. I nothing contained in the Act shall apply to the members of any Scheduled Tribe within meaning of clause 25 of Article 366 of the Constitution unless the Central Government by notification in the official gazette otherwise directs". Under Special Marriage Act 1954 there is no such provision for application of the Act and the tribal people are not governed under the Act. The Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 and the Muslim Marriage Law has also not mentioned any special provision for marriage of tribals.

The Constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favours to women. After the coming into force of the Constitution, pre-constitutional laws inconsistent with fundamental rights are considered as void. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees the fundamental right to equality. Article 15 (I) prohibits gender discrimination. Referring to the directive principles of state policy Article 39 (a) enjoins the state to ensure that men and women equally have adequate means of livelihood. Article 38 directs the state to promote the welfare of people (men and women alike) by securing a social order in which justice – social, economic and political – informs all institutions of national life. In addition, the Supreme Court of India has also expanded the scope and ambit of Article 21 to make the life of women more meaningful. However the idea of indigenous people is an issue of considerable contention in India today. In India there is continuing debate on the appropriateness of the use of the phrase "indigenous people".

#### CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE OF TRIBALS IN ODISHA

Marriage as an institution is recognized by all the tribes of Odisha and there are different ways and means of acquiring a mate in tribal society. As regards the acquisition of brides for marriage, the customary practice among the tribes of Odisha is through "capture", although other practices, such as elopement, purchase, service and negotiation are also there. Paying bride price is also customary among tribals. In addition to the arranged marriage, probationary marriage, marriage by trial, marriage by exchange, marriage by mutual consent, and marriage by intrusion are some other ways of acquiring mates among tribals.

*Maga* marriage is the arranged marriage where the marriage is settled by negotiation. If the parents of the bride and bridegroom can not afford for the expenses of arranged marriage, the marriage may be held by capture (*Jhinka* marriage). The third type of marriage i.e *Pasnamundi* or *Udulia* are equivalent to marriage by intrusion. Moreover tribals practise marriage by elopement and the couple is treated as husband and wife at their destination (**Gurumurthy, 1985**).

In tribal society, the widow or widower is allowed to remarry. So far as compensation for divorce and bride price is concerned, the women have an inferior role in determining it. It is also significant to mention here that in Bonda society the bride is usually older than the bridegroom. Among the Hill-Kharias, remarriage of widow and widower, divorcee is permitted. Similarly in Kutia Kandha society widow remarriage as well as bride price is prevalent. But women in this society are also not entitled to exercise customary rights for inheritance, authority and ritual activities. Among the Didayi customary rules regarding widow remarriage is different. The son of a widow is left in her husband's house, whereas a daughter is taken by her widow mother to her new husband's home (Mohanti, 2004). In Saora tribe if a woman remains unmarried after attaining adulthood (if not proposed to by someone for marriage), she is forced to marry a plant, and her remarriage is performed like that of a widow (Pattnaik, 2003; 149-152). After marrying the plant, the spinster is sent to stay in her maternal uncle's house. Saoras practise both sororate and levirate forms of marriage, i.e., a man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister and woman can marry her deceased husband's younger brother (Mohanty et al., 1990, 94). The Juang as well as the Koya tribe practice marriage by negotiation (Pendul) but marriage by capture and intrusion is also prevalent to avoid the bride price. In most of the primitive tribes of Odisha, marriage by negotiation is the common practice. With regard to their attitude towards divorce, it has been found that both the tribal male and female can go for it on equal terms. Their society is tolerant enough to permit this practice to be followed by either of the sexes. A tribal woman does not have the fear of social taboos relating to divorce but bears the burnt of the difficulty in getting her protection and social status. In case of mate selection, they enjoy much freedom to select their partners as they have ample opportunity to meet during the course of their socio-economic activity and such contacts finally lead to marriage. But these tribals have been subjected to administration of law, contrasting legal system and justice along with the dynamics of cultural change.

### TRIBAL WOMEN RIGHTS IN JUDICIAL TREND

As a matter of fact, the rights of women become *savoir faire* when they cross childhood and attain the age of puberty. Marriage among tribals in Odisha is not associated with any kind of legal involvement. Further none of them is also aware of the legal age of marriage as enacted by the Government of India. Among the eight forms of marriage, the tribal people perform the *Asura* form of marriage. In *Asura* form of marriage the bridegroom or his parents offer bride price to the bride or to her parents. In the light of above observation, if we will

consider the married life of tribal women, we find that, their social condition remains unmatched with mainstream of the nation. A girl child of 14 years often gets married and at the age of 15 she is blessed with a child on her lap. She does not have any education to lead a meaningful life. She herself is a child who needs care and protection under law (Juvenile Justice: Case & Protection Act 2008). There is no easy means to get out from such social drudgery. The Supreme Court in a case observed that, "Preamble and Article 38 of the constitutions of India envisions social justice as its arch to ensure life to be meaningful and livable with human dignity. Social justice, equality and dignity of person are corner stones of social democracy". The above concept of democracy is not well considered by the tribal women in the village corridor. They seldom understand the value of freedom and justice. Inadequate planning and implementation as well as culture resistance gave rise to more gender disparities.

Among all the tribal groups in Odisha there are no fixed rules for barren women. Barren women are generally not abandoned, as their labour is even now valued. But a new wife is brought to the family for procreation. According to the Article 25 of the Indian Constitution tribals are outside of the bounds of Hindu religion. The Hindu Code Bill, though passed in divided pieces, is not applicable to the tribals. Therefore tribal women are deprived of the legal protection of provisions of bigamous marriage etc. According to the section 494 of Indian Penal Code bigamy is a punishable crime but the customs and tradition of tribals sanction bigamy. Therefore tribal men can not be tried in the court of law.

In spite of loads of duties they do not have any rights of inheritance and succession. It is the majority of judgment upholding the exclusive right of male successor but giving a limited right of livelihood to tribal women in the land, which presently governs inheritance in tribal communities. The customary tribal law continues to discriminate against women in matters of succession. Due to lack of knowledge about modern jural system and different penal provision of modern law and shortage of money to fight cases in the court, they have no other way to remain helpless with lot of worries and anxieties. Tribal would not have faced such difficulty if there had been a special provision in law.

## SYSTEMS WHICH RULE THE TRIBES

### A) Marriage and Household Harmony

The ideal form of marriage is the arranged marriage; however other types are prevalent and equally valid in the eight communities of the study area. Marriages like monogamy, bigamy and widow remarriages are prevalent in the

area of study. There may be reasons like premature death, marital discord or infertility that threatens family continuity. The ethnographic data shows that all the eight communities were ready with way out to overcome these state of affairs. The women are rarely abandoned. Premature death of one husband does not affect her social standing. Even in case of infertility, she is not deserted though another wife is brought into the family. Custody of children and of household property is determined by customary law, which relies on elders to resolve these issues. Tribal women who marry outside of their ethnic group forfeit their rights to any personal and paternal property.

#### **B) Remarriage of Divorced Women**

All women agree on the point that like men, women should also have the prospect to remarry. The eight tribal societies under study do have provision for remarriage of a divorcee or a widow. It is socially accepted and considered as desirable that subsequent to the death of her husband, a woman should marry her brother-in-law. However it is at the discretion of the widow if she wants to go into the alliance. The equality of sexes can be seen in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage and divorce in the eight groups.

#### **C) Dowry in Tribal Marriage**

Most good part of tribal women rights is the non prevalence of dowry system as found the caste and other modern societies. Rather they have the privilege to receive bride price from the groom's parents as a compensation to give away their daughters. The father of the bridegroom pays a bride price to the father of the girl. Widowed or divorced women are free to marry again. Moreover during the time of divorce or dissolution of marriage the husband or his relatives are entitled to get back the bride-price paid at the time of marriage.

#### **D) Domestic Violence**

In modern world especially in Indian or other developing countries (where religious sentiment is intense), women has to be submissive whether the cause of fight is right or wrong. But in case of tribal women, she has all the right to resist and leave the man and go back to her parents house as society protects her. In case of re-marring another man, she can do so but her parents have to return marriage expenses incurred in her last marriage or what she or her parents get as bride price in re-marriage. Also if a man is impotent or sexually weak she has all the reasons to leave him without any problem. Thus ultimately women win in the domestic violence and disputes. Moreover the violence in the form of female foeticide and infanticide suffered by women of other castes and communities is apparently not present among tribals.

### E) Social and Ritual Rights

Tribes too have son preference but do not discriminate against girls by female infanticide or sex determination tests. Among the best part of women rights is that she is considered as an equal partner in the house and society though the male head of the family has rights for maintaining house. Women are free to participate in social events, dancing, singing and other recreational programmes. She has right to participate (not perform) in rituals, social ceremonies, managing household and various social activities. As women's responsibilities are more in some cases they have more rights than men. Men have responsibility of family security, hunting, farming but women drudgery exceeds the social status carved for them.

### F) Beneficiary of the Father's Property

The concept of patriarchy prevails in tribal societies, yet views regarding inheritance were different among the sample groups. As Scheduled Tribes they are not subject to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. Custody of children and of household property is determined by customary laws. Tribal girls in Odisha do not inherit land. Land rights are held in the name of the male head of the household. Even the traditional practice of "*Tamen Jom*" in Santal tribe (where a daughter is given the share of family land) is not a largely accepted practice. The role of the women has been reduced to a "care taker" of ancestral land but there is no entitlement in their names. The single and unmarried women can get maintenance out of the land of their father as the caretaker but not as the owner. Similarly, the widow becomes a caretaker until her sons grow up and exercise their land rights. In fact tribal women have no customary land rights other than residuary rights of maintenance depending upon their marital status and place of residence. However the recent Forest Rights Act of 2006 had benefited the women by the provision of joint names in *patta* (ROR) in Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Mass awareness is needed among the tribals for acceptance of tribal women right to land.

## CONCLUSION

The economic power of the tribal women in the household is not translated into corresponding economic rights. In spite of their substantial contribution to the subsistence economy, their rights are not recognized in the matter of landed property and this makes them dependent upon men. The socio-economic equality of sexes can only be seen in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage, divorce and household harmony (Bhasin 1991). All the

tribal societies in the study area are patriarchal in which men dominate. However, in their own world, women have adequate scope for freedom and self-expression. They can only be understood on their own terms.

As socio-economically backward communities, the tribes of Odisha deserve a speedy and meaningful all-round development intervention. Incursion of modern culture is destroying tribal society and their value system. In this situation nothing that is alien and harmful to their traditional systems should be imposed on them in the name of change and development and a suitable course is to be followed to strike a balance between the tradition and modernity.

## References

- Balgir, R. S., (2009), Impact of Gender Bias on Health and Nutrition of The Tribal Women in Relation to Dynamics of Development in India, *The Internet Journal of Biological Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 1
- Bhasin, V. (1991), Status of women in the Himalayas: A case of Gaddis. *J. Hum. Ecol.*, 2(2): 107-116
- Dam, Shubhankar. (2006), Legal System of Cultural Rights: A Rights based Approach to Traditional Legal Systems, *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review*, Vol.16, No.2, pp.295-335
- Gurumurthy, G. (1985), Marriage patterns, Age at marriage, and Fertility Behaviour among Yanadis- A study of tribal community in Andhra Pradesh., *Health and Population- Perspectives and Issues*, 8(4): 236-245.
- Mann, K. (1987), *Tribal Women in a Changing Society*, Mittal Publications, Delhi
- Mohanti, K.K. (2004), Custom vis-à-vis Law: Some Reflections on Marriage Customs and Rules among Caste and Tribal Communities, *ADIVASI*, Vol. 44, Nos. 1 & 2, 2004, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar
- Mohanty, B.B. & Mohanty, S.C. (2009), *Tribal Customs and Traditions*, Vol.1, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odessa.
- Pattnaik A.K., (2003), *Sabara Sampradayara Vivaha Pratha, Parab*, (in Odia) 2003. Koraput: District Council of Culture, pp.149-152.
- The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Sec.2



# INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF SHIFTING CULTIVATION : OBSERVATIONS ON THREE PRIMITIVE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN ODISHA <sup>1</sup>

P. Samantray<sup>2</sup>, S.S. Mohanty<sup>3</sup>, P. Patel<sup>4</sup>, M.K. Jena<sup>5</sup>

## Abstract

Shifting cultivation in the traditional manner is highly diversified; it is more stable and reliable for the farmer than specialized cultivation. Economic self-sufficiency protects ecological integrity and viability in ways more important than simply maintaining diversity. The survival is contingent upon maintenance, rather than the exploitation of the larger community of which they themselves are to be only parts. In short traditional shifting cultivation is a system which is well adapted to the tropical forest environment; it helps maintain the biodiversity and often significantly benefits wildlife population. The maintenance of such system is of considerable importance to modern form of development.

The shifting cultivation is operative chiefly in the regions where more technologically advanced system of agriculture have not become economically or culturally possible or in regions where the land has not yet been appropriated by people with greater political or cultural power. It destroys natural resources when operated inefficiently and not so inherently than other systems of agriculture operated inefficiently. It is also considered a residual system of agriculture largely replaced by other systems except where retention or practice is expedient.

The authors in this paper have made an attempt to explore the indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge by trying to understand the community perceptions relating to shifting cultivation. The authors have analyzed the community perceptions on a conceptual and theoretical understanding of indigenous knowledge. In this attempt the authors have studied three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), namely, Dongaria Kondh (Bissam Cuttack Block), Kutia Kondh (Tumudibandh Block) and Lanjia Saora (Gunupur Block) in southern Odisha for whom shifting cultivation is a way of life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXIII, Nos.1&2, 2013, pp.100-111

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture (ATLC)

<sup>3</sup> Research Scholar, ATLC, (sushree.s.mohanty@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Research Officer, ATLC, (atlcbsr\_08@yahoo.com)

<sup>5</sup> Manager, Foundation for Ecological Security, Gautam Nagar, Koraput (drmihirkumar@yahoo.co.in)

**Key words:** Shifting cultivation, swiddening, indigenous knowledge, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

### **Introduction**

Odisha is home to 62 tribal communities who are at different levels of development yet possess unique repository of indigenous knowledge basing upon their age old practices for their survival needs. The indigenous practices of natural resource management as applicable to agriculture, forestry, human and animal health, soil conservation, water harvesting, and many other sectors has, in matter of fact, preserved grandeur of indigenous knowledge that can be suitably applied in present day context. Application of indigenous knowledge for rural development is an emerging paradigm especially for resource conservation and sustainable use. From the long experience of cultivation, the traditional communities have acquired enormous working knowledge in fields of classification, codification, accumulation and dispensation of knowledge on cultivation. Their understanding of environment and sustainable resource management is largely embedded in their socio-cultural life and manifested in their interactions with the socio-ecological complex they are part of. These knowledge systems reflect their perception of ecologically sensitive interactions with local ecosystems and the changing paradigms under the spell of modern technical knowledge and management practices.

Shifting cultivation is one such area of their interaction with the forest ecosystem which showcases age old wisdom in managing environment security and food security and disseminates treasures of indigenous knowledge systems. It is one of the primary means of earning livelihoods for many tribal communities inhabiting mountainous regions of the state. It is synonymous with slash and burn cultivation, swiddening, *jhum*, fallow farming, *podu*, *nalla* and many other local denominations. It is a flexible and highly adaptive means of production. In Odisha, as per an estimate, the extent of shifting cultivation has been spread over 118 Tribal Sub-Plan blocks of which 62 comes under shifting cultivation zone and 56 are partially covered.

On the basis of degree of dependence on swiddens, L.K. Mohapatra (1983, vol2, ix) comprehended four types of dependence on shifting cultivation; exclusive dependence, major dependence, contingent dependence and marginal dependence. With respect to each category of dependence he has analyzed the community-wise and individual-wise dependence on shifting cultivation

portraying the situations at which the community or the individual may be categorized under the above said dependency categories. Most of the tribes in Odisha who take up shifting cultivation as a means of earning a livelihood fall under the category of exclusive dependence and major dependence as shifting cultivation connote a subsistence economy.

Because shifting cultivation in the traditional manner is highly diversified, it is more stable and reliable for the farmer than specialized cultivation. Economic self-sufficiency protects ecological integrity and viability in ways more important than simply maintaining diversity. The survival is contingent upon maintenance, rather than the exploitation of the larger community of which they know themselves to be only parts. In short, traditional shifting cultivation is a system which is well adapted to the tropical forest environment; it helps maintain the biological diversity of the forest and often provides significant benefit to the wildlife population. The maintenance of such system is of considerable importance to modern form of development.

The authors in this paper have made an attempt to explore the indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge by trying to understand the community perceptions relating to shifting cultivation. The authors have analyzed the community perceptions on a conceptual and theoretical understanding of indigenous knowledge. In this attempt the authors have studied three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), namely, Dongaria Kondh (Bissam Cuttack Block), Kutia Kondh (Tumudibandh Block) and Lanjia Saora (Gunupur Block) in southern Odisha for whom shifting cultivation is a way of life.

### **Understanding Indigenous Knowledge and its applicability**

Indigenous knowledge means that something is originating locally and performed by a community or society in this specific place. It emerges as peoples' perceptions and experience in an environment at a given time and is a continuous process of observation and interpretation in relation to the locally-acknowledged everyday rationalities and transcendental powers (Seeland, 2000). Although 'indigenous knowledge' and 'traditional knowledge' are used as synonyms, yet they vary conceptually and contextually in certain respects. Knowledge is to be said indigenous, if it is bound to local experiences and takes its local world perhaps not as the only existing, but as the most relevant of all. In other words, indigenous knowledge is location and culture-specific knowledge. Local knowledge in this connection may be understood as knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. Indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities and research

institutions. Being influenced by global or western knowledge, one tends to forget that over the centuries human beings have been producing knowledge to keep a balanced relationship with their natural and social environment in order to survive. Indigenous knowledge refers to a large body of accumulated knowledge with which the people are able to manage their natural resources in order to subsist on a long-term basis. Some other relevant definitions of indigenous knowledge are:

- a) It is a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. Further, traditional ecological knowledge is an attribute of societies with historical continuity in resource use practices; by and large, these are non-industrial or less technologically advanced societies, many of them indigenous or tribal (Grenier, 1998).
- b) It is the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of men and women indigenous to a particular geographic area (Johnson, 1992).
- c) It is a body of knowledge built by a group of people through generations living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment, and a system of self-management that governs resource use (Studley, 1998).
- d) There is consensus amongst scientists using various terms that such knowledge: i) is linked to a specific place, culture or society; ii) is dynamic in nature; iii) belongs to groups of people who live in close contact with natural systems; and iv) contrasts with “modern” or “western formal scientific” knowledge.” (Warren, 1991)

Indigenous knowledge systems got a face-lift when International policy regime on nature and biodiversity conservation considered it as an instrument to achieve sustainability in biodiversity and bio-resources conservation, utilization and management. As a result of the World Conference on Science, organised by UNESCO and the International Council for Science U (ICSU) in 1999 in Budapest, two principal documents - the ‘Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge’ and the ‘Science Agenda Framework for Action’ (1999) are not only further underscoring the valuable contribution of: ‘...traditional and local knowledge systems as dynamic expressions of perceiving and understanding the world’, but also point to the need: ... to preserve, protect, research and promote

this cultural heritage and empirical knowledge.' A major impetus was given to an international understanding on Indigenous Knowledge through the conference on 'Building Bridges with Traditional Knowledge – International Summit Meeting on Issues Involving Indigenous Peoples, Conservation, Sustainable Development and Ethno science' that was held in Honolulu, Hawaii in June 2001.

### **Indigenous Knowledge in Shifting Cultivation and Scientific Opinions**

The basic features of shifting cultivation include clearing of fields primarily by felling, cutting, slashing and burning and using fire to dispose of vegetative debris after drying; human labour chiefly operative; labour pattern frequently co-operative; many different systems in crop planting including multiple cropping and specialized cropping; use of yields primarily for subsistence; use of vegetative cover, as soil conditioner and source of plant nutrient for cropping cycle; when efficiently operated soil erosion occurs to the least; soil depletion not more serious than that under other systems of agriculture. All the processes and systems are based on experience based understanding of the communities and the practitioners are masters of the art. The shifting cultivation is operative chiefly in the regions where more technologically advanced system of agriculture have not become economically or culturally possible or in regions where the land has not yet been appropriated by people with greater political or cultural power. It is destructive of natural resources when operated inefficiently and not inherently destructive than other systems of agriculture when these are operated inefficiently. It is also considered a residual system of agriculture largely replaced by other systems except where retention or practice is expedient.

The New Agriculturist on-line made a literature survey to comprehend different scientific observations from research and studies on shifting cultivation from ecological and livelihoods perspective as:

- Shifting cultivation is a style of forest-based land use around which myths and hostile assumptions have often clustered, especially among foresters. In fact, research studies on shifting cultivation in the tropics point, rather, to the strength and resilience of many of these systems, the high returns to labour they offer; and, as importantly, the species enrichment and biodiversity conservation they allow. (*Reporting DFN Mailing 21, ODI*)
- Migrants tend to use non-traditional and non-sustainable practices. Many are new to farming, without the benefit of indigenous knowledge about the land and vegetation, and they indiscriminately clear forest areas, leaving no

tree stumps to regenerate. They often plant crops that are unsuited to the acid soils and the hot and humid climate. Migrant farmers continue to crop after grass weeds have established themselves, further exhausting the soil so that recovery time is lengthened, hindering forest regeneration. *Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn - A Global Initiative, ICRAF publication*

- Governments have not been successful in dealing with swidden systems nor in coming up with solutions. There is a need to empower local communities to participate more fully in problem diagnosis and in generating innovations for more sustainable agro-ecosystem productivity and ultimately to manage their own resource base. *IDRC, Comparative Analysis on Shifting Cultivation.*
- Upland people practicing various types of shifting cultivation are also being forced to reduce traditionally maintained fallow periods and are clearing more forest lands to compensate for losses in food supply. While the plight of mountain people is unmistakably getting worse; it appears that development policies have been highly insensitive to mountain conditions and have also contributed to some of these problems. The need for sustainable solutions is urgent. Efforts are needed at different levels and with the growing partnership at different levels, important breakthroughs are being made in different areas. Most of these success stories are being produced by the mountain people themselves with a little bit of help from outside. The future of the mountains lies in ensuring that the maximum numbers of people are supported to help themselves. *The Hindu Kush-Himalayas: Finding Sustainable Solutions, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development*

Swidden has generally been seen as cultivation and not culture by those who are closely concerned with the 'degradation of environment'. To bring the concept of culture in their frame of reference is as essential as bringing the concept of environment in their domain of culture. Practitioners of shifting cultivation have always been viewed from the perspective of outsider who treated them either as a different and a closed social system or viewed them as a satellite system having deleterious effects on their society and surroundings. (*Atal & Bannagen, 1983:2*)

Considering the nature of economy and economy of nature in relation to shifting cultivation, it can be said that it is not completely uneconomic or destructive to environment (*Jena, et.al. 2000*). Strangely enough some of the environment specialists took the stand that in the kind of environment in which

this kind of cultivation is practiced, it is the most rational form of cultivation, as no other form of cultivation will be possible or economical ... the so called innocent people know enough about the environment as they take good care of those trees and plants that are regarded by them as useful. 'In traditional swiddens, agricultural tools are minimal, ploughs are not used and even the harvest is often reaped by hand without the use of a blade. Energy returns for energy inputs in traditional swiddens are quite high' (*Rappaport, 1972 cf. Jena, et.al. 2000*).

In ecological terms, swidden cultivation is characterized by its high degree of integration into the natural tropical forest ecosystem, whose characteristics it conserves to a considerable extent ... it is the ecologically viable agricultural strategy to have been developed thus far, on a large scale in tropical rain forests, and attempts to apply intensive agricultural techniques brought from other regions have generally been dismal failures, resulting only in the destruction of the ecological balance of the natural rainforest (*Seymour-Smith, 1986*).

Shifting cultivation comprises a range of highly variable and site specific systems that have developed in response to local environmental and cultural conditions. The essentials are that fields are rotated rather than crops and a forest fallow returns fertility to the soil. Sedentary swidden agriculturists have a strong interest in maintaining the fertility of the village territory and practise long term conservation measures which contribute to biological diversity. (*Mc. Neely, 1989*).

#### **Shifting cultivation by the Kondh and the Saora of Odisha**

The **Kuttia Kondhs** have been shifting cultivators since times immemorial. This method of cultivation is part of their way of life and is remembered in the mythology of the tribe. The Kui terminology for the practice of shifting cultivation is *nellakama*, *bagada* (cleared hill for cultivation) or *dongar chasa* (hill cultivation). References are made to shifting cultivation in cosmogonic myth of the Kuttia Kondh. This mythological background is an important reason for the Kuttia Kondh to continue with shifting cultivation as a way of maintaining their culturally distinct lifestyle and identity in accordance with the traditions of their ancestors. The *Kui Gaani* describes some mythical views of shifting cultivation, although today, much of this myth can only be recalled by the elderly members of the tribe. They refer to the myth, *Kui Gaani*, as a means to justify their traditional cultivation practices.

The myth also alludes to the fact that the patches of forest selected for shifting cultivation should contain a *Dharnivali* and a bamboo bush. If bamboo bushes are not found, either the field is abandoned or bamboo saplings are planted

in the field. The presence of bamboo as a site for worship, offered to *Dharni Penu* is essential. It is said that bamboo came into existence near *Sapangada* - the mythical place of origin of the tribe, from the hair of *Nerandali* when she was taking a bath after emerging from *Sapangada*. The Kuttia Kondhs believe that a *dharni* stone is found in a newly cleared forest patch must have been left there by their ancestors who had cultivated the area before. As the cultivators require the permission of *Dharni Penu* before they clear a new patch of forest, she is therefore appeased with an offering of blood from an animal sacrifice. It is believed that without the blood offering, the deity becomes angry and can inflict harm by producing poor yields in swidden plots and can inflict disease and other misfortune on the people. This is indicative of the fact that shifting cultivation is co-existent with the Kuttia Kondhs. It is culturally and religiously tuned preventing the community to take up the practice just anywhere in their vicinity.

The **Dongaria Kondh** economy centres round shifting cultivation, plain land cultivation and horticulture. The Dongarias' increasing interest in horticulture has brought shifting cultivation to a limit but for their minimum subsistence, they depend mostly upon shifting cultivation. Though horticulture has a significant position in the Dongaria Kondh economy, it does not fetch the right market price as it should, due to various factors. Although horticulture surpasses shifting cultivation in the rate of production, yet at the subsistence level, shifting cultivation maintains its importance as it was in the past. They claim that, in the past, when the Jungle was dense, they depended on cultivation on hills for subsistence. The Dongaria believe that food gathering and hunting was the first stage of economic activity; further development began after that occupational shift from hunting and food gathering to the practice of shifting cultivation. This also indicates technological progress and preference for earning a livelihood. The next step of development marked their orientation towards horticulture, although shifting cultivation continued. Some decades ago, the Dongarias started plain land cultivation. While these stages of development in the Dongaria economy involved technological changes, the social system did not change considerably. In remote pockets, the social system, traditional pattern of distribution of economic means and the socio-political organisation have more or less remained constant.

Similar to the Kuttia Kondhs, the Dongarias also have socio-political and religious practices specific to shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is also rooted in the Dongaria myth of origin. To convert a patch of forest to swiddens, the Dongarias make an ecological assessment of the area in terms of vegetation, soil moisture, nutrient conditions and suitability for shifting cultivation. After the



ecological considerations, the cultural condition is taken into consideration. The forest should have a *dharni* altar established by earlier settlers. The Hill God must permit the people to cultivate the site. Rituals are performed to seek the permission of the deity. On getting the permission they slash the vegetation, otherwise, they never dare to take the risk of inviting the wrath of the deity. Then come the economic consideration according to which the hill should have enough cultivable land to be divided among all the families in a village or a group of families of bigger size who wish to cultivate it. If ecological and cultural conditions are found favourable then the economic consideration becomes less significant. On the other hand, if the cultural consideration does not go in their favour, the other two conditions even being favourable becomes meaningless.

The **Lanjia Saoras**, traditionally, were hunters, food gatherers and shifting cultivators. In course of time when swiddening became less productive, they started terrace cultivation along with swiddening. For the Lanjia Saora shifting cultivation (*Barooh loom* or *Bagada chas*) has been their way of life. Most of them possess patches of swiddens inherited individually. It is said that the community has inherited the practice from their supreme ancestor *Kittung-Radab* who started cultivating the hill slopes to eke out a living.

The selection of a site for shifting cultivation is mainly considered on two grounds; vegetation and soil. Black soil is the preferred one as it is known to be very fertile and can assure a good harvest. Dense vegetation with good population of timbers is not preferred, for it would require lot of labour force to clear the patches. Therefore, a fertile land with bushy vegetation is cut and cleared or swiddening. The availability of labour force in a family is the other consideration for deciding the extent of land that could be cleared. During site selection, the slope consideration decides the land use pattern. If the slopes are relatively wider they are preferred for terrace cultivation. However, such slopes are not immediately converted into terraces. After a series of cropping cycles under swiddening practice when the yield decreases then people convert it to terraces and take up paddy cultivation.

More than shifting cultivation, the Saoras are well known for their expertise in terrace cultivation. They exhibit a high degree of indigenous skill, ingenuity and technological outfit for preparing the terraces with inbuilt water management system. The terraces are built right up the beds of the hill streams and ascend hundreds of feet from the depth of valleys to the hill slopes and even up to the hill tops.

The Lanjia Saora exhibit technological up-gradation in farming practices in the indigenous way. They have integrated shifting cultivation, terrace cultivation and horticulture in a way that builds a viable economic base for the community with both subsistence and cash crops.

### **Ecological perceptions: Slope land classification and cropping pattern**

On the hill slope, Dongarias cultivate a selection of crops. The bushy forest covering the upper part of the hill (*mundeni*), however, is not slashed. On the other hand the slash and burn method is applied to the tops of low hills or hillocks. Immediately below the un-slashed forest, in the area called *madre gandre*, seasonal crops such as cereals, pulses, vegetables and oil seeds are grown. The next layer down, called *penda gandre* is reserved for perennials, particularly for the fruit bearing species such as citrus, mango, jackfruit, banana, pineapple, and other tree crops without disturbing any naturally growing useful tree species. The Dongarias have the perception that a better harvest results from seasonal crops if they are between two dense vegetation patches (i.e. between *penda* and *mundeni*). Below the *penda gandre* is the area called *penda* where vegetables and oil seeds are cropped. Occasionally, the *penda* is levelled out for paddy cultivation. The Dongarias have rich ecological perception of slope and soil that is instrumental in crop planning at different levels of a slope.

For the Kuttia Kondhs, after slashing and burning of vegetation, marking the individual field area is considered very important. Individual fields are marked out by crop fencing. Usually the castor seeds, maize seeds and sometimes sorghum seeds are used as fence lines for plot demarcation, for these species are tall species and hence, if they are planted with a particular spacing, they make a distinguishing fence. The border of one field planted with castor seeds of one cultivator follows the plantation of maize and sorghum for the other person whose area begins from the same boundary. The other side boundary of the second person may be planted with castor seeds. It goes on like this to differentiate patches of individual fields. The plantation of castor, pigeon pea, maize and sorghum as boundary species is beneficial as they take relatively longer periods to complete their life cycle in comparison to other crops. Maize which has a shorter life cycle compared to others can be collected easily on maturing from the boundary fence. This also keeps the other crops undisturbed. Following the boundary species, all other crops are sown which include other pulses and vegetables like cucumber, pumpkin, etc. Seeds of yams are put in dibbled holes on the boundary fence, because its coiling system can easily extend to castor plants (*Jena, et.al. 2006*). Cow pea is planted little after the castor and

pigeon pea have been planted so as to prevent the young twigs of the later from the coiling system of the former. The pulses and other vegetables thus are planted at random inside the boundary. The ginger, turmeric if planted is made into pure cultures with which the bird chilli species also share the space. The plotting scheme of the Kuttia Kondhs are almost the same like the Dongaria Kondh, but the major distinction observed is that the Kuttia Kondh have not added the fruit growing species in their swidden system.

The Lanjia Saora community divide a hill into three parts: *Amutti* is top of the hill, *Trangdi* refers to the middle area, and *Baseng* refers to the foothill. In their practice of shifting cultivation (*Barooh loom*), the middle area of the hill is called *Baroon* where people grow multiple crops. In this context *Trangdi* and *Baroon* are synonymous. The foothills and the region between the foothill and swiddening area are terraced and the terraced lands are called *Dunkeli*. *Baseng* and *Dunkeli* are also synonymous in usage. In general, *Baroon* is the space where swiddening is done, in *Dunkeli* wet or terrace cultivation is done, in unterraced *Baseng* cash crops like mustard, Niger are cultivated. The horticultural and fruit bearing species are given space in *Baroon* and *Baseng*.

These communities grow varieties of crops in a mixed cropping system that includes cereals, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables and spices. The crops include cereals like *Panicummiliare* (little millet), *Eleusinecoracana* (Finger millet/ragi), *Sorghum vulgare* (Sorghum), *Pennisetumtyphoides* (Bajra), *Zea mays* (Maize), *Oryzasativa* (Rice); pulses like *Vignaindica* (Cow pea), *Vigna* species, *Phaseolusmungo* (Black gram), *Cajanuscajan* (Arhar/ yellow dal); oil seeds like *Ricinuscommunis* (Castor), *Guizotiaabyssinica* (Niger), *Brassica campestris* (Mustard); spices like *Capsicum frutescens* (Bird chilli), *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric), *Zingiberofficinalis* (Ginger), etc; vegetables like *Cucumissativa* (Cucumber), *Cucurbita maxima* (Pumpkin), *Lagenaria vulgaris* (Bottle gourd), *Dioscoreasps* (Yam), *Ipomeabatatas* (Sweet potato), *Manihotesculenta* (Tapioca/ Cassava), etc.

### **Rationality of plotting along the slope than across the slope**

While distributing the hill slopes for swiddens, the decision makers first decide upon the area that is to be slashed leaving a reasonable measure of forests on the hill top. The slashing area is then vertically divided into plots corresponding to the requirement of individual families in a village. The preference for the vertical plots is mostly considered on ecological basis (Jena, et.al.2002). Unlike the horizontal plots the vertical plots have the significance that each family gets almost the same kind of ecological space for cultivating multiple crops suitable

to slopes and altitudes. In such a design the water management during rains is also well planned. As slopes at different elevations are cropped with different cropping density and there is fair arrangement of perennials and annuals on the slopes, water flows down from ridge area to valleys with minimal soil erosion. As such the water logging is avoided. Considering the browsing and predatory habit of wild life, plotting along the slope is preferred to plotting across the slope. The wildlife movement usually happens from the hill top where forest is not disturbed. Hence they usually browse upon the crops on the slope closer to the forest at top of the hill. Hence, in a plotting design across the slope, the farmer whose plot is located closer to the forest suffers the loss. In contrast, in a plotting along the slope scheme, the loss gets distributed to all the cultivators. Moreover, by constructing sentinel huts on the upper side of the slope it is easier to guard the crops on a longitudinally divided plot. Hence, horizontal plotting is not rational in the local context and its consideration also guides the cropping pattern at different levels of the slope.

### **Traditional distribution patterns and customary land governance**

One of the basic features of shifting cultivation has been frequent shifting of cropped fields, normally in some kind of sequence in land control, resting in special social groupings under customary laws, but sometimes occurring under other legal institutions of land control. In this context it is important to examine the traditional distribution patterns of swidden lands under customary rules, the power and authority of formal and informal village councils and other social institutions and legal instruments.

The swidden plots are distributed by the village council to lineage groups which distributes it to its constituent households in consideration to the family labour force, as understood in case of several tribal communities practicing shifting cultivation. Once distributed the lands are inherited to fore-generations at the family level. In the early days, particularly at the time of setting up a settlement, one enjoys relative liberty to cultivate as large an area as is manageable considering manpower available in the family.

In the Dongaria Kondh community, the swiddens (*neta* and *bada*) are divided among member families by the clan heads. The inheritance of such lands is maintained in the patrilineal order. Patches of lands under possession of father is equally divided among his sons after his death. In some cases daughters also get shares from their father's land. If a man has only daughter (s) or if a daughter is divorced or widowed then she may get share from her father's landed property. There are different patterns of land distribution. There can be village-wise

distribution, clan-wise distribution and *punja* (title group) wise distribution. PTG Villages are found exclusively with one clan or with one dominant clan. In a village-wise distribution there is always a boundary between two villages. Keeping the boundary in view, hills are distributed among respective village communities. People of a single clan or different clans residing in a village can occupy a hill land, convert it to swidden plots without any restriction. In the Dongaria Kondh community, a rational distribution of hill land was exercised long ago to minimize discrimination in terms of early settlers and late settlers; proximity and distant location; dominant *punja* and others. Thus, hill lands were first distributed among clans, then among *punjas* and then among families. However, some patches of land were kept as buffer land to be distributed to new families who may come from outside irrespective of their clan membership. In case the number of families increased along with the need for more land, further grant of land is made possible through the village level decision making body where *jani* and *mandal* allot the required land if available.

In the Lanjia Saora community, traditionally, the hills have been distributed among *Birinda* or extended families (*Patnaik, N, 1989, 1993*). Members of a particular *birinda* used to have swiddens exclusively on a hill and no outsider was allowed to share the hill for cultivation. An individual family who has been cultivating a plot continues to own it as long as it is capable of cultivating it. Every family or every household possesses a limited number of plots around the village. This personal possession is hereditary. Ultimately, the father's plot is divided among the sons. However, the base rule for possession right over a land depends on availability of family labour force. In this consideration, in the past, the families who had more labour force could take big chunk of swidden land under their possession. Since the swidden lands have become very limited, over the last three to four decades hardly people have been able to add more lands to their existing possession. Since, initially the swiddens had been distributed *Birinda* wise, the *Birinda* has larger control over the land use patterns and this has limited diverse land use practices in the swiddens.

### **Positive sides of Shifting Cultivation**

Old traditional swiddens have gradually become converted to fruit orchards giving it a forest like structure. Preservation of timber plants in and around the swidden serves as a seed reservoir for endemic species. Sophisticated fire control mechanism such as fire breaks, fire fighters, coordinated burning is maintained. Swidden soil is often more moist than adjacent forest soil. Careful rotation of swiddens is maintained looking at land-man ratio. Bush fallowing

period of different intervals is practiced to allow flow of nutrients to reserve the trend towards leaching and be recycled through burning. Careful control of weeds is remarkably done. Minimal disturbance of top soil in cropping practice help minimizing erosion. It is a sound practice as there is the least risk of total crop failure even due to drought or excessive rainfall because variety of seeds are cropped together and the crops mature at various intervals of time. People are keen observers on the ratio of labour input to productivity and hence, when productivity decreases in relation to labour input, they leave the land for fallowing till the fertility is regained. Unproductive swiddens are converted to permanent orchards thereby introducing new varieties and land use patterns. Above all, subsistence crops and cash crops are taken simultaneously from the same patch of land.

### **Conclusion**

Swidden cultivation, as an indigenous knowledge system of the tribal communities in Odisha should be studied and documented thoroughly and an overall assessment of the situation made, as swidden can be a useful component of rural development in hilly terrains and environmental management. The need is emerging to blend traditional knowledge systems with latest technology to make the swidden system more vibrant and productive. It requires development planning to follow consultative processes giving the communities wider choice to maintain traditional practices, sustain indigenous germ plasm, traditional food habit, cultural identity and traditional technology through shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation or swiddening should not be seen as a completely destructive practice rather as a suitable land use practice in mountainous regions of the state and as a way of life for the tribal communities who have been depending on it since generations.

### **References**

- Atal & Bannagan (1983): *Swidden Cultivation in Asia*, Vol.I, UNESCO, Bangkok
- Global Biodiversity Strategy (1992): WRI/IUCN/UNEP
- Grenier, L. (1998): *Working with Indigenous Knowledge: A Guide for Researchers*. Ottawa: IDRC.
- Jena, M.K., et.al. (2000): *Biodiversity and Cultural diversity: Modes and Means in Primitive-Modern Continuum*, in H.K. Patra (Ed) Environment and Disaster Management, Dept. of Botany, Utkal University, Orissa

- Jena, M.K., et.al (2002): Forest Tribes of Orissa, Vol.I. *The Dongaria Kondh*, DK Printworld, New Delhi
- Jena, M.K.,et.al (2006): Forest Tribes of Orissa, Vol.II. *The Kuttia Kondh*, DK Printworld, New Delhi
- Johnson, M. (1992): *Lore: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge*. Ottawa: Dene Cultural Institute/IDRC
- Mc. Neely, J.A. (1989): *Conserving Cultural Diversity: How the variety of human experience can promote sustainable forms of using natural resources*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland
- Mohapatra, L.K. (ed) (1983): *Swidden Cultivation in Asia*, Bangkok, UNESCO, Vol.2
- Patnaik, N. (1993): *Swidden cultivation among tribes of Orissa*, CENDERET, XIM, Bhubaneswar
- Posey, D.A. (1999): Editor of *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: A Complementary Contribution to the Global Biodiversity Assessment*. UNEP/Intermediate Technology
- Seeland, K. (2000): *What is Indigenous Knowledge and why does it matter today?* In Seeland, K., F. Schmithusen (eds) 'Man in the Forest – Local Knowledge and Sustainable Management of Forests and Natural Resources in Tribal Communities in India, D.K Printworld, Delhi.
- Seymour-Smith, C (1992): Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology
- Slikkerveer, L.J. (1999): Growing Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Context of Development: A New Challenge for Indonesia. In *Indigenous Knowledge Systems Research & Development Studies*, No. 3, Ed. K. Adimihardja & M. Clemens. UPT. INRIK, Bandung
- Studley, J. (1998): *Dominant Knowledge Systems and Local Knowledge*. Mtn-Forum On-line Library Document, <http://www.mtnforum.org/resources/library/stud98a2.htm>. Accessed August, 2001
- The New Agriculturist on-line ([www.new-ag.info/99-5/pov.html](http://www.new-ag.info/99-5/pov.html))
- UNCED.(1992):*United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*. Rio de Janeiro
- Warren, D.M., L.J. Slikkerveer & D.W. Brokensha, (1995): Editors of *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*. IT Studies in Indigenous Knowledge and Development. Intermediate Technology Publications, London

**TRIBAL INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE :**  
**IT'S RELEVANCE FOR ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT <sup>1</sup>**  
**(with reference to Primitive Tribal Groups)**

K.J.N. Gowtham Shankar <sup>2</sup>

**Introduction:**

**Tribes of India**

Tribes in Indian sub-continent are commonly known as *Aboriginal Tribes, Indigenous Tribes, Adivasi, Girijan, Vanyajati*. As per the constitution they are known as *Scheduled Tribes*, who constitute 8.20% (83.58 millions) of the total Indian population (2001) representing from 532 communities and their sub-groups. Broadly, the Indian tribals belong to the *Negrito*, the *Proto-Australoid* and the *Mongoloid* racial stocks and their sub-stocks (Guha). They have been categorized into 4 main language speaking groups, such as the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic (Munda) and the Tibeto-Chinese (Sino-Tibetan). The habitat of these tribal communities is broadly confined to the North or North East, the Central and Southern Zones.

**The Eastern Ghats**

The Eastern Ghats is one of the major natural resource bases of India, which is located between 72° 22' east longitude and 11° 30' to 21° 0' north latitude in the tropical region. These *ghats* lie between Mahanadi valley of Odisha state and Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu touching Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and a bit of Karnataka in between. These Eastern Ghats is sub-divided into (i) North Eastern Ghats covering Mahanadi Valley in Orissa, Chattishgarh and Godavari and Krishna Valleys in Andhra Pradesh, and (ii) the South Eastern Ghats region covering South of Krishna Valley to Nilgiris of Tamilnadu. The Eastern Ghats are rich in various minerals, floral, faunal and water resources.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXVII, Nos.1&2, 2007, pp.41-47

<sup>2</sup> IDEA, Flat 4C, Maharaja Towers, R.K. Mission Road, Visakhapatnam – 530 003



### **Tribes of the Eastern Ghats**

The Eastern Ghats is the home land of about 65 indigenous tribal communities with a population of 19.6 million (Provisional census of India, 2001), while North Eastern Ghats accommodates 17.6 million population and South Eastern Ghats accommodates about 2 million population. A major portion of these tribal communities live in hilly and forest areas. The tribes of Eastern Ghats are mostly from Proto-Australoid, Mongoloid and few Negrito racial stocks. Majority of the tribes speak their own tribal languages, which are classified as the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic language groups.

### **Tribal Indigenous Knowledge and Worldview**

The tribal societies represent a unique and sustainable eco, agri and health cultures and related indigenous knowledge, worldview (cosmo-vision) and values which are the basis for evolution of their animistic religion, social organizations and sustainable subsistence of forest and agro based economy and survival. These elements are in tune with the laws of nature and reflect the wisdom of tribal living in harmony with nature. Their worldview as a product of their belief on the existence of human, natural and spiritual worlds and also the product of the interplay are the bases for their survival of the surrounding environment and natural resources. For a tribal, the origin of this worldview is the beginning of the time and the inter-play and constant interaction between these worlds is the space and the outcome of the interaction (both physical, spiritual and cosmic) is the matter. This is the simple philosophy of the tribal animism.

The tribal lifestyle is mostly based on their indigenous knowledge, which is intimately connected with nature and its related worldview (also known as cosmo vision). They believe that their life is controlled, guided and influenced by various natural, supernatural beings (spiritual), who live around them (in and around village, in forests, hills, trees, rivers and fields etc). Hence, this worldview is the basis for their survival. It is imbibed in them and is passing through generations.

This animistic philosophy is the basis to acquire the Indigenous Knowledge and Technologies (IKT), heritage, history, mythology, language and imagery in varied forms of expression that helps to ensure their survival against all odds for several centuries.

They maintain cultural identity and values through their social organizations such as traditional institutions and dormitories, animistic practices, languages,

customs, norms, values, rituals, folk songs, music and dance etc. Most of them are relevant and complimentary to sustainable development oriented practices.

## Specific Tribal Indigenous Knowledge

### Ecology and Natural Resources

There is an intimate and symbiotic relationship between the tribals, their cosmo vision and environment (bio-diversity). They believe in the existence of natural and supernatural forces which influence their life-styles. They strongly believe that all the natural resources are the gifts of these divine forces. Accordingly they have evolved their own eco-cultures. Hence, they can also be called as **eco-people**.

To establish a friendly relationship with these divine forces, they perform a variety of rites, rituals, ceremonies and festivals. They believe that their ecological life always depends on their interaction with these divine beings of natural origin. Their worldview on the cosmo vision beliefs stress the existence of different divine beings of natural origin, ex: the tribes of Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh and Koraput district of Odisha believe that the *Konda Demudu* [Mountain god], *Bag Devata* [Tiger- the goddess of Mammals], *Ransula* [Goddess of large trees], *Bongowd* [Goddess of Medicinal plants and edible tubers], *Banbula* [Goddess of sub jungles small animals and micro organisms], *Jalkamini* [Goddess of water resources], *Nag Rani* [Goddess of snakes and other reptiles] etc, to protect various floral and faunal species and other natural resources and also influence their interactions and symbiotic relationship with them. They also believe that some of the trees, wild animals, streams, mountains and forest patches are sacred.

### Spiritual Beings of Natural Origin (vernacular)

Sl. No	Local Name	Significance
1.	Konda Demudu	Mountain god
2.	Konda Devata / Dongar Devata	Goddess of nature
3.	Rangowd	Protector of forest
4.	Bongowd	Protector of medicinal plants, edible tubers etc.
5.	Ransula	Protector of large trees
6.	Banbula	Protector of scrub jungles
7.	Nagrani	Protector of Reptiles
8.	Bagrani	Protector of faunal species

Sl. No	Local Name	Significance
9.	Jalkamini	Goddess of rain and water / streams
10.	Jakar Devata	Goddess of sacred mountains and streams etc

- *Tribal definition of Devata and Demudu carries the meaning sometimes as god and sometimes as goddess in many cases.*

In order to get the blessings in the form of good rain, good forest produce, wild game, fruits and agricultural yields, they propitiate these divine spirits properly. They relate different divine spirits to different natural resources. The establishment of the relation between the divine spirits and physical and natural objects (animate or inanimate), differs from the region to region and sometimes community to community. The above statement is the example drawn from the tribes of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha border:

Their well knit socio-cultural systems, strong kinship bonds, totemic concepts, dormitory education and well organized participatory democratic traditional village institutions are all the supporting mechanisms for the stability, equity and sustainability of their life styles.

#### **Tribal Traditional Institutions / Councils – Their Indigenous Knowledge in Management of Natural Resources and Bio-Cultural Diversity**

Swidden / *jhum* or shifting cultivation locally called *podu* is the major concern of the present sustainable eco-development strategies in any region in the world, specially, when it is related to the specific conservation of biodiversity jointly by the states and the local (ethnic or endemic) tribal communities. But the fact remains same as the shifting cultivation is a definite stage in the evolution of human culture and it is also a fact that, for many mountain dwellers, there is no alternative. Knowing the importance of maintaining the symbiotic relations between them and nature, the tribal societies have long back evolved several controlling and regulatory mechanisms.

Tribal traditional institutional functionaries, with their vast indigenous knowledge (IK), are playing a major role in managing the eco-cultural resources. The inbuilt mechanism of these institutions is evolved in such a way that they have prescribed specific cultural norms, sanctions and taboos in conserving the natural resources right from the community to clans and individuals. These norms include – (i) obtaining the prior permission from the traditional village council heads, (ii) involving the traditional village council heads in the selection of area, based on eco-cultural and economic criteria (iii) following the guidelines

of the traditional heads and senior farmers on the preservation of certain tree species in the patches and (iv) performing the ritual before commencing the operation. It is the traditional practice of the tribals to select specific localities and the extent of the land for each clan. The extent of the location varies depending upon the number of families within each clan (*kutumba*). Violation of these rules is viewed seriously.

#### **Protection of Clan Totems:**

The traditional institutions also have an elaborate arrangement to protect and conserve the natural resources by establishing the concept of totemism in the communities and taboos for the violation of these norms.

Each clan has its totemic relations with some natural objects – animate or inanimate. The concerned clan heads are supposed to watch the preservation and protection of different species / objects with which they have totemic relations. The sacerdotal heads always maintain and watch the observance of totemic relations of different clans in the community. Killing, eating or destroying the clan totem is a taboo, since they believe that this causes the decrease of the population of particular animal or tree species and affects the symbiotic relation and also upsets the nature-man relations and leading to the erosion of bio-cultural richness / diversity. The traditional institutions celebrate different festivals and ceremonies to worship the nature and various natural resources in and around the forest, considering them as community abode of supernatural divine beings. These institutions with the mechanisms of totemism and ritual ceremonies are always maintaining socio-ecological solidarity between the tribal communities and nature. These animistic cultures and totemic orders are also bringing the natural orders within the social and moral order of man and helping the tribals to domesticate the nature on one side, and to live in harmony with it on the other. This interesting traditional nature resource conservation practice is imbibed in all the tribal communities since generations.

#### **Community - Natural Resources and Conservation for Biodiversity, Food and Nutritional Security and Livelihoods:**

Unlike their other non-tribal counterparts, where the competition and the individualism is the order of the day, the tribals have a definite community spirit on the concepts of harmonious living with nature and natural resources. This community spirit leads to communal ownership; communal ceremonies and the community based harvesting of the resources. These concepts are helping them to conserve the bio-diversity and to improve the livelihoods, health, food and

nutritional securities on sustainable lines. Some the examples of such conservation of cultures / practices are:

- It is a taboo to touch some of the specific natural resources (fruits etc.), by individuals, without performing the necessary ritual and the ceremonial announcement of the beginning of the harvest of these fruits.
- To maintain community ownership on fodder grass, roofing grass, drinking water resources, wastelands and grazing grounds.
- Cutting forests or burning around fodder and roofing belts is strictly prohibited.
- Grazing in a specific grazing ground continuously is strictly prohibited.
- Pollution of drinking water sources (washing cloths, bathing of animals) is prohibited.

The community has adopted these mechanisms to preserve these resources with a limited scope against over exploitation. The simple mechanism they have adopted for the resource conservation and to maintain stability, equity and sustainability of the tribal societies is linked up with their worldview practices.

### **Traditional Sustainable Harvesting Practices**

Another interesting conservation consciousness is that, while collecting bamboo clumps, edible tubers, edible leaves etc; for consumption and also for commercial purposes, they shall purposefully leave tender tubers, clumps, seeds, fruits, and leaves to maintain the sustainability of the resources. A tribal, if he does not find the matured or required clumps, leafs, fruits and tubers etc; shall not disturb the tender ones and prefer to walk kilometers together in search of required one. This shows their conservation consciousness.

There are similar examples of different species of trees like Mahwa, Mango, Jack fruit etc; when the farmer feels that his crops are being benefitted by these large trees in their plots, they do not remove them totally except pruning the branches.

### **Storage and Dissemination of Knowledge**

The tribals have retained this knowledge in their songs, dances, music, folk tales, proverbs etc., and disseminate them to next generations through dormitory education, ceremonial hunting and forest product collection expeditions, ceremonial dances, songs and music and also by performing rituals and chanting of *mantras*, and application of symbols known as *gondas* / *chakras* to propitiate spirits to protect community and natural resources at the time of need.

### Tribal Worldview in Conservation of Bio-Cultural Diversity

There are several interesting facts about the inter relation between the tribal worldview practices and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity as a whole. In spite of rapid socio-economic changes, still tribals are looking upon the forest and the natural resources as a socially and ecologically relevant living institutions rather than just a habitat of wild life. They are trying to maintain the symbiotic relations and live in harmony with the forest and environment, as much as they can. This can be evidently seen in many of their rituals and ceremonies connected with the forest and their natural resources by the divine beings and the spirits. These animistic beliefs are the basis for their bio-cultural philosophical thought and concepts. Following are few examples –

- The festivals ranging from “*Konda Demudu Panduga / Kdu pata puja / Sareni vali puja*” (festival to mountain God) to “*Dongor Devatha Panduga*” ( festival to goddess of forest) to “*Vippa Poola Panduga*” (Mahuwa flowers, first eating festival) to “*Mamidi Panduga / Aam nua* (Mango festival, fist eating festival)” to “*Tenki Panduga* (mango kernel festival, fist eating festival)” or to their festival to their “*Nisani Devatha*” during “*Itukala Panduga*” / “*Chait (ra) Parob*” are all environmental related festivals. The names and the presiding deities of these festivals differ from community to community and area to area, depending on the eco-cultural background of the communities. But, the rationale behind the celebration of these festivals, more or less, is similar in all the tribal communities. Each festival has its significance and is being performed to different divine beings residing in the forest. Until and unless they perform this ritual, they don’t touch or eat the produce. They believe the violation is seriously viewed by the spirits and inflict the damage to individual and some time to community.
- The “*Chaitra Parob*” known as “*Itukala Panduga*” or “*Bijju Panduga*”, which is celebrated in the month of March/April can be considered as **the major environmental festival of the tribals**. This is to appease the god “*Nisani Devatha*” to get good rain, soil, disease resistant to seeds (sacred cosmic power to seed) and fertility to the crops, besides to get good game and food from the forests and to get protection from angry wild animals, over flowing stream, heavy winds, rock sliding in the forests etc. The entire annual life cycle of the tribals commences from this festival. The tribal’s informal assessment of the status of the forest and the availability of the

natural resources for their livelihood for the whole year will be done during their ceremonial hunting expedition to the forests around the villages.

### **Agriculture**

On the basis of the topography, agro-ecology and their racial and cultural backgrounds, tribals have adopted diverse (sometimes area and community specific) agricultural practices with their time-tested indigenous knowledge and technologies and have integrated several related worldview practices.

Tribal traditional institutional functionaries – the custodians of knowledge on agriculture and related worldview practices play a big role in the agricultural development and farming practices. The healers responsible for crop health are called *Taas Gunija*, and they help the community take care of crop health by using herbal medicines and mantras and by performing rituals related to crops. The other functionaries and senior farmers help the community in land, soil and crop management.

The tribes of the North-eastern Ghats mainly practice three types of agriculture (specific to the Koraput–Visakhapatnam area of the Andhra–Odisha border). These are –

1. Shifting cultivation (Podu/Dongor Marbar/Lankapadsenad)
2. Terrace cultivation (Tinn/Jolabedda)
3. Plain land agriculture (Digudu Podh/Pallam/Metta)

### **Shifting/ Slash and Burn Cultivation**

Shifting cultivation is the major subsistence economic base of the tribals, especially the mountain and valley tribes. The fallow period of the shifting cultivation patches usually last for about 6-7 years has come down to 1-2 years due to socio-ecological reasons. However, this practice is not only an academic pursuit, but is a way of life for many hill tribes. However, the practice of shifting cultivation is not only an economic pursuit but is also a way of life for many mountain tribes. The practice of shifting cultivation accounts for their social structure, political organization, economy, culture and religious identities, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

These shifting cultivation patches normally belong to nuclear or joint families within each family, some times they may belong to the entire clan, depending upon the availability of the land and number of working members etc.

Mixed crops are the traditional varieties grown in the shifting cultivation patches. However, depending on the type of design of the plot, a cropping pattern is selected. For example-

- In wider horizontal sloping plots, cereals, millet, beans and vegetables are grown.
- In vertical rising plots, different crops can be grown at different altitudes, for instance, sweet orange (*kamala*), lemon (*nimmu*) and custard apple (*seethaphal*) can be grown on the upper part; ginger, sweet potato, turmeric and yam species can be grown in the lower part and cereals, pulses and millets can be grown in the middle part.

### **Terrace Cultivation**

Terrace cultivation is carried out in the valleys where perennial or seasonal water is available. Unlike shifting cultivation, the selection process and the ownership of the terrace cultivation is retained with individuals or a clan. The practice of terrace cultivation involves mostly terrace bonding using indigenous technologies, for example, land and soil management practices adopting indigenous knowledge such as application of farmyard and green manure, mulching and weed management practices. Terrace cultivation patches normally belong to either nuclear or joint families.

Crops grown in these lands are mostly mono crops such as traditional rice varieties in the *kharif* season (monsoon crops) and vegetables and pulses in the *rabi* season and few short duration crops are also grown as summer crops, depending on the availability of the water resources.

### **Plain Land Cultivation**

Plain land cultivation is of two types (i) Dry plain or undulated land cultivation (ii) Irrigated or rain-fed wetland cultivation. These lands normally belong to either joint or nuclear families. They grow varieties of mono or mixed crops and vegetables.

### **Traditional Land Classification for Shifting Cultivation**

Depending on the soil type, the traditional shifting cultivation patches are classified into:

1. **Arengbur:** A land with large boulders and soil that is very hard
2. **Jalengbur:** A patch with rocky soil but that a hoe can till
3. **Jakupbur:** A land with scattered stone slabs, which are not removable



4. **Takup:** A land dominated by stones and a depth of considerable soil in between two large stones
5. **Ragudibur:** A land characterized by fragile red chips mixed with soil

On the basis of the soil types, crop selection is made. Traditional village council heads such as *Disari* and *Pujari* and senior farmers usually advise farmers on these technical aspects. There are diverse land classifications in different agro-ecological zones in the tribal belts, some are community specific and some are physiographic.

**Table I: Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Worldviews of Tribal Agriculture (General Picture)**

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
Classification of agriculture	3 types (shifting, terrace and plain land cultivation)	<p><b>Shifting cultivation:</b> Selection is based on ecological, cultural and economic criteria with more thrust on eco-cultural aspects. Community traditional institutions provide guidance and sanctions.</p> <p><b>Terrace cultivation:</b> Geographical and ecological considerations are the criteria and water sources are the main consideration. Senior farmers are the technical advisors. Plots are either individual / owned by joint family)</p> <p><b>Plain land cultivation:</b> Normally ancestral properties or assigned / acquired lands, belongs to individuals / joint families. Senior farmers and traditional institutions provide guidance on cropping systems and technical suggestions.</p>

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)		Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
Types of shifting cultivation	5 types* (Arengbur, Jalengbur, Jakupbur, Takup, Ragdibur). *Area and community specific.		Performing community ritual before selection of area for shifting cultivation
Agriculture implements	Implements for indigenous knowledge for bush clearance, land leveling, dibbling, hoeing, weeding, crop, protection, harvesting, threshing, processing, storing and nursery preparations.		The implements are common and mostly made of wood and few are with iron. Specific woods and fibers from specific tree species are selected for making the implements. Collection of raw material for implements is done based on the specific star constellation movements and as per the advice of tribal astrologers (priests).
Soils suitable for specific crops (General)	Red soil	little millet, finger millet, tubers	Soil selection is based on the indigenous technical criteria such as - color, weight, smell, taste, texture, moisture, moisture retention and nutritional capacities. This is done by individual farmers with the help of senior farmers and traditional soil testing functionaries.  Crop selection for each soil is done based on the time tested knowledge and suggestions of the senior farmers and traditional institutional functionaries.
	Black soil	little millet, finger millet, dry paddy	
	Sandy soil	tubers, hill paddy,	
	Rocky soil	jowar, red gram, finger millet, niger, blackgram, cowpea, beans, red gram, minor millet	
	Red and black soil	paddy and mixture vegetables	
	*Crops selections differ from area to area.		
Soil testing	Soil testing by observation of the health (color, size) of germinated seedlings during <i>Bali parob</i> festival (texture of soil, weight, taste, color etc)		Soil testing ceremony by name <i>Bali Parob</i> (Nov-Dec) for every 2-3 years at community level for both <i>kharif</i> and <i>rabi</i> crops. Soil testing by individual members of some communities for <i>rabi</i> crops (Ex: Malis & Konda Doras)

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
Seed testing for germination and seed health	Soaking the seed in wild wine called <i>maddi kallu</i> made of herbs (Konda Dora) or Mixing the seed in the cooked rice and offer to goddess <i>Nisani</i> (Kondh and Kotiya tribes) or Broadcasting the seed around the temple of god <i>nisani</i> during the <i>chait(ra) parob</i> festival and sprinkling of sacred on the seed for the observation of rate of germination, and health of seedlings depending on the colour and size of the saplings within the specific period (7-11 days) (Kondh, Kotia, Poraja, Konda dora tribes)	Traditional institutional functionaries collect the seed from the community during <i>chait(ra) parob</i> (March-April) for offering to goddess <i>nisani</i> to get sacred cosmic powers to the seed for healthy germination and to get disease and pest resistance. Secondly, to test the rate of germination of different crops seeds to suggest the communities to select the cropping pattern accordingly during the season.
Pest control	Herbal medicines, animal products to control the pest.	<i>Ashad jatra</i> festival (July-Aug) to demonstrate the preparation and application of botanical pesticides mixed with animal parts such as – blood etc.
Intercropping patterns/ systems in mixed agriculture	Cropping of heterogeneous varieties, e.g.: 1) Maize with beans 2) Jowar with red grams 3) Little millet with jowar/maize	Crop calendar (as per astrological calculations) – (Ploughing, land tilling, hoeing, seed broadcasting, harvesting and threshing)
Knowledge on duration of crops (area and also community specific)	Each tribals in each region have adopted different short medium and long term duration crops according to their food requirements	Selection of crops depends on the eco-cultural and geographical criteria.

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
a) Short duration crops	<b>50-60 days:</b> Little millet – Araku, Koraput Italian millet – Kondhs, Kondareddis of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh Maize – Koyas of Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh	
b) Long duration crops	<b>7-8 months:</b> Black jowar ( <i>Nalla /kaki jonna</i> ) – tribes of Andhra Pradesh–Orissa border <b>9-10 months:</b> Hill red gram ( <i>Kaliya kandi</i> ) – tribes of Koraput–Visakhapatnam border	
Seed broadcasting, transplantati on and spacing techniques	Number of fistfuls per acre (seed rate) Number of throws for each grip/fistful (to maintain spacing) Song related to spacing techniques for transplantation, broadcasting and dibbling of different saplings of crops and seeds such as millets, cereals, pulses, beans, oil seeds and tubers	Knowledge is vested with male farmers. Songs are mostly vested with senior women
Knowledge on weed management (mostly vested with women)	Weeds for crop health (green manure, mulching) Weeds for cattle health (fodder and medicine) Weeds for human health (medicinal plants) Weeds for nutrition (leafy vegetables)	Knowledge is vested with senior women, and tribal healers.
Knowledge on biological and botanical pest control	<b>Biological:</b> Spiders (social spider), black ants, quails, reptiles, animal products <b>Botanical:</b> About 25 species of major plants (parts used: leaf,	Performing rituals and festivals such as <i>Ashad jatra</i> .

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
	bark, stem, tuber, fruit & cakes)	
Knowledge on harvesting techniques (women)	Sustainable harvesting techniques	Knowledge is mostly vested with tribal women
Agriculture related songs	<i>Beddaroppa</i> – transplantation <i>Oylee geeth</i> – land management <i>Tode geeth</i> – weed management	Knowledge is mostly vested with tribal women.
Agriculture related Proverbs	Soil related: <i>Puttamannu</i> – <i>gattimannu</i> (meaning: Ant hill soil is best for nursery beds and plants) Weather forecasting related: <i>Uttara choosi</i> – <i>yettara gampa</i> (meaning: after <i>uttera</i> nakshatra there is no use of transplantation) Seed broadcasting: <i>Vadlu okati</i> – <i>visurlu rende</i> (meaning: throw the one fistful of paddy for two times.	
Knowledge of seed storage	Earthen pots, siali leaf baskets, bamboo baskets, application of cow dung paste around the baskets, application of wood ash, fungicidal and insecticidal plant parts in the seeds, storing the seeds above the cooking stove, storing the seeds in the ground (tubers), are some of the indigenous techniques.	Women farmers have the knowledge on the preservation of seed diversity and seed genetic resources.
Food and nutritional security	Conservation of food grains, vegetables, wild leafy vegetables to main food and nutritional security	Community celebrates <i>Nuakhia</i> festival before consuming the newly harvest foods and vegetables (cultivated and wild). Eating, the newly harvested / ripened crop or food without

Activity	Indigenous Knowledge (IK)	Socio-Cultural and Religious Practices
		celebrating the festival is a taboo. This mechanism ensures the balance of food and nutritional security to the entire community on sustainable lines. Besides, ensuring the healthy <b>biodiversity</b> .
Traditional knowledge and technology transmission practices	Dormitory education known as “Gothul / Akada Sal” etc. in different forms with different names (songs, dances, music, proverbs, practical demonstrations and participation) are all traditional schools of tribal education. These institutions are not only the socio-cultural centers but also the centers for tribal community development knowledge, including agriculture, ecology, health and livelihood aspects.	Traditional institutional functionaries, senior farmers (men and women), cultural heads, shall teach the tribal youth in different forms.

### Health and Nutrition

#### Indigenous Knowledge (IK) on Health and Nutrition

Tribal communities possess a vast indigenous knowledge on the ethno-botanical aspects. This is ranging from the knowledge on the medicinal plants for human, crop and cattle health, and also the health of the women and nutrition. The tribal concept of community health is mostly based on the worldview. The belief of the influence of malevolent and benevolent spirits on their health is based on their animistic philosophies. During various phases of evolutionary stages of animistic philosophies, the animistic thought on the existence of natural and supernatural spirits and their influence on their daily life and health have also emerged in the tribal societies. This has forced them to learn more from the nature. Thus, the art of learning on the medicinal herbs and

their usages by observation from animals and birds and by trial and error method is evolved. Thus, the folk medicine is evolved.

The emergence of the cadre of spiritual leaders to communicate with supernatural spirits to obtain the peace and health to the communities is also another stage of evolution of specialists. These spiritual leaders have been gradually developed as magico-religious and herbal medicine men.

These functionaries have addressed the health problems through their magico-religious and herbal health practices and it is still continuing in many tribal communities. Except for the minor ailments, the tribals main line of treatment consists *mantra*, ritual (*puja*) and herbal medicine. They prescribe small herbs and some parts of herbs for the minor ailments (primary health problems). If the problem is an acute one (physical or psychological) or a contagious/ communicable disease, they resort to the major treatment, which involves performing a ritual to appease the spirits by establishing communication through *mantras* and other cosmic tools and providing medicines to the patients. They have specific communication tools to communicate with the spirits of good and bad nature, causing the problem. Some of the tools include specific symbols known as *gondas / yantra / chakras*, sacred rings and sticks such as *bethu, bhairav* etc.

They possess vast knowledge on different medicinal plants for both physical and psychological ailments, which are classified into medicinal and magico-religious plants. Medicinal plants are mostly used for internal and external purposes and magico-religious and sacred plants or plant parts, epiphytes and animal parts are mostly used as external (as talisman / amulet) for psychological / neurological disorders, and offerings to the spiritual beings or used against the bad spirits (wooden nails, roots etc). The healers are generally called as *guniya / vejju* and magico-religious herbal men are called as *dhisari and gurumayi* etc. The names are community or area specific and some times they also perform other functions. There are also specialist traditional birth attendant cum medical women called *sutrani / dammuralu* and also women *gurumayis* to attend general health and maternity health of women and also children. On an average there are at least 3 traditional herbal healers in every tribal village with good amount of indigenous knowledge on herbal health practices, ranging from minor ailments to communicable diseases.

### **IK of Women on Wild Leafy Vegetables and Edible Tubers etc for Health and Nutrition**

Majority of the tribal women possess vast knowledge on indigenous nutritional practices based on their natural resources such as – wild leafy

vegetables, edible tubers, nuts, berries, fruits, flowers, meat etc. Their knowledge is ranging from seasonal foods to specific foods for specific cultural occasions to body and nutritional needs to specific age groups. This knowledge is integrated in their food cultures and food preparations. Each tribal region has its own traditional food cultures and the foods based on local resources and the preparation of these foods based on their indigenous knowledge is not only helpful for them to meet their body requirements, but also to meet their health, nutritional and growth needs. The traditional foods prepared with wild leafy vegetables and edible tubers and from the traditional grains, cereals and pulses provides them the nutritive, health and physical values with flavor, taste and smell, besides they are low cost. The traditional foods of tribals contains sufficient calories, lower in saturated fats, more iron and zinc, sufficient vitamin-E, calcium and other micro nutrients, besides cultural spiritual values.

### **Present Status of Tribal IK & Development Significant Worldview**

#### **Agriculture**

Indigenous tribal agricultural knowledge and related worldview are rapidly eroding because of modernization and acculturation. Modernization and the influx of mono crops and other cash crops and new crop management practices are adversely affecting tribal traditional agricultural practices. The functions of the traditional institutional functionaries such as – soil, land and crop management specialists are also vanishing rapidly owing to modernization and socio-political reasons. The traditional knowledge is dying on the one side and on the other - the hybridization process of tribal agriculture has begun, leading to a loss of agro and crop genetic diversity and also the traditional agricultural knowledge in the tribal belts.

#### **Ecology and Natural Resources**

The indigenous knowledge related to traditional nature resource management practices, biodiversity conservation and the custodians of this knowledge - the traditional institutions and the functionaries, eco-cultural based worldview of the tribals have started vanishing with the advent of alien cultures, acculturation and modernization and also due to eco-political interventions. On the other hand, the population pressure, poverty, indebtedness, land alienation etc are also forcing the tribals to exploit more and more forest resources. These factors are mainly contributing for the loss of biodiversity and livelihood base of the tribals, besides, the loss of medicinal plants for health and nutrition from the



wild. Tribal's attitude towards forest is being changed and the biodiversity in the region along with the eco-cultures of the tribals is dying.

### **Health and Nutrition**

In spite of the dependency of the urban and rural communities on the ethno-botanical knowledge and resources of the tribals, the modernization, environmental degradation and acculturation of tribals are leading to the problems of extinction of the natural resources including the medicinal plant species, the indigenous ethno-botanical / ethnic herbal knowledge in the tribal belts.

The modernization and the modern health development models are forcing the tribals to adopt alien models by keeping aside the indigenous knowledge, which are very harmful in the long run, not only to the tribals but also to the other non-tribal societies. It is the typical tendency of advanced medical sciences, to draw the base ethno-medical knowledge and even the resources and ignore and challenge the folk science application by the healers. Though many folk medical sciences are accepted as time tested and are being practiced from much before the advent of the classical and modern sciences, they are still facing the challenges.

The influx of modern knowledge systems are mostly biased towards their advanced theoretical frameworks, based on their scientific validation. This may be true, but the lacking point is the mutual learning, understanding and appreciation between modern medical sciences / health practices and herbal medical practices of the tribal healers. In the process, the tribal indigenous knowledge on ethno-botanical aspects are eroding, but the fact remains that in spite of the advanced modern medicine and Indian system medicine and knowledge, many tribals still depend on their traditional healers and their herbal and nutritional practices.

### **Missing Links and the Need of the Hour**

Quite some research and documentation work has been done by many researchers and development organizations to understand the diverse indigenous knowledge (IK) and worldview practices of the tribals. Most of them have been done and assessed in western perspectives and plans have been prepared for tribal integrated development. However, many of the relevant IK and worldview, functions of various traditional thematic functionaries and necessity for their integration, including traditional customary and cultural practices have been ignored during the planning and implementation of development programmes. The reasons are many. However, belatedly, their importance is increasingly being

acknowledged by policy makers, development planners and organizations, who are contemplating to revive and integrate them with main stream development interventions for sustainability.

In spite of knowing / realizing the relevance of tribal IK, worldviews, local values, customs and traditions, besides local resources, for integrated development, very negligible attention is being given to understand the internal logic of IK and the concepts of worldview (cosmo vision), the life and livelihoods of communities, specially the tribals. The conventional integrated development approaches are mostly confined to the integration / convergence of various sectoral modern development programmes and institutions for the tribal development, including livelihoods. These convergence exercises have mostly ignored the convergence of tribal IK, worldviews and traditional institutions with the thematic components in the sectoral approaches for development. This missing link in the planning and implementation is severely affecting the growth of tribal economy, health and nutritional status, besides, the development of bio-diversity. This is also effecting the growth of local, regional and national economies.

Therefore, it is the high time that the development organizations, either NGOs or G.Os. of the state, should focus more on the understanding of these tribal practices and initiate actions to facilitate judicious integration of indigenous knowledge, worldviews and traditional village institutions with the modern development knowledge, methodologies and institutions to achieve a comprehensive sociologically acceptable, economically viable, environmentally sound and culturally ethical lines of sustainable development, which is called - the Endogenous Development (ED).

### **IDEA's efforts for Tribal Integrated Development through Endogenous Development Approach**

IDEA (Integrated Development through Environmental Awakening), which is working for the endogenous development (ED) of the tribals in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh in North Eastern Ghats, has initiated participatory development action programmes for the documentation, conservation and revival of indigenous knowledge (IK) and development significant worldview practices of the tribals. IDEA is facilitating the tribal communities, through ED approach, to improve the agro-forest based livelihoods, health and nutritional securities, since two decades. Based on the experiences gained over the years, by IDEA, it is proposed that the indigenous knowledge and some of the development significant worldviews and functions of the traditional institutional functionaries of the tribals can be successfully and

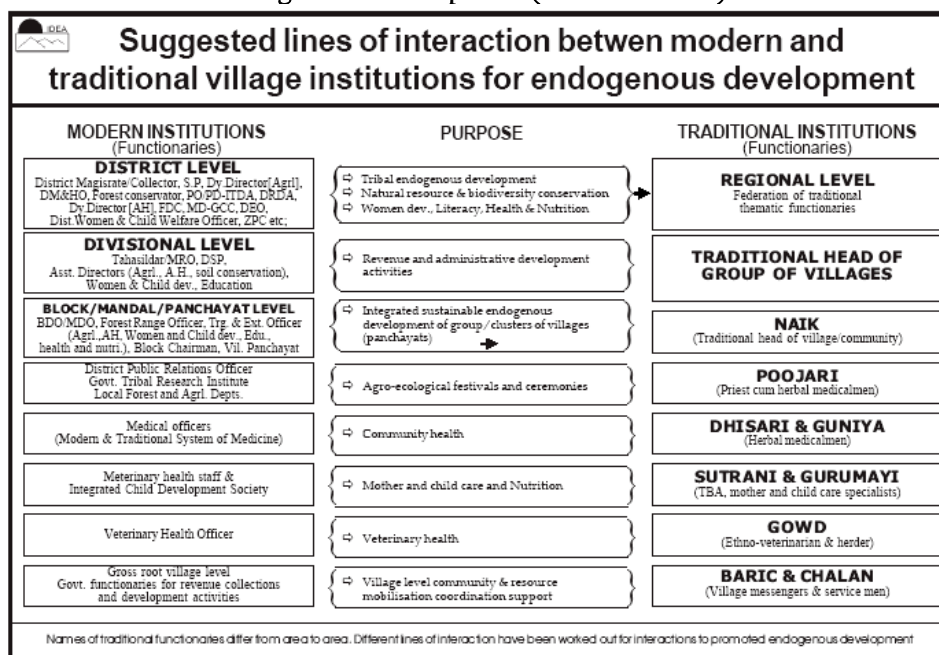
judiciously integrated with modern knowledge systems and institutions to promote sustainable endogenous development.

Unlike the so-called integrated development approaches and methodologies, this Endogenous Development approach, of IDEA, emphasizes the need to integrate conventional development models with IK, so as to ensure the comprehensive development with ensured sustainable eco-agri-cultural and forest based livelihoods, improved health and nutritional status to the tribal communities. This ED also ensures the revival of IK and development significant socio-ecological health and nutritional relevant customary cultural practices of the tribals and helps them to join the main stream development, while keeping their cultural identities intact.

### Suggested Strategies

The endogenous development needs to be promoted through the concepts called emotional integration and awakening. This entry point approach brings not only the people but also their minds together to promote awareness on the subject. This forms the base for sustainable development.

### Suggested Lines of Interactions between the Indigenous Knowledge / Traditional Institutions and Modern Knowledge and Institutions to promote Endogenous Development (General Model)



## Methodologies for Integration of Tribal Indigenous Knowledge with Modern Knowledge for Endogenous Development

### Ecology / Natural Resources

- Govt. forest conservation programmes can be linked up with tribal traditional natural resource management practices which can improve the forest based livelihoods on sustainable lines.
- Wild life conservation programmes can be linked up with totemic clan concepts and traditional conservation related song, dance and music of the tribals.
- *Akhand shikar* – the ceremonial hunting practices of the tribals during *chait(ra) parob* and *bisak parob* can be successfully moulded towards the natural resource assessment survey for the conservation and protection of the biodiversity with active tribal participation.
- Afforestation programmes with natural forest species can be successfully taken up by involving the tribal communities in the collection of diverse forest species during the ceremonial hunting ritual and plantation of the same by direct sowing method on the hills during the first monsoon rains with the involvement of men and women. This would improve the biodiversity and forest based livelihoods, health and nutritional securities of the communities. Special provisions and enactments are needed to be done by the concerned Govt. development agencies.
- Environment related rituals and festivals of the tribals can be revived and strengthened through the active involvement of department of cultural affairs of the Government.
- First eating ceremonies known as *nuakhiya*, which are food security related cultural mechanisms can be revived, so as to maintain the balance of food and nutritional securities to the tribal communities and also to the wild life as a whole, besides re-generation of forests.

### Agriculture

- The traditional institutional functionaries can be involved in the selection, planning and for technical suggestions to take up agro-forestry activities in the shifting cultivation patches for the mountain agricultural farmers.

- Dept. of Agriculture, soil conservation and soil testing departments can establish contact with senior farmers and traditional institutional functionaries with knowledge on the soil testing and also on the selection of specific crops on specific soils.
- Traditional seed testing knowledge can be improved by providing the modern techniques and parameters by the department of agriculture.
- The knowledge on the natural pest control, botanical pesticides and application of organic manures can be further improved by providing support to the farmers to conduct on-farm experimentations, further documentations, validations and standardizations of the formulas with active collaborations among research institutes and agricultural extension departments.
- Traditional land, soil and water management and water harvesting practices can be integrated with modern watershed and water harvesting programmes.
- Traditional weed management practices can be successfully revived through modern scientific methods to improve the agricultural productivity and livelihoods.
- The knowledge of the indigenous crop health healers can be integrated with modern crop health programmes under integration of pest management programmes.
- Traditional seed and seed genetic resource conservation programmes can be improved with modern scientific backups.

#### **Herbal Health and Nutrition**

- Tribal herbal health knowledge can be enhanced through capacity building to the tribal healers by the modern / Indian system of medical disciplines.
- Primary health related problems at the household and village level can be successfully addressed through a systematic revival through scientific support by involving the researchers and tribal healers in the participatory planning and implementation.
- The Govt. Ayurvedic medical personnel can interact with tribal herbal healers for catering the herbal health needs of the communities.

## General

- Govt. Allopathic and Ayurvedic medical personnel can interact with tribal herbal healers and traditional birth attendants to address the communicable diseases, first aid, immunization programmes etc.
- Promotion of village or cluster based herbal health care centers and village based herbal research centers with the active involvement of tribal healers.
- Integrated child development service (ICDS) programmes can integrate their nutritional improvement programmes with the tribal traditional nutritional practices successfully etc.
- Involvement of tribal healers in herbal health based livelihood activities, wild leafy vegetables, traditional nutritional foods etc.
- The Govt. veterinary health care personnel can closely interact with tribal cattle health healers to improve the health and nutritional status of small and large cattle in the tribal villages, so that animal husbandry based livelihoods of the communities can be improved.
- Encouragement to tribal healers and traditional birth attendants to promote networks and federations to closely interact with Govt. institutions in the health sector.

*(The author is conducting several significant participatory action researches on the tribal worldview and indigenous knowledge system related to community traditional natural resource management practices and promoting endogenous development in this sector, since two decades, through his organisation - IDEA).*

## References

- Eco-people for Endogenous Development; by K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar
- Culture and Agro-ecology in Tribal Areas; by K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar
- Ethnic Herbs; by K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar
- Endogenous Development in Tribal Agriculture; by K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar
- Hand book of Ethno-botany; by S.K. Jan and V.Mudgal
- Forest Tribes of Orissa; Klaus Seeland, M. K.Jena, Padmini Pathi, Jagannath Dash, Kamala K.Pattnaik
- Eco-people in Eco-development; by K.J.N.Gowtham Shankar
- Primitive Tribes of Orissa; by N. Patnaik

# MANKIRDIA <sup>1</sup>

A B Ota <sup>2</sup>  
S. C. Mohanty <sup>3</sup>

The Mankirdia constitute a semi nomadic section of the Birhor tribe. They are primarily a hunting and food gathering community. For their traditional skill of rope making, trapping and eating monkey, their neighbours call them 'Mankidi' or 'Mankidia'. In the district of Kalahandi and Sundargarh they are named Mankidi whereas in Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts they go by the name Mankirdia. They catch and kill monkeys from the forests and eat monkey's meat. When these monkeys create havoc in the rural areas and destroy crops, fruits and vegetables, the local people employ the Mankirdias to catch them.

They are one of the most archaic and little known forest dwelling and nomadic communities of the state as well as the country. They wander inside forests in small bands and stay at different *tandas* - the temporary make shift settlements, comprising of temporary dome shaped leaf huts, known as *kumbhas*. They speak a Munda language and some of them are also conversant in Oriya.

The typical physical characteristic features of Mankirdia are short stature, dark complexion with long head, broad flat nose, thick lips, wavy hair, loose arms and bow-like legs. They are simple and shy in nature.

The nomadic hunter-gatherer group exemplifies the past life of human beings in the forest in archaic conditions. The scenic Chotanagpur plateau is said to be their place of origin. From there they might have migrated to different parts of Orissa and ultimately chosen temporary habitations around the hill tracts. Besides Orissa, they are found in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Orissa, small wandering bands of Mankirdia are largely found in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Jajpur, Deogarh, Sundergarh

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Photo Hand Book on PTGs: Series –IV (2008)

<sup>2</sup> Director, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Research Officer, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar

and Sambalpur districts. They are mostly distributed in and around the Similipal hills. They number 1050 persons as per 2001 census. About 99 % of the Mankirdia populations are ruralites. Their sex ratio is 937 females per 1000 males. Only 7 percent of them are literates.

Their traditional style of dress and ornaments are plain and simple. They follow the same pattern as the neighbouring Munda speaking tribes like the Santal, Munda, Kol, Ho etc. Men use coarse handloom loin cloth and women wear similar *sarees*. These white coloured clothes have coloured check pattern and are woven by local weavers. Women put on few ornaments made of glass, beads and cheap metal. Often women fix a wooden comb in their hair knot.

### **Habitat & Settlement**

The Mankirdia wander in the forest tracts of the states, like Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhatisgarh and West Bengal. Generally they are seen moving in the jungle areas of northwestern Orissa comprising the districts, such as Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Balasore, Jajpur and Dhenkanal.

Sometimes they travel long distances in the jungle crossing the State and district boundaries in search of games and natural resources i.e., the *siali* creepers and minor forest produce. For instance they wander from Orissa to Hazaribagh district. It has been observed that often they go out of State and come back after two or three years. It has also been found that the Mankirdia bands had moved out of State and were camping in and around TATA Nagar in Jharkhand State for about a year mainly for marital purposes and then they had returned to the Mayurbhanj district after that.

The temporary settlement of Mankirdia is a small one, called *tanda* - the leaf hutments. After observing the ritual testing of suitability of the site by the *Dehuri*, the priest, a new *tanda* is set up at a place close to forest, water source and weekly *hat*. Most often the *tanda* is found in the fringe of a village.

Large number of families in a *tanda* affects adversely to their forest and market based economy. So it houses 10 to 15 families comprising about 50 people. Some of the families are related to each other consanguinally and others, affinally. In a *tanda*, besides the *kumbhas* (leaf huts) belonging to the individual families, there are two other huts, called *Dhugala*, used by the unmarried boys and *Kudi Ada*, used by the unmarried girls for sleeping in night. In one more *kumbha* the *tanda* deity is installed.



More often their *tandas* are traced in and around the Similipal hills of Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts. One can see their camps in the fringes of the Similipal forest close to the areas of the Karanjia, Jashipur, Rairangpur and Thakurmunda blocks in Mayurbhanj district.

Their movement from place to place is more frequent in summer than in other seasons. But in rainy season they set up their *tanda* and stay all the four months in a locality preferably near a peasant village. In winter season they change the camp two or three times. The frequent change of settlement is primarily made in search of forest produce. Moreover, the wanton destruction of the forest by some tribal communities who practise shifting cultivation and by non-tribal people who gather fire wood and forest produce from the forest make it difficult for the Mankirdia to get the required amount of forest produce i.e., the *siali* bark with which they make ropes. But the general pattern of movement is that a Birhor *tanda* is confined to one or two places in the rainy season and it more frequently shifts in summer months.

The Mankirdia wandering in Karanjia area have their own reasons for frequent change of camps. They divide themselves into different groups on the basis of kinship ties and move from place to place in search of forest resources, mainly for abundant availability of the mature *siali* creepers and monkey population and the prospect of marketing of ropes.

The other reasons could be short supply of *siali* creepers and disturbed monkey populations at an approachable distance in the forest and diminishing demand of rope among the peasants and other people of the locality. Superstition over the issue of unnatural death of a relation, constant conflict among *tanda* members, seeking for a prospective bride, violation of incest taboo, observation of rites and rituals of a close relative at other *tanda*, etc. often force the Mankirdia to leave one *tanda* and join with other groups. During monsoon the Mankirdia stick to a place to avail the seasonal employment opportunity in the agricultural operations of the local farmers.

Whenever, the people of a *tanda* want to shift to a new place all the families of the *tanda* move together to the new place where they set up their new *tanda*. A man can leave his parent *tanda* at his will and join a new *tanda* elsewhere. He is also at liberty to return to his parent *tanda* where he will be received by the inmates of the *tanda* cordially. It is the customary practice that the newcomer offers drinks to the headman and the fellowmen of the *tanda* for his readmission.

## Housing

*Kumbha*, the leaf huts in which the Mankirdia live are dome shaped, having an opening for entrance. It is made of twigs with leaves of *sal* (*shorea robusta*) tree, woven in a framework of wooden saplings tied together with *siali* fiber. The height of *kumbha* as found in Karanjia area of Mayurbhanj district in Orissa, is about 5 feet. It covers a circular space having a circumference of 46 - 50 feet. During the rainy season they build an earthen ridge around the outer circumference of the *kumbha* to prevent seepage of water into it. It is windowless but has a door (*badgir*) shutter of 3'x3' size made of twigs and *sal* leaves. The structure is leak proof.

The Mankirdia enter into the *kumbha* by creeping. The *kumbha* accommodates humans, domestic animals and birds, and the scanty household belongings. Their belongings include few clothes, cooking and serving pots and utensils, few implements made of wood and iron used for rope making. A portion inside it serves as kitchen and store. They are so skilled in constructing the *kumbha* that a Mankirdia family takes few hours to collect the required raw materials and build a *kumbha*. The Mankirdia say, "the *kumbha* keeps them warm in winter, cool in summer, and it is wind and waterproof".

A tiny *kumbha* erected behind the main one is used as the abode of their ancestral deity, *Alabonga*. They strongly believe that the spirits of the deceased live with them in the *tanda*. The main *kumbha* is destroyed before a Mankirdia abandons a *tanda* and migrates to another locality. But the ancestor's tiny *kumbha* is left intact. Rather the sacred materials kept within it are carried respectfully to be placed in a new tiny hut in the new *tanda*.

## Livelihood

The primary occupation of the Mankirdias is making of ropes out of the bark of the *siali* creepers (*Lama bayer*), which are used by the local peasantry for different agricultural and domestic purposes. Various kinds of ropes prepared by the Mankirdia are listed below.

The craft of rope making is the lifeline of Mankirdia's subsistence economy. They produce good variety of fibers by chopping and stripping the bark of seasoned *siali* creepers. In an open-air workshop, which sits in front of their *kumbhas* and most often beneath big trees, they tear the *siali* fibres into different sizes, make thin threads and braid and twist them to get the finished products of ropes, slings, nets, bags and small baskets (*topa*). The *topas* are used for oil pressing in

an indigenous way. It helps contain oil seeds placed between two wooden planks which are pressed for extraction of oil by crude method by the tribals.

Local term	Mankirdia term	Manner of use	Daily out turn
1. <i>Sika</i> (Sling)	<b>Sikur</b>	Used in carrying poles for carrying things on shoulders	2 pairs per head
2. <i>Pagha</i> (Halter for cattle)	<b>Pagha</b>	Rope for tethering cattle	20 pieces per head
3. <i>Barjao</i> (Rope for drawing water)	<b>Barehi</b>	Used for drawing water by means of pots from wells	10 pieces per two persons
4. <i>Panda chhati</i> (Halter for buffalo)	<b>Kodadgha</b>	Ropes in which buffaloes are tethered	8 to 10 pieces per head
5. <i>Chheli Pagha</i> (Halter for goat)	<b>Meronijoda</b>	For tying goats	20 pieces per head
6. <i>Jaunli</i> (Rope used during harvest)	<b>Dhaunri</b>	For tying cattle at the time of harvest	10 to 12 pieces per head

Except the oil press baskets and halters used for tying the buffaloes, which cannot be prepared by women, all other types of ropes are made by both the sexes. The women folk, more particularly, the old generation weave mat out of date-palm leaves for their own use but not for sale. On an average a Mankirdia produces items worth Rs.100/- to Rs. 140/- in a day.

In this craft making they use small tools like axe, knife, bamboo club and knife-sized bamboo/wooden blade. At times, they use jute as raw material to prepare ropes to meet requirements of local peasants. Now-a-days some Mankirdias are making fancy items like hand bags out of jute and *siali* strings. These products have a good demand among the local peasants. The later use these products with their agricultural implements and tying cattle and to draw water from the wells with the help of the ropes.

The Mankirdias are skilled monkey catchers. They use large nets made of *siali* fibers for catching monkeys. They eat the flesh of the monkeys and sell the skin to the local skin traders for cash. A taboo is observed against the use of

turmeric paste for preparing curry out of monkey's flesh. It is generally believed by them that the use of turmeric in the preparation of the said curry will make them unsuccessful in their monkey hunting. Often, they catch birds, snares, squirrels, hare and deer with the help of traps and nets. The birds and animals caught are generally sold in nearby villages or at market places for cash.

During their trip to forest for collection of barks, they dig out roots, fibres and also collect honey which supplements their diet. In many places *tussar* cocoons are available in forest and the Mankirdias are well acquainted with these places. The sale of cocoons adds to the income of the Mankirdias in the form of cash, which they use for buying their clothes. The Mankirdia rear domestic animals like, goats, fowls, dogs etc to supplement their food and income

Many Mankirdias have learnt some of the techniques of agricultural operations such as weeding, transplanting and harvesting of paddy. The local people very often employ them as labourers during agricultural season. The wage earned from this pursuit by both the sexes adds to their family income.

Although the Mankirdias tap different sources for their livelihood, they run deficit in their food supply many a times. During scarce period they eat mango kernels, which are preserved at home for consumption in difficult times. The staple food of the Mankirdia is rice. With the sale proceeds of ropes and forest produce they buy their weekly requirements of rice and other provisions from the market. They also buy corn and minor millets in harvest seasons and eat these in addition to cooked rice. They collect various types of green leaves, mushrooms and various types of fruits such as *Kendu*, palm and mango from the forest for their own consumption. During festive occasions they prepare and eat non-veg dishes, various kinds of cakes and other delicious items. They like the most to eat the flesh of monkey. When they kill monkey and have some surplus meat, they dry it under the sun and preserve it for future consumption.

They are also fond of alcoholic drinks like their traditional rice beer (*handia*) and *mohuli* liquor. Handia is their most favorite drink which women prepare at home. They also buy and consume drinks available in the market places. Mankirdia males smoke and chew tobacco

The subsistence activities of Mankirdia revolve around forests and the markets. Therefore they venerate the natural forest for their safety from the attack of wild animals and for a successful hunt and availability of forest produce. Annually they have a great ceremonial hunt in the forest, known as *Disum Sendra*. Often they use to live in makeshift hutments in the forest for

about half a week or so to perform the forest collections and return to their *tanda* for preparation of ropes and baskets.

In the weekly market days they visit markets without fail for disposal of ropes and procurement of their daily provisions. The other attractions are meeting friends and relatives and enjoying tasty snacks and drinks. The bachelors and spinsters seek in the market the possibility of meeting with their beloved ones from different *tandas*. Under the impact of modernization the Birhor minds are tuned with the market economy but they still practise barter. Occasionally, they are seen in village streets trying push-sale of ropes and small baskets in exchange of rice and *mudhi* (puffed rice) - the popular fast food of Mayurbhanj district.

Forest provides them with free supply of raw materials, i.e., *siali* fibres with which they make ropes and baskets. The market provides them the outlet for selling or bartering their products on one hand and buying their requirements on the other. Their livelihood depends upon regular interaction with the forest and market.

The economic life of the Mankirdia is full of hazards and hardships and barely at the level of subsistence. Even though they live from hand to mouth, they appear to be joyful and contented.

### **Social Life**

The Mankirdia perceive life as a continuous process from birth to death, through the phases of infancy, adolescence, youth, marriage, family life and old age. The death, which brings life to an end, takes him/her to the unseen world where a man is transformed into a spirit and starts influencing the fate of living human beings. Hence, they have the "Cult of Ancestor Worship"

The **birth** of a baby is a matter of great rejoices among the Mankirdias. The father is addressed as *Aba* and the mother, as *Mai*. Being addressed as such they feel proud of their parenthood whereas those having none to address them as such remain unhappy. Among them a male child is preferred to a female child because the latter leaves her parents after marriage.

During pregnancy a woman observes some taboos and prohibitions regarding her food, work and mobility. She is relieved of doing hard work and particularly, cooking. Most often she is not allowed to go out or come in contact with a dead body and move near the shrine. She is forbidden to take consecrated

meat. While going out she must cover her body completely with her clothes, lest enemies or persons with evil eye may cause harm.

After the birth of the child, which often takes place with the help of a traditional midwife, the whole *tanda* is considered polluted for a period of 7 days and the family in which the birth takes place observes pollution for 21 days.

**Marriage** is very colourful event in a Mankirdia's life. It takes place when a girl attains 14 -18 years of age and a boy, 20 - 25 years. Prior to marriage the Mankirdia boys and girls have to spend at least 2 years in their dormitories to learn the lessons of life from their seniors after which the marriage is contemplated.

Marriage within the *tanda* is in vogue as the *tanda* is multi-clan in structure. Cross-cousin marriage is absent but marriages of sororate and levirate types are in vogue. Arranged marriage is common. Besides, marriage by elopement and marriage by exchange are also practised. For all regular kinds of marriage the customary bride price is paid by the groom's side to the bride's parents. It usually comprises some amount of cash and three pieces of clothes. Their society permits divorce, remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees.

There is no specified month for holding wedding ceremonies. Generally the best time for marriage is after the monsoon when people have some savings in hand and the guests and relatives can be entertained without difficulty. On the wedding day the groom accompanied by his friends, relatives and *tanda* members goes in a merry procession to the bride's *tanda* where they are accorded a warm reception by the bride's side. With pomp and ceremony the marriage is solemnized by the groom smearing vermilion on the bride's forehead. At this time the boys and girls of both the parties dance and sing in great joy and happiness to the tune of their drums and other musical instruments. After the wedding ceremony is over, the bride and the groom with the party return to the latter's *tanda* where the groom's father arranges a feast for them.

The Mankirdia **family** is invariably of nuclear type. It comprises of father, mother and unmarried children. In some cases either the widow mother or the widower father lives with the married son in his family. The next higher social unit is clan that regulates marriage and prohibits incestuous sexual union. A number of clans are found among the Mankirdias, some of which are *Sinkhili*, *Hembrum*, *Nagpuria*, *Malihi*, *Sikria*, etc.

In a Mankirdia family men and women supplement and complement each other as equal partners. While men take up harder jobs like hunting, women accomplish relatively lighter tasks besides shouldering their routine responsibilities of housekeeping, child care, processing, cooking and serving food. Children help their parents and there by learn the art of living in their respective gender based domains. Even the aged people do not sit idle. They do whatever they can to contribute to the family budget.

When **death** takes place in any Mankirdia's house, other members of his family send the news to all the people of their lineage. Death occurring prior to old age is believed to be caused due to the machination of evil spirits or sorcerers. Generally, the dead body is buried in a trench. Head of the dead body is kept in southwest direction. The pollution is observed for a period of ten days. On the 10th day *Dehuri* (priest) conducts purificatory rites and sprinkles water all over the *tanda* and over the lineage members. In the evening a feast is arranged for the elderly persons of the *tanda*, lineage members and other invitees.

### **Magico-Religious Life**

The Birhors are polytheists. Basically they worship the elements of nature. They believe that Gods and spirits who create trouble and illness and death are malevolent and others who bring progress and prosperity and overall well being to the society are benevolent.

Like most of the neighbouring Munda speaking tribes they worship the Sun God as their Supreme God. In the thicket of Similipal hill ranges the abode of their two supreme deities such as *Logobir* and *Budhimai* lies.

They worship their ancestors for the purpose of enjoying good health and achieving success in hunting and collection of forest produce without meeting any accident. They are worshipped regularly in different months. Every clan has its own deity for which, a small leaf hut is constructed in the *Tanda* and food and prayers are offered to the deity on all ritual occasions.

### **Social Control**

For all practical purposes the Mankirdia *tanda* is an autonomous socio-political unit. The headman of the *Tanda* is called *Mukhya*. His post is hereditary. The headman often acts as the priest. In this capacity he worships the deities and officiates in all the ritual performances. He does not receive any remuneration for his services except a major share of the sacrificial meat. But he commands respect and allegiance of his fellowmen.

Customary matters relating to the *tanda* and its members are discussed and decided in the meetings of the traditional Tanda council. The male household heads of the *tanda* are members of the council which is headed by the *Mukhya*. They punish the sinners and offenders by social boycott, which they call *chindal* or *began*. The situation which invokes this kind of social sanction is incestuous sexual union between brother and sister or persons belonging to the same clan who are also considered as brothers and sisters by blood or with the members of the communities whom the Mankirdia consider socially inferior to them. When any person develops maggots in the sore on any part of the body he is also boycotted until the sore is healed and a purificatory ritual is conducted accompanied with a common feast in the *tanda*.

As regards their social interaction with the neighbouring communities, the Mankirdia eat cooked food in the houses of Santal and Kolha but not the *vice versa*. They do not accept cooked food from the Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and the Kharias. Any breach of this social norm leads to social boycott.

### **Music, Song & Dance**

Like other tribes of Orissa, the Mankirdia are passionately fond of music, songs and dancing through which their artistic talents find expression. They dance and sing when they are in happy mood. Dancing and music are associated with all the rituals and festivals. This is a way to free oneself from the tired and boring life. They may sing, dance and beat the drums unceasingly the whole night. Their music, songs and dances closely resemble those of their neighbouring tribes viz, Munda, Kol and Santal.

The principal varieties of dances they traditionally perform are known as the *Dong*, the *Lagre*, and the *Mutkar*, the *Kadur* (with *Gena*) and the *Karam* (with *Khemta*, *Jhumar*, and *Hansda*) dances. Each of these dances is associated with appropriate songs known respectively as the *Dong siring*, the *Lagre siring* and *Mutkar siring* etc. The characteristic Mankirdia dances- the *Dong*, the *Lagre* and the *Mutkar* are really wedding dances performed in accompaniment to marriage songs on occasions of weddings. *Lagre* songs are mostly worded in Hindi. Devotional songs are sung during religious ceremonies.

For dance and music they use various kinds of musical instruments like the *dholak* or *madal*, *tomka* or *nagra* (kettle drums), the *tirio* or the bamboo flute with 3 or 5 or 7 holes along its length and stopped by the fingers, the *kendera* or banjo with a wooden body and a sounding board covered with the



lizard skin and strings played with a bow, and clappers and ankle-bells (*ghungurs*) both made of brass.

Dancing is associated with all happy occasions like births, weddings, feasts and festivals. Dancing is invariably accompanied by singing and drumming. The males play the musical instruments and females dance to the rhythm singing songs.

The Mankirdia dance is a group affair. Boys and girls, old and young, participate in it. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the time and place for dancing. But they generally dance at night. The dancers do not wear any special dress during their performances. Mankirdia dances, even today, are a source of healthy recreation.

### **Planned Change**

The Mankirdia pursue a semi-nomadic way of life. For their livelihood they are very much dependent on forest and more particularly the Similipal hill ranges which are now a National Park and a Tiger Project. Usually, they set up their *tandas* very close to forest. Their *tandas* are seen in and around the Similipal forest.

Due to operation of forest and wild life conservation rules and regulations, the free movements of these nomads deep inside the forests and for that matter, their subsistence activities have been checked. As they are yet to graduate into a settled economy, they are left without any viable alternative.

Now the Birhors are thinking to give up their wandering habits and settle down permanently upon agriculture and allied pursuits. Presently, they have been identified as one among the 13 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) of Orissa. A Micro Project named Hill-Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HK&MDA) headquartered at Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district is working for bringing about their all round development since 1987.

This Micro Project has setup two Mankirdia settlement colonies, one at Durdura village of Jashipur Block and another at Kendumundi village of Karanjia Block under Karanjia ITDA in Mayurbhanj district in which it has successfully rehabilitated two bands of Mankirdias. In these colonies the Mankirdia families have been provided with community houses, wells, tube wells, Anganwadi Centers at the community level and Indira Awaas houses, kitchen gardens, Voter Identity Cards, Ration Cards, BPL cards, Old Age Pensions and also the benefits of different Income Generating Schemes etc. individually.

The community has shown a good response to their development programmes initiated by the micro project and other agencies. By the impact of these interventions some of them have crossed the poverty line; turned literate, sharecroppers, petty businessmen, tractor drivers and sent their children to schools. All of them have given up their wandering habit and lead a settled life.

This Agency's area of operation is limited. There are other bands of Mankirdias still wandering outside the Micro Project area. They are seen in few localities of Karanjia, Rairangpur, Kaptipada, Baripada ITDAs of Mauyrbhanj district and the adjoining Nilagiri ITDA area of Balasore district and the Similipal National Park. In these areas, for not being permanent residents they are relatively deprived of the development interventions. There they lead a life of impoverishment coupled with illiteracy, landlessness, homelessness, etc. Influenced by the progress of the Mankirdias rehabilitated in Kendumundi and Durdura colonies by HK&MDA these wandering bands also want to settle down.

# THE BIRHOR <sup>1</sup>

N. Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Many tribes of India depend upon hunting and food gathering for their subsistence. The means of livelihood is such that these hunting communities are invariably nomadic. Some of them have very little contact with any other communities while some others are in contact to some extent and have developed a symbiotic relationship with them. The Birhors, a nomadic tribal community of northern Orissa, fall to the category of such a hunting and food gathering group having reciprocal economic relations with their neighbouring peasants.

The main concentration of the Birhors is in Bihar where their population was 3,464 in the 1971 Census. Their number in Orissa during the same Census period was 98.

It may be noted that the local people identify the Birhors in various ways. In the district of Kalahandi and Sundergarh they are called as Mankidi whereas in Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts they go by the name Mankirdia. In fact, both the Mankirdia and the Mankidi are one and the same and they both are none but the Birhors. But in the 1971 Census the Birhor, the Mankidi and the Mankirdia have been enumerated separately because they have been enlisted as separate tribal groups in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. Taken together the Birhors including the Mankidis and Mankirdias numbered 1,307 persons in 1971 Census.

Their distribution in different districts of the State according to **1971 Census** is given in the **Table.I** (next page).

The reason for calling Birhors as Mankidi or Mankirdia is that they are skilled in catching monkeys. When the monkeys create havoc in the rural areas

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVII Nos.2 & 3,1987, pp 1-17

<sup>2</sup> Director, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

and destroy crops, fruits and vegetables, the local people employ the Birhors to catch and kill them. The Birhors belong to the Austro-Asiatic language group and according to their mother tongue the Birhor means 'men' (Hor) 'of the forest' (Bir). They are dark skinned, short statured, long headed, wavy haired and broad nosed people.

**TABLE-I**  
**Distribution of Birhor Population (1971 Census)**

Sl. No. (1)	Name of the District (2)	Total Population (3)
1.	Sambalpur	241
2.	Sundergarh	221
3.	Keonjhar	104
4.	Mayurbhanj	486
5.	Balasore	41
6.	Balangir	23
7.	Koraput	22
8.	Cuttack	4
9.	Kalahandi	154
10	Ganjam	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,307</b>

There are two types of Birhors – the Uthul, i.e. nomadic Birhors and the Jagi, i.e. settled Birhors. It is to the nomadic section of the tribe that our attention is directed in this report. The Birhors move from place to place in different groups in a specified area within the State.

Each group comprises on an average 10 to 15 households. Some of the households may be related to one another by blood and others by marriage. A Birhor camp is called 'Tanda', which is generally set up in a place close to the forest and near some market centre and peasant village.

### **Material Culture**

The Birhors distinguish three seasons in a year; rainy, winter and summer season. The change of place is frequent in summer season than in other two seasons. In fact, the Birhors stick to a place where they set up their *Tanda* and stay for all the four months in the rainy season (June to September). Their *Tanda* is located in a place which is very close to a market centre and also to the mountain ranges covered with thick forest. With the destruction of the forests, it is becoming very difficult now-a-days to find such a place. Under such

circumstances nearness to the market centre is given more preference to that of the forest while selecting a place for setting up the *Tanda*.

**Table-2**  
**Seasonal Change of Locations of Tanda**

Sl.No.	Name of the Place of Tanda	District	Season
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Nilgiri	Balasore	Rainy
2	Kendumundi	Mayurbhanj	Rainy
3	Melana	Keonjhar	Rainy
4	Satkosia	Mayurbhanj	Winter
5	Dhokota	Keonjhar	Winter
6	Gudabhanga	Mayurbhanj	Winter
7	Dongadiha	Mayurbhanj	Winter
8	Hathikocha	Keonjhar	Winter
9	Nadinocha	Keonjhar	Winter
10	Marichapal	Keonjhar	Winter
11	Tamaka	Keonjhar	Summer
12	Kalipani	Cuttack	Summer
13	Angul	Dhenkanal	Summer
14	Daitari	Keonjhar	Summer
15	Nandara	Keonjhar	Summer
16	Patalikota	Keonjhar	Summer
17	Harichandanpur	Keonjhar	Summer
18	Janghira	Keonjhar	Summer
19	Jaikeshi	Keonjhar	Summer

In winter season the Birhors feel the need for changing the camp two or three times. But such changes are more frequent in the summer season because of shortage of food supply in a particular place. The barks of *Siali* creepers which is the main forest produce to which their subsistence and livelihood is intimately attached are available in plenty in rainy season and therefore shifting of *Tanda* is not necessary in this season.

The situation in the summer season is different. In this season the forest growth is affected by the hot sun and forest fire. Moreover, the wanton destruction of the forest by some tribal communities who practise shifting cultivation and by the non-tribal people who gather fuel wood from the forest

make it difficult for the Birhors to get the required amount of bark in one place and therefore they are forced to change their camp two or three times.

The Birhors make their huts in leaves. A hut which is called 'Kumbha' is conical in shape having an oval shaped base covering in circumference about 50 feet living space inside. The height of the Kumbha at the center is 5 feet.

There is an entrance in the middle on the long side of the hut which is 3 feet in breadth. The Kumbha is divided into three compartments. On the right side of the entrance is a space set apart for the Kitchen. During rains when cooking is not possible outdoors, the foods are cooked at this place. The central part is used for sleeping. On its left side there is a place which is used for storing things. In the rear portion of the hut, the goat-pen is present on the right side and the fowl-pen is present on the left side. The pet-dog of the family finds its place either in the sleeping portion or in the rear end of the hut according to its convenience. A door called *Bagdir* made of twigs woven in leaves is used to close the entrance when the family members are out on hunting and gathering in the forest.

The *Kumbha* is made of saplings thatched with twigs having leaves. A wooden beam supported by two forked wooden poles stuck to the ground holds the frame of the *Kumbha* in position. Rafters laid on either side of the beam are covered with twigs with leaves. Wooden splits one inside and the other outside the *Kumbha* are tied to each other by means of *Siali* barks to keep the rafters intact. The hut is thatched very skillfully to make it rainproof.

A household has its own *Kumbha* in which parents and children sleep at night. Besides, there are two other types of *Kumbhas* in every *Tanda*. One *Kumbha* known as *Dhingala* is used by the unmarried boys for sleeping at night and the other *Kumbha* known as *Kudi Ada* is for the unmarried girls.

The *Tanda* is heterogeneous in clan composition and each clan has a small hut of its own set apart as the Shrine of the clan deity. The clan members offer food and worship the deity in this place.

As the Birhors led a nomadic style of life they keep their household belongings to the minimum so that they can move from place to place conveniently. The **Table 3** gives a list of their household articles, domesticated animals, processed products and miscellaneous items of objects which were found in a *Tanda* during our field work. This inventory concerns five Birhor households of a *Tanda* which was located at Kendumundi, a multi-caste village

17kms. Away from Karanjia on the Karanjia-Thakurmunda road in Mayurbhanj district.

**TABLE 3**  
**Inventory of Household Belongings**

Name of the Item	Guni Mankirdia	Ram Das Mankirdia	Akala Mankirdia	Kailas Mankirdia	Kasia Mankirdia	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<b>Food stuffs</b>						
Rice	2Kgs.	1Kg.	3Kgs.	2Kgs.	3Kgs.	11Kgs.
Oil	100 Gms.	50 Gms.	200 Gms.	100 Gms.	250Gms.	700 Gms.
Maize	..	..	..	..	1Kg.	1Kg.
Spices	Rs.2	Rs.1	Rs.3	Rs.2	Rs.3	Rs.11
Dried Monkey Meat	1Kg.	..	2Kgs.	..	1Kg.	4Kgs.
<b>Processed products</b>						
Rope	20 Mtrs.	..	..	10Mtrs	20Mtrs.	50Mtrs.
Broom	1	1	..	..	1	3Nos.
Sling	2	1	1	1	2	7Nos.
Halter	1	2	1	3	2	9Nos.
Mat	1	2	2	2	6	13Nos.
Net (Monkey catcher)	1	1	2	1	1	6Nos.
Net (Squirrel catcher)	1	1	..	1	1	4Nos.
<b>Adornments</b>						
Ornament	1 Pair ear-ring rolled gold)	..	1 Necklace (rolled gold)	..	..	..
Talcum powder	1 Pkt. (50 Gms.)	..	1 Pkt. (50 Gms.)	..	..	2Pkts. (100Gms.)
Clothes Nos)	6	6	8	6	7	33 Pieces
Comb	..	1	..	..	1	2Nos
<b>Animals &amp; Birds</b>						
Goat	1	8	2	3	4	18 Nos.
Poultry	..	1	2	..	4	7Nos.
Dog	..	..	2	1	1	4Nos.
<b>Utensils</b>						
Cooking Vessels (big).	2	1	2	3	2	10 Nos.
Cooking Vessels small)	2	2	2	..	1	7 Nos.

Aluminium utensils	..	3	3	4	4	14 Nos.
Bell bowl	..	..	..	..	2	2 Nos.
<b><i>Tools and Weapons</i></b>						
Knife	2	2	1	1	1	7 Nos.
Axe	2	4	2	2	2	12 Nos.
Wooden flattened stick	3	2	..	..	4	9 Nos.
Vegetable cutter	..	..	..	..	1	1 No.
<b><i>Miscellaneous</i></b>						
Ladle made of coconut shell	..	1	..	..	..	1 No.
Monkey hide	2	1	..	..	2	5 Nos.
<b><i>Bamboo items</i></b>						
Basket (big)	2	3	2	2	4	13 Nos.
Basket (small)	1	1	..	1	3	6 Nos.
Bottle	4	3	..	2	1	10 Nos.
Bag	1	..	..	..	1	2 Nos.
Bamboo yoke	1	2	1	1	2	7 Nos.
Bamboo stick	..	..	1	..	..	1 No.
<b><i>Containers</i></b>						
Made of net	1	..	1	1	..	3 Nos.
Snail shell	20	..	..	..	..	20 Nos.
Peacock tail	1	..	..	..	2	3 Nos.
Water container	3	..	2	..	2	7 Nos.
Sac	..	..	1	1	1	3 Nos.
<b><i>Others</i></b>						
Low wooden Stool	1	..	..	..	2	3 Nos.
Fuel	5Kgs.	..	10Kgs.	..	5Kgs.	20Kgs.
Lamp(earthen)	1	1	..	1	1	4 Nos.
Bolster	1	..	..	..	5	6 Nos.
Grain measuring pot	..	1	..	..	2	3 Nos.
Musical Instruments	..	..	3	..	3	6 Nos.
Halter meant for goat	1	8	2	..	4	15 Nos.
Umbrella (cloth)	..	..	1	..	..	1 No.



Glass	..	..	1	..	..	1 No.
Torch	..	..	1	..	..	1 No.
Spoon	..	..	2	..	2	4 Nos.
Leaf cups and plates	..	..	2	..	10	12 Nos.
Plate (Aluminum)	..	..	..	1	5	6 Nos.
Match box	..	..	..	..	1 Pkt.	1 Pkt.
Herbal medicines	..	..	..	..	1 Boxful	1 Boxful

### Economic life

The main occupation of the Bihors is the making of ropes out of the bark of Siali creepers (Lama Bayer), which are used for different purposes. A list of the types of ropes and cost per unit and the manner of use is given in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
Outturn of Ropes made by Bihors

Sl. No.	Local Term	Birhor Term	Cost per Unit	Use	Daily Outturn
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	<i>Sika</i> (Sling)	<i>Sikur</i>	Rs.5.00 per pair	Attached to carrying pole for carrying things on shoulder	2 pairs per head.
2.	<i>Pagha</i>	<i>Pagha</i>	Rs.1.00 per piece	Rope for tethering cattle.	20 pieces per head
3.	<i>Barkai</i> (Rope for drawing water)	<i>Barehi</i>	Rs.4.00 per piece	For drawing water by means of water pots from wells.	10 pieces per two persons
4.	<i>Pandachhati</i> (Halter for buffalo)	<i>Kadadogha</i>	Rs.5.00 per two piece	Rope to tether buffaloes	8 to 10 pieces per head
5.	<i>Chhelipagha</i> (Halter -goat)	<i>Meromloda</i>	5 paise per piece	For tying goats	20 pieces per head
6.	<i>Jaunli</i>	<i>Dhaunri ..</i>	Rs.2.00 per four pairs	For tying cattle at the time of harvest	10 to 12 pieces per head

The Birhors also make small baskets (Tupa) out of the *Siali* bark which are used for passing oil seeds. Except the baskets and the ropes used for tying the buffaloes which cannot be prepared by women, all other types of ropes are made by both men and women. One load of *Siali* barks is sufficient to turn out ropes and baskets worth Rs.20 and person can exhaust a single load of barks in two days. On an average a Birhor turns out finished products of barks, worth Rs.10 to Rs.12 per day.

The animals and birds which the Birhors are fond of keeping at home are goats and chickens. They keep these animals and birds to sell in the market for cash and to offer them to their deities on ritual occasions.

The Birhors are skilled monkey catchers they use nets made of *Siali* creepers for catching monkeys. They eat the flesh of the monkey and sell the skin for cash. Use of turmeric in the preparation of curry out of monkey's flesh is a taboo among the Birhors. It is believed that the use of turmeric will make them unsuccessful in their monkey hunting. Sometimes they catch birds with the help of snares, and squirrels, hares and deer with the help of traps and nets. The birds and animals caught are generally disposed of in the neighbouring villages or at the market place for cash.

Many Birhors know how to do the weeding, transplanting and harvesting of paddy and find employment in agricultural labour during such operations. In many places they earn substantial amount of money from this source. Sometimes they collect roots and tubers, fruits and flowers from the forest for consumption purposes. But there are other types of forest products such as resin which they collect for selling to the local people for cash. They also catch mongoose and peacock and sell them to the local people who like to keep them as pot animals and birds.

The staple food of the Birhors is rice. With the sale proceeds of ropes and forest produce they buy their weekly requirements of rice, corn, millet and other things from the market. They collect various types of green leaves from the nearby places and mushrooms and various types of fruits such as *Kendu*, Jack-fruit and Mango from the forest for their own consumption. Whenever time permits during their trip to forest for collection of barks, they dig out roots and tubers and also collect honey which supplement their principal cereal diet.

In many places cocoons are available in forest and the Birhors are well acquainted with these places. The cocoons add to the income of the Birhors in the form of cash which they use for buying clothes.

Although the Birhors tap different sources for their livelihood they run deficit of their food supply almost every year. During the scarce period they eat mango kernels which are preserved at home for use in such difficult times.

The weekly budget of a Birhor family may throw more light on their living conditions. For this purpose the weekly income and expenditure of the family of Sandu Mankirdia stationed at Kendumundi is given below. The budget relates to the period from 19th to 25th August, 1984. The family of Sandu Mankirdia comprises his old mother brother and brother's wife and his daughter.

The **income of the week** was drawn from the following sources –

1. Sale of bark products		
(a) <i>Tuppa</i>	4 Jhala (12 pieces)	.. Rs.20.00
(b) <i>Sika</i>	3 Pairs	.. Rs.15.00
(c) <i>Pagha</i>	4 Pieces	.. Rs.4.00
(d) Pandachhati	3 Pairs	.. Rs.15.00
(e) Chhelipagha	4 Pieces	.. Rs.2.00
2. Income from wage earned by Sandu's daughter-9 pailas of paddy		.. Rs.11.25
3. Saving from previous week		.. Rs.12.00
	<b>Total</b>	.. <u><b>Rs.79.25</b></u>

**Items of expenditure** are as follows-

1. Food stuffs	.. Rs.20.00
Rice 6 ½ Kg.	.. Rs.0.50
Dal	.. Rs.2.00
Brinjal	.. Rs.0.50
Potato	.. Rs.0.25
Onion	.. Rs.0.50
Spices	.. 0.25
Salt	.. 0.50
Mustard oil	.. 10.00
2. Drink	.. 2.00
3. Items of fried-food and mutton curry taken with wine	.. 1.25
4. Tiffin	.. 13.00
5. Clothes and ornaments	.. 0.50
6. Tobacco	.. 0.40
7. Kerosene	.. -
	<b>Total</b> .. <u><b>Rs.51.75</b></u>

The Birhors do not have any stable income from week to week. The maximum amount of weekly income is of the order of Rs.60 and the minimum Rs.20. A Birhor family having five members like that of Sandu Mankirdia needs at least 7 Kgs. of rice per week which costs Rs.20 to Rs.25. This means that when the weekly income is limited to Rs.20 to Rs.25 the Birhors purchase rice much less in quantity than what is required per week in order to buy other items which are badly needed in daily life.

Among the Birhors a man needs three pieces of cloths annually for his use. One piece is worn, another piece is used for covering the body and in case the cloth which is worn gets wet it is replaced by the third piece which is kept at home. A piece of cloth costs Rs.12 to Rs.15 and a man needs about Rs.40 annually towards the cost of his cloths. In case of a woman she needs only two pieces in a year which costs Rs.60. The male folks have now started wearing shirts and the female folks, petticoats and blouses which increase the expenses of the Birhors on clothing. A woman wears bangles and hair-pins to keep the tassel in position in the hair bun.

The Birhors use different types of oil for different purposes such as coconut oil used in the body and also for dressing hair mustard oil for cooking food and *Mohua* oil (Tola) for lighting lamps. The Birhors are conversant with the techniques of extracting oil from *Kusum* and *Mohua* seeds by using wooden oil press. The process of extraction is that they break the seeds in to small pieces and boil them. Thereafter the boiled powdered seeds are kept in small baskets. Two fully filled in baskets are kept one upon the other and both are kept between the two planks of wood which comprises the oil press. One end of these two planks is tied tightly and inserted into a groove made for this purpose in a tree and the other end of the lower plank is kept to rest on a big piece of stone above the ground and the filled in oil-seeds baskets are pressed by lowering the upper plank so as to tightly press the baskets until the oil comes out. The oil which is extracted from the seeds is collected in an earthen pot which is kept below on the ground.

The Birhors use earthen vessels for cooking food. They also use earthen pitchers for storing water. They buy these earthen vessels from the weekly market from the potters on payment of cash. A big earthen pot costs Rs.3 and an earthen pitcher costs Rs.1.50. A household needs two pitchers and two or three earthen pots. They go on using these vessels until they break. Generally, two earthen pitchers and two to three earthen pots which are required in the

minimum in a Birhor family having four to five members, last for three to four months. During the transit from one *Tanda* to the other the belongings which are carried by them to the new camp include the earthen vessels.

Aluminium pots and pans are in use in all the Birhor households. One bowl, one plate and two to three cups constitute the aluminium vessels in a Birhor family. Leaf cups are still common in all the Birhor households for taking cooked food. Brass pots and plates are almost conspicuous by their absence among them. Inventory of household articles in a Birhor *Tanda* located at Kendumundi shows that there were only two brass plates found in the whole of that *Tanda*.

Bamboo baskets are needed to store things at home. The Bihors get the baskets at the weekly market from the basket makers on payment in cash. A basket of minimum size costs Rs.2 and two baskets of this size last for a year or so. The Bihors use mats for sleeping. Palm leaves are used for weaving the mats which is the work of the women.

The Bihors of Kendumundi *Tanda* don't know the use of bow and arrow and therefore do not have them. The only weapon which has multipurpose use is axe. Local blacksmiths supply these axes and an axe costs about Rs.5 and lasts for about five to seven years. It is sharpened periodically by the local black smiths on the market-day and each time it costs 50 paise per sharpening. In some houses people have knives. A knife costs Rs.1 and is used for peeling of the bark from the *Siali* creepers.

Cloth umbrella is a new household item which may be found in one or two households in a *Tanda*. For instance, there were only two such umbrellas found in two households out of a total of nine households which comprise the Birhor *Tanda* at Kendumundi. The people use country lamp fed with kerosene in all the households. But a few of them use lantern. The inventory shows that there were two lanterns in the *Tanda* at Kendumundi. The lantern requires kerosene worth 50 paise per night whereas the house can be lighted for two nights with a country lamp at the same costs.

The Bihors have neither mortar and pestle nor country husking lever. Whenever they get the wages in paddy, they dry it at home and thereafter take it to some house in the nearby village to get it husked.

Our observation of the economic life of the Bihors shows that they lead a life which is full of hazards and hardships and below the level of subsistence.

Even though they live from hand to mouth they appear to be very joyful and contented. Almost in every evening both the boys and girls join together and spend time in singing and dancing in accompaniment of music from flute and drum.

### **Social Organization and Social Control**

The family which is the smallest social unit among the Birhors is invariably of nuclear type. It comprises father, mother and unmarried children. In some cases either the widow mother or the widower father lives with their married son in his family. The grown-up sons and daughters work for the family with their parents until they are married. But they sleep at night in their respective dormitories.

The next higher social unit is clan which regulates marriage. Clan is exogamous and any sexual union within the clan is incestuous. Our study of the Birhor *Tanda* located at Kendumundi shows that it was composed of the following five clans.

1. Singhkili
2. Hembrum
3. Nagpuria
4. Majhi and
5. Sikria

As the *Tanda* is multi clan in composition, inter clan marriage within the *Tanda* is in vogue among the Birhors. The genealogy which was collected from different households of this *Tanda* shows that the male members have brought their wives from several *Tandas* such as Dhardhara and Mahuldia of Mayurbhanj district; Nilgiri of Balasore district; Dhudaram and Ghatgaon of Keonjhar district; Kaliapani and Tamka of Cuttack district and Kamakhya Nagar of Dhenkanal district. Cross cousin marriage is not practiced among the Birhors. But marriage of Sororate and Levirate type are in vogue.

Whenever the people of a *Tanda* want to shift to a new place, all the households of the *Tanda* move *enbloc* and set up their *Tanda* there. Before the huts are constructed, a ritual is performed by sacrificing two goats and five chicken and offering prayers to ancestors. A man can leave his parent *Tanda* at will and join a new *Tanda* elsewhere. There will be none to obstruct him from leaving the old *Tabda* and joining the new one. He is also at liberty to return to his parent *Tanda* at will where he will be received by the inmates of the *Tanda*

cordially. It is the practice that the new comer offers drink to the people of the *Tanda* and to the *Tanda* headman for their acceptance of his coming and living with them in the *Tanda*.

There is a headman in each *Tanda* called *Mukhya* or Big man and this post is normally hereditary. The *Tanda* headman combines with him the functions of religious headman (*Dehuri*) and in this capacity he worships the deity and associates in all the ritual performances. There is no system of any payment to the Secular-cum-Religious headman for the services rendered by him. But sometimes he is given wine and tiffin particularly on market days by his *Tanda* members as a gesture of fellow feeling, generosity and hospitality. It is noteworthy that harmony and friendship is maintained throughout among the households in a *Tanda*. If any conflict arises between some households, the *Tanda* headman settles such conflicts through his personal intervention and arbitration.

The Birhors follow the practice of social boycott which is called *Chindal* or *Began*. The person who is kept under boycott is not allowed to mix with others and all kinds of help which he was ordinarily getting from others are withdrawn. It is a sort of punishment for a correct measure to bring a deviant or any person suffering from certain ritually unclean illness back to normal position.

The situation which invokes social boycott is incestuous sexual union between brother and sister or persons belonging to the same clan. Persons who commit such offences are kept segregated until they pay the fines levied on them by other members of his *Tanda*. Generally, the fine comprises 1 Kg. of rice, some turmeric and Rs.10 in cash. The ritual involved for readmitting the deviant into the *Tanda* includes clean shaving of his head and giving him a clean bath.

When any person develops maggots in the sore of any part of the body, this person is also put under social boycott until the sore is headed and the above mentioned ritual is performed accompanied with a common feast in the *Tanda*. The person who was put under boycott meets the expenses of the ritual and feast.

As regards the inter-caste and inter-dining the Birhors eat cooked food in the houses of Santals and Kolhas but the reverse is not in vogue. The communities which they avoid in this respect are Muslims, Harijans and Kharias. Any, breach of the commensal rules leads to social boycott and the consequence arising therefrom.

## Life Cycle

The Birhor idea of life is a continuous process from birth to death through infancy, adolescence, youth marriage and old age and lastly death. He regards himself as the supreme creation of earth and has been bound by supernatural influences. The death, which brings life to an end takes him to the unseen world where a man is transformed into spirit and starts influencing the human beings of this world.

### Birth

The birth is a matter of great rejoice among the Birhors. Pregnancy is very much welcome. An important woman is considered inauspicious. A couple having children enjoys a higher status than a childless counterpart in Birhor society. The father is addressed as *Aba* and the mother as *Mai* and those who are addressed as such feel proud of themselves whereas those having none to address them as such feel depressed. When a baby is born in a Birhor household, it is believed that one of the ancestors has taken rebirth and therefore the family's fortune and well-being have come back with greater potency and vitality. Among the Birhor a male child is preferred to a female child because the latter leaves her parents after marriage and therefore is of limited economic utility.

Some of the symptoms of pregnancy are stoppage of menses, feeling of weakness and nausea. With the abdominal protuberance, the pregnancy becomes conspicuous. During pregnancy a woman observes some restrictions and is relieved from doing hard work and cooking particularly in the advanced stage. Most often she is not allowed to go outside or come in contact with dead body and move near the shrine (*Sal*). She is forbidden to take consecrated meat. While going out of her house she must cover herself completely with her clothes, lest enemies or persons with evil eye should do her some harm.

As soon as the woman feels labour pain, an old woman of her lineage having experience in delivery is immediately called for. In difficult cases some herbal medicines are given to the pregnant woman. As soon as the child is born the old woman who was attending on her informs the husband thereafter, and it takes no time for others to know about the birth of the child. The umbilical cord of the child is cut by means of a sharp snail.

After birth, the mother and the child are considered unclean. It is interesting to note that with the birth of a child the whole *Tanda* comes under ritual pollution as does the family in which the birth took place. The whole *Tanda* is considered impure and all the rituals are suspended for the period. On



the 7th day the *Dehuri* (priest) comes and performs the ritual which is meant for the final purification of the *Tanda* members and for the preliminary purification of the new child and his parents.

On the 21st day a ritual is observed and only the kin members are invited to participate. On this day the mother is led to the nearby source of water where her women relatives smear her with turmeric paste mixed with *Mohua* oil and all the accompanying women take ritual bath there and return to her house. Coming to the house she throws the old used earthen pots and cooks in new pots which have been brought previously. The father shaves the baby with a razor. In the meantime the *Dehuri* worships the clan deity and the supreme deity *Logo Bir* and *Budhi Mai* and a black cock and a white one are sacrificed. The sacrificial meat is cooked and a small feast is arranged. On the following day a name is given to the baby by the elderly women of the *Tanda* and another feast is arranged to feed the assembled relatives and guests.

### **Marriage**

Marriage is considered a significant event in one's life. One cannot think of adult life without being married. The marriageable age in the case of a girl is 14 to 18 years and in the case of a boy is 20 to 25 years.

In a marriage ceremony the girl's parents meet all the expenses and the boy's parents pay the bride price which comprises Rs.12.00 and three pieces of clothes. The guests and relatives invited to the marriage ceremony contribute according to their might.

There is no specified month in which the marriage takes place. Generally the best time for marriage is after the rains when people have some savings in hand and the guests and relatives are entertained without difficulty. Before marriage the boys and girls have to spend at least two years in their respective dormitories and there after the marriage is thought of. Most of the marriages are of arranged type in which negotiation is held between the parents of the bride and the bridegroom to settle details regarding the bride price, the date of marriage, the number of guests and relatives to be invited and the bridal feast.

The day on which the marriage takes place, the bridegroom's party consisting of bridegroom, his friends and relatives come to the bride's house. The marriage is solemnized there in the presence of the *Tanda* elders. The Bridegroom smears vermilion on the forehead of the bride which symbolizes solemnization of marriage. The bride's father provides cooked food and drink to the bridegroom's party.

The family observes mortuary pollution for a period of ten days. On the tenth day, the head of the household (male member) goes to the burial ground and calls the spirit to his own hut and sets fire to the small leaf hut erected there for the spirit. An earthen lamp is kept burning and is covered under a winnowing fan in the house till he comes. As soon as the man bearing the spirit enters the house, the light under the winnowing fan goes out which indicates the entry of the spirit of the dead into the hut.

Sometimes in the mid-day all the lineage members and the pall-bearers get purified by the *Dehuri* (priest) who arranges a ritual in front of the shrine of the clan deity (*Ora Bonga*) and sacrifices a cock and offers *mohua* wine and cooked food. Thereafter, he sprinkles water all over the *Tanda* and over the lineage members. In the evening a feast is arranged and the elderly persons of the *Tanda*, lineage members and other invitees participate in the feast. After the feast is over, all the invitees give consolation to the members of the bereaved family and leave for their respective *Tandas*.

The boys and girls of both the parties dance and sing in great joy and happiness to the tune of their drums and other musical instruments. After the marriage ceremony is over, the bride and the groom with the party return to the latter's *Tanda* where the father of the groom arranges a feast for them.

### **Death**

When the death of a person takes place in any house other members of the house send the news to all the people of their lineage. The natural death according to the Birhors, is that which comes when a person is very old. If any person dies prior to the old age it is believed to be due to the machination of the evil spirits and sorcerers. On getting the death news the near and dear ones come to console the bereaved family and make necessary arrangements for the burial of the corpse. The women-folk smear turmeric paste on the face of the dead body and a piece of new white cloth is covered all over. A wooden frame of the type of a ladder is made and the dead body is laid on it and is carried to the burial ground (*Gachhad*) by four lineage members and other accompany them.

A trench of about six feet into three feet into five feet in dimension is dug by the relatives in the burial ground. It is dug in such a way that the head can be kept in the south-west direction. The new white cloth is spread on the floor of the trench on which the dead body with face upward is laid. Thereafter the trench is filled up with soil. Big stones are kept on the pit so that the jackals and other animals may not dig out and eat up corpse. After the burial is over all

the pall-bearers and the accompanied members go to a place, where water is available and take bath there.

### Religious Beliefs and Practices

The Birhors believe in many gods and goddesses. According to them some of these supernatural beings are benevolent and others, malevolent who create trouble and cause illness and death. They also worship their ancestors at home on several ritual occasions. Generally, ancestor worship is practiced with the purpose of enjoying good health and for being successful in hunting and collection of forest produce without meeting any accident.

*Logo Bir* and *Budhi Mai* are the two main and supreme deities of the Birhors. It is believed that their abode lies in the thicket of Similipal hill ranges and they are worshipped in different months particularly in the months of Aswina (September-October) and Pausa (December-January). In the month of Margasir (November-December) the ancestors are worshipped at home and in the month of Bhadrab (August-September) the deity *Karma Thakur* is worshipped. The main idea of worshipping such deities is to get their blessings for the general well-being of the people and for getting food all the time and also for success in their various economic activities without falling into any accident and illness. **Table 5** and **Table 6** give description of different deities and the months in which they are worshipped.

Every clan has its own clan deity for which a small leaf hut is constructed in the *Tanda* and food and prayer are offered to the deity on all ritual occasions.

The Birhors have fallen victims to family planning programmes. The demography of the tribe does not show any alarming increase in population which warrants limitation of Birhor population. According to the 1971 census the population of the Birhors was only 92. In such a situation there appears to be no need for the Birhors to adopt family planning practices. But it is found that many Birhors have been sterilized in order to get financial assistance. During our field work we have met with two such instances in the Kendumundi Birhor *Tanda*. Some unforeseen events and drastic consequences took place soon after they were operated upon and people attributed these mishaps to the Vasectomy to which these two Birhors were subjected. In both the cases they lost their wives within a period of three weeks from the date of operation and thereafter one of them lost all the children and the other who had two sons and one daughter lost all his sons. Both of them were young and capable of bearing children. The

Birhors, strongly believed that their supreme deity got angry with these two people for undergoing operation and punished them by causing death to the members of their families with the objective of leaving none to continue in the progeny. There was no escape from this divine punishment and as a result the family planning practices are dreaded in the Birhor community one of the Vasectomized victim pathetically expressed during the interview that he was very keen to get married second time but no woman was willing to marry him because in the Birhor society barren women are looked down upon.

TABLE - 5

Sl. No.	Name of the deity	Direction in which deity's abode is located	Name of the worshipper	Ritual designation of the worshipper	Village to which worshipper belongs	Month in which deity is worshipped	Article of offering	Purpose of worship	Remarks
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
I.	<i>Logo Bir</i> (The Supreme Deity)	North-West direction of the village Kendumundi i.e. some where in the Similipal forest	<i>Dehuri</i> and other members of all the Bansas.	<i>Dehuri</i> as also, every head of the household	Male members of all the <i>Tandas</i> .	November-December	Ten cocks and two bucks are sacrificed on behalf of all the <i>Tanda</i> members	Overall well-being	<i>Logo Bir</i> and <i>Budhi Mai</i> are the husband and wife and others except <i>Chandi</i> are their children. They all have a society of their own. The <i>Dehuri</i> of the <i>Tanda</i> worships these deities on behalf of all people of the <i>Tanda</i> . All the family members of <i>Logo Bir</i> serve as the custodian of the Birhor society and provide security, food and drink to the people. They also save the people from danger and other calamities. As the people say, "we are moving in dense forest and have no permanent settlement. There is none to help us when we are in distress and in danger. You are our everything, we pray you to keep us out of danger and mishap and grant us good health and long life".

Sl. No.	Name of the deity	Direction in which deity's abode is located	Name of the worshipper	Ritual designation of the worshipper	Village to which worshipper belongs	Month in which deity is worshipped	Article of offering	Purpose of worship	Remarks
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2.	<i>Badhimai</i> (Wife of <i>Logo Bir</i> )	North West	<i>Dehuri</i> and other members of all the Bansas.	<i>Dehuri</i> as also every head of the household	Male members of all the <i>Tandas</i>	November – December	Ten cocks and two bucks are sacrificed on behalf of all the <i>Tanda</i> members	..	Brings good luck and good health to children.
3.	<i>All Mai</i> (Daughter here)	Ditto ..	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	..	Overall well-being. No such specific reason worshipped as the daughter of <i>Logo Bir</i> and <i>Badhi Mai</i> .
4.	<i>Sita Mai</i> (Daughter of <i>Logo Bir</i> )	Ditto..	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	..	
5.	<i>Bhandar Bir</i> (Son of <i>Logo Bir</i> )	Ditto ..	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	..	Brings success in catching monkey
6.	<i>Chandi</i> (Not a member of <i>Logo Bir</i> family)	Somewhere in Sumilpal hills	<i>Tanda</i> priest	Dehuri	<i>Tanda</i>	All through the year before starting for hunting.	One white cock	..	To ensure success in hunting

TABLE 6  
[Clan Deity (Ora Bonga) of the Hembrum Clan]

Sl. No.	Name of the deity	Direction in which deity's abode is located	Bansa/clan of main worshipper	Ritual designation of the worshipper	Tanda to which the worshipper belongs	Month in which deity is worshipped	Nature of offering	Main reasons	Remarks
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1.	Karambonga	The Shrine ( <i>saf</i> ) is situated in the backside of the worshipper's Kumbhas	Hembrum.	Household head of each Bansa/ Clan (Males only)	Elderly male members of each <i>Tanda</i> who belongs to Hembrum clan	August – September	Two bucks Mohua wine, Sun-dried rice.	For curing illness particularly fever	If someone falls ill, he promises before the karam bonga to offer sacrifices to get rid of the illness. In an auspicious day in the month of August-September, the Dehuri worships the deity at the shrine and offers prayer and food and sacrifices animals and birds as promised earlier by the <i>Tanda</i> members.
2.	Nasambonga	Resides in the same shrine	Do	Ditto	Ditto	Ditto	Pig (Sukuri)	For healing such diseases as fever, cough, cold, feets and giddiness	The worship in the case of this deity is same as that of Karambonga.
3.	Rajakoodin bonga	Ditto	Do	Ditto	Ditto	November-December	Cock (Sims)	To get rid of typhoid and malaria	He is believed to be the supreme clan deity. Cocks are sacrificed to appease him.

### Strategy for Development

The Birhors lead a nomadic style of life. As the seasons change they move from one place to the other. But in all the seasons they try to have the *Tanda* very close to forest. The Similipal hill ranges, around which most of their *Tandas* are situated are vitally linked with their economic life. They collect Siali bark from the forest to make various types of ropes which are in great demand in the farming community. The transactions between the Birhors and the local peasants take place at the weekly markets, it is for this reason that they set up their *Tandas* near such market places for conveniently disposing of their finished goods and forest produce for cash income.

The Birhor are skilled monkey catchers. When there was no restriction to catch monkeys in the reserved forests they set nets in some convenient places in the forest to catch monkeys. They eat monkey flesh and sell the monkey skin to the Scheduled Castes for cash. Sometimes when the monkeys create havoc in the villages and destroy crops their help is sought on payment of money to catch and kill the monkeys.

As they live close to the people who carry on agricultural practices, they have observed various agricultural operations and most of them have experience in ploughing land, showing seeds, transplanting seedlings and other types of agricultural works such as weeding, manuring and harvesting. Both men and women of their community are employed by the farmers on wage basis to help them in various agricultural operations. The income from agricultural labour is seasonal and therefore not very substantial.

The occupations which feature prominently as substantial sources of income among the Birhors are rope making which is their primary source of livelihood and goat keeping. The Birhors buy young she goats from the weekly market at a nominal cost of Rs.40 to Rs.50 and raise them properly to bear kids which they sell when they attain full growth. These grown up goats are in great demand in the rural areas and therefore fetch substantial amount of money to the Birhors. Sometimes they also buy goats of one year old at Rs.60 to Rs.80. After rearing them for a year or so take them to market place for sale. These goats also fetch them very substantial income which varies from Rs.140 to Rs.160 per goat.

It is the opinion of the Birhors that they no longer want to move from place to place. Instead they are very eager to settle down permanently in some places and carry on cultivation of paddy. They have expressed that



they need land, plough, bullocks and seeds for this purpose. From our discussions with them we found that they were interested in having tile roofed permanent houses in place of leaf thatched huts.

Some time back the Project Administrator of Karanjia Integrated Tribal Development Agency supplied 25Kgs of jute to each of the Birhor households of Kendumundi *Tanda*. They accepted the jute and manufactured ropes and sold them at the local market. Since such kind of help did not continue, the Bihors reverted to their old practice of making ropes from *siali* barks. They pointed out that as compared with bark-made ropes the jute made ropes fetched them a higher price and there was no need for them to move from place to place in search of fibers. As the help from the ITDA did not come forth on a continuing basis they had to go back to their nomadic way of life in order to get the raw materials for making bark-ropes.

The strategy that emerges from this study for the development of the Bihors is their rehabilitation in agricultural colonies which should be set up close to market places and not far from places where they set up their *Tandas* around Similipal hill ranges. Each household should be allotted adequate land with title rights over it. The beneficiaries of each colony should be provided with plough bullocks, seeds, fertilizers and any other inputs required for growing crops. The most important point in any rehabilitation is people's participation in all works concerning the settling up of the colony. Therefore the beneficiaries of each colony should be motivated for their physical and emotional involvement in clearing the land and irrigation works, digging wells, constructing houses, building approach roads and schools. The cost of materials including labour charges should be borne by the Government and payment made daily at the end of the work and in no case contractors should be employed for any work in the colony.

The Bihors are excellent rope makers. As they would settle down in a colony permanently they may not get *siali* bark in sufficient quantity throughout the year. In that case jute may be supplied to them on a regular basis for making ropes. Goat rearing is another avocation in which they have gained vast experience. Each household should be provided required unites of goats for rearing. These two subsidiary occupations will not only fetch them sufficient cash to meet their expenses on clothes and daily necessities but also help effectively in stabilizing their new sedentary mode of living in the colony on a permanent basis.

### Bibliography

- Anonymous *Adibasi*, No.3, 1963-64 (1st January 1964), P.182
- Roy, Sarat Chandra
1. Totemism account of Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.2 1916, PP.250-264.
  2. General account of Birhors, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.2, 1916 PP. 457-467.
  3. The Social Organisation of the Birhor, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.4, 1918, PP.307-321.
  4. Death and Funeral Customs of the Birhors, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.4, 1918, P.P. 307-321.
  5. Kinship Organisation of the Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.3, Part-4, 1971, P.543.
  6. The Religion of Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.4, Part-4, 1918, P.455.
  7. The Marriage Customs of Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.4, Part-4, 1918, P.455.
  8. Birth, Childhood and Puberty Ceremonies among the Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol.4, 1928, PP 214-231.
  9. Magical Practices, Omens and Dreams among the Birhors, *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol 10 1924, PP.209-220.
- Dalton, E.T. *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, P.207
- Sinha, D.P. The Birhor and their World View, *Adibasi*, Vol.III, Nos. 3 & 4, 1959, pp.17-25.

# THE BIRHOR AND THEIR WORLD VIEW <sup>1</sup>

Dharanidhar Prasad Sinha

In the present paper an effort has been made to examine the world view of the Birhor on three broad aspects:-

- (i) The Birhor themselves,
- (ii) The Birhor and their supernatural world and,
- (iii) The Birhor and their natural world.

The material for this paper have been drawn from the larger report written by the author in the basis of field investigation which he carried among the Birhor in 1957 in two of their settlements. One of them was the colony of the wandering Birhor founded recently for their rehabilitation by the Government at Jahengutua situated at Bishunpur Police Station, at a distance of 84 miles from Ranchi town. The other was their original leaf-hut settlement at Banari situated at a distance of five miles away from the former. The data incorporated in this paper are based mainly on observation, interview and the case histories of the selected Birhor of these settlements. These have been supplemented with their folk tales and anecdotes. It should however, be noted that in course of the field work only male members of different age grades were interviewed. The paper therefore has a limited scope.

## **The Setting of Birhor Life:**

The Birhor settlements lie on the plateau of Chotanagpur, especially in the area which is covered with dense forest. The average elevation is some 2000 to 3000 feet and in order to reach them one has to go off the track through bushes and shrubs and small cliffs. The settlement which is called in the native dialect, 'Tanda', invariably is situated close to a stream or river. Wandering

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. III, Nos. 3 & 4, 1959, pp.17-25

people, as most of them are, hardly think of digging well which is the general source of water supply for the most of the neighbouring tribals of the area. Their huts (*kumba*) which are made of leaves are purely temporary and it does not take a day even to erect one such hut single handed. The huts are of conical shape, hardly 5 to 6 feet high, with an arched narrow entrance. One has to creep in to get inside. It is not possible to stand inside a hut except at the centre. A Tanda has nearly 10 to 20 *kumbas* (leaf huts). It comprises of a small migratory group; perhaps just sufficient to live about a year or so on the resources of the forest coming in a radius of 3 to 4 miles.

The Birhor numbered 2542 individuals in the state of Bihar during the last Census in 1941. At the time of Census they were distributed in Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Singhbhum and Palamau Districts of Chotanagpur Division. The population of the Birhor in 1891 was 1234 only. But since then the Birhor have wandered in the above mentioned districts as also in the contiguous district of Manbhum.

The Birhor have long since been called as expert rope makers and monkey hunters. During recent decades they have acquired another occupation of making wooden tubes. They make ropes from the bark of trees, hunt wild monkeys to eat their flesh and sell their hide and manufacture *kathauts* made of wood. These goods have a great demand among the neighboring tribes and the Birhor find a constant market. There are some slack seasons, especially rainy season when the production and sale of their manufactured goods decline and as a result they pass on a very difficult time. Their means of subsistence are too low to allow a saving which may sustain them for even a short period of time.

Very recently, since 1955, the Government of Bihar has attempted to rehabilitate a section of the migratory Birhor. A colony of 16 families was founded and lands were provided to them @ 5 acres per family for cultivation, but up till the time of writing this paper not all lands were reclaimed. Some families had, however, started kitchen garden for growing vegetables. This scheme was to supplement their traditional economy.

The huts in the Tanda are scattered. The hut of Ora Bonga, the clan god, is situated a little away from the huts of the Birhor. Even at the newly built colony where the houses are mud-built, the house of Ora Bonga is a leaf hut Kumba. There are more than one clan inhabiting a Tanda and hence several huts for the clan gods, but all the settlers are invariably related either by consanguineal or affinal relationship.

Every Birhor Tanda has a Mukhiya (head man), Mati (priest and/or witch doctor) and a Kotwar (watch man) who are officials of the settlement. Since S.C Roy wrote on the Birhor in 1925 it seems the traditional name of the headman (*pradhan*), priest (*naya*), convenor of meetings (*digwar*), and witch doctor (*sonkha*) have undergone change. Some of the roles have been fused, such as that of the Mati, Naya and Sonkha; and some posts as that of Kotwar and Digwar have gone out of use. The services of the Mati in a Tanda are required on all rituals and religious ceremonies. His supernatural powers make him especially qualified to deal with the cases of illness which are presumed to be inflicted by evil eyes or sprits. The Mukhiya is always an experienced elder who helps in solving the problems of the settlers. It is his responsibility to offer sacrifices to Ora Bonga for the security and peace of the Tanda, and in case, some calamity occurs he is accused for not propitiating the god to ward off the evil.

### **The Birhor themselves:**

In course of the field work we came across one instance that the people got stirred and confused. It was like this. Charwa (52) who was until recently a settler at the newly built colony had engaged his son to work in a sand loading operation at Banari, 5 miles away, where the Birhor lived in their traditional leaf hut. In connivance with Charwa's son, a young boy of Banari kidnapped Budhu's wife from Jehangutua. Later one evening Dunga's son fell down and became unconscious. Everyone ran to the boy. Manjira, Budhram and other Matis of the settlement began to use their charms, but of no avail. In this confusion, everyone suspected Charwa, whose son had helped another boy in the recent scandal. All began to whisper, and soon every one cried, "This unfortunate incident was because of him". Charwa also learnt about it after he returned home from the forest. He was quiet, and quietly he slipped away from the settlement in the dead of night along with his belongings. The following morning people discovered him gone, and found the boy getting around.

In the Birhor world an individual is nothing. The consciousness of self, which the anthropologists find so dominating in complex societies, is simply lacking among the Birhor. This is obvious in the life-histories, folk-lore and in the anecdotes of the Birhor. From the preceding instances, it is clear that the role of an individual is insignificant among them. Neither the father of the ailing child, nor the man who was suspected to have inflicted the evil, could find ways for themselves. While the former sought help from the settlers who willingly came to his rescue, the latter silently fled away from the colony. One thing, very

evident from the occasions witnessed was that a Birhor had very little of interest in initiating a problem however helpful he may think it to be for his own self. A Birhor does not fear; but he always takes things lightly. In the preceding case it was only when the settlers gathered round the ailing boy and began to whisper about the suspected evil eyes of Charwa, that the matter created confusion. Otherwise it might have gone un-noticed. There is an allied incident to attest it.

The wife of Budhu- a young Birhor of 24, of the same colony escaped from her husband's house. Budhu was extremely sorry for his wife, and more for the bride-price he had paid for her; which he said was extremely difficult to recover. He was helpless. He could not even assert himself to his people to fight for him and to get back his wife. Neither the settlers showed any anxiety, as it was evidenced on the former occasion. But this did not seem to reduce in any way the corporate and homogeneous life of the Birhor.

The Birhor have little worry about their impulses. Though they don't have vigorous sex life, as in some other tribes of the country, they do not have the problem of sex. So far it does not lead to an incestuous relationship, sex license is given. But the Birhor restrain themselves from such acts, because of their belief that over indulgence is harmful. They give here, an impression of a strong self-confidence and ego-identity, which too again is evidenced from the life histories. In contrast to the sex, the Birhor have many anxieties about women; to be more precise, about their wives. Without wife a Birhor is scarcely a person. She is an asset, in many ways. She gives a status to her husband and lends help in all his spheres, right from economic to ritual. The link between husband and wife is very close at some important rituals. A Birhor does not dream of a divorce and in fact, it is extremely rare. It is a pride for a Brihor to have two wives and those who happen to get their elder brother's widow are considered fortunate. A Birhor does not have strong attachment with his parents nor there are any reasons for having conflict with parents. Even after marriage, when a Birhor man builds his separate hut, he remains in close association with his parents. In case, where the parents are invalid, the sons look after them, collect food and fuel for them and do all the rest without any reluctance. Usually a daughter goes away after marriage, but if in some cases she stays with her husband in her parent's settlement, she plays as similar role, as the son does. Parents, on the other hand, do not interface with their children, grown up sons and daughters and allow them to be quite independent. Invalid children are, however, a source of great anxiety for the parents.

What is more important for a Birhor is his relationship with the people of the Tanda (the settlement). All the inhabitants of a Tanda go to the forest together for collecting fruits and barks of the trees. The hunting, which they often undertake, necessarily warrants a co-operative effort of all the settlers.

The Birhor of a Tanda face the world together as a single group. When one is threatened all are supposed to come to his support and usually they do so. A Tanda at this level is thus a unit. In case, there is a conflict within the Tanda, which is again a rare event, the Tanda splits, and one group moves down to another place. A Birhor looks to his Tanda as a ritual unit also, where all the Birkhars are united among themselves in religious bond.

All this, however, does not deny the extension of Birhor world which primarily concentrates round his Tanda. A Birhor well recognizes his fellow brethren who live at different places and whom they meet frequently at the market places and occasionally while on a trip to find bride or meet relatives. But this is not so much important. A Birhor's interest lies somewhere else; not in his relations with other men but in his relation with God and nature.

#### **The Birhor and the Supernatural World:**

The Birhor recognize a powerful spirit world around them and of a mysterious spiritual force or energy behind various animate beings, inanimate objects, natural or artificial and even in certain things, such as a spoken word, an expressed wish, a name or a number. Their sense of awe or fear of the unseen spirit world has led them to devise methods by which they expect to enter into friendly relations with the more important spiritual powers. The Birhor have personified these powers as *bongas* or *bhuts* and *deos*—spirits and deities, and assigned to each of the more important ones a symbol, a habitation and a name, and a suitable periodical sacrifice by which to conciliate them and enter into communion with them. In such cases as those of omens and dreams in which the spirit involved is not known, the Birhor seek to protect themselves with the help and advice of the *matris* (witch doctor), who are supposed to be always in communion with gods and spirits.

To the Birhor the gap between God and man is very narrow. When a Birhor goes to forest he is said to carry God along with him. He stays day and night in the dense forest alone, cutting woods, skinning trees and making wooden tubes. In a local proverb forest is the home of the Birhor.

Whenever the Birhor shift their Tanda from one place to another, they first send two or three people, mostly *matīs* – (witch doctors), to conduct a pilot survey, choose a place and see if the gods or spirits will not be disturbed by their camp there. Only when the conditions are found favourable, Birhors shift their Tanda to that place carrying with them the Bongas residing in the Tandas. It is taken for granted that their Bongas will lead them to a safe abode. There is one interesting incident to note in this regard. When the Birhors of a Tanda stationed at Manjira were asked to settle down permanently at the above mentioned colony, they first showed reluctance, later with much persuasion they agreed. But when they agreed, the neighboring villagers dissuaded them, saying that, the selected place for settlement was inhabited by malevolent spirits. They became afraid. But in order to be sure, they planned for a test to find out whether or not the place in question is a good one. They sent three people one day prior to the scheduled date of their movement along with monkey nets, bows and arrows, and few chickens. They sacrificed the chickens and left the things overnight unguarded. Next morning they were convinced that the place was undisturbed by the malevolent spirits and a good one for their habitation. In the evening the whole Tanda moved to the place selected for their settlement.

The Supreme God of the Birhor is known as *sing bonga*, who does not take active interest in human affairs, but does not ordinarily cause harm to people. *Sing bonga* is invoked when the Birhor go out on hunting and is always offered a white fowl. *Burhi Mai*, the Mother Goddess, stands next. She is supposed to be much interested in man and brings good luck, children and health, if properly propitiated.

The god which ensures success in hunting expedition is called *chandi* and he must be propitiated with sacrifices to ensure success in hunt. *Bandar Bir*, (baboon god), and *Hanuman Bir* (monkey god) are other spirits which bring success in catching monkeys.

Besides these three supernatural beings, a Birhor, propitiates his clan spirit and Tanda spirits, called *Manita Bhuts*, who look after his welfare and the welfare of his clan and the Tanda people. There are many tutelary deities and spirit of the Birhor, but mention must be made of the ancestor spirits. According to the Birhor, death, unless caused by violence, results from the misdeeds of evil spirits. A Birhor after observing a ceremony includes all dead ancestors in the rank of ancestor spirits. But persons dying of un-natural death make a separate cadre of spirits, called the *Haproms*. If, however, these Haproms are not



regularly given food and drink, they prevent success in hunting or invite outside spirit to cause sickness in the family.

A Birhor is always pervaded with super-natural influences. He closely observes the goods and spirits and does not want to work against them. He desires to live together undisturbed, without disturbing the gods or spirits and without being disturbed by them. In a sense the Birhor regard the gods and spirits as their equals who possess or have acquired a certain sanctity or rather 'sacredness' and superior power, but are inclined to be friendly if kept in good humour and supplied with food and shelter in due time.

### **The Birhor and the Natural World:**

The Birhor live in forest. They depend on forest produce for their living. It is the nature, which they regard as the care-taker of their life and living. A Birhor goes to forest to collect raw-materials for ropes, wild roots and fruits to eat and to hunt monkeys for meat and skin. They use skin for making drums which add gaiety to their devices. The migratory Birhor do not cultivate land. It is a taboo; for they think that to cultivate land is to trouble the Dharati Mai—the Earth goddess. The Bihors believe that, when they take out the bark of the trees to make ropes, they do not hurt the trees; rather they help them in their growth. What the Birhor precisely means is that they do not exploit nature.

The Birhor have in many ways close association with the hills. Besides it being the main source of their economy, every clan of the Birhor has a hill as its ancestral home. In course of their wanderings they happen to come across their ancestral home, after several years; but they do not climb the hill straight. Either they change their route, or worship the ancestral home – god, before climbing the hill. The Birhor have totemic clans. Most of the clans derive their name from animals and plants.

There are Bihors who have taken to settled life are called *Jaghi* Bihors, and they practice cultivation. Agriculture has certainly brought a change in their economic life, but it does not seem to have affected their relationship with nature. They feel that they are not exploiting nature; rather they feel that they are taking help of earth in order to lead a better life. But this does not exclude them from offering prayers and sacrifices to the Earth Goddess. Offerings have to be made to keep Earth Goddess pleased who in exchange of offerings, keeps the land always fertile.

As has already been said, the migratory (Uthlu) Birhor are still in the hunting and gathering stage of economic life. The continual rain and the thundering sound of the clouds and lighting present a difficult problem to them. The Birhor always fear rain, lighting and storm which wash off small leaf-huts and the few belongings that they have and even stop their food quest. The Birhor have, however, tried to devise magical ways to conciliate with these natural forces. Whenever there is a fear of rain, the youngest member of the family puts some wild flower into an earthen pot, fills it with water and covers the mouth with a leaf which is tied up with a string round the neck of the pot. The pot is finally buried in the ground. It is believed that this is sure to stop rain. Similarly at the sound of thunder or at the sight of flashes of lighting a Birhor woman throws a pestle, a Birhor man throws an axe into the open space in front of his hut to prevent the thundering sound of cloud. A similar process is followed by them to stop the storm.

### **The World and the World View of the Birhor:**

Looking back to what has been described in the foregoing pages, a conclusion may be drawn as follows;

The Birhor are an isolated people. They know that their community men live at distant hills. They frequently come across their neighboring tribe and the Hindu peasants in market places. But as they are not of very mixing nature they do not have any close alliance with these people.

A Birhor thinks less of himself, and more of his co-inhabitants of his Tanda. He is vitally associated with supernatural beings in his day to day affairs. A Birhor is not self-centered, he closely identifies himself with the Birhor of his own and other settlements, and also with the visible and invisible supernaturals. He is of course often confronted with natural problems, but he knows many effective ways of neutralizing evil effects of spirits which surround him and also saving himself from various natural calamities which the nature poses in the forms of heavy rain, storm, thunder and lighting. He works in the most friendly ways to his benefit in nature utilizing its productions and resources for his living.

# BONDA <sup>1</sup>

A. B. Ota <sup>2</sup>  
S. C. Mohanty <sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

In the remote highland country within mighty Kondakamberu ranges of Eastern Ghats rising on the eastern side of Malkangiri district lives the brave and beautiful human race called "Bonda". Hardy highlanders as they are, they sparsely inhabit the upland towards north-west of the river Machkund confined within the group of high hills named after them - Bonda Hills. In the lap of nature, amidst rolling hills and tropical forests, the Bonda habitat - a wild and picturesque territory rich in flora and fauna lies at about an altitude of 3000 ft above the sea level.

## Identity

Their neighbours call them 'Bonda'. But they say they are 'Remo'- the Man. Their unique style of personal appearance distinguishes them from rest of the world. Bonda men wear a narrow strip of loin cloth (*gosi*). It is the women's attire that is so remarkable. A taboo backed by legends prevents women against clothing themselves above the waist. They make up this very patent deficiency by wearing a mass of brass and bead necklaces and by large heavy circular collars (neck rings) of brass and aluminum. These ornaments cover the breasts and hang down to the navel.

The only short strip of loin cloth women wear is called 'Nadi' or 'Ringa'. This is a striped and coarse coloured cloth of 3' - 4' x 1' tied to the waist thread (*thumiya*). It barely covers their lower parts. Using their simplest and indigenous primitive loom Bonda women weave this cloth themselves during their spare time out of natural *kerang* fiber applying vegetable dyes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in the Photo Hand Book on PTGs: Series –III, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Director, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Research Officer, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar

Bonda women look majestic in their unique and spectacular fashion of traditional adornments. Their traditional costume consists of a large mass of necklaces of coloured beads, coins and cowries which adorn their shaven heads and hang down from neck to the navel totally covering their upper parts. Besides they wear a variety of ornaments such as aluminum neck rings, ear rings, nose rings, finger and toe rings, bangles of glass and aluminum, metallic anklets, head bands made of grass or beads, etc. They shave their heads and adorn it with coloured beads.

### **Settlement**

Hill Bonda settlements are situated on high level lands such as hill tops and hill slopes surrounded by bounties of nature. Access is difficult through zigzag hilly tracks. The villages may be large and small. Large villages often have small hamlets around. Within the village there are no regular streets and the houses are scattered adjacent to each other. The village meeting place - '**Sindibor**' is built at a convenient location within the village. Girls' dormitory house (Selani Dingo) exists either at the middle or at the end of the village. The shrine of Hundi, the village presiding deity is found at the entrance. Patkhanda Mahaprabu, the Creator and the Supreme God is represented by a long sword kept in a banyan tree in Mudulipada village. Perennial hill streams flowing close to the village are used as source of water. Little away from the village lies the village cremation ground.

### **Housing**

Bonda live in small thatched huts. The walls are made of bamboo frame plastered with mud and cowdung. Walls may be painted with coloured earth. The roof is thatched with a kind of wild grass called 'piri'. Now due to shortage of 'piri' some people are using tiles, tin or asbestos sheets. Some houses have a wide verandah in front or around. This serves the purpose of sleeping and gossiping. This may be open or enclosed with mud walls. The entrance door is often made attractive by wood carving and wall colouring. The interior is partitioned into sleeping-cum-cooking part and store part. Domestic articles are scanty only to meet the bare necessities. There are a few earthen pots, bows and arrows, agricultural tools etc.

The domestic animals like cows, bullocks, buffaloes, goats, fowls etc are sheltered in separate sheds either attached to or little away from the house.

Some Bonda homesteads are enclosed within fences made of bamboo wattle. A kitchen garden (*dinrbui*) is raised in the backyards or in the vicinity.

Here fruit bearing trees like jackfruit, mango, guava, lemon etc are planted and a variety of seasonal vegetables are grown. It is protected by bamboo wattle fencing.

### **Routine Life**

In the Bonda highlands climate remains mild even during the summer. Bonda get up early in the morning to start their daily routine life of struggle for existence. They rise before the sunrise to finish their morning works and get ready to toil hard outdoors for subsistence. Hard working Bonda women get up little earlier than men to attend to various domestic chores. Virtually being the backbone of Bonda Society they play a pivotal role in running their family. They shoulder a major part of the work load of the family including child care, plastering cleaning and maintenance of the house, taking care of domestic animals, routine cleaning of the cattle sheds, cleaning of clothes and utensils, fetching of water and firewood, processing, cooking and serving of food, weaving *ringa*, making leaf plates and broomsticks, visiting weekly markets for sale, barter or purchase etc apart from undertaking routine subsistence works. Therefore their society respects them.

Finishing the household works Bonda men, women and children move out to work in their fields carrying their lunch with them.

Bondo derive their subsistence from out of shifting cultivation (Klunda or Dongar *chas*) as well as settled cultivation (Jhola *chas*) where ever wet lands are available in the rugged and undulating terrain. While working in the field, they take lunch brought from home. Sometimes they cook food and eat there. By the afternoon they come back home.

Men climb the Salap (Sago Palm) tree to have a refreshing drink of Salap juice to which they are strongly addicted. Bonda men are aggressive by nature and they are skilled archers. They always go out with their arms such as bow, arrows, knife and axe. Under intoxication they become more aggressive and violent which often leads to homicide.

Reaching home from the field women resume their routine household works. They take care of children; gather firewood for the kitchen to cook the evening meal. Bonda women work for their family from dawn to dusk. During leisure hours they flock together to while away some time in chit-chatting.

Among the Bonda all people irrespective of age and sex work according to their capacity. Children, old men and women do not sit idle. Those above 10

years of age help their parents in indoor and outdoor activities. They take care of their younger siblings during the absence of parents.

In winter after the sunset people gather in the streets and sit around fire to get relief from cold. During festive occasions and whenever they want, young men and women rejoice by dancing wearing their gorgeous costumes. Their dances are performed during day and night. Others enjoy the show from a distance.

### **Livelihood**

In the rugged terrain of their habitat the Bonda toil hard to eke out their subsistence. Primarily the Bonda are agriculturists. They practise shifting cultivation (*klunda chas*) extensively. Here they grow cereals, pulses and oilseeds such as- *kangu, suan, jana*, oats, black gram, maize, niger etc. Irrigated and terraced paddy fields are used for cultivation of paddy by transplantation method. In their kitchen gardens they grow maize, tobacco, fruits and vegetables. Their livelihood is supplemented by animal domestication and seasonal forest collections.

Bonda come down the hills in different week days to visit the weekly markets in the adjoining plains held at Mundiguda, Kudumulguma, Govindpally, Mathili, Lamtaput, Onkadely, Khairput, Panasput, etc. Here they come in contact with the outside world. Here they sale or barter their surplus agricultural produce, minor forest produce and brooms and procure their provisions. The market transactions are done mostly by Bonda women. Besides, they meet their friends and relatives from villages far and near and enjoy happy moments while relishing the taste of sweets and snacks from the food stalls. These markets sit during morning hours. By afternoon they return to their home in the distant mountains.

### **Magico –Religious Domain**

Bonda are polytheists. They believe in the existence of a number of Gods and spirits. They worship mostly the deities of nature like the Patkhanda Maaparabu - the Creator of universe, Hundi or Bursung - the Mother Earth and the village Goddess, Kapurchuan - the deity of stream, Dhartani - the deity of cowshed, Uga and Renungbor - the forest deities, Doliang - the spirit of mango tree, Kalarani - the spirit of low-land paddy fields and Vinding Sagar - the spirits of musical drums.

The village Priest - Sisa or Pujari conducts worship of these deities on various occasions. Besides, there are many dreaded evil spirits. All of them need to be kept in good humour through rituals and sacrifices. Gurumai -the

Shaman, detects spirits causing sickness and other troubles with the help of rice divination, communicates with them in trance, and appeases them by conducting rituals and sacrifices.

### **Social Control**

Bonda villages are traditionally autonomous. Social discipline is maintained by a set of traditional functionaries - Naik- the village chief, Challan -the organiser of village meetings and Barik - the village messenger. The Barika belongs to Dom caste.

Naik is an elderly person of the village with knowledge and experience. He presides over the village council meetings at Sindibor and adjudicates cases concerning village affairs. Cases violating social customs, traditions and conventions are brought to the assembly and decided. Punishment is given to the offender in accordance with the gravity of the case.

### **Dance Traditions**

In sharp contrast to their aggressiveness the Bonda have finer aspects of life that finds expression in their age old tradition of dance and music. Grown up boys and girls become members of youth dormitory. They dance for themselves on different occasions wearing colourful dance costumes. While boys play musical instruments the girls holding bunch of peacock feathers dance to the tune.

### **Changing Scene**

Bonda no longer remain isolated in their remote mountainous abode. Winds of change have entered into their territory. They have been identified as one among 13 Primitive Tribal Groups of (PTGs) of Orissa. The 1st Micro Project of Orissa named Bonda Development Agency is functioning at Mudulipada - the heart of Bonda country since 1977 to bring about their all-round development. It is effecting changes in their life style. Change is taking place in road links, housing, livelihood patterns, health and hygiene. Priority has been given to spread of education. Residential schools for boys and girls are running at Mudulipada.

The Bondas have now gradually adopted the cultivation of wheat, potato, high-yielding paddy, pulses, vegetables, etc. Now it is up to them to decide upon their way of life not at the cost of their unique cultural identity.

# MARRIAGE & FAMILY : A STUDY ON THE BONDO OF ORISSA <sup>1</sup>

B. B. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

## I

Towards the south-west of Jeypore at a distance of about 70 Kms. lies a picturesque landscape forming a part of the eastern-*ghat* hill ranges covered with thick vegetation which is the abode of many Dravidian and Mundari speaking tribes such as the Gadaba, the Bondo, the Didayi and the Saora. Among these groups and other tribal communities found elsewhere in the state, the Bondo are considered as one of the primitive tribes. Because of their long occupation, the region occupied by them in the eastern-*ghats* is commonly known as 'Bondo Hills.' Here, the nature with all its bounties and endowments has favoured the Bondo to flourish and lead a kind of life they cherished through ages. In terms of both socio-economic development and contact with the outside world they not only lag far behind their other tribal brethren, but also, they are one of the few select band of tribal groups found in the country, who are known to have preserved their respective core culture to a large extent undisturbed by the effects of massive development intervention that is going on in the area for quite sometime.

### Distribution and Demography

Under the present administrative divisions, the area inhabited by the Bondo comes under Khairiput Block of newly formed Malkangiri district. Based on the location of settlements, socio-culture affiliations and geo-physical diversities the Bondo villages lying in the Bondo territory can broadly be divided into three groups of villages such as:-

- I) Barajangar group or Barajanagar *des* comprising twelve original Hill-Bondo settlements forming a confederacy for politico-jural purposes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIV, Nos.1&2, 1994, pp.28-36

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI



- 2) Gadaba or Gadaba-Bondo group consisting of six Hill-Bondo villages greatly influenced by the Gadaba culture and dialect.
- 3) Plain Bondo group of twenty-four villages located in the plains of Khairput Block completely distinct from the other two groups.

At present there are 25 Hill-Bondo villages distributed under three Gram Panchayats (GPs), namely Boddural, Ondrahal and Mudulipada and many plains Bondo villages distributed in four GPs, namely Khairput, Kudumuluguma, Govindapalli and Muniguda.

Numerically, the Bondos are a small group compared to other tribal communities mostly confined to Khairput Block of Malkangiri District. The population of the tribe from the year 1941 onwards are mentioned here under-

Census Year	Bondo Population
1941	2,565
1951	3,641
1961	4,677
1971	5,338
1981	5,895

The above population figures reveal that the Bondo population has shown steady increase during the last five decades. But their growth rate is little slow in comparison to that of the total tribal population of the state. The decadal growth rate recorded among them during 1971-81 was 10.93 percent as against 16.68 percent for the total tribal population of the state. In the total population 5,895 (1981 census) the females outnumber the males, the sex ratio being 1,113 females per 1,000 males. The rate of literacy among them is alarmingly low i.e., only 3.61 percent as compared to 13.96 percent for the total tribal population of the state. The present paper is prepared on the basis of the data collected in connection with a larger study on "Traditions and Customs of the Bondo" taken up during the year 1993-94.

## II

### MARRIAGE

In the social organization of the Bondo, marriage is an important institution which lays the legal foundation for the family. It is the most remarkable and memorable event for a Bondo during his life time, as his cherished dream comes true by acquiring a mate. It is a kind of indissoluble

bond which does not break ordinarily, as only death of either of the partners can break such tie.

### Marriage Rules

The marriage rules of the Bondos, are very elaborate and framed on the basis of three sets of relationships, that is, the relationship of a man with his village community, the relationship with his *soru-bhai* and the relationship with his clan (*kuda*) members.

The Bondo villages are almost like sacred entities with well defined and demarcated boundaries, guarded by many benevolent deities and spirits. These sacramental fellowships between the members of a village backed by moral and religious values that force them to lead a disciplined life and maintain brotherhood making the village an exogamous unit. Besides, the boys and girls of a village whether belong to a single *kuda* or several *kudas* who are attached to one *sindibor* (the sacred meeting place of the village council) are considered as brothers and sisters. Therefore, marriage cannot take place among them under any circumstance. The marriage rules are observed so strictly that the boys of one village are not allowed to visit the girls' dormitory (Selani *dingo*) of the same village in the evening, as that visit may lead to marriage with some girl of the same village. Such union is viewed as a serious offence of incest. But in certain exceptional situations deviation of the customary rule of village exogamy is also made as mentioned by Elwin and Haimendorf in their descriptions about the Bondo. According to them, when the village is composed of some immigrants who have not been fully integrated with the original inhabitants and who for all ritual purposes form a separate entity, then marriage between the members of two different groups is possible.

In addition to village exogamy, the Bondo also observe *soru*-exogamy rigidly. *Soru* means food, in Tamil literature. But to a Bondo it is a kind of sacred food offered ceremonially to Patkhanda Mahaprabhu - their supreme deity. The persons belonging to a group of specific villages who share this food are attached to one another by a sacramental fellowship or *soru*-brotherhood. Elwin writes "A man's neighbours are his *sorubhai*, brothers who have eaten the same sacrificial food, a privilege that is rigidly restricted to the members of the same village (1950:24). Due to this ritual tie, marriage between these families is forbidden. For example, initially, members of two villages - Mudulipada and Dantipada were sharing *soru* among themselves. But due to the increase of population, the village Mudulipada gave rise to two more settlements, namely Bandhuguda and Podeiguda, the members of which now share *soru* with the inmates of Mudulipada and

Dantipada. These four villages which are ritually attached to one another by sharing a common *soru* are held as *kutumb* villages, hence, matrimonial relationship between the members of these villages is not permissible.

Apart from *soru*-fellowship that forbids marriages between its members, the rule of exogamy is very rigidly adhered to by the members of different *kudas* or clans. The *kuda* or *monda* which is very conspicuous in Bondo social organization is nothing but exogamous patrilineal clans. A Bondo is proud of his own clan name. There are nine different *kudas* such as Badnaik, Challan, Dhangere-Majhi, Kirsani, Muduli, Sisa, Dora, Jigiri and Mandra found in the Bondo society. The latter three names are said to be recent inclusions. Formerly, the villages were uni-clan in composition as evident from their names. For example, Mudulipada was the stronghold of Mudulis and the Kirsanipada, of the Kirsanis. But in course of time, due to population growth both in and out migration took place in these villages which resulted in complete change in their composition. Now, in each and every village, households belonging to more than one *kuda* are noticed. The members of one particular *kuda* are said to have descended from a common ancestor and, as such, regarded as consanguineal kins. Therefore, marital alliances between boys and girls belonging to the same *kuda* are forbidden. Formerly, as the *kuda* was more or less coterminous with the territorial division, while observing village exogamy, it automatically meant that marriage had taken place outside one's own *kuda*. But now under the changed situation, they are very particular about both village and *kuda* exogamy as a Bondo is restricted by customary rule not to marry a girl within his own village even if she belongs to a different *kuda*. However, in village Andrahal marriages have been reported between the members of different *kudas* living in the same village. This is due to the fact that Andrahal is a big village where different *kuda* members live in separate wards maintaining their separate identity for all socio-religious purposes independent of others. This case may be taken as exception to the general rule.

Another ritual-relationship known as Moitor or Mahaprasad that exists at the family level also regulates matrimonial relationship between the concerned families. It is a kind of ritual friendship based on intimacy, mutual help and support that develops into a permanent tie, between two persons of similar temperament of more or less of the same age group. Informal and casual friendship between two persons, in course of time if develops into a very rigid bond then a permanent shape is given to such relationship when they call each other as Moitor. Such relationship once established continues for generations between the two Moitor families, and marriage between the members of these two friendly families is not permitted according to their customs.

### **Age at Marriage:**

The Bondo have a peculiar tradition with regard to determination of age at marriage for boys and girls. The girls marry at the age of 16 to 18 years after attaining puberty and adulthood and the boys, at the age of 8 to 10 years when they are still in the childhood stage. In Bondo marriages parity of age between the marrying couple is not a factor to be considered, where the wife is older than the husband and the margin of age difference between the two in certain cases may exceed more than 8 to 10 years. Their society does not take into account such factors as maturity and adulthood. Capability of maintaining a family and performing sexual act, etc. required for a boy while considering him fit for marriage.

The explanations to the custom of marrying immature boys to the matured girls mostly come from the women folk as they feel that a boy becomes old when he develops beard and mustaches on his face and no girl would like to marry such a person. Haimendorf has put forth some reasonable explanations to this quoting the opinion of some of the Bondo ladies. He mentions that "such uneven matches were of the girls fun making. . . . they like marrying small boys for them who have young husbands to work for us when we are old. . . a stronger motive may be girls' desire to prolong the happy days in the dormitory." (1943:172).

### **Pre-marital Sex:**

The customary rule of the Bondo does not permit pre-marital sex. The boys and girls though enjoy complete freedom in their society and spend the night together with intimacy in the youth dormitory; the instances of pre-marital sex are rare. Such intimacies never lead to sex as the girls would never like to have it. To them sexual intercourse in the pre-marital period implies a serious intention; it is most equivalent to a betrothal. Haimendorf, observed that pre-marital sex act is of rare occurrence among the Bondo. "The Bondos believe that occasional intercourse in the girls' dormitory does not lead to pregnancy; only if a boy and girl live together for a year or two will they have children (1943:170)". Commenting on the reaction of the society on pre-marital sex and pregnancy he further writes that, "But even pregnancy resulting from adventures in the *selani dingo* is no very great misfortune; most likely the girl's lover will marry her, but if he does not, neither he nor the girl will draw upon themselves a fine or any other unpleasantness. It is said that in such a case the girl has no difficulty in finding someone else to marry her and accept the child as his own. In neither event are wedding ceremonies hurried, for there is no objection to the child being born in the house of the girl's parents (1943:170-171).

Now-a-days, the Bondo culture has been subjected to many changes under the influence of increasing outside contact and mobility and many age-old customs and traditions have been given up. Therefore, whatever liberty was allowed with regard to pre-marital sex has been completely withdrawn. Now the society lays more emphasis on the chastity of the girls prior to their marriage.

### **Selani Dingo : The Matrimonial Agency**

Of all varieties of experiences a Bondo may have in his life time, the one that relate to his days in the dormitory is unforgettable for these days are his happiest moments of life. Perhaps, no other tribal societies in Orissa other than the Juang of north Orissa have such a well organized youth dormitory system as that of the Bondo. In each village there are two dormitories, one for the girls, called *selani dingo* and the other for the boys called *ingersin dingo*. The former is well maintained unlike the latter and chiefly acts as the matrimonial agency. The Bondo children enjoy utmost freedom in selecting their life partners and in such matter the parents or the guardians do not interfere at all. For right selection of life partners, they allow free mixing of the boys and girls, in order to know each other's habit, temperament, likes and dislikes form a close quarter. *Selani dingo* acts as the common meeting ground for them.

The Bondo society has imposed certain restrictions on the boys with regard to their visit to girl's dormitories. A boy can not visit the girl's dormitory of his own village. He is also not permitted to go to these places of other villages where his own *kuda* and *soru bhai* members are living. He is only allowed to visit the girl's dormitory of those villages with which matrimonial relationship can be forged.

During the rainy season, the girl's dormitory, *selani dingo*, roars into activity in the evening every day, when the unmarried girls charmingly dressed eagerly wait to welcome the boys of other villages. The boys, in groups, well-dressed walk miles to reach their destination and on their arrival they greet each other with smiles on their face. The girls entertain the boys with food and drink and in return the boys give them presents like bamboo combs, plaited grass or Palmyra hair bands. Till late night playing and singing, fun making and gossiping continues between them and in the morning the boys return to their respective villages with the promise of meeting once again in the evening. Visits to girl's dormitory continue for days together and in course of such visits a boy may fall in love with a girl. When love intensifies and the boy becomes sure that his marriage proposal will be accepted, then he while holding the middle finger

of his beloved girl puts a brass bangle on her palm. The girl may accept it to confirm her consent, or else she may throw it away to convey her disapproval of the proposed marriage. Therefore, love affairs do not always lead to marriage and out of many only few succeed. The unsuccessful boys never lose their hearts and they continue their effort by moving to girl's dormitories of other villages.

### **Types of Marriage**

The Bondo marriages are of two types (1) marriage by mutual consent (*sebung*) and (2) marriage by capture (*guboi*). Among these, the former type is more common.

#### **Marriage by Mutual Consent**

Marriage by mutual consent, though held as prestigious in their society, is very expensive. Therefore, it is, more or less, a well-to-do family's affair. It is very elaborate and involves several stages such as, dormitory visit by the boys and selection of girl, formal approval by the boy's parents, exchange of visits by both the parties several times with presentation, fixation of amount of bride price to be paid and finally consummation of marriage. Marriage is celebrated in an auspicious day fixed by Dissari, the village astrologer. The groom's party goes to the bride's village carrying with them several pots of cooked food and beer to bring the bride. The food and drink is served to the bride's relations present there who in turn also entertain the members of groom's side with the same type of food. Next day, the bride is brought to the groom's house. In both these places customary rituals associated with marriage are performed. At the end, a sumptuous feast is arranged by the groom's family to entertain all those who are associated with the marriage, that include *kuda* members *soru bhais*, Moiter friends, maternal relatives and other distinguished guests.

#### **Marriage by Capture**

This type of marriage is less expensive, less elaborate and simple than the above type. Most of the secondary marriages are performed by capture of divorced or married women and widows. Capture of unmarried girls is rare. The main features of this type of marriage are forcible capture of a bride followed by her and her parent's approval and payment of bride-price. According to Haimendorf, "The capture is usually a mere pretence, for a Bondo girl cannot easily be married against her will and even if taken by force to capturer's village she will run away at the first opportunity unless she likes him and he has her consent. However, a marriage by capture must be followed by the payment of usual bride price (1943:171-172)". In this type of marriage, expenses on feast are minimized as

no bullock is killed, besides gifts and visits are reduced. The circumstances that compel a Bondo to resort to this type of marriage are narrated below:

- i) When a boy fails to select a girl during his visit to *selani dingo*.
- ii) When a boy grows old with the emergence of beard and mustache on his face.
- iii) When a man goes for second marriage.
- iv) When a widower or divorcee wants to remarry.
- v) When a physically handicapped person wants to marry.
- vi) When poor man who cannot afford to pay the usual amount of bride-price and meet the marriage expenses wants to marry.

Sometimes, in this type of marriage, if attempts are made to marry forcibly an unwilling girl, the situation may lead to quarrel and conflict between the two concerned families taking a violent shape, even resulting in murder of person(s) from either side.

There are many cases of marriage by capture noticed in the Bondo societies. In village Dantipada one E. Sisa, an orphan and poor person who was brought up by his maternal uncle captured a girl named S. Toki of village Challaniguda and married her. He resorted to this practice as he could not afford the expenses of 'Sebung' type of marriage. Another case of kidnapping of a married woman was reported to in village Dumuripada. A man of this village captured the girl named M. Toki of village Badapada while she was working in Donger (swidden land) and paid double the bride-price as compensation to the former husband of the kidnapped lady.

### **Preferential forms of Marriage**

Generally speaking, the customary law of the Bondo does not prescribe any preferential or obligatory forms of marriage. Marriage between the cross-cousins and parallel cousins is not permitted as they are regarded as brothers and sisters. Elwin, commenting on the freedom a Bondo with regard to his marriage writes, 'A Bondo boy has unprecedentedly wide field from which to select his future wife, he is not tied down . . . by obligations to a cousin or other relative or by his elders tiresome desire that he should marry many or improve the family status by marrying well. (1950:73)'.

They do not practise sororate but to some extent, senior levirate. In the latter type, a man may marry his deceased younger brother's wife with her consent. This is an opposite of junior levirate practiced by other tribes in which the younger brother marries the widow of his deceased elder brother. Verrier

Elwin has put forth reasonable explanations about this as “among the Bondos an elder brother’s wife would probably too elderly to be attractive, whereas the younger brother’s wife though possibly older than her own husband, would be more of an age with the elder brother and so more available for an affair (1950:117)”. There are instances among the Bonda that the elder brother has forcibly married his younger brother’s wife after she has deserted her husband and gone back to her parents.

### **Polygamy**

The practice of Polygamy though permitted in the Bonda society is very rare. A Bonda ordinarily does not like to invite trouble and put himself into difficulty by acquiring more wives. To him, more the number of wives means, more the number of houses to be built, more the number of children to rear and more the quantity of food stuff to produce. Moreover, polygynous marriages are rarely successful due to frequent quarrels among the co-wives. However, a man may go for a second wife, when extra hand is needed in agricultural works, or the first wife is barren or too old to satisfy the sexual urge of the husband. The first wife does not grumble and conveys her approval to her husband’s second marriage for the first two reasons but if the motive is sexual gratification she disapproves the proposal. The co-wives stay in separate huts with their children and very rarely they tolerate each other and live as co-operating housewives.

For this reason, in most of the Bonda villages very few polygynous families are seen. In Mudulipada X. Muduli has two wives; the first one G. Toki was acquired by negotiation and the second one K. Toki through capture. Here the motive for second marriage was to obtain an extra hand to expand the area of cultivation and get more food stuff for family consumption. In the same village one Y. Muduli brought a second wife due to the barrenness of his first wife. Both the cases are examples of successful polygynous marriages as these were performed with the approval of the first wife.

### **Bride Price**

Payment of bride-price is a unique practice found among the tribal societies in Orissa. This custom is rigidly followed among the Bondos too. Whether the marriage is made by negotiation or by capture, may it be a rich or poor man’s affair, the payment has to be made otherwise, marriage cannot take place. The amount of bride-price negotiated between the two parties is paid soon after the marriage is over or within a reasonable time-frame. It is paid both in cash and kind, which consists of some heads of cattle, few pots of liquor and



some cash. The amount of bride-price to be paid is fixed by taking into consideration the types of marriages to be performed and the economic condition and social position of groom's family. Generally, lesser amount of bride-price is paid in case of marriages made by capture of a widow or divorced woman in comparison to marriage performed through mutual consent. In case of marriage made by capture of married women became double the amount of usual bride price is paid.

### **Divorce and Remarriage**

The Bondo marriages are more or less stable, therefore, divorce, though socially permitted is of rare occurrence. They regard breaking of the wedlock a very serious matter which requires careful thought and consideration before it is effected. Like marriage, divorce is a family affair. Both men and women are at liberty to divorce each other on reasonable grounds. Besides, divorce can be effected unilaterally by either of the spouse or by mutual consent. The grounds for effecting divorce for both men and women are adultery or illicit sexual act; cruelty, harassment, ill-treatment and physical assault, laziness, non-cooperation in economic activities, sexual disability and incapability, incurable diseases, unfaithfulness and physical and mental disabilities etc. When divorce is effected with the initiative of husband, he cannot claim to get back the brides price, but in the opposite case the husband gets back the bride-price. After divorce, the wife has no claim over the children.

In Bondo society widows or widowers and divorced persons are allowed to remarry. They enjoy equal status as that of others. A young widower may visit the girl's dormitory, but a widow, young or old is not allowed to do so. In case of widow marriage she has no right to take any of her children with her to the house of her new husband.

## **III**

### **BONDO FAMILY**

In every human society, ranging from most primitive to most modern, family is the basic social institution. Murdock (1949) regards family as a 'social groups'; Mead (1931), 'a status giving group', and Lowie (1950), 'an association which includes adults of both sexes having socially approved sexual relationship'. In the Bondo society family is the basic social unit forming a cultural superstructure over a biological foundation. It comprises both young and old of either sex tied together by kinship bonds and marriage rules. The family functions as (1) Legitimate sexual unit, (2) Controlled reproductive unit, (3)

Educational unit and (4) Economic unit that are essential for survival and perpetuation of individuals and the society.

### **Structure and Composition**

Among the Bondo, the family is mostly nuclear composed of married couple and their dependant off springs. Joint or extended families are very rare. The ideal structure of the nuclear family often disintegrates owing to death and marriage of any individual thus giving rise to various broken forms of family. The different forms of nuclear family found among the Bondo are given below:

- (a) Households having married couple and their unmarried children.
- (b) Households having married couple only
- (c) Households having only siblings
- (d) Households having either husband or wife with unmarried children
- (e) Households with a single member

Generally the ideal form of generationally enlarged or extended family structure is not seen among the Bondo. Besides, the system of joint family which is made up of co-laterals that is, the brothers of one generation, together with their sons in the next generation, or sons of third generation is also not found among them. But as a matter of obligatory duty, a Bondo is bound by tradition to shoulder the burden of his parents when they become invalid due to old age, prolonged disease or permanent physical or mental disability. In such situations the general practice is that the old persons are provided food and other necessities by their sons and their burden of maintenance is shared equally by them. This indicates that in Bondo society although a son after marriage gets separated from his parents and establishes a separate residence, the tie with his natal family which is built on kinship bonds and strong emotional feelings does not break. Apart from the societal custom of establishment of new residence after marriage, the other reasons which discourage the growth of extended family among them are lack of space in the paternal house to accommodate more members and the carefree and individualistic attitude of the Bondo to lead an independent life.

In order to find out the average size of the Bondo family and its structure and composition a survey was conducted in seven villages covering 414 households and 1510 population. The data revealed that on an average a Bondo household is composed of 4 members confirming to nuclear family structure. The composition of different kinds of Bondo families as found out during the study is given below, in the following table.

### Composition of Bondo Family

Sl. No	Categories	No. of families	Percentage
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Household with husband and wife	58	14.9
2	Household with husband and wife with children	224	54.2
3	Household with either husband or wife with children	66	16.0
4	Households with siblings only	2	0.1
5	Household with single member	25	6.1
6	Household with either husband or wife or both with or without children with dependent collaterals or parents.	39	9.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The above table indicates that out of the six categories of Bondo families, the largest are the unbroken and complete type of the households (282 households – 68.3%) given at serial 1 and 2. Among the ‘broken’ forms, the category i.e., “Household with either husband or wife with children” (Sl.3) accounts for maximum number of households (66 households - 16.06 percent). Besides, the other broken forms include 25 or 6.1 percent single member households and there are only two households with siblings only. The sixth category is composed of households with either husband or wife or both with or without children with dependant collaterals or parents. Although the inclusion of dependant parents and collaterals in the nuclear family do not seem justifiable, but these cannot be taken as examples of extended family. It is because, sometime when the parents die leaving behind young children, it becomes the duty of the elder brother to look after them and arrange their marriage after which they get separated. In other cases as mentioned earlier, the old parents are taken care of by their sons as a matter of duty no matter whether they stay with them or separately in their own huts. Therefore, in both these cases their inclusion in the family is temporary and they are not the permanent members of the nuclear family.

The family, apart from being nuclear is largely monogamous as they practise polygyny rarely. During the study only six out of 414 families were found to be polygynous. Generally, persons having more economic assets in the

form of land, go for a second wife not for the sake of sexual enjoyment but to increase the wealth of the family. Besides, in certain conflicting situations a man may also go for a second wife to reestablish his prestige and honour. All secondary marriages are performed through capture of divorced woman or widows which involves a lower rate bride price. But under no circumstances an unmarried girl is eloped.

### **Pattern of Residence**

The composition of household is entirely dependent upon the rules of residence. Besides, the location of marital residence is governed by various other factors, as economic, property and inheritance pattern. Among the Bondo, the residence after marriage is established by custom and it does not allow any individual choice or preference. Among them the residence after marriage is patrilocal or neo-local. The newlywed couple lives in the same village where the husband's paternal kins live. This means that a woman consequent upon her marriage breaks all ties with her family of orientation and gets admitted to the *kuda* (clan) of her husband automatically. The patrilocal residence pattern helps a Bondo man to keep intimate relationship with his paternal kins and the community members of the village which promotes strengthening of group solidarity. On rare occasions, a couple after marriage shift their residence to another locality or village. But such migration does not deter them in fulfilling their rights and obligations which they owe to their kin and the community members of their village of origin. They remain in constant touch with their paternal kin groups and participate in all socio-religious functions by participating and contributing their share.

### **Descent**

The Bondo society is organized, based on the principle of uni-lineal descent which emphasize the father's side of the family. The family is patrilineal, in which the members inherit their social identity through descent reckoned in the father's line. To a Bondo, patrilineal kinship membership is hereditary that is achieved by birth only and not by any other means. By virtue of his birth in a particular family a man becomes the biological as well as jural descendant. Under the patrilineal descent system, a Bondo male inherits his name, property, liabilities, family secrets, social status from his father.

### **Authority**

Among the Bondo, both in the management and decision making process, at the family, village and clan levels, the males enjoy considerable

freedom and authority. In the family, the senior most male member acts as the head of the household who controls family budget and takes important decisions in the matters of settlement of marriage proposals, observance of birth and death rituals, property transactions, etc. Though he enjoys absolute authority in taking decisions regarding family matters, yet the views of other members and more particularly that of his wife is given due weightage.

### **Functions of the Family**

Among the tribesmen, the family functions as a reproductive, consumption, production and educational unit. Generally, in tribal societies, the father exercises guardianship over the children till they become major. At this stage, the adult unmarried boy is partially independent. After he establishes his new home and hearth after marriage he becomes fully independent. But in the Bondo society, a boy even after his marriage continues to remain under the control of his father for some time. According to their custom, generally a boy of 8 to 10 years old marries a grown up girl of 16 to 18 years age. Although they live separately after marriage, the boy who is a child at that time is not strong enough to perform the heavier works independently and as such depends fully on his parents for his requirement of food grains without contributing his required quota of labour input. Because of the economic dependence on the father the boy does not enjoy much freedom and rather remains under the control of the father till he attains adulthood and becomes capable enough to sustain himself and his wife.

The family functions as a unit of economic co-operation maintaining a balance between production and consumption. Whatever is produced is consumed leaving hardly any surplus. Based on the principle of division of labour among sexes, the family members barring the small kids perform their respective economic duties. The family also functions as an institution of socialization of children. The parents not only rear their children with utmost fondness and care, but also more importantly they guide children while they learn to earn their own living in conformity with social customs and values. In the family, the child while grows, develops his basic personality structure through its interaction with the adult members.

On the whole, the foundation of the Bondo family is built on intense love and affection, mutual help and co-operation between its members. And such rigid bond helps them to live together under one roof and beyond the family, as a compact social group.

## IV

The social life of the Bondo which is guided and regulated by their deep rooted customs, traditions and ethical values has, more or less, remained unaffected from the impact of modern trends of civilization. But to some extent, they have changed in their attitude and outlook. An outsider is no more taken as a stranger and greeted with shower of arrows. Neither they fly away to jungle nor hide themselves in the house on seeing an outsider. However, the attitudinal changes, so far have not made them to deviate them from their traditional way of life and have little impact on their customary practices.

## References

- |                        |      |                                                                                              |
|------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Barnow, Victor         | 1979 | <i>Anthropology and the Human Experience</i> , Home Wood Illionis. The Dorsy Press.          |
| Bhattacharya, A.       | 1950 | A Bondo Child Cremation, <i>Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society</i> , Vol.20       |
| Bogardus, Emory S.     | 1969 | <i>The Development of Social Thought</i> , Vakils, Feffer and Simons, Bombay.                |
| Bohannan, Paul J.      | 1969 | <i>Anthropology and the Law</i> in Sole Tax and Leslie G. Frieman (ed) O.P. Cit, 1977        |
| Block. Donald          | 1976 | <i>The Behaviour of Law</i> , New York, Academic Press                                       |
| Das, G. N.             | 1956 | A Note on the Hill-Bondo of Koraput District, Orissa, <i>Vanyajati</i> , Vol. 4.             |
| Elwin, Verrier         | 1950 | <i>Bondo Highlanders</i> , Bombay, Oxford University Press                                   |
| Furer Haimendorf. C.V. | 1943 | Avenues of Marriage Among the Bondos of Orissa, <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.23, No. 2, Ranchi. |
| Patnaik, N. & Others   | 1984 | <i>The Bondos and their Response to Development</i> , T.H.R.T.I. Bhubaneswar.                |

# POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AMONG THE BONDA <sup>1</sup>

B.B. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

Among the sixty-two tribal communities found in the State of Orissa, the Bondo are considered as one of the most primitive tribal groups. They are found in the Khairput Block of Malkangiri district. The Bondo live along with other tribal groups, like the Gadaba, the Didayi etc in the Eastern Ghats. They were well-known for their homicidal tendencies. For their long occupation in a definite territory in relative isolation in this region, their habitat is popularly known as Bondo Country or Bondo Hill.

Based on the location of settlements, geo-physical diversities, and socio-cultural affiliations, the entire Bondo country can be divided broadly into three groups of villages. They are the *Bara-jangar* group, the *Gadaba* group and the Plain group. The *Bara-jangar* group comprises twelve villages namely, (1) Mudulipada, (2) Kirsani Pada, (3) Tulaguram, (4) Bandapada, (5) Bandiguda, (6) Bausupada, (7) Salanpada, (8) Gopurpada, (9) Pindajangar, (10) Kichapada, (11) Dantipada and (12) Pandraguda. These twelve villages are said to be the original Bondo settlements and form a confederacy for politico jural purposes. The *Gadaba* group covers six villages namely, (i) Andrahal, (ii) Dumuripada, (iii) Katamguda, (iv) Antamguda, (v) Bodbel and (vi) Bodapada. The Bondo of these villages are greatly influenced by the Gadaba culture and dialect and therefore, they are known as Gutob-remo or Gadaba Bondo. Under the Plain group, there are five villages such as (i) Kadamguda, (ii) Pandraguda, (iii) Puchaguda, (iv) Similiguda and (v) Fat-Kanguda. The inhabitants of these villages have completely discarded their traditional culture coming in contact with the neighbouring Hindu castes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Tribal Customs and Traditions, Vol.I, SCSTRTI, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Former Deputy Director of SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

Barring a few, most of the Bondo villages are homogeneous in composition. Even in heterogeneous villages the majority of households belong to Bonda, who live amidst other local communities, like, the Gadaba, the Mali, the Rana, the Paiko, the Dom, the Teli, the Lohara and the Brahman.

Bondo settlements function as independent political units to provide protection to its members and safeguard their rich cultural traditions. Based on the rigid democratic principles, the customary laws and values are enforced among the people through their traditional village Panchayat. Each and every member who strongly abides by these rules, contributes substantially to the maintenance of peaceful and coherent social order. The customs, traditions, values and norms of the society are transmitted from generation to generation through the process of socialization and interaction among the individuals and groups and maintained by oral traditions.

At the village level, Bondos have their own traditional council, which is in charge of deciding intra-village disputes and looking after other village affairs. Over and above it, there is a confederacy formed of 12 villages to discharge functions of higher order, which cannot be settled at the village level. The villages namely, Tulaguram, Baunsapada, Kirsanipada, Gopurpada, Pindajangar, Mudulipada, Dantipada, Chedanpada, Bondapada, Bandiguda, Pandraguda and Kichhapada which constitute the *Barajngar des* are said to be the original Bondo settlements. Besides this group that constitutes the most important Upper Bondo villages, the other two groups of villages fall to the Gadaba group and plain group. Mudulipada is said to be the capital of *Barajngar* group. The headman of this group of villages is called *Bad Naik* who is also otherwise known as Raja. The *Bad Naik* hails from *Bad Naik kuda* and belongs to Mudulipada village. The post is generally held for a period of three years and selection to this post takes place during the *Susu-gige* festival. The *Naiks* of all the twelve villages, who gather at Mudulipada during the festival, select the *Bad Naik*. The mode of selection of *Bad Naik* is same as that of the *Naik*, which is described later in this chapter. During the feudal regime he was the most powerful man in the Bondo country. But now he has almost lost his importance among the people.

The Bondo, generally speaking, are not deviants of their own rules. They follow the rules of exogamy, taboos on incest or adultery with utmost sincerity in order to avoid supernatural aggression and public criticism. They are by nature, simple and innocent, who in their hard toil from dawn to dusk, rarely find any time to indulge in any quarrel or dispute with others. To a Bondo, his fellow tribesmen are not strangers to him. He is tied with some sorts of social relationship with each of them. Moreover, they are not that ambitious to grab



other's wealth and women. They have high regard for their customary rules and social presumptions; therefore a Bondo feels proud to be called as *Remo*.

#### **Village Functionaries:**

In each and every Bondo village, there is a set of office bearers who work under different capacities to enforce and maintain law and order among the inhabitants of the village. They are, *Naik*, *Challan*, *Sisa*, *Disari*, *Pujari* and *Barik*.

#### **Naik:**

*Naik* is the secular headman of the village. He is a man of high prestige, power and authority. His post is achieved but not ascribed. Formerly the *Naik* was being selected from the *Bad Naik kuda*, but this practise has been stopped long since and persons of other *kudas*, capable of holding such post are appointed to the job. The attributes such as adequate knowledge and experience in customs and traditions of the society, high economic status, good character, personality and cordial behaviour, promptness and intelligence, ability to interact with outsiders, etc. are considered essential for selection of a man to this prestigious post. Besides, he should be a man of higher age group, preferably middle aged or old. Normally, the *Naik* holds the office for a period of 3 years after which he may again be reelected based on his competence and previous good work or another new man is elected to the post.

The appointment and reappointment of *Naik* is done during the festival of *susu-gige* in the month of *Pusha*. For the consecration of seeds and the worship of *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu*, the *Naik*, designate is asked to sit on the *sindibor*. One of the elderly members of the village puts a mark of rice as well as vermilion on his forehead. Then, each of the adult males present in the function tie a cut-piece of a red cloth on his head. Following this *Sisa*, the village priest performs a ritual, before the *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* by killing either a fowl or a goat. Then everyone thumps the new *Naik* on his back and congratulates him. A *Naik* can also be removed from his post during this festival.

The main functions of the *Naik* are to maintain peace among the villagers and regulate their behaviour as per the societal values, norms and customs. Besides, he takes leadership in collecting contribution from the individual households for organizing communal functions and celebrations. He was, in the past, responsible for collecting land revenues to be deposited in Tahasil office. He keeps account of the fines collected from the offenders, and when the amount becomes substantial, it is spent on communal feasts in which all villagers participate. When any Government official or outsiders visit the village, he acts

as the chief spokesman on behalf of the villagers. Being the most respected and important person of the village, he remains present in marriage negotiations, important celebrations, property transactions, etc. of the villagers. The *Naik* is allotted some wetlands for his valuable service to the village community.

**Challan:**

The *Challan* is the chief secular assistant of *Naik*. He is a Bondo and his post is hereditary. Like the *Naik*, formerly the *Challan* belonged to only *Challan kuda*, but now persons of other *kuda* are also holding such posts. He assists *Naik* in discharging his functions effectively. The *Naik* gets the first hand information about any good or bad event that happened in the village through him. He also provides important clues to the *Naik* in revealing truth and detecting the real culprit. He is not paid any remuneration towards his service, but invited to participate in all communal feasts and festivals.

**Barik:**

The *Barik* is the village messenger who works according to instructions of the *Naik*. He enjoys the lowest status among the secular functionaries. He is not a Bondo but a scheduled caste called Domb. Due to limited number of Domb families in the Bondo country, one *Barik* serves a group of villages. During the *susu-gige* festival the appointment or reappointment of *Barik* takes place. Generally a *Barik* works for three years, but if his conduct is not satisfactory, he can be dismissed even before the completion of his term.

The *Barik* is required to perform varieties of duties. As per the decision of the *Naik*, the *Barik* moves door to door to inform the villagers, the date and time of village council meetings. Besides, during the annual hunting expedition, he organizes the party and leads the team into the forest. Through him, messages are interchanged between the villages. In the event of any murder committed, he is called upon to run to police station to lodge F.I.R. He works as the attendant to the visiting dignitaries to the Bondo country. Besides, he functions as interpreter between the Bondo and outsiders in different situations ie, when anybody wants to have some information from the Bondo or at the time of trial of any criminal case in the court. In other words, the *Barik* acts as the middleman between Bondo who do not understand and speak Oriya properly and the outside world. In recognition of his service each household contributes some grains annually towards his remuneration.

Apart from these secular functionaries, the religious functionaries, like *Sisa* and *Disari* play important roles. In the village council meeting for

adjudication of cases, their presence is not only essential but due weightage is given to their opinions also. The interdependence of both the secular and sacerdotal village functionaries is very much marked among the Bondo while discharging their respective responsibilities. All of them work as a team.

**Sisa or Pujari:**

Every Bondo male is a potential *Pujari* (priest), as he performs rituals to appease deities and ancestors at his own home in each and every festival, which does not require much skill and specialization. But the person who specializes in this domain and willing to shoulder the responsibility becomes the *Sisa* (priest) of the village. He performs rituals and sacrifices in all communal functions and public occasions. His office is not hereditary. Elwin who holds this view, stated, "the *Sisa*, as the village priest is called, may be deposed if he does not do his work properly and every year he has to offer himself, along with the other village officials, for reappointment." (1950:159).

**Disari:**

While the *Sisa* is the village priest, the *Disari* is the astrologer-cum-medicine man of the village. He also acts as village shaman. He enjoys higher position and is considered more important than the *Sisa*. His activities do not remain confined to one village only. If he is reputed for having a good knowledge in indigenous medicines and in curing diseases, he may be sought after by the people of neighbouring villages. He is believed to have possessed divine powers and is considered as the link between the living world and the alien world of evil and hostile spirits. His post is hereditary.

**Sindibor: the Village Meeting Place:**

The village council holds its meetings in a specified place, called *sindibor* conveniently located within the village under shady trees. It is a sort of raised stone lounge prepared under the shade of a mango or jackfruit tree. The platform is made of sufficient number of stone slabs arranged horizontally on the ground in a rough circle to facilitate sitting, and there may be other long stone slabs fixed vertically in a slanting manner along the border end of the circle to serve as back rests. Each and every village has a *sindibor* of its own, and the *sindibors* of different villages do not exhibit any definite pattern. In some villages these may be located at the centre of the village, while in others these are found at any other place. They also vary in number, shape and size from village to village.

The *sindibor* occupies unique place in Bondo social life and caters to multifarious secular and sacred needs of the tribe. It is dedicated to *Burusung*

deity, the Mother Earth. On every important occasion like before ceremonial eating of new crops, fruits and during harvest operations, this deity is worshipped by *Sisa*. Although the *sindibor* is considered a sacred place, it is used very casually. Commenting on the use of *sindibor*, Elwin says, 'there is no taboo on women, even on menstruating women, and men and boys are usually to be found lounging, chatting, bathing, cooking or lying fast asleep on one or other on the village platform' (1950:169). Besides, Bondos have found it a convenient place not only for making various tools and implements, but also for warming up in the chilly winter morning by sitting around the fire. The visitors are offered seats here for chitchat. Among all its functions, the more important is its use as the meeting place of the village elders for discussion on different matters relating to activities and welfare of the village and for settlement of disputes.

Above all, the *sindibor* provides the common platform to mitigate differences and sort out problems through arguments and discussions among the people which develops togetherness among them in promoting village solidarity.

### **Traditional Village Council: Functions**

All kinds of intra-village disputes are brought before the village council for solution. The council holds its meeting in the *sindibor* presided over by *Naik*, who with the help of other office bearers and knowledgeable elderly persons of the village decides each case on its merit after listening to the arguments and counter arguments of both the parties. Long ago, this body was even deciding the cases of homicide, but after the establishment of Police Station at Mudulipada, these cases are reported there. The judgment delivered by the village chief is final and binding. Under no circumstances it can be challenged or revoked. But in exceptional cases wherein at a later date if it is proved that the judgment has been influenced by tampered then, it can be modified.

Adultery, rape, murder, violation of rules of exogamy, grievous bodily injuries, trespassing, killing of domesticated animals, encroachment of other's property, theft, black-magic, etc are considered as serious offences. In these cases the culprit is firmly dealt with and heavily punished. The minor offences include quarrel, scolding innocent persons in filthy language and physical assault without causing any injury, ill treatment to elders, deliberately allowing the animals to graze over other's land etc. for which the offender is punished lightly.

The Bondo believe that an offender may escape from the eyes of the human beings without being punished, but he is always subjected to supernatural aggression and punishment. A man who commits incest with his own or *soru*

sister is believed to suffer from blindness, whereas a murderer becomes a patient of rheumatism and for black magic, the person responsible suffers from leprosy. They also think that if a person while committing sin is seen by another person, then some amount of pollution is transferred from the real offender to the witness who is also subjected to anger of supernatural beings like the former.

But Patnaik and others while commenting on authority of the headman hold a different kind of view. According to them, "the village headman has less authority and goes by the consensus of public. During adjudication of case he only argues, submits the point of view of both the parties and persuades the people either this way or that way and never gives any order or verdict, which has no support of the public. (1984:54)

The Bondo laws are neither written nor codified. The offenders are punished according to their prescribed customary rules. Generally, the guilty persons are fined either in cash or kind or in both. The amount of penalty varies according to the gravity of the offence. The penalty collected from the offenders includes animals such as, bullock, buffalo, pig, goat, etc. The fines collected from the offenders are regarded as the property of the village council. With these collections feasts are organized in the village on different occasions. Their traditional village council is empowered to excommunicate the offenders considering the gravity of the offences. For petty offences, warning, threatening, ridicule, etc, are the prescribed punishment.

Normally, guilt is established through oath and ordeal. The accused is asked to take oath in the name of *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu*, their supreme deity and confess the truth to establish his innocence. The other means for revealing truth is done through cross-examining the witnesses and interpretation of circumstantial evidences.

Bondos were well known for their homicidal tendency. They are by nature, individualistic, freedom loving, aggressive and independent minded people. Added to these, their excessive drinking habit, carrying of deadly weapons always with them, bad temper, endurance and patience, suspiciousness, fear of supernatural powers, poverty and hardship, etc., keep them always under a state of mental irritation. Therefore, for petty incidents, which could have been ignored by a normal individual, they do not hesitate to commit major offences, like homicide or physical assault causing serious injuries to another person. It is worthwhile to mention that, whenever a Bondo commits any crime, he must be heavily drunk. Otherwise, a Bondo without any intoxication is a nice person.

The motives for committing offences like murder may be due to disputes over property and marriage, domestic quarrels, fear of prosecution, sorcery, revenge and other unmotivated quarrels.

The case studies cited below reveal the situations, which provoke Bondos to commit offences.

### *Case Study-1*

#### **Unmotivated murders in a drunken state:**

One C. Muduli, son of S. Muduli of village Mudulipada, who has two wives, is one of the few rich persons among Bondos. He murdered one S. Sisa of village Sileiguda, with whom he had no previous enmity. The incident happened years back in the month of January. During the harvest of *ragi*, one day, both C. Muduli and S. Sisa went to the hillside to drink sago-palm juice from the tree owned by the former. They were heavily drunk and while returning back to their respective villages, on the way, they quarreled under intoxication for unknown reason. As a result, C. Muduli killed S. Sisa by shooting arrow at him. After the incident, the matter was reported to police and C. Muduli was imprisoned.

### *Case Study-2*

#### **Murder for Dispute over Cattle:**

This case study relates to another incident of murder relating to dispute over grazing of cattle. In village Bandhaguda, one A. Dhangada Majhi, son of M. Dhangada Majhi was in charge of herding cattle for that day which was a Friday. When he returned to his village with the cattle in the evening, it was found that a goat belonging to one S. Dhangada Majhi was missing. When A. Dhangada Majhi was asked about this, he told that the goat was taken away by some wild animals in the jungle. After one week, on Saturday, when the turn of S. Dhangada Majhi came for herding, he took the cattle to jungle and when he returned in the evening it was found that the bullock of A. Dhangada Majhi was limping. A. Dhangada Majhi got angry with this and refused to take the limping animal and demanded a good one from S. Dhangada Majhi. As per the discussion made between them, S. Dhangada Majhi took that limping bullock and in exchange gave one good bullock to him by purchasing the same from Mundiguda market on payment of Rs.760/-. Then after 8 days or so, A. Dhangada Majhi forcibly took away another bullock from the house of S. Dhangada Majhi saying that he was not satisfied with the bullock given to him as it was not as good as the bullock owned by him previously. Since, S. Dhangada

Majhi is a boy of 15 years age, he reported this to his elder brother B. Dhangada Majhi, who interfered and told A. Dhangada Majhi to return the bullock forcibly taken from his younger brother as he has already given him one. When A. Dhangada Majhi refused to return the animal, there occurred a nasty quarrel between the two. As both of them were fully drunk and the time was evening, A. Dhangada Majhi could not control himself but suddenly stabbed B. Dhangada Majhi and killed him on the spot.

### ***Case Study-3***

#### **Breach of Contract:**

One O. Badnaik an orphan of Badpada was working as a bonded labour under S. Sisa of the same village as he had no other means to pay the money borrowed from him. Once O. Badnaik while he was holding the radio of M. Dhangada Majhi of village Bandhaguda, it slipped from his hand and fell down. M. Dhangada Majhi charged him Rs.500/-, which he paid after borrowing from S. Sisa. After working for about six months O. Badnaik demanded a *lungi* and a shirt from his employer who refused to comply. Then, O. Badnaik quarrelled with his employer and refused to work under him further. He also demanded that he might be paid at the rate of Rs.15/- per day for the entire period of six months. S. Sisa became angry about such demand and one day while he was drunk shot arrow at O. Badnaik and injured him. The case was handed over to police.

### ***Case Study - 4***

#### **Dispute over Property:**

In the village Podeiguda, A. Dhangada Majhi, son of H. Dhangada Majhi and Y. Dhangada Majhi, son of A. Dhangada Majhi are parallel cousins. A. Dhangada Majhi was enjoying the property of the D. Dhangada Majhi, the 3<sup>rd</sup> younger brother of his father who died without any heir. The latter was not giving any share to Y. Dhangada Majhi when he was young. But when Y. Dhangada Majhi grew up and demanded his share, A. Dhangada Majhi quarreled with him and killed him in a drunken state.

### ***Case Study-5***

#### **Domestic Quarrel:**

Years ago, one P. Kirsani, son of M. Kirsani of Podeiguda village was beating his wife S. Toki during the festival of *Chait Parab* due to some domestic quarrel. At that time, another person named, S. Mandra of the same village went to his house and told him not to beat her, and otherwise

he would report the matter to the woman's father. Incidentally, both the persons have married in the same village Bodbel. P. Kirsani, who was drunk, got angry over such threatening, and stabbed S. Mandra with a knife. Immediately after stabbing, he ran away to Bodbel to his in-law's house for his safety. S. Mandra was then hospitalized for about a fortnight and got cured by spending about Rs.1800/-. The father of P. Kirsani wanted to effect a compromise to the issue, and as per the decision of the village council the offender paid one plot of *beda* land and one bullock to S. Mandra as compensation. Besides, both of them jointly contributed another bullock to host a feast for the villagers.

### ***Case Study –6***

#### **Dispute over Cattle:**

The incident relates to killing of a cow, which happened during the year 1992 in the month of November. One L. Kirsani of Podeiguda village hired a cow for threshing paddy from L. Muduli of Mudulipada village. After threshing while he was coming to return the cow to its owner, the cow slipped into the crop field and started grazing over a plot of *Pada* land with standing ragi crops. That piece of land belonged to one A. Dhangada Majhi of village Bandhaguda who was also working there. On seeing the cow grazing over his land he got angry, shot an arrow to the animal instantly and killed it on the spot. After being informed about this, L. Muduli came with some of his villagers and demanded a cow from the killer. But A. Dhangada Majhi refused to accept their demand, instead, claimed compensation from them towards the damage of his crops. Next day morning, when A. Dhangada Majhi was away from home, L. Muduli came with some men and took away three cattle from the former's house.

Then, A. Dhangada Majhi went to village Mudulipada with some of his villagers to settle the dispute. It was finally decided that A. Dhangada Majhi would give a cow to L. Muduli. After M. Dhangada Majhi promised before the *Patkhanda Mahaprabhu* to this effect, L. Muduli returned him his cows. Then, the meat of the killed cow was distributed among the elderly persons of the two villages. Besides, A. Dhangada Majhi paid Rs.5/- to the village council members of Mudulipada as a token fine.

### ***Case Study - 7***

#### **Sorcery:**

This case study relates to one D. Kirsani of village Bandiguda who had two children. But both of them died one after another due to some disease.



The people in the village told him that his sons died because C. Kirsani of the same village performed black magic. C. Kirsani was well known in the area for his art of sorcery and black magic. D. Kirsani almost believed this. One day while he was returning from the Mundiguda market dead drunk, the death of his children came to his mind and in order to take revenge he immediately took his bow and arrow and rushed to the house of C. Kirsani who was not at home at that time, but an orphan boy named S. Challan of village Andrahal who was staying with him informed D. Kirsani that C. Kirsani had not returned from *dongar*. D. Kirsani asked the boy to go to *Dongar* and call C. Kirsani, as he wanted to see him. But S. Challan refused to go and rather told D. Kirsani to go to *dongar* himself to meet him. This made D. Kirsani angry, and he immediately shot an arrow to S. Challan, which pierced the right side of his chest. Thereafter, he went away telling S. Challan not to reveal anything to C. Kirsani. Later on, late in the night, C. Kirsani was informed about the incident. Next day, C. Kirsani took S. Challan to hospital for treatment where he died. A case was registered in Mudulipada police station. The matter did not end there, the people of Bandiguda expelled C. Kirsani from the village and he is now staying at Chhallanpada in one of his relative's house.

### ***Case Study-8***

#### **Trespassing:**

In village Badapada, one M. Kirsani had kept sago-palm juice (*salap*) in an earthen pot at the foot of the tree in his *dongar* for sale in the Mundiguda market. Another O. Kirsani of his village saw this while he was passing by. He could not resist his temptation but drank the juice from the pot. But to his misfortune, some people could see this happening and they informed the owner about it. On knowing this, B. Kirsani, the younger brother of M. Kirsani caught hold of the culprit and confronted him? O. Kirsani did not admit the charges and refused to pay any money. The quarrel between the two took violent turn, when O. Kirsani pierced a sharp knife into the chest of B.Kirsani. The injured was taken to the hospital and he survived. Then the case was handed over to police.

The analysis of the above case studies reveals many interesting facts about the Bondo criminality as mentioned below:-

- I. For petty offences and mistakes, which could have been easily solved through discussion, crimes of serious nature are committed.

2. A person at the time of committing crime is found to be in a drunken state and the time sequence of occurrence of such crime is evening.
3. In most cases, instead of causing harm to the person at guilt, the innocent person who wants to settle the dispute through negotiation is either killed or seriously injured. This shows the inconsistency of their mind, aggressiveness and lack of judgment capacity.
4. Although traditional village council exists in each village, these organizations in most cases have failed to play any effective role in preventing the people from taking law in to their own hands.

The political organization of the Bondo has undergone transformation and changed over the years. After the establishment of Police Station at Mudulipada, all cases of murder and disputes resulting in physical assault and injuries are being reported to Police Station before the traditional village councils take notice of such incidents. Besides, after the introduction of Panchayat Raj system, the ward member has started functioning in each and every village, but ironically, he in attitude, behavior and work follows more of traditional values than modern.

## References

- |                         |      |                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elwin, Verrier.         | 1950 | <i>Bondo Highlander</i> , Oxford University Press, Bombay.                                |
| Furer-Haimendorf, C. V. | 1943 | Avenues of Marriage among the Bondo of Orissa. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.23, No.2, Ranchi |
| Patnaik, N. and others. | 1984 | <i>The Bondo and their Response to Development</i> , T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar              |
| Patnaik, N.             | 1989 | <i>The Bondo</i> (Popular series on Tribes), T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar                      |

# CHUKTIA BHUNJIA

S. C. Mohanty <sup>1</sup>

Chuktia Bhunjia is a small and little known tribe of Western Orissa. They consider themselves as a pure and clean section of the Bhunjia tribe.

Their mother tongue *Bhunjia* is a mixture of Oriya, Hindi and Chhatisgarhi languages. As per the survey data for the Action Plan for PTGs for 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan- 2012, their population in the Micro Project i.e., Chuktia Bhunjia Development Agency (CBDA) area in Sonabera plateau of Nuapara district is 2378.

Their villages are located in the sylvan hill ranges. They have linear pattern of houses, arranged in rows. The house consists of one large living room, an open verandah, a kitchen shed, a cattle shed and a goat pen. The houses are made up of wooden poles and mud walls, the roof thatched with wild grass. The kitchen separately built at a little distance is the most sacred place for them and they entertain the belief that their ancestral spirits dwells in there. No unrelated person, not even the daughter of the family, especially after her marriage is allowed to enter into kitchen. Consequent upon the defilement of the kitchen it is leveled to the ground and the roof is burnt and a kitchen is built anew.

Men wear hand-woven clothes, *dhoti* and *gamuchha* and women wear sari. The women adorn themselves with ornaments of brass, aluminum, silver and imitation ornaments and put on tattoo marks.

The Chuktia Bhunjias are settled agriculturists and depend on minor forest collections. Rice is their principal crop. Besides, they cultivate pulses, oil seeds and vegetables. Due to lack of regular market and communication facilities the middlemen exploit them.

The shrine of *Sunadei* - their supreme deity is located at the heart of the Sonabera village. The Chuktia Bhunjia worship *Sunadei*, *Budharaja*, *Dharani*

---

<sup>1</sup> Officer on Special Duty (Research), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

*mata* and *Budhimai* for their wellbeing. Being influenced by Hinduism they worship Hindu gods and goddess like, *Siva*, *Jagannath*. *Bhudha raja* and *Sunadei* are their main village deities. *Chaitra Jatra* is their main festival. They also worship ancestral spirits, natural and supernatural objects. *Pujari*- the priest, *Chhatriya* - the umbrella holder, and *Katariya* - the animal sacrificer are their religious functionaries.

The tribe is divided into two exogamous moieties viz, *markam* (affines) and *netam* (kins). Each moiety is again split into a number of lineages (*barags*). They prefer cross-cousin marriage. A Chuktia can marry a Chinda Bhunjia following a rite called *dudh pani* in which an affine washes the mouth of the bride with milk. They observe birth pollution for six days. Pre-puberty rite, *kunda bera*, a ritual of arrow marriage is significant for the maiden. It is celebrated for a group of girls of the same age-set. No girl can marry before that. They bury the dead and observe death rituals on the third day and organize mortuary feast. The maternal uncle plays a vital role in all the life cycle rituals. Their village council is called *bhunja baithki*. *Siyan* is the headman of the village and *Badamajhi* is the chief adjudicator of the inter-village council called *kuraha*.

# SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE CHUKTIA BHUNJIAS OF KALAHANDI<sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

The Bhunjias are one of the little known tribes of Orissa. Russel and Hiralal in their "Tribes and Castes of The Central Provinces of India" have given some passing references on the Bhunjias in general, but no detail description about their socio-cultural life is available in the ethnographical literature. Numerically the Bhunjias are a small tribe numbering 2,375 souls. They are autochthones of Kalahandi district. Sunabeda plateau is considered to be the birth place of the Bhunjias where from they are believed to have migrated down to the plains and to the villages of Madhya Pradesh. The Bhunjias of the plateau are fairly secluded from their non-tribal Hindu dwellers and maintain cultural conservatism to a greater extent, and those setting on plains have adopted alien traits in their socio-cultural life. But inspite of such diversification the Bhunjias observe strict rules to maintain their purity. They do not eat food even from Brahmins and burn the kitchen house if touched by an outsider. The present article aims at analyzing their socio-cultural traits, but provides baseline data which may give clues to ethnologists to explore more and more about the details of Bhunjia culture.

The study was conducted in two Chuktia Bhunjia villages Junapani and Sunabeda on the Subabeda Plateau for a period of three weeks in the year 1965.

## **History and Genesis:**

The racial origin of the Bhunjias is difficult to be traced out. There are no written documents which record the history of their origin and their migration to different places. The notable account on Bhunjias given by Russel and Hiralal (1916) in "The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India" holds the view that a section of the Bhunjia called 'Chaukhuntia' has originated from the marriage between Gonds and Halvas, but the field study among the

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.1, 1967-68, pp.50-58

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (now SCSTR TI), Bhubaneswar

Bhunjias revealed that the two sections of the tribe, Chinda and Chuktia have completely different connections. Those dwelling on hills are called Chuktias, but the plains dwellers are called Chinda. Furthermore, the Chuktias strictly observed the traditional norms of Bhunjia culture than the acculturated Chindas and thereby claim higher social status than the latter. By Chinda, the Bhunjias also mean “one who knows more” and thus the enlightened Bhunjias of the plains who by the privilege of their close contact with the outsiders have widened their outlook are said to be Chinda by the secluded hill dwelling Chuktia Bhunjias.

Like other tribes the Bhunjias have their legendary evidence to state as to how the earth was created, how the human race was produced, and how the Bhunjias originated. As the legend goes, Sunabeda was the ancient patch of the earth where dwelt the first couple of the human race called Dokra and Dokri. Once the Dokra on his way to the forest, overheard the Gods discussing about the problems of the earth. He heard them saying “today it will thunder, tomorrow there will be rains and a day after tomorrow all the world will be over flooded”. Coming back home, the Dokra built a wooden box, kept food, water and other necessities inside, and locked the box keeping his son and daughter inside. There was heavy pouring of rains and the earth was submerged under water. However, the wooden box with two human lives was floating on the sea. Goddess Parvati created a crow to trace if any living human beings were available on the earth. In the meanwhile, Lord Mahadev created earth-worm to make the earth solid, and the two children lived there. As they did not know their identity, in course of time they became husband and wife and begot children. From them were born the Ganda (untouchables), who are the eldest brothers, next to them the Bhunjias and other tribals, and at last were born the ancestors of other castes.”

The fact that the Bhunjias had racial admixture with the Gonds is however, ascertained from the legend narrated by them. The story tells that in earlier days the Bhunjias had no inter-marrying group (Markam). Seven Gond brothers coming from the west in search of games married seven daughters of the Mathiar (The Netam Bhunjia living in Sunabeda) and thus became Bandhu (Markam) to the Netam Bhunjias.

The Bhunjia have no language of their own. They speak a dialect which is admixture of Oriya and Chhatishgari and dress themselves in Chhatishgari style. They are fairly strong in their body built and eke out their living mainly by cultivating land. Shifting cultivation has long since been abandoned and settled

agriculture is widely practiced, but the economy is no doubt substantiated by collection of roots, fruits, greens and tubers from the jungle, wage earning by working in road-work, cutting timbers from the jungle on wage basis and collecting and selling valuable forest products.

The villages vary in size. The big villages with three to four wards have 60 to 70 families, but the small ones may have 10 to 15 families. The villages on the plateau are more or less homogeneous save a few Ganda (drummers) families who are settled by the Bhunjias to get their service during marriage or on other socio-religious functions.

The houses have gable shaped roofs thatched by wild grass. A single family has usually three huts, the outer house, the kitchen and the cattle-shed. The outer house is divided into two compartments, the sleeping apartment (*kudia*) and the outer house (*beska/chepar*) meant to accommodate guests. Cows and buffaloes are kept in cattle-shed. This is considered sacred because the Bhunjias believe that the *mirchuk* (spirit of those ancestors who had no place in the kitchen) reside in the cattle-shed to take care of the cattle. A menstruating woman thus avoids going to the cattle-shed. Kitchen is the most sacred hut of the Bhunjias. It is the abode of their ancestral spirits and the touch of any outsider is believed to drive away the spirits (*dumba*). A Bhunjia takes proper caution to construct the kitchen a little away from the main house and to fence it properly so that an outsider may not have an easy access to it. The kitchen is considered to be the temple where all the family rituals are performed sacrifices made and the ancestors propitiated. Menstruating women are prohibited to enter into the kitchen and if an outsider happens to touch the kitchen it is set on fire without hesitation.

#### **Units of Social Organization:**

##### *Family*

Family is the smallest unit of Bhunjia social organization. A single family with three to five members is the normal pattern, but big families with ten or more persons are also not uncommon. Average number of persons per family is 5.8. Nuclear family consisting of a married couple with their unmarried children and giving shelter to widow mother or the widowed father is the most predominant type, but cases of extended families comprising of parents and their married son or sons are also occasionally met with. The frequencies of joint families where the married brothers continue to live jointly after the death of the father are very rare. Generally, a Bhunjia starts living independently separated

from his parents or brothers soon after marriage. In cases of separation unmarried sons continue to stay with the father till marriage, though the married sons leave the father after their marriage. In case of the death of a father, an unmarried brother stays with his married brother till he is married and is able to establish his independent household.

The family sample collected from the hill villages in Sunabeda area showed that 85.3 percent were nuclear families; 13.4 percent, extended families and only 1.3 percent, joint families. The authority in a family is vested more with the father than with the brothers. Occurrence of greater frequency of extended families than the joint families may be attributed to the fact that the married sons of a father tend to live together under the control of their father, but as soon as the father dies the ties become loose and the married brothers get themselves separated from each other to establish their independent household.

Preponderance of nuclear families over joint and extended families is a common occurrence in all tribal societies. Nuclear family not only minimizes tensions between brothers but is an economic necessity. It promotes economic stability in a family. It generates new responsibility in the brothers who learn to shoulder their own burdens soon after marriage. They exert more labour and struggle hard to raise their economic standard. In joint and extended families there is greater economic co-operation, but nuclear family encourages greater economic competition leading to increase economic standard of the family. Thus among the Bhunjias, the nuclear families are more stable in economy than the big joint and extended families.

Break of joint families does not necessarily result in the breakup of kin ties between the brothers. The brothers living in separate families tend to co-operate with each other and help each other in scarcity more than other kins in their socio-economic life.

### *Lineage*

The members of one lineage, though living in separate families may be grouped together genealogically. The members of a minor lineage can trace their relation genealogically, but the members of a major lineage fail to do so, though they believe in a common ancestry. In their social, economic and religious intercourse, it is difficult to mark and measure the difference in the degree of dealings between the members of major and minor lineages, but closer kin tie and greater association between the minor lineage is found. The annual rituals performed in family sphere are always performed by the senior most male



member of the lineage on behalf of all the families of the lineage. The logic of this lies in the fact that since the immediate ancestors of all the families in a minor lineage happen to be the same persons a single rite performed by the minor-lineage head to propitiate the ancestors serves the purpose for all the families. In case of death however, all the families of minor and major lineage throw away their old earthen cooking pots.

### ***Barag***

Each minor-lineage consists of a number of families the members of which are closely related to each other and come directly under a single genealogy, and the major lineage consists of a number of such minor lineages whose members believed in a common ancestry but fail to trace their relationship genealogically. Likewise, a *barag* consists of a number of such minor lineages whose members believed in a common ancestry but fail to trace their relationship genealogically. Likewise, a *barag* consists of a number of major lineages. The *barag* name is used as surname. Like clan, each *barag* is exogamous which regulates marriage, but unlike clan it lacks any totem. Each *barag* has also its tutelary deity to whom the *barag* members propitiate on festive occasions. The ownership of land is vested in *barags*. Each *barag* has traditionally defined territory in which the *barag* deity dwells. Any new settler in a village must seek the permission of the *barag* members and propitiate the concerned *barag* deity whose land he intends to enjoy. On hills 19 *barags* could be noted but the number was reported to be much more on the plains.

An interesting feature of the *barag* organization is that not only each *barag* is exogamous but a number of *barags* taken together constitute one agnate group. The members of all such *barags* believe to be brothers to each other who owe their marital alliances with another set of *barags* who stand as marrying *barags* to them. This phenomenon divides the whole Bhunjia tribe into two exogamous sections (moieties), the Netam and the Markam, each having a set of *barags*. The *barags* of Netam group can only have their marital alliances with the *barags* of Markam group, but such relation is strictly prohibited with any *barag* of the Netam group. The following gives a list of the *barags* of Netam and Markam groups.

#### **A. Barags of Netam Group**

1. Barge
2. Chhatria
3. Dandasena

4. Bhoi
5. Dabi
6. Disori
7. Barik
8. Sarmat
9. Naik
10. Bhamargadia

**B. Barags of Markam Group**

1. Pujari
2. Majhi
3. Mallick
4. Jhankar
5. Patia
6. Suar
7. Ambarukhia
8. Dumerbaharia
9. Sosengia

The Bhunjia legend holds that in the long past the Bhunjias had no inter-marrying groups. There were only Netam Bhunjias and the Markam Bhunjias, and the Markams originated only after the Netams gave their daughters in marriage to seven Gond brothers.

*Village*

Bhunjia villages on hills are homogenous except that the Bhunjias give shelter to a few Pana or Ganda families in their villages. The Panas beat drums in Bhunjia rituals and to commemorate their feasts and festivals. In some villages the Bhunjias live along with the Gonds who are supposed to be their brother's tribe and from whom the Bhunjias accept water and cooked food. The villages are not exogamous as the people of both Markam and Netam groups live together in the same village. A village may have a number of wards, situated as far as a mile away from the main village, but all the wards owe their identity to the main village. Each village has its own set of ritual and secular officers who discuss and decide the village quarrels and conflicts. On village rituals, the wards of a village funds for village rituals which contribute for worshiping materials and the rituals are performed communally in the main ward. In each village, are installed stones representing *Mati deota* or the village deity to safeguard the

villagers from disease and death. Marriage is viewed more to be the responsibility of the villagers than the guardians of the marrying partners. The guardians bear the expenses of a marriage, but the co-operation of the village men and women is essential to make the marriage ceremony a success. Similarly, in birth and death rites help and co-operation are sought from the villages. In their economic life, co-villagers help each other in lending bullocks for ploughing fields, weeding fields, harvesting crops, thatching house and so no. in cases of minor quarrels and conflicts, the village leaders assemble to discuss and decide the matter.

The markets are situated far away from the Bhunjia villages of Sunabeda area. The Bhunjias of Sunabeda have to come down about 23 miles to reach Vella market and also the Dharmbandha market. Bhunjias from the surrounding villages also frequent Vella for loans either from the Panchayat Graingola or from private money lenders.

#### **Inter-Village Organization:**

The Bhunjias of different villages come in contact with each other on major ceremonial occasions, in marriage, in fairs and in markets. In Dasahara festival (October) groups of tribals and non-tribals from neighbouring villages come to worship Sunadei, the tutelary deity of the Bhunjias. As M. P. border being only after five miles from Sunabeda, the Bhunjias of Sunabeda seek their marrying partners from villages of Orissa and neighbouring Madhya Pradesh (now Chhatishgarh).

In cases of incest or irregular marriages, delegates from the neighbouring villages assemble to decide the matter. The Kurha (political chief) decides the matter in consultation with the council of elders and the erring ones are penalized.

#### ***The Tribe***

The origin and genesis of the Bhunjias have been described earlier. The Bhunjias of Sunabeda plateau designate themselves to be Chuktia and recognize four sections of Bhunjias, namely Chuktia, Kholarajia, Nuagarhia and Sharia, according to the area of their inhabitation. Those dwelling on hills are called Chuktia, those living in open country on plains (Khala-open and *rajya*-country) as Khalarajia and those remaining in Nuagarh area are called Nuagarhia Bhunjias. The Saharia Bhunjias are so named as they live around towns and other urban centers. Broadly, however the Bhunjias may be grouped under two sections the Chuktia (the hill-dwellers) and the Chinda (the plains dwellers).

While the Chindas show large number of changes by coming in contact with the outsiders, the Chuktias are conservative in observing their traditional customs and manners. The classification of the tribe into four sections has no functional basis as there is no stigma to recognize each section as a distinct unit. There is no bar in exchanging brides among the four sections and between the Chindas and the Chuktias. Only a minor rite (*dudh-pani*) is performed when a *bandhu* washes the mouth of the bride with milk before she is taken in as a member of the groom's group. Except for this minor rite, all the four sections of the Bhunjias consider themselves to be of one tribe. They never marry outside the tribe and do not accept cooked food from others save a few castes and tribes to whom they do not consider inferior.

#### **Inter-Ethnic Relation and Social Distance:**

Social distance maintained by the Bhunjias with other castes reveals that they strictly abide by their traditions and customs. They consider it polluting to eat cooked food from outsiders. Males may eat food from Gonds and Gours if cooked in metal pots, but the women never eat anything cooked by outsiders. After marriage the daughter also never eats food cooked by her parents. On her visit to her parents she is provided with uncooked provisions which she cooks by herself and eats as long as she stays there. The reason as to why the Bhunjia men eat cooked food only from the Gonds and Gours and not from higher castes like Brahmins is that the castes were born after the Bhunjias were born and thus became lower in status to Bhunjias. Their association with the Gonds has been described earlier with whom the Bhunjias had matrimonial relations, but as to why they accept cooked food the Gours could not be ascertained. This may be due to the fact that the Bhunjias have come in closer association with Gours since time immemorial and in course of time have taken Gours to be a clean caste.

As the legend goes, Gandas (Pana) were born prior to Bhunjias and as such are viewed to be elder brother to them, but because they ate beef they were cursed by Sunadei and became lower in status than the Bhunjia. A Bhunjia does not accept cooked food from a Ganda, but may eat molasses sold by a Ganda vendor. The touch of a Ganda is not considered defiling and a Ganda may dwell in the same ward where the Bhunjias live. A Bhunjia also never hesitates to work as a labourer to a Ganda.

The Bhunjias also maintain certain food taboos. They do not eat beef, pork or buffalo meat. The women observe more taboos than the men. They

never eat outside. On their way to far off places they cook their own food. While at home they eat in the kitchen which is considered to be their sacred hut. Menstruating women are not allowed to enter into the kitchen or to the cowshed. While at outside the women do not eat *usuna* (rice husked after the paddy is boiled) rice as such rice touched by an outsider is considered to carry pollution. The idea of pollution goes so strong in the mind of the Bhunjias that even within the same tribe such idea plays its role. When a Chakatia, for example, marries a Chinda a purificatory rite is performed for the bride before she enters into the house of the bridegroom and is accepted as a member of the new society. Likewise, it is the custom among the Bhunjias to perform arrow-marriage (*kanda bara*) for their girls before they attain puberty. When a girl becomes 10 to 12 years old, the parents give her in marriage to an arrow. Unless and until a girl is ritually married to an arrow her actual marriage ceremony cannot be performed. Furthermore, if a girl attains puberty before her "arrow-marriage" she loses all her status in the society so much so that no one approves her for marriage. Such a girl can be eloped away but her marriage is not socially approved. After *kanda bara* a girl is considered to be an active partner and a full-fledged member of the society and she observes all the taboos observed by the women-folk of the society.

It is very difficult to state definitely as to why the Bhunjias strictly observe a series of such taboos and maintain social distance with other castes and tribes to such a degree. It is, of course a common belief among the tribals to consider themselves the first born human beings of the earth and thereby claim superiority over others. It seems, therefore, that the Bhunjias, like other tribes consider themselves superior to all other castes and tribes by virtue of their priority in being the first born human race on the earth, and they further try to raise their status in the society by observing a series of taboos and adhering to strict principles of austerity. Russell and Hiralal (1916) hold the view that because the Bhunjias are a product of racial admixture of two ethnic groups, they are, therefore, highly suspicious about the racial purity of others. They therefore, observe all such taboos and maintain social distance from others to raise their social status. Such suspicion goes so strong in their mind that among their own group they take sufficient precautions to free themselves from social pollution. They doubt the chastity of their own girls and as a precautionary measure perform *kanda bara* ritual for them before they attain puberty, so that they abide by strict rules of the society even before they become responsible members of the society. Russell and Hiralal further opine that it is not strange for a father to doubt the purity of his married daughter, a fact for which the married daughters

are not allowed to enter into the kitchen of their parents and cook their food in separate hearth during their visits to the father's house.

Whatever the reason may be the fact that the Bhunjias observe strict rules to maintain their social purity cannot be doubted. This not only keeps the Bhunjias away from other communities of the society, but poses serious problems for social workers to implement welfare schemes among the Bhunjias without affecting their cultural norms. A single example will illustrate the situation. How can the welfare schemes to promote female education be successful when the social norm of the Bhunjias does not allow their girls to remain and eat outside their own house after they attain ten years of age?

During the field investigation, I was really shocked to know that a Bhunjia girl of Sunabeda who was reading in Vella (about 20 miles from her village) and passed U.P. securing a high position in the examination among all the students of the centre had to discontinue her studies because she was discouraged by her tribesmen to pursue her education further. The Bhunjias apprehended that misfortunes may befall on her parents and on the village lest she remains away from home and continues her studies after 10 year of age. When I interviewed the girl she seemed to be very intelligent and sharp and she expressed that she was forced to give up her studies due to her villagers.

# CULTURAL CONSERVATISM AMONG THE BHUNJIA<sup>1</sup>

Ch. P.K. Mohapatra <sup>2</sup>

The ubiquitousness of cultural change is no more a hypotheses for study in a given culture. It has almost assumed the position of an axiom. The wheels of modern civilization which have been set agog by developing technologies during the present century have penetrated into the regions, hither to considered, the most inaccessible. As a result, criteria of homogeneity, isolation and simpler technology can seldom be attributed together to any single community, at present, which may be considered as primitive.

The students of change have found out methodological tools to deal with the process or the dynamics of change. Attempts have been made to visualize change against the spatial as well as time dimensions apart from the details of the agencies of change.

In contrast to the phenomena of change, the literature on which abound, there remains yet another phenomenon which has attracted attention of very limited number of scholars interested in the analysis of the dynamics of change. It is this phenomenon which in the face of rapid cult change, provides stimuli for the members of a particular society to continue their traditional way of life. This is “the phenomenon of cultural stability, a phenomenon which, in its psychological aspects, is called conservatism” (M.J. Herskovits).

Although we find highly developed methodological schemes to deal with the study of culture change, it is surprising to find that not even sufficient literature on the subject is listed for appreciation and appraisal of the problems of cultural conservatism. The problem is described as negatively oriented and as such difficult to deal with. It is also held that study of the problem of

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 43 - 49, 1968

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, TRB

conservatism can be undertaken only when the field worker is present on the spot at the time of introduction of new element in a culture so as to be in a position to observe how it is rejected or resisted. So far, historical documentation facts or testimony offered by members of a society has formed the main source of data for analysis.

In the present paper attempt has been made to draw information partly from historical sources along with testimony offered by Bhunjia themselves to corroborate the present force of conservatism at work. Besides, few of the institutions and traits have also been analyzed. It may be indicated that the term conservatism which implies resistance to change, while it is in process, may be significantly determined in particularly those cultures which are under the powerful impact of change either through innovations or inventions leading to the very struggle for existence of itself. This may not, however, imply that cultures undergoing a gradual process of changes do not manifest elements of conservatism. What is emphasized here is that methodologically, it may be easier to approach those cultures which are under the sway of complete assimilation with the donor cultures. Because the elements of conservatism are more pronounced here than that of others, so much so that they appear to be exaggerations unless viewed from psychic distance of the observer. Kroeber holds the view that "No matter how awkward an established system becomes it normally remains more practical to keep it by a better scheme. The wrench and cost of reformation are greater, or are felt to be greater, by each generation than the advantages gained". Reforms and changes are easy to be brought in technological aspect of a culture but it is difficult where institutions are involved. From the following accounts it will be evident as to how the Bhunjia have been under powerful impact of changes since many generation yet maintain their own identity by exhibiting conservatism in certain elements of their traditional culture which give meaning and continuity to their way of life.

### **The Tribe**

The Bhunjia are a numerically small tribe of Orissa numbering as little as 2,375 souls according to 1961 census. Their habitat lying at an altitude of 2,000 feet on the Sunabeda plateau of Kalahandi district amidst forested areas is an extension of the central plateau which was once inhabited by Kolarian tribes and subsequently witnessed the large incursion of Gonds who came from south. The only written record about this tribe has been made by Russell and Hiralal (1916). The history of their racial origin has been a disputed one. The above mentioned authors hold the view that a section of the Bhunjia originated as a



result of marriage between Gonds and Holvas. Field enquiry did not reveal any such fact to corroborate the view although definite connections between Gond and Bhunjia could be traced in the history and myth of Bhunjia. The mythical origin is detailed below.

In Sunabeda area a 'Mathiar' or the worshipper of Goddess 'Maait' was living. A group of seven brothers of Gonds came from west in search of wild games and shot a *sambhar* with arrow which ran for life and fell dead on the outskirts of village Sunabeda. The brothers followed and found the *sambhar* and divided the meat into seven shares. Surprisingly, the shares became nine instead of seven. Each brother tried in turn to find to their great surprise that the same nine equal shares emerged invariably. They thought that somebody else must be staying nearby and called for him. The 'Mathiar' came and the eight shares were distributed. The brothers again shouted for the remaining unknown inhabitant to take the last share. Lastly a Gond came from Gatibeda village and shared the meat. Thus he is called 'Pat Dhurwa' or the Gond who came last. When the Gond brothers were there they saw seven young unmarried girls in the house of the Mathiar who were his daughters. The Gonds wanted to marry them. The Mathiar agreed under certain conditions that they have to leave their religion and custom and become Bhunjia and live in that territory. The Gonds agreed and became the Markam or 'Bandhu Barag' which was to have affinal relation with the 'Netam' group of clans of the Bhunjia.

The myth can be corroborated by historical record of events to the extent that during the distant past there was an incursion of Gonds into this plateau. The Gonds were a superior group, who not only brought under their sway large tracts of land and ruled over them but also influenced as well as got influenced by the numerous other communities during the passing of years. Hence inter-marriage with a smaller tribe and subsequent adoption of their culture on the part of the Gonds is nothing but a part of usual phenomena that took place in the central and southern belt of India before advent of British.

It is, however, not known as to what was that tribe in this particular case who established marriage relationships with the Gonds but it may be suggested that the 'Matia' was the earlier name for Bhunjia, both the terms implying origin from earth.

### **The Process of Culture Change**

In the foregoing accounts it is found that the Bhunjia had their earliest contact with Gonds with whom they established marital alliances. That the

Bhunjia eat food cooked by a Gond further corroborates the fact. Contact with the neighbouring Hindu castes must be ranked as next because on the plains down below on each side of the plateau Hindu villages ranging from small to very big are found. The Bhunjia, today, depends on the markets and stores for their daily necessities to a large extent. Their material culture has been enriched by introduction of complex implements and tools for various purposes. They cultivate their land in the way their Hindu neighbours do. Mustard and millet are grown on commercial basis and taken to the markets down below. Growing of tobacco extensively for own use as well as marketing indicate their expanded outlook on agricultural practices.

Their dress and hairstyle are nothing other than the local Hindus. They admit that they have been addicted to tea now days which not even known to the past generation. They visit Hindu festivals and enjoy Opera and other audio-visual programs with utmost pleasure whenever they get the opportunity. There is always a flow of Hindu traders, merchants and other outsiders to Bhunjia villages.

Their religion has been greatly influenced by Hindu religion with the introduction of 'Sunadevi' cult which has been incorporated fully in Bhunjia pantheon. The myths of Bhunjia are full of names of Gods and Goddess who are described in Hindu mythology. Goddess Sunadevi who is worshipped with observance of elaborate festivals thrice a year attract not only Bhunjia but also Hindus from quite distant places like Komna in Orissa and places from M.P. side down the plateau.

The iconic figure of Sunadevi Goddess has been enshrined in a thatched temple constructed by the Bhunjia in their village. It is interesting to note that the traditional Goddess of Bhunjia, namely "Maait" is enshrined below a thorny tree without any shade and no iconic figure is developed for her by the Bhunjia. She is much less elaborately worshipped on various occasions. The Bhunjia, these days, install 'Tulsi Chaura' a cult represented by earthen structure over which a Tulsi is planted according to Hindu myth representing Goddess 'Vrundabati' sitting on the head of Lord Vishnu. This cult is introduced in Bhunjia religion which further corroborates that Hinduisation has been in process among the Bhunjia since many generations.

### **Elements of Conservatism**

Amid bewildering array of cultural change in process among the Bhunjia it is interesting to note that certain elements are very rigidly adhered to by them. Mention may be made of the institution of ancestor worship which is observed

not only with austerity but the place of worship is considered sacred, and a slight touch of the place by an outsider leads to complete demolition of the structure. The structure is no other than their own kitchen which is the abode of their revered ancestors. The placement of kitchen in the house site of Bhunjia is very carefully considered. It is always constructed away from any road or lane or bypasses to eliminate the possibility of touch by an outsider. Even inside the area of courtyard the kitchen is erected 10 to 15 yards apart from the main house where they sleep and work. The male member of a family are not always allowed to enter into the kitchen because they work outside and may not always be able to keep themselves clean before entering the kitchen. The women are, however, allowed to work in the kitchen after taking bath. During menstrual period they are strictly tabooed to enter the kitchen until the flow ceases. Thereafter, they are allowed to enter after taking bath. Till then, the husband or any of the consanguinal relation of the husband manages cooking inside the kitchen.

It is interesting to note that a daughter, soon after her marriage, is prohibited to enter or touch the kitchen as she loses her tie with her father's clan. When she visits her father's home, she is given with food grains and utensils to cook outside and eat.

According to the Bhunjia the kitchen is the abode of their ancestors. The cult of ancestor worship is thus one of the important features of Bhunjia religion. The dead ancestors are considered to be the guardian spirits of the Bhunjia who look to the family wellbeing and prosperity and guide them in their day to day work. An elaborate rite is observed on the occasion of bringing the spirit of the dead of family who was a married person and died a natural death. The rite is known as 'Budh' and is performed on completion of one year of the death or can be deferred to the 2nd, 3rd or 4th year. If it cannot be held on the fourth year then a gap of five years is given to hold the rite on the ninth year. It is an expensive rite which tells upon the economic status of a person. Nevertheless, the rite is thought to be indispensable for no social or religious function can be observed in that particular family where the death has occurred. On the eve of the ceremony all the affinal and consanguinal kins, are invited although the consanguinal kins take active part in the ceremony. There is a special ceremony called 'pithpoda' which is observed to invoke the dead ancestor and offerings are made to satisfy them.

There is another element of conservatism which find its expression at the time of marriage between a bride from 'Chinda' section of Bhunjia and a groom from the 'Chaktia' section and not the *vice versa*. In this connection it is

necessary to know about the distinction between the two sections of the Bhunjia. The 'Chinda' section of the Bhunjia lives on the plains down the hills above which the 'Chaktia' Bhunjias live. The 'Chinda' or those who are the more acculturated group and have been considerably influenced by the local Hindu culture and are no more observing the traditional religious rites with as much austerity as the Chaktias. Their kitchens are no more so much sacred as that of the Chaktias. They eat food from Hindu clean castes. They worship most of the Hindu gods and goddesses of the local area. The 'Chaktias' have however, continued to keep marriage relationship with them. On eve of marriage the bride of a Chinda Bhunjia has to undergo certain special rites being poured with "Dudh Pani" (milk water) so as to be cleaned and allowed to enter the sacred kitchen of the Chaktia Bhunjia thereafter.

There is another element which is clearly indicative of conservatism among the Bhunjia. The Bhunjia do not eat food or drink water from the hands of Brahmin who, according to Hindu caste hierarchy are the only privileged caste to worship the various gods and goddesses of Hindu religion. It is only Brahmins who cook and make offerings to various gods and goddesses. In this context it is interesting to note that the Bhunjia do not eat food cooked by a Brahmin or drink water from his hands. The reason may be adduced to the fact that the Bhunjia being racially an admixture of the Gonds, retain the Gond conception about Hindu Castes, especially Brahmins. The true Gonds who have not come under the sway of Hinduisation as compared to the Hinduised Raj Gonds, consider it polluting to eat food from Brahmin whom they think to be inferior in social status.

There are many other instances of conservatism with regard to the various religious and social institutions. An analysis of these may be made here for purposes of precision.

### **Conservatism vs. Change**

It has been observed that the Bhunjia have been in contact with other communities, especially, the Gonds since time immemorial. Other Hindu communities have also been in contact through trade and agriculture. The material culture of Bhunjia has been greatly enriched as a result of culture contact with these communities. The religion has also been influenced by Hindus. The result of change has been conspicuously observed in the separation of a section of Bhunjia called 'Chinda' who have almost adopted Hindu way of life. In face of such changes which have been in process since long the retaining

of traditional way of life has been a problem for that section known as Chaktias. The elements of conservatism are nothing but "stubborn addiction to folkways, the established and the habitual. Some of it is due to societies getting enmeshed in their institutions and not seeing a way out....." (Kroeber). If the Bhunjia are considered a tribe with their distinct cultural traits it is only the manifestation of conservatism in certain traditional institutions through which one is able to understand the distinctiveness.

Their cult of ancestor worship is based upon their sole dependence upon their ancestor for their well-being in spite of the fact that the Hindu goddess Sunadevi is elaborately worshipped. The females when go to markets or outside, cook their own food to eat instead of purchasing cooked food. This is because the females are largely responsible for up-keeping the sanctity of the kitchen. The males are usually not allowed to enter the kitchen off and on.

Avoidance in taking food from Brahmins indicates the true tribal spirit of Bhunjia based on the idea of ethnocentrism which is characteristic of unsophisticated cultures. Outsiders including Brahmins are considered socially low in spite of having high social status in Hindu society. The 'Chinda' Bhunjia, however, regard Brahmins superior and do not hesitate to take food from them. It has earlier been mentioned that the 'Chaktias' perform 'Dudh-pani' ceremony while marrying a Chinda bride although they are a section of the same tribe. In this case the attitude of conservatism is more pronounced in spite of the fact that they have continued to maintain marriage relationship with the Chinda section. It is a matter of further intensive research to find out the factors responsible for such social union. What is important here is that a specific purificatory ceremony is observed to permit such a bride to be socially acceptable. As mentioned above a married woman is largely responsible for up keeping the sanctity of the kitchen which is the sacred abode of their ancestral spirits. It is for this reason that the 'Dudh-pani' ceremony is considered indispensable for a Chaktia groom while marrying a Chinda bride.

# THE DIDAYI :

## A HILL TRIBE OF ORISSA<sup>1</sup>

Prasanta Kumar Mohapatra <sup>2</sup>

The Didayi are a small primitive hill tribe of the (undivided) district of Koraput inhabiting the 4,000 feet plateau of the Eastern Ghats range. The plateau is a continuation of the habitat of the Bonda, who are frequently referred to as notorious by the local people due to their atrocious attitude. The Didayi numbers 18,000 approximately. At present they do not live in a compact geographical area and migration has taken place in the plains lying at the foot of the plateau on both sides. Comparatively more frequent migration has been in the direction of the valley on the eastern side of the plateau as the tract is more secluded from the general stream of the population of the district. As a result of this, they can be said to be divided into two groups i.e. the hill and the plain Didayi. It is interesting to note that the people living on the hill-tops have almost lost social ties with the plains people who, to a considerable extent, have been influenced by the Telugu speaking people living close to them. The hill people have retained, to greater extent, the primitiveness which can be observed from their habit, dress and other activities.

The Didayi speak a dialect closely akin to the language of the Gadaba and Bonda; hence it belongs to the Mundari group. The plains people have incorporated many Telugu words into their language due to contact. The hill people are comparatively dirty with regard to their dress, habits and mostly keep long locks of hair known as 'Gunagbo'. The plains people have done away with this practice and are comparatively better off with regard to their dress habits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V. No. 2, 1963-64, pp.63-66.

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, T.R.B.

## The Villages

There is sharp contrast between the types of villages of the two divisions of Didayi. The hill villages are limited and their number hardly exceeds ten. The plain villages on both sides approximately are twenty in number. Approach to the villages is extremely difficult as the 4,000' plateau stand as a huge barrier. There is absolutely no road to reach these villages. The only easily accessible village is Orangi lying at distance of three miles East of Kudumuluguma Panchayat headquarters situated on the main road from Jeypore to Balimela. From Orangi one has to climb the Kondakamberu range of the Eastern Ghat Mountains to reach the hill villages. A steep descent from the plateau makes one to reach the plain villages of Didayis and Kandhas on both the banks of river Machhkund amid dense forests. There are other rounds about approaches to the plain Didayi villages to avoid the steep *ghat*.

The houses in hill as well as plain villages lie scattered all over and no regular street is found. The houses are built in an individualistic manner and the villagers do not share a common roof like the Kandhas. The one characteristic which is marked in the hill villages is that it is inhabited by members of a single clan and is an exogamous unit. In a plain village this is not strictly the rule. They have accommodated people from other castes and tribes keeping their identity by separate hamlets.

The Didayi houses constitute two rooms, a front verandah (*pledā*) and a small open space before the house. The house is fenced all-around and is called *turrah*. There are no back-doors or windows. One entrance is used for both the rooms. The bigger one at the entrance is known as 'Mannah Duan' and the small one 'Dhan Duan' and is used as storehouse for *ragi*, *suan* and other crops. The bigger one is used for a sleeping and cooking. The earthen platform, attached to oven (*nukturson*), is in one of the corners and is used for keeping pots. It is known as *batur*.

## The Clan

The Didayi kinship system is based on two distinct exogamous clans known as 'Ghia' and 'Nta'. Ghia Sig, Gudia, Majhi, Muduli, Surma and Sisa constitute the Ghia clan and Nta, Mleh, Gushuwa, Golpeda, Palasi and Kswa constitute the Nta clan. The groups of each clan are exogamous and can have marriage relations only with any of the groups of the next clan. The clans have

their respective totems. Malabu-Bais or 'Nag' is the totem of the Nta clan and Nku-Bais or tiger is the totem of Ghia clan.

### Marriage System

As the Didayi kinship system is based on two exogamous clans, mother's sister's children and father's brother's children are considered to be brothers and sisters. Preference is given to father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter who are called *marraseboi*. Generally three forms of marriage are prevalent in the Didayi society. They are 'Bihay' or marriage by negotiation, 'Gube' or marriage by capture and 'Posia mundi' or marriage by intrusion in which the girl forcibly enters the groom's house and makes sexual-relations with him. On the event of negotiation marriage, the groom's father goes to the bride's father to ask for his consent. The groom is called upon to the bride's house. It is interesting to note that decision depends upon the girl's willingness to marry the man. When the girl gives consent her father asks the groom's father to come to his house in each month for one year. This custom is known as 'Tosopangla'. The groom's father visits bride's father's house bringing with him one *mana* of rice, *salap* wine and sometimes a cock.

February to April is the season for marriage (Magha, Phagun and Chait) and Tuesday and Wednesday are considered to be the two auspicious days for marriage. After completing his term of visiting bride's father's house, the groom's father asks for performing the marriage ceremony. The son's father gives one goat; ten *manas* of rice, one pot of *salap* wine, cash of rupees twenty and a cock to bride's father. The bride's father then gives a feast to his villagers and asks the groom's father to take away the girl after payment of bride-price – 'Gneng'. It constitutes a cow, one metal plate, one arrow, three plates of rice, one new cloth and one small chicken seated over a cock. After receiving this bride's father says to the groom's father that he is finally giving his daughter for his son. Then the girl goes to the groom's village accompanied by the *tosore* or the guests of the groom's villages. After reaching the groom's village, the groom and bride are brought together and the priest puts an 'Hdasing' (chicken) on the hands of the couple which is allowed to eat rice. Then its neck is wrung and the blood is mixed with rice which is thrown over the couple. After this, turmeric water (Siandia-kigbike) is thrown over the couple from above the grooms' roof by his younger brother and dancing and drinking take place till evening. The couple is not allowed to have sexual relation for eight days from the day of the marriage.



## Economy

The hill Didayi practise shifting cultivation whereas the plain Didayi have adopted settled agriculture. Both the groups cultivate *ragi* and *suan* extensively which is their staple food. There is, however, exception for few villages like Konangi and Oringi lying on the plains with greater avenue for wet land cultivation. These villages cultivate paddy as their major crop.

The monthly cycle of economic activities of the hill Didayis is given below:-

**Magha, Phagun** - 'Guebar' or virgin forest are cleared by felling trees.

**Chait, Baisakh** - The dried logs are burnt. Bamboos are fetched from the jungle and fencing of the houses is made.

**Landi** - Houses are thatched with Piri, a type of jungle grass which grows on 'Birla' or tree less hill-tops which are abandoned for few years after practicing shifting cultivation. The *suan* fields are dug for broadcast of *suan*.

**Asadh** - Seeds of *suan* are broadcast, the stumps and other undergrowths of Guebar or virgin forests are cleared for broadcast of *ragi* and other seeds.

**Bondapon** - Seeds of *ragi*, maize, millet, *jhudung* (bean), chilli, *jada* (oil-seeds), cucumber and *biri* (Romia) are broadcast on the patch of cleared forest.

**Aosa** - Vegetable plants like tomato, brinjal and chilies are planted.

**Dashera** - Weeds are cleared from *suan* and *ragi* fields.

**Diwali, Pongal, Pus** - *Suan* and *ragi* are harvested, husked and stored.

The Didayis of plains do not have sufficient virgin forest for practising shifting cultivation; hence they depend on paddy and *ragi*. They grow cash crops like *alsi* more extensively than the hill Didayi. The hill and plain Didayis both collect a variety of roots and fruits throughout the year to supplement their food economy.

The Didayis are voraciously addicted to the juice of *salap* tree which is available in abundance in the forest. The drink is available almost throughout the year and is depended upon as one of the major sources of their food. Liquor prepared from *ragi* and *mahul* are also in use among them. It may be concluded

that the hill Didayi live on subsistence level having no scope for wet land cultivation and can be said to be still on collection stage where the plain Didayi are economically better off having scope for raising various types of cash crops like oil-seeds and pluses.

The process of shifting cultivation as practiced by the hill Didayi is that a virgin forest is cleared by felling the trees in the months of Magha and Phagun (February - March). They are allowed to dry up for a month after which fire is set. During May and June the stumps and other undergrowths are cleared for broadcast of seeds. The first stage of the forest is called 'Guebar'. After one harvest the same field is called 'Sasambar' where only small variety of *suan* is cultivated. After the second harvest the same plot becomes 'Birla' for three to four years when no cultivation is made over it. After three years it becomes again 'Guebar' and shifting cultivation is practised. The process continues till that patch of land is finally used for cultivation of small variety of *suan*, maize and vegetables.

The plain Didayis have undergone immense changes when one looks at the hill Didayi's way of life. It is interesting to note that a section of plain Didayi in the village of Ramguda which is going to be submerged due to Balimela Dam say that they are Matia Paroja and not Didayi, though they retain their own language and relations with other Didayis. It appears that they want to merge themselves with the major bulk of the population around them losing their link with their fellowmen. It is to be regretted that no comprehensive data about these people's life is available from any source. A detailed study should be taken up to know the present state of affairs of this small tribe.

## DIDAYI: A PICTURESQUE TRIBE OF ORISSA <sup>1</sup>

S. C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

The Didayi are a numerically small primitive hill tribe inhabiting a small forest clad hill-tract hidden inside the inaccessible 4,000' plateau of Kondakamberu range of Eastern Ghats that stretches along the South-Eastern border between Malkangiri and Koraput Sadar Subdivisions of Koraput (undivided) District. Living far away from the main-stream of civilization, this little community is almost unknown to outside and hence devoid of ethnographic attention. Dr. Verrier Elwin refers them as a 'wild tribe' in his 'Tribal Myths of Orissa' and in 'The Bondo Highlanders'. The tribesmen call themselves 'Gntre' -the people. The present name Didayi meaning the 'wild people' has been bestowed upon them by their Oriya neighbours, which they have accepted unhesitatingly.

### **Population**

The whole tribe number, 2,164 individuals including 1,131 males and 1,033 females (1971 Census). In 1941 Census their population was 1,661 only which rose to 1978 (962 males and 1,016 females) in 1961.

### **Physical Features**

The Didayi are a well-built, medium statured, brown complexioned, squarish faced, and flat nosed people possessing coarse and wavy hair, scanty bodily hairs, depressed nasal bridge, and concave nasal profile, narrow eyes sometimes exhibiting traces of Mongolian (Epicanthic) eye fold and prominent cheek. Didayi men and women are graceful and charming.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol.XXI, Nos. 1-4, 1982, pp. 1-10

<sup>2</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal & Harijan Research & Training Institute (THR TI), Bhubaneswar

### **Dialect**

The Didayi dialect which comes closer to those of Paroja, Gadaba, Bonda, Soura and Juang belongs to the Non-Kherwary branch of the Munda-Kol linguistic group under Austro-Asiatic branch of the Austric family. Hence linguistically the tribe stands at the most ancient stratum of Austro-Asiatic group of tribes in this country.

The timid Didayi living in the immediate neighbourhood of the Paroja, Gadaba, Kondh and the aggressive Bonda maintain peaceful and cordial social ties with all of them. Dr. Elwin and Thurston consider Didayi as a part of Paroja tribe with whom they are intimately related by their mythical origin and inter marriage relationship. Mr. R. C. S. Bells in the Koraput District Gazetteer states that the Didayi are more or less similar to Gadaba than Bonda. According to Furer Heimondorf, the Didayi and the 'Reddis of Bison Hills' are of a related stock and are also remnants of an ancient Asiatic culture despite their present diversities. However the Didayi Gadaba identify themselves as separate tribal group and regard all their tribal neighbours as their brethren.

### **Legendry Origin**

The Universe, *ab initio* was filled with infinite water. Once a gourd containing two little children, a boy and a girl, fell from the heaven and started floating on the surface of water. The panicked children cried helplessly that echoed at Mahapru's ears. He sent a crow to find out the matter. The crow discovered the source and reported to Mahapru who came down to help the destitute children. He tore off a handful of stars from the sky and planted it as mother earth. Then he created trees, flowers, mountains, animals, birds, rivers, springs, lakes and ponds out of His hair, blood, teeth, eye-brow, sweat, cough, spitting and urine respectively. After creating the world, He directed the boy and the girl to travel in opposite direction. They obeyed. After a long separation they met again below a Kendu tree when they have attained their blooming youth. Irresistible carnal desire indulged them in passionate love. The children born out of their union scattered all over the earth and became Adivasis like Bonda, Gadaba, Paroja, Didayi etc. Hence all the Adivasis are believed to be their brethren and the Bondas are considered as the elder brothers of Didayi.

### **Settlement Pattern and Housing**

Formerly the Didayi were semi-nomadic shifting cultivators preferring to dwell on the plateau amidst sylvan surroundings. Now a bulk of their population have migrated to the plains and valleys on either side of the

mountain range-preferably more to the Eastern valley side in search of better livelihood and settled in 20 villages adopting low land plough cultivation. Here impact of neighbouring Oriya and Telugu speaking population is noticeable in the spheres of their social behaviour, economy, material culture, dress and dialect. Their dialect now contains a few Telugu and Oriya terms. These villages are not only bigger in size, compact and populous-often consisting as much as 118 households (village Oringi) but also socioeconomically better off as compared to the smaller and uni-clan uphill settlements hardly comprising more than 10 households scattered at random. The hill Didayi because of their geographical, cultural and physical seclusion has remained more primitive and backward than their plain living counterparts. Thus on the basis of such visible cultural disparity between both the groups, there can be made a dichotomy as the plains and the hill or highland Didayi.

The Didayi villages are characterized by isolated homesteads fenced within enclosures scattered at random implying individualistic housing pattern. In hill villages the difference between two houses may be one kilometer or so. In the large-sized plain villages families belonging to different clans and communities live in separate hamlets inter-connected by narrow foot paths. 'Gulisung' the communal place for conducting the dances, ceremonies, festivals council meetings is located at a central place in the village.

Didayi houses are rectangular in size having mud walls and floor. The grass (Piri) thatched sloping roofs are supported by centre and side poles. Each house had a long verandah (Mnah Plida) and a short verandah (Dhna Plida) in front separated by the main door entrance. The verandahs are used for sleeping by grown up children at night, and grinding and husking purposes, in day time. In hill villages, smaller verandahs are seen because nobody sleeps there under severe cold climate. The houses are divided into three parts, i.e. kitchen, living and store, which are often separated by wattle partitions. The hearth (*trusu*) is built around one corner below an over-hanging wattle container to keep provisions and dry grains during monsoons. The middle portion meant for living and sleeping is furnished with mats and gutted cot. Pots utensils, baskets, etc., are kept on a platform called 'Bakho'. The remaining few material belongings including agricultural implements are kept in the store. *The* remarkable feature of Didayi housing is the attic made of reeds or bamboo mating approached by a bamboo ladder. It serves as general store room especially for storing grains and food stuffs in large baskets (Hondra). Generally Didayi houses are neat and clean and have one door but without windows. Domestic animals are sheltered in separate sheds. Indeed Didayi housing is much similar to that of neighbouring Bonda.

## **Economy**

The traditional subsistence economy of Didayi is mainly dependent upon cultivation supplemented by hunting and food collection. The hill Didayi still continues to practise shifting cultivation. , "Bri" -the shifting cultivation sites are found on precipitous hill slopes around Didayi settlements.

### **Shifting Cultivation**

The Didayi follow their traditional method of practising shifting cultivation. Even though, it requires the minimum and simplest kind of implements, manure and other inputs, the output is inadequate to fill their stomach for the whole year. The crops cultivated are Red-gram (Give), Jowary millet (Dahua), Black-gram (Romig), Brinjal (Koraihai), Millet, Niger (Olsi), Ragi and Suan, etc. Generally the steep hill slope with rich vegetations which is adjacent to the village is selected for shifting cultivation. The operation starts from winter (January-February) when the patch is cleared off. The Didayis use axe and sickle to cut down trees and shrubs respectively. These are allowed to dry up for a month or so after which the time is set. Then the ashes are distributed all over the plot which is fenced with wattle. The sowing of seeds starts from June—after the onset of monsoon, followed by raking with the help of hoe and weeding after one and half months. Small iron sickles are used for reaping the corn. Threshing is done on a clean ground specially prepared for this purpose by beating with wooden sticks or treading of the animals. The grains and seeds are carefully stored in storing baskets. Alternatively the plot at one site is cultivated in cyclic rotation for three consecutive years and then abandoned for 10 to 12 years.

In the past the Didayis were enjoying unchallenged liberty to exploit the forest around them to procure all their needs. But now most of their former shifting cultivation tracts are protected under reserve forests, reducing them to a stage of starvation. Yet the hill Didayi carry on this old practice in unreserved forest areas with permission from the Forest Officials.

### **Plough Cultivation**

The plains Didayi are socio-economically better off than their hill brethren. They have been used to settle themselves permanently taking up plough cultivation and also wet land cultivation wherever possible. The new agrarian pattern demands better implements, domestic animals, organised endeavour and skills to cover larger area effectively. The yield is definitely higher often producing surpluses. The need of money for purchasing sophisticated

implements, draught animals from local markets and paying land revenue oriented the natives to the money and market economy over and above the former barter system. The noticeable enhancement of living standards and social status of prosperous cultivators have gradually tempted all but many plains Didayi families living in lower slopes, foot hills and valleys (in the villages Koningi, Oringi, Mudulipada, Purna Gumma, Kasamput, Sindhiguda) to change over to plough cultivation from shifting cultivation. The main crops grown are paddy, *jowary* millet, *ragi*, *suani*, pulses besides the recent addition of vegetables like brinjal, tomato, onion, chilies, beans, pumpkin which fetches ready cash at the local market. Thus the perceptible shift from hoe to plough brings about a socio-economic revolution precipitating far reaching implications in Didayi standard of living, despite the unsuitability of the major part of the Didayi area for plough cultivation and other related adversities.

In spite of the aforesaid agrarian revolution majority of Didayi population are poor, landless and lead a hand to mouth living. The hill dwelling shifting cultivators always look at the forest for their needs. The landless and marginal farmers either having less land or infertile land with lower yield try to make up their deficits by working as agricultural labourers under their well-to-do neighbours, forest contractors to earn wages in cash or kind. In addition to that most of them resort to food gathering and collection of minor forest produce and basket making as subsidiary vocations so as to keep their body and soul together.

#### **Collection and gathering of the forest produce**

The Didayi men, women and children go in small batches of 2 to 8 persons with digging sticks and baskets to procure wild fruits, roots and tubers in all seasons. Women and children come back home in the evening while the men camp inside the forest at night to continue their mission for a longer period. Fruits like mango (Ulih), Kendu (Trek), Dimiri (Lewa), Tangani Siali (Hiansla), Kabri, Tal (Taria), Tamarind, roots and tubers called Kirla Gha, Torla, Soreila, Tomo and leaves known as Koriha, Dhuly, Chadibade, Bhajji, Gudiali are among the principal items collected from the jungle. Mohua flowers and seeds are procured for brewing liquor and extract oils. Kendu leaves used in manufacture of Bidis are collected to get money by selling them to local contractors.

#### **Hunting**

Didayis are hunters with their bow and arrow of which they are proud of themselves. Hunting was concomitant with their food gathering stage. Presently the paucity of animals, restrictions on hunting and the economic change over to plough cultivation have limited the scope but could not redeem

the importance of hunting by the Didayi. The ceremonies and rituals connected with hunting are still observed. Didayi men take advantage of leisure especially during festive occasions in summer to hunt in group after propitiating forest deities. Birds and animals except the totemic animals such as snake, tiger, monkey, deer, crocodile and tortoise are killed and eaten. The kill is equally distributed among all the households of the village and guests who are present on that day. Only the real hunter, Headman—Naik and the Palasi, the priest get a slightly bigger share. The hunter receives a larger portion of hind quarters and the skin of the animals while the Palasi receives the head. Didayi use simple bow and arrow, axe (Tangi) and trained dogs in hunting.

### **Fishing**

Fishing is a pastime of Didayis dwelling in the banks of Machkund River and perennial streams. Small hand nets and fishing baskets are mainly used for this purpose. Often they kill fish by poisoning water.

### **Animal domestication**

The hill Didayi rear few animals like dogs, pigs and cocks. The plain Didayi keep cattle for ploughing and supply of meat. They are not used to drink milk but take eggs. Now-a-days, they are becoming interested in keeping goats, sheep for meat and better financial gain.

### **Basketry**

Didayi men and women are very good at preparing various handy materials out of bamboo in their spare time to meet their requirements making use of plentifully available bamboo from the jungle. The bamboo products include a variety of grain storing baskets, winnowing fan, mat wattle, bolt arrow, digging stick, fishing basket, large hat, etc., which they use themselves.

### **Division of Labour and Mutual Cooperation**

Sexwise division of labour is conspicuously marked among the Didayi regarding carrying out their regular subsistence activities. Men shoulder the harder responsibilities like cutting down trees, tilling land, constructing and thatching the house, hunting and food preparation in communal feasts which are tabooed for women. Women apart from their cooking, clearing utensils, sweeping and the household activities cooperate with men to work in the fields, clearing shifting cultivation sites, weeding, fencing, reaping and thrashing corns, harvesting, preserving grain and food materials, rearing animals, collection of food and forest produce, fishing, basket making, in all possible ways. Among the Didayi co-ordination of efforts and collective endeavor through mutual help and



co-operation show significant characteristic of their social life based on peaceful co-existence that is observed particularly in hunting in group, house building, felling down trees, harvesting, marriage and mortuary rites and in all communal festivities whenever and wherever such need is felt.

### **Food Habits**

Rice, *ragi* and millet constitute the staple food of Didayi supplemented by vegetables, fish, meat, eggs and a variety of seasonal fruits, roots and tubers collected from the jungle. Few simple items from boiled rice, *ragi* and millet and their gruels are prepared and regularly eaten. Spices like tamarind, chili, salt, turmeric are also used for making vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. The Didayi eat thrice daily—morning, noon and night. A large quantity of liquor, cakes and other delicacies prepared from millet and rice are taken during festive occasions. Men and women are addicted to drinking Salap (sago palm juice) and country liquor brewed by themselves from Mohul.

### **Material Culture**

The Didayi are simple and self sufficient. They are content with what they have at present and don't want more than their actual requirements. They fight with their immediate physical environment with the aid of the least and simplest kind of material objects, tools and artifacts most of which they design themselves. To cultivate the land the Didayi needs plough (Sinhi) with iron share (Sinlah), yoke (Rigna), hoe (Mulvai), sickle (Hoishak), axe and knife. Food collection is carried out with simple digging sticks having iron heads, collecting baskets, hoe, knife and axe. The weapons of hunting are simple bow and arrow and bolt arrow (Bita) made of bamboo, axe and knife. The fishing implements include few variety of fishing baskets of bamboo - a conical one (Gumghur), a semi spherical one (Geera) and a tumbler type (Bhandar) besides small hand nets. The Didayi households possesses scanty material belongings such as brass, aluminium and earthen utensils, gourds to store water, grain storing baskets, winnowing fans, mat and wattle made of bamboo, ropes, poles, grinding stone, husking lever, etc.

### **Dress and Personal Adornments**

The traditional dress of women is known -as "Kisalu", a self made short, unstitched clothing made of natural bark fibers and thread. It was being wound around waist to cover the lower parts of the body while the upper part left uncovered. But now the popularity of cotton *sarees* and blouses among Didayi women has replaced this 'Kisalu'. Didayi women are fond of wearing

ornaments like silver, aluminium, gold and bead necklaces, brass ear rings and nose rings, aluminium and brass rings in finger and toes, aluminium anklets (Pohari), the glass and aluminium bangles. Wearing nose rings (Tandrimu) is compulsory for all married women. Men put on a small piece of a loin cloth. Gradually they have started wearing shirts, banyans, dhoti, etc. by the influence of plain people. Use of fashionable dresses and ornaments and modern cosmetics is unknown to both the sexes.

### Social Organisation

The structural organisation of Didayi society is characterised by moiety and totemism. The whole society is divided into two exogamous segments or moiety each composed of totemic group of clans. One's own moiety is his (Niramon) or group of brothers and the other one in which he can marry is his moiety. There are 5 exogamous group of clans called "Gta" or Bongo" namely Nkhoo (tiger), Mala (cobra), Gbe (deer), Mosali (crocodile), Goi (tortoise) out of which the first one, i.e., the Nkhoo Gta constitute one moiety and the remaining four are grouped under the other moiety. The social structure is represented in the following Table:

### Didayi Social Structure

DIDAYI TRIBE					
Totemic Segments	Moiety (I)	Moiety (2)			
Totemic Clans / Bonso	Nkhoo Gta (Tiger)	Mala Gta (Cobra)	Gbe Gta (Bear)	Musali Gta (Crocodile)	Got Gta (Tortoise)
Lineages	1. Gudia 2. Ghia 3. Dongar Majhi 4. Dongar Majhi Palasi. 5. Nkak 6. Muduli 7. Muduli Palasi 8. Sig	1. Ntar 2. Golpeda 3. Pujari 4. Gta 5. Palasi 6. Truk 7. Snobo 8. Angra 9. Bisoi 10. Kusuah 11. Mleh 12. Rimbi	1. Sanyasi 2. Bhoja 3. Golpeda 4. Rajpeda	Kumbai	Rachhi

Each clan (Gta) has its own tale to tell their relationship with the totemic ancestor. The Didayi rarely worship their respective totemic animals but

they avoid killing or injuring them. The clans are strictly exogamous because members of one clan consider themselves as brothers and sisters. Hence, any sexual relationship between them is regarded as incest. This rule is not strictly followed now-a-days. There are evidences of inter-marriage between Nusali Gta and Goi Gta which belong to the same moiety.

### **Lineage**

The clan is divided into several lineage groups. Consanguinal kips of patrilineally related families in a village form one lineage or "Biria"- Manang and Dhanang the eldest and the second eldest male members of Biris discharge important social functions in the matters of regulating the conduct of members and bringing the offender to book. They represent and protect interest of their lineage members in Lepar —the traditional village Panchayat. The proposal for marriage, bride price and divorce, etc., is dealt through Manang and Dhanang along with other senior members of the lineage. In these days, the lineage organisation is declining.

### **Family**

Family, the smallest basic unit and institution of Didayi society is patriarchal in nature. It is mostly nuclear and monogamous type, which includes the man, wife and their unmarried children. Sometimes, the membership is extended to the widowed, divorced or unmarried sister, or daughter, newly married son and daughter-in-law and dependant old parents. However, married sons leave the family of orientation to live in their own families of procreation within a year of marriage. Family members - the husband, wife and children form a close knit group to struggle against the physical environment. The role and status of each member is well defined. Within a very congenial atmosphere the children are brought up with extreme fondness and love. They help their parents when they grow up. Women exercise a dominant influence over domestic affairs and the husband as well. Succession and inheritance of property is strictly patrilineal. If a man dies leaving a daughter but no son his property goes to his brother.

### **Marriage**

The institution of marriage is the most significant event in Didayi social life. Not only it unites two souls to enter into their newly made separate love nest and reproduce but it also confers a prestigious status of full-fledged manhood and womanhood and membership of society as well provide socio-economic and emotional security. Monogamy is the common practice although

very few cases of polygyne are found. Didayi prefer adult marriage; girls are considered fit for marriage after attaining puberty, boys marry within 16 to 24 years of age. Boys and girls are free to select their mate without least parental interference. Premarital and post-marital love and sexual intimacy is present and tolerated in the society. Therefore most Didayi marriages are love marriages. Consent of the girl is badly essential in finalising such affairs. The marriage season is between January and June. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are considered most auspicious for the purpose. The following kinds of marriages are practised.

1. *Cross-cousin Marriage* (Marshaboyi) — It is considered to be the most ideal form of marriage. Marriage of a boy with his maternal uncle's daughter (Marshaboyi) is most welcomed. However, both boy and the girl are free to choose their beloved partner transgressing this preferential matrimony. In that case, the boy appeases his maternal uncle by paying compensation ("Managhar") before one month of his marriage and frees himself from this social bondage and obligation with the latter. Otherwise, his marriage and post-marital life will be in shambles by the curse and black magic inflicted by his aggrieved uncle.

2. *Marriage by Negotiation* (Toshu) — Toshu is the traditional form of marriage in which boy's parents negotiates matrimony with the girl's parents through "Jhora-Khatia" -the go betweens. The girl's parents accept the proposal after getting the consent of their daughter. Few days before the wedding bride price is settled and paid to girl's parents after which the marriage is finalised. On the wedding day the girl comes to the boy's house in a procession with her mates and relations where she is pompously received by groom's mother and village boys and girls. Marriage rituals take place amidst dance, music and fun. The groom puts a ring on the left ring finger of the bride and takes her to his home. On the day following the wedding, parents and elderly ladies of the newlywed couple sit in a customary session to offer valuable advises regarding ideal conjugal life to the couple. It is called "Budhi Gyan Bhashangre". Then a sumptuous feast is given to the villagers. As Toshu is an expensive and elaborate affair only well-to- persons can afford for such type of marriages.

3. *Marriage by Elopement* (Udulia) — In this type of marriage, the boy elopes with his beloved and hides her in a friend's or relative's house. Girl's parents hearing about this come to the boy with their relatives and villagers to demand bride price. Marriage ritual follows after negotiation of bride price which is less than that of Toshu wedding.

4. *Marriage by Capture* —The boy kidnaps the girl of his choice from the market place with the help of his friends when he fails to marry her otherwise. The girl is kept in the friend's house and given the best food and treatment in order to get her consent for marriage. After a week her parents and relations come to the boy to claim bride price and finalise the marriage which is always subject to the willingness of the girl.

5. *Marriage by Intrusion* (Ghasia-mandi) — The girl enters forcibly into the family of his beloved and stays there. If the boy is willing to accept her he can do so but he does not pay bride price in that case. Otherwise, he throws a pot of water on the yard and breaks off 3 broom sticks which mean the girl may face disastrous circumstances like the pot of water in case she urges to live with him. Such refusal is rare.

6. *Marriage by Service* (Gharjwa) — A poor boy who is unable to pay the bride price for his desired girl may in lieu of that serve her parents for a stipulated period of time usually for 3 years. Then he is allowed to marry the girl and move to his new home with her. The boy approaches girl's parents with a gourd of *salap* wine and a goat. When he finally leaves with his bride he is presented with a cow, a goat, a gold nose ring, other brass and bead ornaments, cloth, about 10 kgs. of rice, salt, *ragi*, millet, and Rs. 30/- by his parents-in-law in the presence of relatives, village elders, Naik and Palasi who perform marriage rites.

*Post Marital love affairs and re-marriage*- Didayi women tend to indulge clandestinely in licentious relationships with men other than their husband. If such illicit intimacy is caught red handed by the husband he has every right to beat the adulterer and caution him against further advances. If he likes so, he can bring him before the traditional village Panchayat. In case the accused pleads guilty or his guilt is proved otherwise, he is fined and warned against repetition. If the woman wants to leave her husband and marry him, re-marriage is allowed by the Lepar collecting a fine of Rs. 50/-, two goats and one pig which is deposited in the common village fund except the cash that is paid to the husband as compensation. When one's wife elopes with her lover the former claims compensation double the amount of bride price he has paid for the woman from the latter. In case of rape and pregnancy caused by rape or illicit relationship, the male offender is severely fined and forced to marry the victim by the Lepar which accepts the truth of woman's accuses.

*Widow re-marriage, Levirate and Sororate* - Widow marriage and junior levirate is prevalent among the Didayi. A young widow may marry the younger brother of her late husband to avoid complication regarding property inheritance

if she has children. Of course she is free to marry any male person of her choice other than the younger brother. In that case her new husband has to pay compensation to the younger brother of her ex-husband and to her parents-in-law. Or she may leave her ex-husband's house and stay with her parents if she so likes. Illicit relationship with one's younger brother's wife is strictly tabooed even if she is young and widow. Sororate and sororal polygyne, i.e., marrying wife's younger sister is uncommon though not prohibited.

### **Divorce**

The cases of divorce and re-marriage due to unhappy marital life are few. Only men have the right to divorce under the following grounds:-

1. Illicit relationship of the wife with a lover.
2. Elopement with a lover.
3. Laziness and non-co-operation of the wife in domestic affairs such as cooking, child care, food gathering, etc.
4. Misbehaviour, mal-adjustment, misunderstanding and frequent quarrels between the man and wife.

Sterility or barrenness is not accepted as a reason for divorce since they believe that either of the spouses is responsible for this. The husband can take a second wife with the consent of his first wife to get children in this case. The divorce is finalised in presence of the husband, wife's brother, the Naik, Chalan, Palasi, the lineage elders and village elders. The husband pays Rs. 10 and a saree to his departing wife. She can re-marry after few months. In that case her former husband cannot claim his share of compensatory bride price from her new husband. Though wife cannot divorce her husband she can desert him any time and stay with anybody else she loves. Thus her husband is forced to divorce her after collecting compensation from her second husband.

### **Kinship**

The relationship and behaviour pattern of kinship in Didayi society corresponds to its classificatory terminological sub-system. Father's elder brother and mother's elder sister are called 'Baha' and are highly respected. The relationship with father's elder brother and his wife and mother's younger sister are of respect and familiarity. Father's sister, mother's brother and wife's parents are highly respected. Extreme form of joking relationship and intimacy is permissible among cross cousins who are potential mates, grandparents, grand children and wife's younger sister while there is strict avoidance between a man and his wife's mother and elder sister, a woman and her husband's elder brother and parents.

### Life Cycle

Didayi's journey from mother's womb to the grave is a passage of seven steps. Their kinship system plays an indispensable role in these phases of an individual's life cycle. Biria women and neighbouring kins women attend the woman during her child birth. The new born infant is given a name and membership of the society in presence of the kith and kin on the day of name giving ceremony (*Senujha*) held on the tenth day of birth. Mother protects the helpless child against evil eyes by putting iron bangles and father ties a black thread (*Bneya*) around his waist to ensure their lifelong ties. The first hair cutting ceremony is performed by the father when the baby is 2 or 3 months old. His/her father facing East, buries the hair shaved from his head. A chicken is scarified, cooked with rice and eaten with *salap* wine in a feast by the family and Biria members. The child is given the soup of chicken's head and a small peg of palm wine to sip. Likewise when the first deciduous tooth of the child's lower jaw drops out it is buried in the yard. If it belongs to the upper jaw, it is thrown on the roof by the mother.

Thus the infant steps into the first phase of his life — 'Chirlo' and commences his onward journey to reach his 'Gorhoyo' — the childhood and then gradually steps into adolescence the third-phase, followed by the youth-the fourth phase. The fourth stage is the best and the most romantic period of his life. No specific rites, ceremonies and taboos are associated with initiation and puberty. At this time the boys are called 'Ingire' and the girls 'Shelia' who enjoy un-fettered freedom of pre-marital love and romance among themselves before they finally chose their life companion to be tied in wed lock and called as *Bhendia Binghak* (Man) and *Diya Koye* (Woman).

### Death Rites

As soon as a person dies the women folk start wailing loudly. The *Chalan* announces the sad event inside the village and the deceased's consanguinal and affinal kins living in adjacent villages are called for. The nearest kins such as the brother and parallel cousins move the corpse to the front yard, bathe it anointing turmeric and oil, wear it a new cloth, put it on a bamboo mattress and tie it across a bamboo pole. It is carried to the cremation ground on the shoulders by the male agnatic relatives belonging to the deceased's clan excluding sons and brothers. Women and few people residing in village accompany the funeral procession wailing, weeping and beating their breasts. The corpse is kept on the pyre with its head to the east and the brother ignites the pyre after pairing the nails of the deceased and cutting off the *Bneya* - the black thread tied around

a person's waist by his father on the day of his name giving ceremony. Some of the deceased's favorite belongings like axe, hoe, bow and arrow, knife, etc. are thrown into the pyre. After the body is burnt down the brother pours water on the ashes and the party returns taking bath *en route*. They are fed a vegetarian meal by the deceased's Biria members. On that day, cooking in the dead man's louse and taking non-vegetarian meal or liquor is strictly prohibited.

Much similar to that of Hindu mortuary rites, the Didayi perform the purificatory ritual - 'Lykandisho' (like Hindu Dasah) on the 10th day of death and 'Gighayasha' - the Sradha on the ensuing first anniversary in order to restore status quo from the mortuary pollution and propitiate the departed soul against causing harm to the life and property of the living relatives. Palasi, the village priest conducts the 'Lykandisha' rite by offering the ghost a black chicken and rice which is cooked and taken by all the Biria members of the dead person. The 'Gighayasha' is conducted more or less in the similar manner in which the ghost is offered food at the funeral site and then all the relatives and villagers take part in a big feast accompanied by alcoholic drinks and dance. This ceremony marks the end of annual mourning when the departed soul attains the status of the dead ancestors.

This agenda of funeral observances is not followed for abnormal deaths caused by small pox, cholera and other epidemics, by accidents, such as drowning, falling down from a tree, attack of a tiger and other wild animals and also for the death of pregnant woman and small children. Such dead bodies are immediately buried and a purificatory ritual is performed by the Guniar, the witch-doctor immediately within a week of death so as to save the relatives and villagers from the fiery wrath of the angry and ferocious ghost. Only old age deaths are considered normal and natural by the Didayi.

### **Political Organisation**

The Didayi are custom bound and peace loving people. Social control and conformity are effectively ensured in their socio-political set up. Living in geographical isolation they were in the past nevertheless politically well organised by developing traditional territorial and autonomous socio-political system at central and village level. The central territorial organisation was a larger union of all Didayi villages whose meetings were being regularly held at Kudumulugumma to solve inter-village and inter-tribal problems, to consider bigger issues *ultra vires* to lower political level and to reinforce *esprit de corps* in their tribal life at large. The elderly persons and the traditional village officials like Naik and Chalan from component villages were attending the meeting. The regional territorial



organizations were composed of few contiguous or neighbouring villages sharing more or less the same geographical environment so as to enjoy and defend their common usufructuary rights to exploit their well defined forest territories. These local units in the pre-independence period transcended into Mustajari system as revenue units under Jeypore Zamindari resembling the Mutha organisation of the Kondh and Koya. In these days, such old traditional political institutions no longer exist except in the sweet memories of Didayi old men.

### **Village**

Village is the only political organisation that has survived the test of time. A Didayi village (Hinhi) is the smallest basic socio-political unit that is autonomous, independent and self-sufficient having full access to its assets and resources including exclusive ownership rights to the land and forest. It is a co-operative and corporate body functioning through its own agencies and arrangements. There is a village Council - the Lepar consisting of village officials such as the Naik or the Headman, Chalan his executive assistant and Palasi - the priest. Naik is the secular chief of the village. His post is elective, but hereditary in actual practice. On vacancy it is taken over by the nearest patrilineal or patrilineal kin of the predecessor and thus remains inside the same lineage and clan. In the Didayi village Oringi the former Naik, Buda Naik relinquished his post when his old age and deafness impaired his efficiency and his brother Basu Naik succeeded him. The Naik continues in his post as long as he enjoys the confidence of the people and the Lepar of the village. His Office is most important since his normal duties and responsibilities involve administering law and order, justice, peace, good will and conformity in the village in accordance with their social norms. He also represents his village in all occasions, protects its interest, heads the village council and executes its decisions. He is assisted by the Chalan whose post is not hereditary but given to any one even a non-Didayi member of the village who volunteers his service for this. He acts as the official messenger, convener of village council meetings, organizer, fund collector and assistant to the Palasi for communal rituals and functions and host to the visiting guests and officials.

Palasi is the sacerdotal chief who usually hails from one clan or lineage for generations though his office is not hereditary. He organises and conducts communal rituals, special rituals for the success of hunting expeditions, for driving out evil spirits causing epidemics, drought or calamities harmful to the life and property of the villagers and for such occasions as birth, death, marriage, besides fixing up dates for the annual calendar of rituals and ceremonies and propitiating gods, deities ancestral spirits regularly.

Lepar or traditional village council is a corporate body of household heads headed by the Naik. It is a well defined powerful organisation regulating all activities in social, political, religious and economic spheres of the village. It elects and removes the office bearers, decides cases relating to theft, quarrel, incest, adultery, marriage, bride price, divorce, etc. and punishes the wrong doer sometimes by ostracism or ex-communication but more often than not in terms of fine which is proportionately shared among the aggrieved party, the village officials and the council members. Its' meetings are regularly held in an open space inside the village called—Gulisung, on specific dates and also as and when required. The village elders more specifically the elderly persons from the numerically dominant clan exercise influence over the socio-political system of the village. The Naik usually comes from the dominant clan and lineage. In the post-independent days with the radical transformation of socio-political environment and particularly with the super imposition of statutory Panchayatiraj system over Didayi political set up, a new pattern of leadership is emerging to challenge the pre-existing political set up. Evidently the ward member, the new office bearer is gaining importance in the village affairs in parallel with the traditional chief, Naik where the Naik and member are not one and the same person. In the plains Didayi village Oringi, Sanysi Angra, the present Ward Member appeared more confident and smart in respect of dealing with outsiders and visiting officials.

Today the Didayi people living in the plains come in contact with the outsiders in the weekly markets at Kudumulugumma and Onukadelli held on Thursday apart from numerous other modern agencies of acculturation. Their behavioural patterns of culture are undergoing a slow change that is overtly visible while their original core of social life remains intact. As a result, a superiority complex is developing among them with relation to their hill living counterparts whom they look down upon for unclean and undignified habits. Therefore, they do not like to make matrimonial alliances with the latter. No longer the plains, Didayi are the living specimens of isolated wild people of Dr. Elwin if one observes their degree of sophistication and acquired mannerisms with the outsiders now-a-days.

T. H. R. T. I.  
Bhubaneswar.

# STATUS OF DIDAYI WOMEN OF MALKANGIRI DISTRICT OF ODISHA <sup>1</sup>

Gopinath Pradhan <sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Didayi is one of the Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the status of Didayi women and also to identify some of the important determinants of women empowerment. Where economy is predominantly agrarian and forest dependent and majority of the population is rural and tribal, the status of women is not low. She is considered as the dominant partner. The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of gender equality and social justice in that society. The data has been collected from the Didayi area of Malkangiri district. The analysis reveals that the role performance of the Didayi women is worth noting. In the economic affairs of the Didayi, we find that women really enjoy no leisure and remain busy from early morning to late evening for which they enjoy a better social status in their society.

## Introduction

Tribals who are considered to be the most neglected section of the society, live in forests, hills and isolated regions. The problems of land alienation, exploitation, migration, bonded labour etc are serious issues of tribals in Odisha as well as in India. The education and health status of the tribals is very low as compared to other sections of the society. The tribals are primarily forest dwellers. Their productivity is very low which leads to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, low standard of consumption and living. Odisha is also a less developed state where the standard and status of tribal is relatively low. Most of the tribal groups racially belong to Proto-Australoid racial stock while linguistically they belong to Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan Language families.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 54, No 1&2, 2014, pp. 72-77

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer in Tribal Studies, COATS, DNK Road, Koraput ,Odisha- 764020  
Email: [gnpradhan1972@gmail.com](mailto:gnpradhan1972@gmail.com) [Gnpradhan\\_1972@yahoo.co.in](mailto:Gnpradhan_1972@yahoo.co.in)

Women occupy a central place in the organization of a family. The well-being of a family is influenced by gender issues viz. to what extent the women are on an equal footing with men or to what extent, the women are discriminated against men. Gender inequality, unfavorable to females is an important issue in the social development in India as well as in Odisha. Sex ratio in Odisha is 972 females per 1000 males as against 933 in India (2001 Census) shows discrimination against females.

Gender analysis reveals the roles and relationships of women and men in society and the inequalities in the relationships. The much quoted UN Statistics remain true today as they were when they were formulated over a decade ago:

- Women perform two-thirds of the world's work.
- Women earn tenth of the world's income.
- Women are two-thirds of the world's illiterates.
- Women own less than one-hundredth of the world's property.

For the present study, the status of Didayi women of Malkangiri district of Odisha has been taken into consideration.

### **Malkangiri District**

Malkangiri district is also one of the tribal dominated districts in Odisha that is situated at an elevation of 150-300 meters above the sea level. The Didayi are found only in Malkangiri district (a part of the erstwhile undivided Koraput district). Their habitat is within the Malkangiri uplands of the Saberi basin, which constitute one of the morphological units of the rolling uplands developed to the west of the Eastern Ghats. These rolling uplands are characterized by lower elevations (150-300 meters) compared to high plateaus, flat in nature and contain good soil suitable for paddy cultivation in wet areas. Physiographically the area shows undulating topographical features. The district is divided into 7 blocks. Out of seven blocks, two blocks are the abode of Didayi tribe.

### **Didayi: A Tribal Community of Odisha**

India has the second largest tribal population in the world. Among the Indian states, Odisha has the second largest tribal population. It has the highest tribal concentration in its population which constitutes 9.7% of the total Indian tribal population. As per the 2001 census, the tribal population constitutes 22.13% of the total population in the state. As per the census data from 1981 to 2001, their decadal growth rate declined from 22.43% to 22.13%. It has also the largest variety of ethnic groups numbering 62 Scheduled Tribes (ST). More

than one third of the area of the state is declared as "Scheduled Area". As per 2001 census data, Mayurbhanja district has the second largest S.T population (57.87%) following Malkangiri 58.36%.

The Didayi live in the immediate neighborhood of another tribal community i.e. the Bondo highlanders (Guha et.al. 1970). Mr. R.C.S Bell states in the Koraput District Gazetteer that the Didayi are confined to a stretch of twenty miles in Machhkund valley between Duduma and Kondakamberu and that they are more similar to the Gadaba than to the Bondo. Dr. Verrier Elwin (1950) describes the Didayi as a 'Wild Tribe'. In the past, the Didayi were in the habit of shifting their settlements from place to place for bringing suitable patches of forestland under shifting cultivation (Choudhury, 1990:98). Now they lead a settled life in the-plains in hills and the cut-off area as well.

The area inhabited by the Didayi has been categorized into three distinctive sub-areas. The first sub-area known as the plains lying between the Bondo hills and the Jeypore-Chitrakonda road is in fact partly plain and partly hilly and includes 6 Didayi villages. The inhabitants of this sub-area mostly practice settled cultivation. The second sub-area called the hill area is characterized by rugged and mountainous terrains covering about 130 sq. kms where the elevation of land varies from 3000 feet to 4000 feet and includes as many as 18 villages inhabited by the Didayi. The inhabitants of this area depend on shifting cultivation. The third sub-area consisting 15 villages lying on the left bank of the river Machhkund at an altitude ranging approximately from 1500 feet to 2000 feet is called the cut-off area. This sub area is cut-off from the main land because of the Balimela Reservoir consequent upon the construction of the Balimela Hydro-Electricity Project. These villages however have been connected by motor launch. The seclusion of these villages from the main land has tremendous impact on the socio-economic and cultural life of the inhabitants.

### **Social Life**

The Didayi social organization consists of a number of totemic clans. Among the Didayi a simple nuclear family consists of a man, his wife (or wives) and their unmarried sons and daughters. Generally, a son has to leave his parental home after his marriage. Therefore, a Didayi family is normally nuclear and monogamous. Monogamy is the common practice among Didayi but polygamy is also not unknown. The duties and responsibilities of each member of the family are clearly defined. Certain activities like fetching of firewood and water, keeping the house clean, cooking and collecting certain roots and tubers are entrusted to women. Men plough the field, cut bamboo and go for hunting etc.

In spite of the fact that Didayis are patriarchal, the status of women is not low. They are considered as the dominant partner. Boys and girls exercise their choice in selecting their mates only with the condition that they must not choose anyone from their own clan. Various forms of marriage are prevalent among Didayi such as marriage by negotiation (*toso*), marriage by ceremonial capture (*udulia*), marriage by service (*garjya*), marriage by intrusion (*gaisamuddi*) etc. The negotiation marriage is prestigious but costly because of the payment of bride-price, observation of rituals and arrangement of feasts. The widow re-marriage and junior levirate are permitted in their community.

### **Political Life**

The traditional the village council (*Lepar*) is the oldest and the most powerful socio-political organization at the village level. Every head of the household and in fact every adult male has the right to participate in the meetings of the Lepar. Its functions embrace all corporate activities in social, political, economic and religious spheres of the village. The head man of the village is called *Naik* who is assisted by a *Chalan* and a *Barik*. They along with the head of each family constitute the village council. It decides cases brought before it relating to such matters as theft, quarrel, divorce, offences of sex etc. It also imposes punishment according to nature of the case mostly in terms of fine.

### **Didayi Women and their Status**

The all round development of a country is incomplete without women who constitute nearly 50% of the population. The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women's status as often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as the roles they play within the family, the community and society (Ghosh, 1987). A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic structure of the society. The Dhebar Commission Report (1961) mentions that the tribal woman is not a drudge or a beast of burden. She is found to be exercising a relatively free and firm hand in all aspects related to her social life unlike in non-tribal societies. The tribal women in general and in comparison with castes, enjoy more freedom in various occupations. Traditional and customary tribal norms are comparatively more liberal to women.

A Didayi woman has her passion and emotion, love and jealousy, possessiveness and devotion to her husband and children. The Didayi community has accorded to her an elevated position and granted a good deal of freedom. Although men can only inherit ancestral property, women have liberty for mobility

and enviable role in household decision-making process. A woman can choose her husband and can change him at her will. She can go to forest alone and go to market alone. She plays major role in the management of the household.

Currently, in the changing scenario, the role performance of the Didayi women is worth noting. Besides the traditional roles, the emerging roles have resulted in making them more vibrant, dynamic and outward-looking. In this context, the participatory roles of the Didayi women which provide clues to explore their potentialities for involvement in the planned development intervention may be discussed below.

### **Participatory Role of Didayi Women:**

#### **I. Traditional roles.**

- Husking of paddy and other cereals.
- Grinding of pulses and spices.
- Cutting of vegetables, fruits and green leaves.
- Cutting of edibles including baking.
- Cooking of edibles among family members.
- Storage of edibles for future consumption.
- Fetching of drinking water, storage of drinking water and water for other use.
- Cleaning of household utensils and appliances.

#### **2. Management roles.**

- Participation in house building.
- House cleaning and maintenance.
- Cleaning of house premises.
- Nourishing and caring of children.
- Caring of other family members and guests.
- Participation in household decision making process.
- Taking decision in choosing life partner.
- Taking decision in the dissolution of marriage and re-marriage.

#### **3. Participation as economic partner.**

- Food gathering, fuel wood and seasonal forest collections.
- Cleaning of shifting land by cutting and up-rooting small plants and grass.
- Weeding, reaping or harvesting and threshing.
- Carrying farm harvests home through head load, storage and preservation of produce and carrying food and drinks to the field.

- Working as wage-earner in agricultural sector and non-agricultural sector.
- Participation in barter and market exchange.
- Contributing to the family income, saving for future.
- Contingencies and other income generating activities.

#### 4. Participation in domestication of animals and birds.

- Regular cleaning of animal sheds.
- Feeding of animals and birds.

#### 5. Other emerging roles:

- Participation in elections.
- Participation in Self-Help-Groups (SHGs) in entrepreneurial activities for the diversification of their existing economic base.
- Participation in the Immunization Programmes for mother and children.

### Socio-Economic Status

Women are considered a valuable part of our society. In the social life, the tribal ladies of the rural areas enjoy relatively a more respectable life. From her early childhood, she works in her parent house and becomes an economic asset. In her husband's house, she performs all household works and extends her helping hand to her husband in agricultural field and forest collections. She along with other ladies of her age does the marketing in the nearby weekly markets. In the economic affairs of the Didayi, the women really enjoy no leisure and remain busy from early morning to late evening. Didayi women are no doubt enjoying greater freedom in social life.

In the present scenario, the status of women has been changing due to various reasons. With the spread of education and awareness, women are moving from the four walls of the house to higher levels of socio-economic activities. Enactment of a series of legislations from time to time has raised the socio-economic status of tribal women in the country.

A number of anti-poverty programmes and rural employment programmes like the JRY, EAS, IRDP, DWCRA, TRYSEM etc. have been launched by the Central Government as well as the State Government with the view to raise the socio-economic status of the poor. A number of tribal women in rural areas have been benefited in these programmes.

The Didayi is one of the Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of the State. They are one of the most backward tribal communities in the Malkangiri



District. By keeping this view, the government has established the Didayi Development Agency (DDA) in August 1986 with the main objective of all round development of this primitive tribe. The DDA covers two villages of Rasabeda Gram Panchayat of Khairput Block and 37 villages of Kudumulugumma Block of Malkangiri district.

### **Health Status**

Health is an important element and determinant of well being of people in a society. Improved health is desirable to enhance the physical capacities to work and to participate in economic development. There are 635 tribal communities including 75 primitive tribal communities living in India. A majority of tribals need health care on account of malnutrition, lack of safe drinking water, poor hygiene, environmental sanitation and poverty. Several studies also reported that the health status of tribal women is low because of their illiteracy, poverty and lack of awareness etc.

In the study area, it has been found that the average quantity of food consumed by Didayi woman is inadequate either in normal case or in special condition. From the nutritional point of view, it has been seen that the status of Didayi women is very low.

### **Religious Status**

The women are debarred to take part in rituals, but all works related to the performances of religious activities are done by them. During the festivals and ceremonies, women's role is praise worthy. On the occasion of each of the ceremonies sacrifice of animals like fowl, goat and pig is common. These are celebrated with dancing and singing continuously for several days. Dhemsas dances are performed by the young ladies.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Didayi women of the study area have active participation in all activities for increasing the income of family. There are many household activities, which are unpaid and done mostly by women. They keep themselves busy from early morning to late evening. It is noteworthy that the all round development of a country is incomplete without women who constitute nearly 50% of the population, but their status is not equal to that of men. The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men but strong patriarchal traditions make the women subservient. It is for this reason; the state government has launched Mission Shakti for organizing and

assisting women Self-Help-Groups. The problem of women development should constitute an important segment in the planning process. Our late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru rightly said " In order to awaken the people, it is the women who have to be awakened, once they are on moves, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves".

To conclude, awareness, willingness and capacity building measures are basic factors on which the overall development of women depends. Six decades of political democracy with the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institution in the 90's has certainly raised the awareness among the rural and tribal people. Still many improvements are possible with enhancement of capacity to participate and empower all sections of the people.

### References

1. **COATS, Koraput**, (2001): *In Search of a Strategy to build a Field Model to ensure People's Participation for Sustainable Development: Case Study of the Didayi* (A Primitive Tribal Group of Malkangiri district of Odisha).
2. **Choudhury, B.** (1990): "Didayi" in *Tribes of Odisha*. Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Odisha, Bhubaneswar.
3. **Guha Uma et al**, (1970): *The Didayi- A Forgotten Tribe of Odisha*, (Anthropological Survey of India). The Manager of Publications. Government of India Publication Branch Civil Lines, Delhi.
4. *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. XXXXI, No-2, 2009.
5. **Mohapatra, P.K.**, (1963-64), : The Didayi- A Hill Tribe of Odisha. *Adibasi*, Vol. V, No. 2-THRTI-Odisha and 'Didayi' *Adibasi*, Vol. V, (Special Issue), THRTI, Odisha, Bhubaneswar.
6. **Vision**-Vol. XXIX, No. 2-3, April-Sept, 2009.
7. **Vision**, June-March, 2008.

# LIFE AND CULTURE OF THE DONGRIA KONDHS <sup>1</sup>

A. C. Sahoo <sup>2</sup>

Among all the tribes, Kondhs top the list for their numerical preponderance in the state of Odisha. Considering different levels of economic development and socio-cultural background, the Kondhs can broadly be divided in to several sections. Of them, mention may be made of Desia Kondhs, Kutia Kondhs, Dongria Kondhs, Pengo Kondhs, Sita Kondhs, Malua Kondhs, Nanguli Kondhs and Bura Kondhs etc. The Dongria Kondhs are a major section of the great Kondh tribe and inhabit the Niyamgiri hill ranges of south Odisha.

The Dongria Kondhs are very simple, happy and straight forward and upright in there conduct. They have a lot of respect for their gods, goddesses, deities, spirits and unseen powers. However, they are very superstitious in nature. They work very hard and enjoy leisurely hours. They derive pleasure by helping others and attach great importance to human life. Basically they are out spoken and occasionally become very aggressive. They love their children and their family members and have strong feeling of togetherness among themselves. They believe in equality and feel proud of their social position and status. They depend on the scheduled caste Domb people for their socio economic affairs. They respect elders and satisfy ancestral spirits at all costs. Both males and females adorn their body in a culture specific style. They are very hospitable and proud of their own village and territory.

The Dongria Kondhs mostly live on high hill-land locally known as 'Dongar' which signifies the nomenclature of their community as 'Dongria Kondh'. They have their own language known as 'Kuvi' and distinct culture. They claim as the descendents of Niyam Raja, their legendary ancestral king.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, No.1&2, 2007, pp 98-109

<sup>2</sup> Officer on Special Duty, Tribal Museum, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswarr

Their **area** comes under three community development Blocks namely Bissamcuttak and Muniguda of Gunpur sub-division and Kalyanisinghpur block of Rayagada district. Apart from these some of them are also found in Lanjigarh Block of Kalahandi district. The area inhabited by the Dongria Kondhs is a contiguous rectangular patch over the Niyamgiri hill ranges. Not only by virtue of their habitat but also due to their special cultural characteristic they are clearly distinguished from other Kondh sections as well as other communities.

They are one of the major sections of the great Kondh tribe having about 10,000 population distributed in around 120 settlements. Origin of the Dongria Kondhs is obscure. However, according to their legend and folktales, they claim that they are the brothers of other Kondhs such as Kutia Kondhs and Desia Kondhs who are residing adjacent to their locality and the Niyam Raja had settled them on the Niyamgiri hills since time immemorial. In order to differentiate them from other Kondh groups they keep long hair as an ethnic identity. They also prove through legends that they are the original settlers of Niyamgiri hills since centuries.

**The land of the Dongria Kondhs** is situated between 20°3' and 17°50' N Latitude and 81°27' E Longitude and over high plateau of Niyamgiri hills ranging from 1000 ft. to 5000 ft above the sea level. The area is comparatively cooler and receives 80% of the total rainfall during monsoon. The Dongria Kondhs enjoy three seasons. However, the climate is relatively cool and pleasant through out the year. February to June found to be hot. In May the temperature rises up to 33°C. The average annual rain fall vary from year to year. However, on an average, it is found to be 60 inches. They practice slash and burn type of cultivation, which causes depletion of forest.

The humidity is very high in monsoon time. In summer the wind blows from south to west. The periodicity of rainfall is neither uniform nor regular. As the result of which very often drought is a common problem in the area. The topography of the area is very uneven and lowest part of their habitation is situated above 1000 ft of sea level. So far as the water resources are concerned Gadgada Nala in Bissamcuttack Block and Sakata Nala in the Muniguda Block are two major perennial sources. Almost all the Dongria Kondh villages in K. Singhpur Block have natural flow of stream water.

The **soils** by and large are lateritic and land is sloppy which is not suitable for agriculture. Due to practice of shifting cultivation, a number of hills have become barren. There are hills having only large stones and boulders and at

the same time a number of mountains have luxuriant growth of forest which indicates that there is fertile soil suitable for different agricultural and horticultural purpose. A very few tracts are there where the soil type is loamy or clay. But a major part of their land has brown colour soil with poor water absorption capacity.

The Niyamgiri hills and forests are full of fruit bearing trees like Jackfruit, Tamarind, Blackberry, Mango, Banana and Citrus variety. Extensive pineapple plantations are the example of potential eco system and efforts of man. Apart from different fruit bearing trees a number of valuable timbers like Sal, Biza, Sisu, Asana and Haladu etc, are abundantly found in the hill ranges.

Animals like tigers, bear, wild boar, deer, *sambars*, wild goats, spotted deer, porcupine, hare, many kinds of poisonous snakes etc roam in the local forest. Birds like jungle chicken, peacocks, pigeon and different kinds of sparrows are found. Different varieties of herbs and shrubs having great medicinal value are available.

The **economic life** of the Dongria Kondhs mostly revolves round the forest. It is their main source of food, firewood, herbal medicines and raw materials for house construction. They go for hunting and trapping of birds and animals to get non-vegetarian food items. The hill streams provides them ample scope for washing clothes and cleaning utensils. They also do fishing there and catch crab for relishing with special pleasure. Their favourite sago-palm sap that they collect from the sago-palm trees, are mostly found in the forest. Their swiddens lie in the forest. They work in the forest and there by learn many things in the process of their socialization. As a fish cannot live without water, the Dongria Kondhs can not live without forest. In the changing economy from shifting cultivators to horticulturist they have to depend on the forest to raise orchards and fruit bearing trees for survival. They strongly believe that forest in and around their habitat is a perennial source to provide them all that they need for survival for all time to come. They love their natural habitat very much and hesitate to come down to the plains. They never like trespassing of outsiders into their habitat and resent such movements. Each clan and sub-clan maintain their territorial boundary within their own group members. Any encroachment in this regards may lead to fatal feuding situation.

For construction of a **house** a Dongria Kondh has to select a site for which he has to undergo several observances and perform necessary rituals to get approval of the deities. The Dongria Kondh house is rectangular in ground plan and gable shaped to look at. They make the houses like a railway compartment,

the front compartment of which is used as store room-cum-rest house, the middle room is the main room used for dining, cooking, sleeping, storing of valuable materials and a corner is used for enshrining family deity. The third and last room is located at back side is meant for the women during their menstruation period and delivery time. The walls are made of bamboo splits or poles or wattle of broomstick over which they plaster mud and cow dung. A coating of coloured earth is plastered over it to enhance the beauty of the wall surface on which on special occasions they make traditional paintings. Some people now-a-days are using mud or unburnt or burnt bricks for making wall. They use doors and shutters over which various designs and motifs are carved.

The Dongria Kondh houses are located in two parallel rows leaving a wide street in between. The Domb houses are distinctly separated from the Dongria Kondh houses as the former are considered lower in social status. Each village is inhabited by people of a single clan or more than one clan. Some of the villages jointly form one territorial unit called Mutha. The dominating or the original clan members may allow members of other clan into the unit with the approval of the headman. But all the clan members living in a village abide by the same customary rules.

The Dongria Kondhs follow prescribed rules for selecting the place of residence. Soon after marriage, the young man constructs his own house with the help of family members and kinsfolk. Mostly he constructs the house in his father's village. Sometimes, he moves to other village to establish a new residence. There are cases that husband and wife after marriage move to bride's parental village with the approval of the parent-in-laws and the village elders. A family may move to a village inhabited by members of other clans provided members of the host clan agree to accommodate them. By and large, rules of residence are strictly followed and any deviation leads to quarrels and conflicts between families, lineages and clans. Migration of the members of a clan from an old village to a new one may take place, but at the time of buffalo sacrifice festival, sacrificial blood is offered to the deities in both the villages.

Mostly in the Niyamgiri hill ranges lands are fertile due to deposit of humus through out the year. Perennial streams provide water flow which is conducive for nourishment of plants and fruits bearing trees which the Dongrias grow in and around of their habitat. Moreover, they are experts in raising orchards on the hill slopes. They manage their horticultural crops in such a manner that they get crops round the year for their sustenance. Thus, they are hardly affected by natural calamities.

The land belonging to a clan is known as *Paclar*. The clansmen always own the land and they can lease it to anybody for cultivation. Hence, the ownership rights are never transferred. If a man is issueless his land goes to his lineage brothers. Thus, the sub-clan or the clan, according to the situation holds ownership rights of possession over land in the clan territory along with the authority to use its natural resources. The traditional land owner has every right to take back his land whenever he wishes. Traditionally, mango and tamarind trees are owned at community level and its fruits are enjoyed by all the people. The utility lands like pasture, forest, dancing ground, community centre, youth dormitory, stream, and shrines are used freely by every individual of the community. The stream bed lands cultivated by the Dongrias are strictly prohibited to the Dombs. The Dongira's great affinity towards clan territory and its socio-economic importance is seriously realized along with their socio-psychological and emotional attachment. The Dongria Kondhs inherit land through patrilineal descent line and women have no right over the land and property. When a man dies all his land and property are shared by his sons.

The Dongria Kondhs are addicted to alcoholic drinks. In addition to the juice of Sago Palm trees which is their favourite drink, they consume varieties of wines. They distil liquor from *Mohua* flower, rice, molasses, banana, mango, orange, jackfruit, pineapple, blackberry and a few other sweet fruits containing starch. Each family is proud of possessing juice giving *Salap* trees. Now a days, some of them sell *Salap* juice to the neighbouring Scheduled Caste people for money. By and large the Dongria Kondhs use *Salap* in traditional socio-religious functions to entertain their guests and friends. Their weakness for drinks very often put them into unavoidable peril that they sell and mortgage their valuable plantations to the neighbouring Scheduled Caste (Domb) people. Some of them quarrel among themselves due to heavy addiction. On one hand drinks are unavoidable in marriage, life cycle rituals, ceremonies and social functions and on the other it is the major causes of their economic backwardness.

The Dongria Kondhs practice **shifting cultivation** extensively for production of food and cash crops. They clear forest before summer season and set fire to the dried matter. Spraying of ashes and digging up of the field by hoe and sticks is followed by sowing of seeds in the traditional fashion. They clean the bushes and unwanted plants and watch the crop from the attack of animals and birds. Crops are harvested one after another. But starting from the selection of site upto the harvest they perform several magico-religious rites. They practice wet cultivation near the sides of perennial streams. But this type of land is scarce and a few people own such lands.

There is **division of labour among** the Dongria Kondhs on the basis of age, sex and special skills. Some people have specialization in carpentry, thatching of roof and house construction. The women are very hard working and shoulder major economic responsibilities. The male members enjoy drinks and relish buffalo flesh and dry fish very much but *ragi* gruel and rice of small millets are their usual food items. They also eat pulses and varieties of vegetables, which they grow in their own fields. They remain perpetually indebtedness to the Dombs for payment of bride price, to meet expenses of rituals, ceremonies, festivals and sacrifices to appease deities. They save in form of gold, silver cattle wealth and land in the plains as well as utensils, ornaments and hard cash.

The selling of land or trees by pledging is called *jerat*. No document is signed. After the transaction one can not claim ownership on the property again. The seller takes an oath before the Earth Goddess and loudly tells that *I will melt like salt in water, my body will be rotten like the straw, my life will vanish like the ashes go away in the wind, and I will die fast like the grass and evaporate like drop of wine, if I claim it again*. The Dongria Kondhs also sell and mortgage standing crops of turmeric, zinger, pineapple, mango and jackfruit orchards. The main reason for selling of orchards is their busy schedule in swidden plots and hesitation to go through the tedious process of marketing of the produce. The local Scheduled Caste traders pay advances much before the fruits ripen, and the Dongria Kondhs also feel relaxed by selling much before.

Now-a-days they derive a good income from their orchards, fruits trees and sale of turmeric, ginger and forest produces. Their economic development is visible in their house construction, use of modern amenities, practice of modern cultivation, changes in dressing style, use of silver and gold ornaments and standard of living as a whole. No more they are poor but quite extravagant.

The Dongria Kondhs are very cooperative in nature. At the time of strenuous works one can hire the services of **village labour cooperative**. In this case one member from each household come to work for a needy person and the practice is known as Sahabuti. Some of the lineage members work for some one and it is known as Dutarubuti. When all the youth dormitory members work for some one it is called as Dasabuti. The members rendering services are provided with food, drinks and little money by the host.

**Hunting** is a traditional pastime for the Dongria Kondhs and they go for hunting individually or in a group. Apart from hunting with bow and arrow they use locally made guns, axe, knife, snares, traps and a few other hunting



weapons. They also use indigenous technology and various devices for hunting big animals. They appease the hunting deity before their hunting expedition. The hunted animals are equally shared among the hunters and the real hunter gets a bigger share. If the wounded animal moves to the boundary of neighbouring village, the former group has right over the animal. The dogs are domesticated to be used at the time hunting as well as watching the standing crops.

The **prestations** are in vogue among the Dongria Kandha in several forms. There is prescribed governance pattern for prestations and counter prestations. The major factors responsible for this are social relation and socio-economic interactions between groups and political activities. One's kinship level and social status is determined on the basis of kind of gift. The occasions when prestations and counter prestations made are birth, name giving, marriage, death rites, *meriah* sacrifice, important community level festivals etc. The sharing of prestations and counter prestations bring about unity and solidarity and establish social harmony as well as mutual relationship among the community.

**Family** is the smallest social unit in the Dongria Kondh society but village forms the most important unit for many of the socio cultural and socio religious activities. Apart from this they have multiple social institutions functioning at their respective levels in very organized manner. They have simple and compound type of families, due to the practice of polygyny. A man can have two wives and their children in one family. There are extended families having unmarried brothers and sisters along with widow mother and divorced sisters. Sometimes, some of the relations from mother's side, wife's side and member of lineage groups live together under a common family head. But usually in all the nuclear families wife manages her own economic activities with the help of her husband and unmarried sons and daughters. Relationships between the uterine brothers are very close even if they live independently in separate houses.

The **lineage system** is very strong. The extended lineages are sub-clans locally known as Punja and named as Mandal, Bis-majhi, Jani and Pujari. The senior most Man of Jani Punja takes charge of worshipping the village deities. The function of the Pujari Punja is to assist the Jani in religious functions. Mandal Punja have right to act as secular head and looks after the over all wellbeing of the village. Bis-majhi Punja is to assist the Mandal. The extended lineage of Dongria Kondhs is so large that it is very difficult to unite them together for all lineage purposes.

Beyond this, the greater socio-territorial organization called **Mutha** comprising a group of villages constitutes an important administrative unit. The

unity of a clan is very strong. Among important clans mention may be made of Niska, Sikaka, Wadaka, Pusika, Jakasika, Kadraka, Nundruka, Wangesika, Miniaka, Kundika, etc. Among the Dongrias two or more clans jointly form a single exogamous unit. They have common origin, common shrine and common occasions and jointly perform certain rituals. Marriage is strictly prohibited between brother clans and they are regarded as Maa- Kuda.

The entire Niyamgiri hill ranges come under the “**Muthas**” namely Jakasika, Kadraka, Niska, Wadaka, Pusika, Sikaka and Nundruka. The demarcation of ‘Mutha’ boundary, their interaction, co-operation and some social restrictions are the striking feature of Dongria Kondh Mutha system. However, village plays an important role in the field of unity and extension as well as for different communal activities. Relationship between different kin groups both in the same family and with other families is excellent. After marriage the son lives in his own house constructed in collaboration with all family members.

Role of **girls’ dormitory** (*Adas beta*) and its special function has an immense value in socialization and personality formation. Here both boys and girls of different villages meet each other within the limits of cultural restrictions and social rules. Different social sanctions concerned with marriage, pre-marital relationship and interest for acquiring of mates from the boyhood keep the boys away from their formal school education. Clan feuds, conflicts, quarrels and tensions among the Dongria Kondhs some times lead to fatal result.

The young unmarried boys are prohibited to go the girls’ dormitory of the same village as all the girls are considered as their sisters. But the boys from other villages can come and meet the girls and develop intimacy with them and stay there overnight. The girls learn embroidery works, playing musical instruments and dance etc from their elders. Sometimes a boy and girl love each other which may lead to marriage. It is very dangerous for the boy to develop intimacy with a girl when she is already betrothed. In that case it always leads to clan feuds. Two persons of the same sex can be tied up by ritual friendship. A male addresses his ritual friend, as Sai and female addresses as Ade. This relationship may be extended to both the families for generations and marriage between two members of two ritual kin groups is not allowed. This friendship is established through a ceremony conducted usually on a festive occasion and on such occasion presentations are exchanged between each other. Salap drinking friendship groups are very informal, voluntary and flexible. They enjoy drinks moving in group from each other’s sago palm trees in turn. Early in the morning they meet, drink and chit chart, around fire beside the *salap* tree.

Another very important institution is **Sadar – the village community centre** where all the elders gather and discuss matters relating to village. It is usually located on the village streets where the village deities are enshrined and buffalo sacrifice is performed during Meriah festival. This house is very strong as it is constructed using beautifully carved pillars and beams. The walls are also nicely painted with geometrical designs on festive occasions. The boys and girls are assigned works in the construction and maintenance of the centre but it is used by the elderly males. Each village has its **Jatra Kudi shrine**- who is the protector of the village enshrined at the eastern side of the village boundary.

The **symbiotic relationship between the Dombs and Dongria Kandha** is most significant for several reasons. The Dombs serve the Dongria Kondhs as messenger, cattle watcher, street sweeper and weavers. As messenger a Domb is very influential and feels dignified by establishing himself in the village. He plays very vital role in sale of any produce, giving advance for orchards and fruit bearing trees, purchase of buffalo for community rituals, payment of bride price etc. He acts as a go-between the Dongrias and the police, court, revenue and such other matters. Now-a-days they play unavoidable role in day to day socio economic life of the Dongria Kondhs. They are so intelligent that without having any productive asset, they are comparatively better off economically. In these days the Dombs freely take shelter in Dongria Kondh villages with the help of their Domb relatives and hence, their number is increasing over period of time. Domb people are the all time neighbours of the Dongria Kondhs. Both the groups live in the same village but in two separate wards.

After marriage Dongria couple eagerly want a child because they believe that one of their ancestors is likely to take birth. When a married woman does not conceive for a long time, she is looked down upon by her kith and kin and treated with traditional herbal medicines and magico-religious remedies. Adequate care is taken of a pregnant woman and restrictions are observed with regard to her diets and daily work. At the time of **childbirth** an expert old woman attends her. She is paid some remuneration both in cash and kind. The new born baby is not given any food other than mother's milk. After 21 days, the lactating mother is given her normal diet. Ear piercing and name giving ceremonies are observed in which special food and drinks are relished. Name giving ceremony is observed when the child is about one month old. On this occasion the maternal uncle is invited who has special rights to select the name and lead the celebration. He also presents special gifts which depend on the sex of the child. When the child is about 6 months old an experienced old woman is called for piercing the earlobes and specific thorn is used to make about a dozen of holes in both the

sides. No specific pubescent ceremony is observed for the girls. However, the girl is considered unclean till the 7<sup>th</sup> day from the date of her first menstruation.

As the child grows up, he or she goes through different stages of socialization. During the age of 10 to 12 years they start searching for age mates and friends to develop friendship with them.

**Marriage** is an auspicious occasion and quite expensive affair. Not only higher amount of bride price is paid but also the groom has to work for about 2-5 years in the girl's house. Marriage within the same clan or the same "Mutha" is strictly prohibited. The minimum age for the marriage for a boy is 20 to 22 years and for a girl, 16 to 18 years. Marriage of unmarried boys and girls, according to their parents' choice is often made. However, a number of boys and girls now-a-days select their life partner in course of their dormitory life.

They strictly observe **village and clan exogamy** and are prohibited to marry within the affinal kins and their lineage groups up to two to three generations. Acquiring more than one wife is socially approved. A woman can marry after she is divorced. Similarly a widow can marry even if he has children. Usually a widower gets married if he has no children. Marriage among the Dongria Kondhs is a means of creating alliance between two clan groups. It has important socio-economic implications. Marriage by negotiation is most prestigious and it is practiced by well to do people. This kind of marriage negotiations undergoes through a series of phases. As per the local tradition from the very early childhood boys' father searches for a suitable girl for his son. At the first phase, a group of women under the leadership of boy's mother proceed to girl's village and to the girl's house through a middle woman of the girl's village. As per the usual practice, the girls relatives usually refuse and they use filthy language and behave in a very rough manner. They boy's party comes back. But subsequently girl's father puts the matter before the traditional village council and everything is discussed in details either to approve or disapprove the proposal. This first phase is known as "Wenga". After about four to five months the boy's male relatives proceed to girl's village. Further negotiations are made. Nothing concrete happens at this second round. However, with patience, the boy's party returns and this process is known as "Sidi Wenga"

Again in the third phase (Dena Wenga) the boy's male and female relatives approach the girl's parents to agree to the proposal but with little success. Yet their behavioural patterns are clearly understood. If the indication is in positive side then the boy is sent to girl's family to serve for a period of two to five years. During his stay in the girl's house he tries his best to satisfy one and all. The boy renders multifarious services during his stay and goes through a

lot of ordeals to prove his eligibility. If he is successful he is allowed to talk to his would be wife. Subsequently, the boy visits his own village with some of the friends from girl's village. When the boy is found suitable in all respects the girl's kinsmen attend a feast organized in the boy's parents. This function is known as "Wedakodan".

Then a day is fixed for payment of bride price "Modar" at the bride's house (Malan Jhula). On this occasion, maternal uncle of the bride demands his traditional share (Mamawali). Accordingly bride's father's mother demands a Sari (Pinga-hendra). Bride's villagers demand village share (Kutum Kadu). Boy's party and girl's party finalize the bride price. However, both the parties come to a decision after which bride price is paid by the boy's party. After completion of these formalities boy's party come back and wait for some days. Then they send the message to fix up the date of marriage. Before marriage the girl is invited by her relatives and she is presented gifts.

On the scheduled day of wedding a group of boys from groom's side visit the bride's house in advance followed by near and dear relatives of the groom. After reaching the bride's house song, dance, merrymaking and drinking takes place. After completion of prescribed magico-religious rituals the bride is beautifully adorned. In a procession the bride is brought to groom's village. All the way to grooms village both the parties sing songs and entertain each other. On the way brides clan's villagers, if any, greet them but other clan villagers charge in form of money. As soon as the procession reaches the edge of the groom's village, the women of the village greet them and lead them to village with dance and songs. A chicken is sacrificed at the boundary of the settlement in front of the bride to satisfy village guardian deities. Another two rituals, one in the middle of the village and other in front of the boy's house are performed. Before bride's entrance to the house of the groom a mock fight between the friends of the girl and boy takes place and she is purified with turmeric water. On the fourth day of marriage the boy and girl are taken to river side to conduct a ritual under a mango tree. Thereafter, bride's party is given a good feast and they go back in the same day. However, one of the younger sisters of the bride stays back. In the night bride is taken to a house where the boy waits for her and they are allowed to stay there over night. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of marriage the couple pays a visit to girl's parents and comes back after two to three days with rice, hen, pig, goat etc, which are shared by the groom's villagers. Similarly, gifts are brought by boy's relatives, which are consumed by the bride's villagers along with the meat of a buffalo given by boy's parents.

Among the Dongria Kondhs **marriage by capture** is a common practice. A boy falls in love with a girl in the youth dormitory and kidnaps her to his home with the help of his friends. Sometimes, it leads to difficult situations when the girl's engagement is already fixed with some other boy. If the girl really

loves her kidnapper the matter is settled by paying heavy compensations to the girl's parents and the villagers of the prospective bridegroom. After her abduction the girl is rendered all possible hospitality and comforts. Often when a boy fails to pay the bride price after negotiation, his friends may capture the girl and carry her to his village. But this may lead to fight between both the sides.

After marriage the Dongria Kondh couple usually lead a happy life. They work together share each others happiness and sorrows. They procreate children and take adequate care of them till they get married. Old parents are respected and their needs are given top priority. At their old age they live together and enjoy life with their grand children. Even in the death bed sons and relatives treat them with utmost care. After death, the dead body is considered defiled and not touched by the family members.

After **death** within six to eight hours, the corpse is kept till all the relatives arrive and then it is carried to the cremation ground. The purificatory rite is conducted in the next day if the family members of the deceased are well to do. Otherwise, it may be deferred for a few days. It is customary to invite mother's brother, father's mother's brother, father-in-law and all the uterine kins along with agnates. All the invitees usually attend the ceremony with rice, pig and wine. In the death of mother's brother a buffalo or cow is expected to be presented by the nephew. All the near and dears proceed with Pejeni to the cremation ground to know the cause of death. They verify the ashes; if any portion is found unburnt or pebbles, small stones, iron pieces are detected, then it is presumed that the death is due to black magic. All possible attempts are made through a Dissari and Pejeni - the magico-religious specialists to identify the person responsible for the death. On the day of purificatory rite buffaloes, pigs and goats brought by relatives are sacrificed and consumed. Villagers and relatives of neighbouring villages also participate in the feast. Mortuary rites of the individuals died by snake bite, falling from trees and tiger attack are observed on seventh day of the death. In this case dead body is not cremated in the village cremation ground but at the edge of the village. Death due to small pox, chicken pox, diarrhoea, unnatural accident etc is treated separately. In this case the corpse is buried and participation of distant relations and neighbouring villagers are restricted. A series of ritualistic observance and consecrations are performed.

Dongria Kondhs are animists and polytheists. They believe in the existence of a large number of supernatural beings who control their day to day life. The whole life of the Dongria Kondhs is pervaded by their **religion**. Always they remain submissive and dutiful to their religion and supernatural entities. But invariably they also entertain some benevolent and malevolent spirits. They are

so much involved with their expensive magico-religious affairs that it is one of the major causes of their poverty. All over the year in one or other way they celebrate some magico-religious functions and sacrifice animals starting from chicken to buffaloes. From the very childhood till the death, a Dongria Kandh goes through different magico-religious rites. However, it stands as a barrier to innovation and change.

The Dongria Kondhs believe in a host of spirits and unseen powers. According to their beliefs and age old socio-cultural practices those spirits and deities are appeased in their respective prescribed manner. One can find the magico-religious centres of different nature inside the house, within the village boundary and inside their clan territory. Specific, rituals are performed in these centres on various occasions.

It is undoubtedly true that role of **magico-religious specialists** are very much significant and meaningful in different aspects of their mundane life. The Jani is a magico-religious specialist of the village who performs all the rituals at community level. He is very much respected and possesses a high social status. The “Pejuni” is diviner-cum-medicine person. He also functions as astrologer and psychologist. “Gurumai” the women magico-religious functionaries also play vital role in appeasing spirits at individual level.

They celebrate a number of **festivals** all over the year. Among them mention may be made of Meriah/ Kodru Parbu, Ghanta Parbu, Illuarpa, Pungal Pam, Mandia Rani, etc. Among all these, Meriah sacrifice is socio-economically most important. This is also very expensive and people of different age, sex, status and clan participate to celebrate this festival with pomp and ceremony. A number of feasts and festivals are observed at Mutha and village levels and some others, at the individual level. There are seasonal festivals too.

The most important **Kodru Parbu or Meriah** is locally known as Toki Parbu. Now-a-days they offer buffalo sacrifice in place of human being. It is observed in every four to five years for a couple days. The organization of Kodru Parbu depends on the economic condition of the village as it is performed at the village and clan level. All the families contribute for its celebration and the contribution is comparatively very high than other feasts and festivals. The villagers who observe this festival first inform all clans village and finalize the day of celebration. Thereafter, all other clan villagers are invited to participate as they have to sacrifice the buffalo on the last day of the Kodru Parbu.

Installation of Meriah pole and purchase of buffalo is done observing all customary prescriptions. A healthy and mature buffalo free from any wound and

scar mark is purchased. After sending message to different clan groups the villagers keep themselves engaged in organizing the festivities. The village Kudi is repaired, re-thatched and beautifully painted with colourful motifs and designs. The whole village is enclosed within bamboo splits leaving only two passages at both the ends. Each family gets ready by arranging sufficient food stuffs, drinks and good clothes, birds and animals for sacrifice. The villagers start singing and dancing before a few months of the celebration praising their territory and ancestors. All the relatives arrive during the day time and other clansmen and women arrive singing and dancing. They are given a warm reception.

On the day of Meriah sacrifice or on the last day of the Parbu, very early in the morning the buffalo to be sacrificed is brought to the sacred centre of the village where other clansmen sacrifice the buffalo and within a few seconds the animal is torn into pieces. The head of the buffalo is taken to be offered to the earth goddess of the village. A portion of the flesh of the buffalo is shared by the other participating villagers, which they roast and eat on the way while going back. The remaining portion is shared equally by the host villagers. However, the drinking, dancing and entertainment continue for two to three days.

**Ghanta Parbu** is observed by a well to do Dongria families having good harvest. Since all the villagers take part in this festival the host family obtains the prior approval of the traditional village council. All the friends are invited. The festival which starts either on Monday or Friday continues for three days. A number of Pejunis and other magico-religious specialists also participate in this event. The host's house is re-thatched and walls are white-washed by the dormitory girls. The rituals start in the evening of the first day when goats and s are sacrificed. In the second day morning goat sacrifice is given by the organizing household. In the third day the Pejenis dance and conduct rituals in front of the organizer's house. Finally a pig and a buffalo are sacrificed. The Pejunis dance and perform rituals all through the village street and they visit house by house. Finally, all the participants and magico-religious specialists are entertained with drinks and food. This is a very expensive event for a family but the Dongrias do not care for the expenses.

**Illu Arpa** is celebrated at the household level. All the household deities and ancestors are appeased in the backyards. Jani spells incantations in the presence of the Pejunis. All the kith and kins of the family are invited to attend. Goats, chickens and a buffalo are scarified. All the participants enjoy the feast and on the second day afternoon they return to their respective villages.

The Dongria Kondhs celebrate **Pungal Pam** - the festival of flowers in the month of January-February. Three leaf bowls are made and kept before



Jatrukudi. A buffalo is garlanded with flowers and sacrificed by the villagers. In the **Bicha Hapam** festival, a number of rituals associated with sowing are conducted for seven days along with communal hunting. At the onset of the rains, the Rain God, "Bhima" is worshiped. In the similar way, **Pidika Jatra** is performed at village level to save the crops from the insects and for first fruit eating. **Mandia Rani** is celebrated to eat newly harvested millets. Pigeons, fowls, goats, pigs are sacrificed to satisfy the deities of shifting cultivation. Likewise a number of rituals are observed till harvesting and storing of the crops. Apart from these, a number of feasts and festivals are observed at individual and village level when there is bumper crop or when frequent natural calamities take place.

The sorcerers and witches are hated in the community. People are afraid of them and avoid enmity with them because they may be harmful.

Jani is the sacerdotal leader of the village and he has great role to play in the traditional council. Bismajhi is the formal secular head, who was working as representative of the then Zamindar or king of the area for revenue collection. He also decides several cases of disputes and offences. The fines collected from the offenders are kept with him for future community level expenditures. Bariko is a man from the scheduled caste-Domb community who serves as the messenger. He helps in resolving disputes relating to customary matters. The disputes inside village are mostly mutually settled and small fines are collected from the offender which is spent in a community feast. Inter-village feuds are decided by the Mandal, the secular leader of the Mutha. His verdict is given due importance in all inter-village and intra-village disputes. The Gaudia and Jhateni, who hail from the Domb community, serve as cattle herders and sweepers of the village street respectively. They work on annual contract for the villagers and are given food almost daily. The post of Jani, Bismajhi and Mandal are hereditary and in absence of male heir, the post may go to one of the lineage members. But the Bariko, Gaudia and Jhateni can be changed as and when so required. The Dongria traditional leaders not only enjoy high prestige and status but also exercise considerable power and authority in the village.

The **traditional village council** is very powerful. It usually decides cases or discusses community matters in the community house - Kudi. Early in the morning Barik lights fire around which the village elders sit and discuss different village matters mostly relating to fixation of dates of rituals and ceremonies, amount of contribution from each household, quarrels and conflicts between individuals and groups, visit of government officials and other important guests. All matters relating to the interest of the village are also decided there. The village council plays a vital role for maintenance of peace and harmony in the village.

The village leaders are respected. Before punishing someone attempts are made to reform him and reconcile the matter. Mostly, the culprits are fined and demanded drinks. Serious offenders are ex-communicated. The cases like adultery and anti-clan activities, offences against divine powers etc, are seriously dealt with and the culprit may be driven out of the village. A Dongria Kondh hardly goes against the divinity as he apprehends divine punishment.

### References

- Behura, N.K., 1990 'Shifting Cultivation: A cause for environmental degradation', *Adibasi*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, Vol. XXVI. No. 2, pp 1-7.
- Das Patnaik, P.S., 1972-73 'Bejunis: Their initiation into shamanhood', *Adibasi*, Tribal Research Bureau, Orissa, Vol. No. 1, pp 11-20.
- 1976 'Liquor among Dongaria Kondh of Orissa', *Adibasi*, THRTI, Orissa, Vol XVI, No. 3, pp. 52-57.
- 1984 'Ownership Pattern, Land Survey and Settlement and its impact on the Dongria Kondhs of Orissa', *Adivasi*, THRTI, Orissa, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, pp. 23-32
- 1988 'Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs', *Adibasi*, THRTI, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, pp. 11-15.
- Nayak, P.K., 1989 *Blood, Women and Territory: An analysis of clan feuds of the Dongria Kondhs*, New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House.
- Padel, Felix, 1995 *The Sacrifice of Human Being: British Rule and the Konds of Orissa*, Delhi: OUP.
- Patnaik, N 1982 *The Kondh of Orissa – Their Socio Cultural Life and Development*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
- P.S. Das Patnaik,
- Patnaik, N. 1986 Herbal medicines of the Dongaria, *Adibasi*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa Vol. XXVI No. 4, pp. 1-4
- Rout, Siba Prasad 1964-65 'Dom exploitation in the Kondh villages of Koraput district', *Adibasi*, TRB, Orissa, No. 1, 21-8.

# DEMOGRAPHY OF A DONGRIA KONDH VILLAGE <sup>1</sup>

S. Panda

## Introduction

India has a large tribal population. Demography of tribal people is necessary to know the different aspects and changes of the population. Very few authors have worked in tribal demography. But in India a considerable work has been done on different aspects of demography of the general population. In Orissa so far, no proper demographic study on any aspect of the tribal people has been undertaken. In the present paper attempts have been made to study certain demographical aspects of a Kondh village, such as marriage, family, fertility, mortality, education and occupation, etc.

The Dongria Kondh are a primitive section of the Kondh tribe. The Dongria Kondh village 'Khambasi' is situated on the high hill of Niamgiri at a height of 3000ft. in Gunpur Subdivision of Koraput (former undivided) district in Orissa. The village is surrounded by a chain of hills. It is partly isolated which kept it apart from the main stream of the society in the country. There is no influence of the civilized society. The village is fairly big in comparison with other hill villages. In that village there is the co-existence and inter-relation between the tribal people and the Doms, their non-tribal neighbors. The Doms exploit the tribesmen taking advantage of their ignorance and honesty. Kondhs are the owner of all the land and Doms have no right over it. But they are exploiting the Kondhs since a good number of years. They remain attached to the village but dwell at the outskirts.

According to 1951 Census, the total population of the village was 239; in 1961 it increased to 330 and in 1968 it was calculated to be 414 individuals. Doms speak Oriya but Kuvi is the mother tongue of the Dongria Kondhs. There are nine clans among the Dongria Kondhs, such as Wadeka, Kadraka, Kundika, Sikoka, Pusica, Prasca, Bengaska, Melaka, and Kurunjlika. These are endogamous groups. Khambasi is in the Wadeka *mutha* and therefore members

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XI, No.3, 1969-70, pp.27-35

belonging to Wadeka clan predominate and own all land. All the other clans except Wadeka are outsiders and have migrated to this village. The society is patrilocal and children belong to father's clan. The people (Kondh) are primarily shifting cultivators but Doms are mainly businessmen.

Khambasi, the selected village for study, is situated about 380 miles away from Bhubaneswar. The investigation was carried on during October 1968. The main purpose of selecting this village is that, it is more or less a compact village. As there also Dom families in the village, it is interesting to compare the demographic aspects of these two groups of people. The eastern part of the village is attached to a small hill tract which runs from village Kurli towards the Chatikana railway station situated about 9 miles away. There is a big weekly market near this railway station, which caters to the need of the Kondh people. Most of the people of other hill villages attend this market. People of this village are now going to the hospital run by the D. K. D. scheme (Dongria Kondh Development Scheme) situated three miles away from the village, in another village named Kuril. There is a Primary School established three years ago by the D. K. D. Scheme, which is managed by two non-Government lady social workers of Kasturaba Trust.

### The Population

The data utilized in the paper are taken from the Dongria Kondh and Dom people of the village. The outsiders are not taken into account, as their number is very small and they are the temporary inhabitants of the village.

TABLE - I  
Age and Sex Distribution of the Population

Age Groups	Dongria Kondh				Dom			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
0-5	11	26.1	24	28.2	12	40.3	21	42.5
6-10	18	--	17	--	17	--	16	--
11-15	13	23.5	12	20.6	7	16.4	9	21.3
16-20	13	--	18	--	4	--	10	--
21-25	8	--	16	--	3	--	7	--
26-30	13	--	13	--	6	--	5	--
31-35	7	50.4	10	51.2	2	43.3	6	35.6
36-40	7	--	4	--	4	--	4	--
41-45	4	--	7	--	3	--	2	--
46-51	6	--	8	--	3	--	4	--
51-	11	--	16	--	6	--	3	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>--</b>

The age composition of male and female population in the village is presented in **Table I**. From the table it is obvious that in the age-group 0-5, the proportion of female is higher in both the communities. It is remarkable that in the total population the percentage of female is higher both among Dongria Kondhs and Doms. There may be some sociological and biological factors behind it. It was not possible to investigate in detail all the factors due to paucity of time. The proportion of individuals in various age categories gradually decreases from the age-group 0-5 onwards. The proportion of individuals below 20 years is quite high. Almost nearly half of the population is below 20 years.

### Marriage

The Dongria Kondh marriage is not simple but a long complicated process. They observe clan exogamy. They have retained their traditional ways and customs in selecting mates. Monogamous type of marriage is frequently noticed. Polygyny is also found in some cases to get more wives to assist in shifting cultivation.

In **Table 2-A**, the marital status of the population in various age-groups has been presented. In **Table 2-B**, the age at first marriage of every married man and woman is presented. Most of the Dongria Kondh males marry at the age of 16 to 20 years, the percentage being 47.2. Large number of marriages occurs in the age-group 21 to 25 (46.7%). But this is not the case with Doms. Dom girls marry earlier. Child marriage is totally absent in Dongria Kondh society as is seen from the table.

TABLE - 2-A  
Dongria Kondh Marital Status in Various Age-Groups

Age Groups	Unmarried		Married		Widowed		Divorced	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0-10	32	40	--	--	--	--	--	--
11-20	24	16	3	9	--	--	--	--
21-30	0	7	17	20	--	--	1	--
31-40	--	1	14	13	1	4	--	2
41-50	--	--	8	5	1	10	--	--
51+	--	--	8	4	2	14	--	--
Total	56 (50.4)	64 (44.1)	50 (45.4)	51 (35.1)	4 (3.6)	28 (19.3)	1 (.9)	2 (1.3)

**TABLE 2-B**  
**Age at First Marriage in Various Age-Groups**

Age group	Dongria Kondh				Dom			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
10-15	1	1.8	--	--	2	6.2	10	2.50
16-20	26	47.2	30	37.5	13	40.6	22	55.00
21-25	20	36.3	38	46.7	11	34.3	6	15.00
26-30	8	14.5	13	16.0	--	18.7	2	5.0
37 and above	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>--</b>

*Cause of Late Marriage in Females* - in their society the father of a girl is not worried about the marriage of his daughter. It is the responsibility of the father of the boy to propose.

The ancient custom of procuring wife by service is widespread. Accordingly, a boy is required to serve in his would be father -in-law's house as a suitor servant called 'Khamari', and marries the betrothed girl after a lapse of some years. The time period depends on the will of the father-in-law and in most cases he delays, so that both his daughter and his would be son-in-law work in his field longer. Another cause is high bride-price. It is against one's status and prestige to accept a lower amount of bride-price for one's daughter. The high bride-price makes it difficult for young women to marry and marriage is postponed till late in life. So girls seldom marry below 20 or even 25 years of age.

It is observed that the percentage of widows is greater in Dongria Kondh society than in the Dom society. No widower is present among Doms but 4 such persons are present among the Dongria Kondh. Maximum numbers of widows are present among the Dongria Kondh, in the age-group 51 and above. Their society does not restrict divorce and second marriage. Divorce is rare in both the societies. There is no divorced lady in Dom society and only one divorced man is present. The Dongria Kondhs always wish to have as many wives as possible, but getting more wives is very difficult due to bride price. Only 5 Dongria Kondhs have two wives and one has three. In case of Doms only one man has two wives. Considerable attention has been given to the influence of polygyny on the fertility of women. "On a priori grounds it would seem probable, in view of the ovulation cycle and the chances of conception, that moderate dispassion of the husband's sexual acts would be likely to cause reduction of the fertility of married women" (Lorimer). It is interesting to note

that in polygynous families the number of children is not more as compared to the monogamous families.

### Family

Structurally, three types of families are observed, the nuclear, the joint or extended and the compound families. A nuclear family is constituted by a man, his wife, and their unmarried children. The female members of the family leave their parents after marriage and go to live with their husbands. Nuclear family is divided into ordinary, broken and incomplete. After the death of the husband or wife, the children and their father or mother or on the other hand divorced male or female and his/her children constitute the broken family. Again single family consisting of a spouse without children is considered as incomplete family. It may be complete after getting issues.

The extended family is extended both vertically and horizontally. Large family groups consist of several genealogically related nuclear families living together. (1) A man, his wife, his married children and their children and bond of close kinship embraces uncle uncles and aunts, cousin, etc., (2) Several brothers, each with his wife and children living together. Families which are based on the special marriage custom of polygyny and remarried widow or widower and their children have been taken here as compound family.

In **Table 3-A**, types of families found in the village are presented. Nuclear families are higher in proportion both among the Dongria Kondh and Dom. This is due to their economic stringency and they generally prefer to be separated after the death of the father. The percentage of nuclear families is 70.39 and 72.0 among the Dongria Kondh and Dom, respectively. Compound family is 13.6 percent and 4 percent and extended family is 15.9 percent and 24 percent among Dongria Kondh and Dom, respectively. There are few broken and incomplete families.

**TABLE 3-A**  
Showing Types of Family

Name of the Tribe & Caste	Nuclear Family		Incomplete	Compound	Extended	Total
	Ordinary	Broken				
Dongria	22	5	4 (90.9%)	6 (13.6%)	7	44
Kondh	(50%)	(11.3%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	(15.9%)	25
Dom	14	1 (4%)			6 (24%)	
	(56%)					
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>69</b>

Among the simple families most of the families are small with 3 persons in the family, but joint families have 7-14 members in the Dongria Kondh society. The greater number of member in some joint families is due to the following cause. In these families there are two to four widow or unmarried father's sister or father's father's sister or own sister of the family head. This is because in their society barren women or women with daughter only have no right over their husband's property. Woman having male issues can inherit property. Therefore, barren women in widowhood return to their parental house, a reason for which there was greater number of widows.

**TABLE 3-B**  
**Distribution of Family Size**

No. of Individuals	No. of Families Dongria Kondh	No. of Families Dom
1-3	13	4
4-6	15	10
7-9	13	8
10 & above	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>

### Fertility

The fertility of women varies in two different ethnic groups living in this village. Fertility rate of any group depends on the customs and traditions relating to their sexual behavior. Social taboos and mating pattern play important role in determining the fertility. There are social taboos on illegal sexual intercourse. They do not marry within the clan. This taboo restricts illegitimate children to a great extent. Within a short period of stay, it was not possible to study the complete reproductive behavior of the people. Causes of low fertility may be due to various factors, such as abortion, still birth, miscarriage, etc. The most difficult was to find out the incidence of abortion.

Number of children born per month in Dongria Kondh society is 3.02 and in Dom society it is 3.9 as given in the **Table 4-A**. Pre-marital sexual relations leading to infanticide in Dongria Kondh group may be one of the causes of less number of children. The age of parents at the birth of the first child is one of the important factors in fertility study. In Dongria Kondh society the highest numbers of males become father when they were within the age 21-25 years. It is also same in case of females. In Dom society females becomes mother a bit earlier than Dongria Kondhs and so also, the males becoming father at an earlier age. So among Doms the age of father and mother at the time of



birth of first child is lower. It may account for greater number of children in the Dom society as compared to the Dongria Kondhs. (Table - 4C)

**TABLE - 4 A**  
**Number of Children Born per Mother**

Name of the Community	No. of Children Per Month								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Dongria Kondh	12	11	3	11	9	1	1	0	48
Dom	4	3	5	7	6	3	2	1	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>79</b>

**TABLE - 4 B**  
**Age at Menarche**

Name of the Communities	Age at Menarche		
	11 to 12	13 to 14	15 to 16
Dongria Kondh	30	21	4
(55)	26	22	2
Dom (50)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>6</b>

*Figure in the parenthesis indicates number of women examined*

**TABLE - 4 C**  
**Age of the Parents at the time of Birth of First Child**

Age Groups		Number of Fathers	Percent of the Total Fathers	Number of Mothers	Percent of Total Mothers
Dongria Kondh	16-20	2	55	--	--
	21-25	28	51.9	31	53.4
	26-30	23	42.5	27	46.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Dom	16-20	7	21.2	11	34.3
	21-25	15	45.4	15	46.8
	26-30	11	33.3	6	18.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>99.9</b>

### Mortality

The numbers of deaths in 1967-68 are recorded here. This year large number of children died of smallpox. Higher percentages of death were recorded among the male babies. The percentage of male and female children died were 47.2 and 25.0 among the Dongria Kondh and 19.42, 8.3 among the Dom but the percentage of infant death in Dongria Kondh and Dom group is 72.2 and 27.7 ratio in the two groups. This is due to the fact that, at the time of epidemic, Doms were vaccinated, but Dongria Kondhs were afraid that this was against the will of the God. The main reason of the high rate of infant mortality is due to the lack of hygienic and medical care of the children.

### Literacy

The Tribal populations in India in general are educationally back ward than the general population. The Dongria Kondhs in particular are educationally quite backward. Their boys have very recently started attending schools. Among them out of the total population of 256, there are only 21 literates and all of them are males only who number 11 and their percentage of literacy is 18.9.

In case Doms out of the total 145 only 21 are literate, 17 being males and 4 females. Percentage of literates in various age categories has been presented in **Table 5**. The Dongria Kondh boys do not attend schools in the day time; they keep themselves busy in their fields. But the Dom boys are reading at the day time.

**TABLE 5**  
Percentage of Literates

Age Groups	Dongria Kondh		Dom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-10	11	--	2	--
11-15	9	--	2	2
16-20	1	--	4	1
21-25	--	--	2	--
26-30	--	--	1	--
31-35	--	--	1	--
36-40	--	--	1	--
41-45	--	--	0	--
46-50	--	--	0	1
50+	--	--	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 (18%)</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>17 (25.37%)</b>	<b>14 (4.55)</b>

### Occupation

Dongria Kondh economy almost entirely depends upon hard toil. The hill slopes are cleared by them for shifting cultivation. Being the traditional owners of all the land, they are remarkably proud of their position as landlords and tenacious of their rights. Except kitchen garden, Doms have no land. They cultivate lands of Dongria Kondhs when they are permitted to do so.

Out of the 44 Dongria Kondh families, the primary occupation of 41 families is cultivation. Only 3 families have no land. They work as labourers. No Dongria Kondh is doing business. Both males and females work in the field. A Dongria lady is very laborious. She can do all types of agricultural works, except heavy works like felling trees. Besides being engaged in household activities, the women work in the field and at times also work as labourers. Pineapple, plantain, orange, mango and jack-fruit are extensively grown on the hill slopes of Niyamgiri hills – the Dongria Kondh habitat.

Doms are traders, weavers and middlemen for the products of the Dongria. Business is the primary occupation of 15 Dom families, weaving is of 3 families and 3 cultivate lands given by their Dongria Kondh masters for their remuneration as village servants.

**TABLE 6**  
**Occupation of the Tribe and the Caste**

Name of the Tribe and Caste	Number of Families	Agriculture	Labour	Business	Weaving
I	2	3	4	5	6
Dongria Kondh	44	41	3	--	--
Dom	25	3	4	15	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

# HOW AND WHAT THE KUVI KONDHS ADORN <sup>1</sup>

Bharati Devi <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

In the year 1965-66, I had the opportunity to stay and work among the Kuvi Kondhs of Kuttinga, a village in Koraput subdivision and district in Orissa, India, in connection with the collection of data on the reproductive life of their females. I, however, could collect some additional information about their dress and ornaments. The data were collected partly by interviewing and partly by direct observation method.

## The Data

The dress of the Kondhs, both men and women is simple. The womenfolk of course are more inclined to adorn themselves than their male folk. Since they do not weave they depend upon other caste people for their wearing apparel.

The infants remain naked. It is only at the age of 3-4 years when they start wearing a loin cloth.

The general dress of an adult male is also a loin cloth and nothing on the upper portion of the body during the summer. But during winter, in addition to the loin cloth they also use wrappers, but not any stitched cloth. But of late, the use of readymade shirts and pants and 'Lungis' are in vogue among the younger generation.

The dress of female is divisible into two parts, an upper garment (*punhendra*) and a lower garment (*uchahendra*) respectively. Both are unstitched. The lower garment again consists of two pieces a loin cloth first and then pieces of handwoven cloth with two borders worn round the waist. This piece fully encircles the waist but does not cover the entire thigh region, though extended up to the knee. The upper garment, another piece of hand woven cloth or a

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI. Vol. XIV, No.1, 1972, pp.21-26

<sup>2</sup> Senior Technical Assistant, ASI, 27, Chowrangi Road, Calcutta-13

'lungi' (newly introduced) covers the breasts. Its loose ends are tied behind at the neck. The back remains entirely bare. Stitched garments, like blouse, have not yet found way into their society. It is important to note that seasonal change in dress amongst the male are more marked than the females.

Absence of any type of headgear and footwear among these people is noteworthy.

Women, especially young women, deck themselves with various kinds of ornaments worn on different parts of their persons such as neck, ear, nose, hand, finger, waist and ankle.

Silver necklace is known as 'Kaguri' (Fig I.I). Two types of silver necklaces are found. First one is solid, simple and round. The other type is of stringed coins (Fig.I.I.I). Besides the metallic ones, a kind of head necklace known as 'Mahani' is also found in use. The beads are small in size and a bunch of stringed beads are worn at a time.

Piercing of earlobe is practiced by both the sexes. Piercing is done at an early age. In case of females, the upper part of the *pinna* is also pierced besides the earlobe. The ornaments for the ears are either of brass, silver or gold depending upon the economic condition of the persons. The ornaments are very simple in design. A plain simple ring, small in size, is used for earlobe. It is known as Jambli (Fig. I.2), whereas the ornament of the *pinna* is not simple but slightly twisted and known as Fansia.

Like ear piercing of nose is also practised by both the sexes. Generally the right ala is pierced among the male. Both the alae and septum of the female are pierced at very early age. The ornaments of nose are generally made of gold, because brass ornaments sometimes causes ulcer. The ornaments of the ala are nothing but simple ring known as Murca (Fig. I.3). The ornament of septum is known as Mutli (Fig. I.3). It may be the same nature or slightly decorated.

Women use ornaments on forearm only. The upper arm remains completely bare. Solid bangles of silver, brass or even aluminum are used depending upon the economic condition of a person concerned. The brass bangles and aluminum bangles are known as Pitla paza and Ragi paza respectively (Fig. I.4). Bangles may be used in both hand or in one hand according to the convenience of a user and the number varies from 1-10. Besides these, I have also seen using them plastic bangles known as Pazu. Women of younger age i.e. below thirty generally use the plastic bangles.

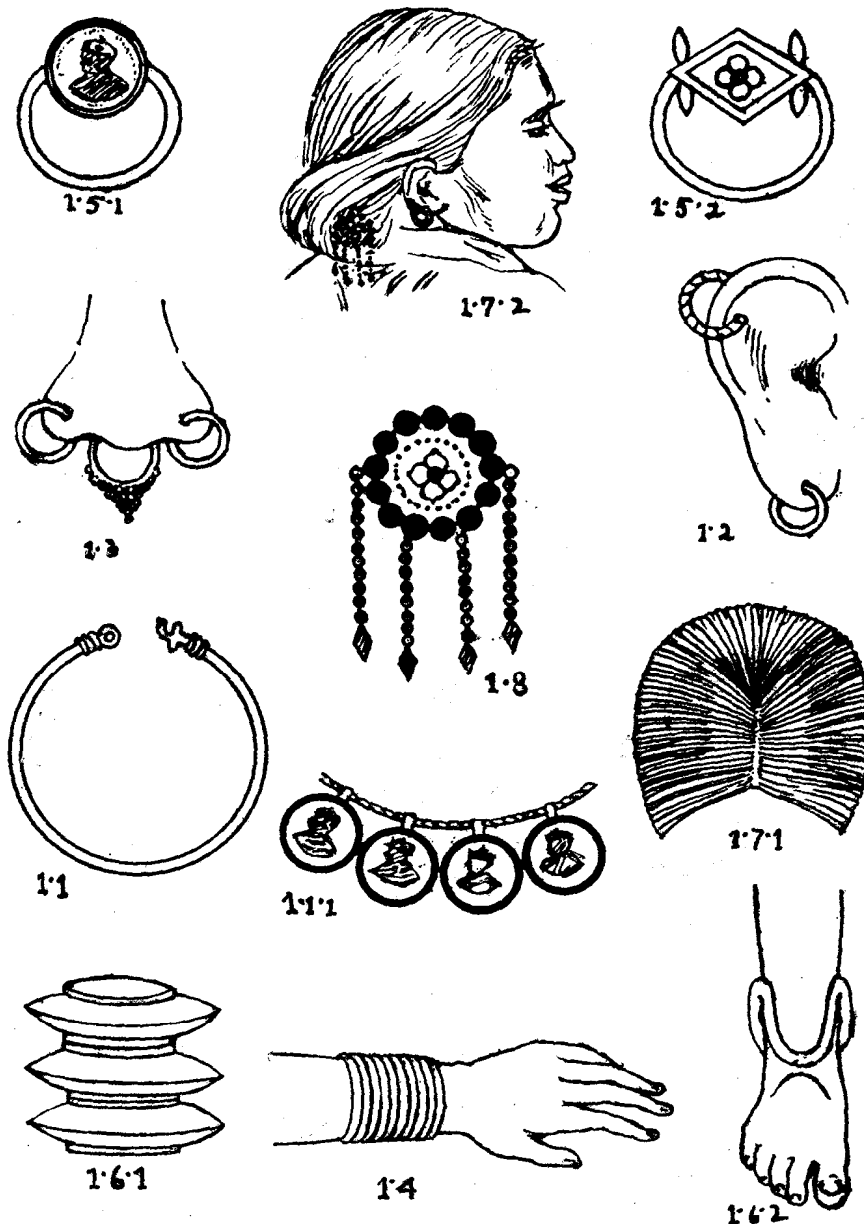


Figure 1. Hairdo and Ornaments of the Kuvi-Khond Women

Male folk often use a single silver bangle in one hand i.e. right hand, slightly different in construction from that of the female.

Silver rings are worn on the left hand by the female folk only. Insertion of coin is prevalent although a few other designs are also noticed (Fig.I.5.1. & I.5.2.).

Children and women, both young and old, may use ornaments on the waist. Children generally use head ornament round the waist irrespective of sexes. Sometimes they also use black string with a few tinkling bells. The silver one, known as Tellimera is worn by female folk only.

The ornaments worn at the ankle is known as Andu. It is made of brass. There are two varieties of Andu. One type resembles a bangle (Fig. I.6.1.). Its inner side is plain and rounded while the outer surface has a curved ridge. More than one Andu of this type may be worn at a time. The other type is worn singly (Fig.I.6.2.). Two curves are present in this type. Andu is worn only by adult females. Children wear small tinkling bells strung by a thread known as Muia. The plastic ornaments are sold at the doorstep of the people by the hawkers and they purchase it either by cash or by barter. But for the gold and silver ornaments they are to depend on the smiths of the adjacent region. Brass ornaments are purchased from weekly markets or fairs.

### Personal Adornments

(I) **Hair-** The people are in habit of shaving heads of their young ones irrespective of sex during the first menstruation period of the mothers after the child birth. From this time onwards complete shaving is not done. Only the frontal portion of the head is shaved while the hair at the backside remains untouched. Shaving is done with a sharp iron instrument similar to razor. The mother herself or a woman of the neighborhood shaves the head of a child. There is no prescribed age for keeping the hair after the fashion of grownups. Parts having continues until the child is quite grownup, i.e. the boy goes out with cartel or girl fetches water. Kusum oil (a kind of locally made oil) is used for lubricating the hair. A kind of locally available soil is used as detergent for cleaning the hair.

The traditional hair-do of the adult Kondh male is not shaving but tying the bunch of the hair into a knot on the back. The young ones have changed their outlook. They shave their hair like other caste people.

Kondh women comb their hair with wooden combs. They part their hair in the middle (Fig. 1.7.1.), comb it closely backwards and gather into a graceful chignon (Fig.1.7.2.) with twisters of false hair on the left side. The twists of false hair are prepared by themselves from their waste hair. Metal pin known as Tirmadera is struck to the chignon so that the twist may not come out. Tirmadera is made of silver (Gig.1.8). A long pin is fitted at the center of a decorated disc. Besides this four small chains hang from the periphery of the disc.

The use of flowers on special occasions such as dancing or marriage ceremony is also noticed.

The old women do not take care of their hair. The hair simple hang as it is on the back or tied in a plain knot.

(2) **Tattooing-** Tattooing is very popular among the tribe. It is especially popular among young women, who consider it as a part of ornamentation.

Tattooing is done profusely on the face and hands. The use of dots, straight and curved lines, and spherical figures are prevalent. The most common design on the forehead resembles a trident. The common designs on different parts of the body are shown in figure 2.

Tattooing is a painful operation but the young women voluntarily submit to the ordeal. A design is chosen by the woman who intends to get her body tattooed. The body is pricked with the help of needles on soot designs. The soot for this purpose is collected from the under surface of earthen ware which are used for cooking. The whole thing is then covered with a layer of saliva. The entire process is repeated twice or thrice to make the tattoo marks permanent.

There is no special class of tattoos in Kondh society. Women of the household or neighborhood help each other.

Application of any colour on the body or chipping of teeth etc. is not in practice among the Kondh.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Systematic and intensive data on the dress and ornaments of the different tribes of India are yet to be compiled. However a comparison is made here with the help of existing literature. The Kuvi Kondh, a Dravidian speaking



tribe under investigation shares a few traits with the Mundari speaking tribes also. For example the principal dress of an adult male is loin cloth among the Kuvi Kondh, the Asurs (Leuva, 1963), Hos (Dalton, 1872), Kharias (Roy and Roy, 1937), Korwas (Dalton, 1872), Mundas (Roy, 1912) and the Oraons (Dalton, 1872). Of course with the advancement of time and contact with outsiders there is rapid change in traditional dress. For example stitched clothes have recently been introduced.

The Kharia (Roy and Roy, 1937) females use two pieces of loin cloth for covering their body. A Kondh woman (present study) also uses two pieces of clothes for covering her body. But they use a piece of loin cloth as undergarment for the lower part of the body. The Hos (Majumdar, 1950) too, use a loin cloth under the 'Sari'.

In case of ornaments, necklace of stringed coins is found to be used by both Dravidian and Mundari speaking tribes such as the Asurs (Leuva, 1963), Kondhs (present study), Oraons (Roy, 1915) and Santals (Mukherjee, 1962). Its distribution is also to be found even among the Gallongs, (Srivastava, 1962) of NEFA.

Again, rings in which coins are fitted are found to be used by both the Kondhs (present study) and Santals (Mukherjee, 1962) of Santal Paragana and Mayurbhanj.

The anklet is known by a common term Andu among the Hos (Mukharejee, 1950), Kondhs (present study) and Mundas (Roy, 1912).

The hair-do of the females of different tribes presents an interesting feature. The hair combed hair gathered as a chignon on one side of the back of the head either right or left is found to occur among the Asurs (Leuva, 1963), Hos (Dalton, 1872), Kharias (Roy and Roy, 1937), Kondhs (present study) and the Santals (Dalton, 1872). It also occurs among the Irulas (Luiz, 1961) a far away Dravidian speaking tribe of Kerala. This style may be of Dravidian origin as the Irulas (Luiz, 1961) of Kerala are also found to follow the same pattern. And it is well known that the Mundari speaking tribes are entirely absent in South India.

Recent changes among the Hos (Majumdar, 1950) or the Santals (Mukharejee, 1962) is that the hair is not worn into one side chignon but at the center of the back of the head.

Tattooing is extensively practiced by the Ho (Mujumdar, 1950), Juang (Dalton, 1872), Kharia (Dalton, 1872), Kondh (present study), Maler (Dalton, 1872), Munda (Roy, 1912) and Oraon (Dalton, 1872) (Roy, 1915) women though the motif varies from tribe to tribe. Though the practiced by a few Dravidian tribes, Dalton (1872) is of the opinion that the trait is Kolarian in origin and the Dravidian tribes including the present one borrowed trait from their Mundari speaking people.

In fine, it may be said that from this little study it is not possible to say convincingly who are the originators or the borrowers of the traits discussed except in the case of hair-do and tattooing.

#### **Acknowledgement**

The author acknowledges her gratefulness to late Dr. D.K. Sen, formerly Director, Anthropological Survey of India for allowing her to carry out the research project. She also wishes to record her indebtedness to Shri M.P. Basu for his valuable suggestions, to Shri B.N. Bagchi for the drawing and to Smt. Sriparna Roy (Chakroborty) for allowing her to utilize some of her research material.

# THE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE DONGRIA KANDHA OF ORISSA <sup>1</sup>

A. C. Sahoo <sup>2</sup>

The Dongria Kandha is one of the major sections of the numerically preponderant Kandha tribe of Orissa. They mostly inhabit the Niyamgiri hill ranges, situated in Bissamcuttack and Muniguda C.D. Blocks of Gunpur Subdivision and Kalyansinghpur C.D. Block of Rayagada district and Biswanathpur area of Lanjigarh C. D. Block in Kalahandi district. Their habitat is confined to a rectangular forest tract situated at a height of 1000ft. to 5000ft. above the sea level. The Dongria Kandha villages are found on the hills tops, spurs and hills bases. Since they live in the hills, they are called by the local plainsmen as the 'Dongria' (the hill dwelling) Kandha.

They speak a Dravidian tongue, known as 'Kuvi' which is an admixture of 'kui' and "Telugu". Their unique characteristic features and rich cultural heritage distinguishes them from the neighbouring tribes and non-tribal groups.

Their distinctiveness is revealed especially from their dress style, mode of living, indigenous skills and technology, cultural pattern and social system. They claim themselves to be the descendants of the Niyam Raja, their legendary ancestor king. This belief binds them together and keeps their social affinity intact. They are an endogamous group and follow clan exogamy. In recent years, some of them have acquired wives from the neighbouring Desia Kandha community whom they consider as their brothers.

One of the striking characteristic features of the Dongria is their strong belief in the supernaturals as well as magic, witchcraft and sorcery. They attach importance to group solidarity and ensure it by their devotion to numerous gods, goddesses and spirits. They like hard work and derive pleasure by performing dance and music in their leisure time. In their society, the division of labour on the basis of age and sex is quite strong. The elders are respected and obeyed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXX,VI, Nos. 1 & 2, 1996, pp. 34-39

<sup>2</sup> Officer on Special Duty, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

The Dongria Kandha have relationship with the local Scheduled Caste (SC) people – ‘Domb’ who either live in Dongria Kandha villages or in nearby villages. They mostly act as middlemen between the Dongria Kandha and outsiders for several purposes. The Scheduled Caste communities maintain a symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kandhas. The SC people usually purchase the fruit orchards and trees of the Dongria Kandha in a lower price and make a good profit by selling the produce in the local market at higher price. They serve the Dongria Kandha as messengers, cattle herders and sweepers of the village. In certain villages, SC people are given land by the Dongria Kandha for cultivation but being tenants they can't have ownership rights on the land.

The Dongria Kandhas are lover of beautiful arts and crafts. They adorn their body with various types of ornaments. Their customs also deserve special mention, because of socio-cultural importance. The male members also adorn their body with jewellery items and keep long hair like the women folk. The male members put on two nose-rings whereas the females put on three nose-rings. The excellent embroidered cloth with beautiful needle-work reveals the indigenous artistic talents of the Dongria Kandha women. Accordingly, the male members also put on a long narrow piece of cloth round the waist with its embroidered ends, one hanging in the front and the other at the back.

The Dongria Kandha villages are situated amidst hills and forests of the Niyamgiri hill ranges. Throughout the year, the area looks green and picturesque. Due to lack of proper communication, many of the villages remain away from the mainstream of the civilization. All over the hills here and there, one can find cleared patches without any vegetation ready for slash and burn type of cultivation which is not only an age-old practice but also the mainstay of their subsistence economy. Besides, there are plenty of pineapple, banana, lemon, orange and other plantations as well as jackfruits and mango groves found in the area. Adjacent to the villages, sago-palm trees not only add to the scenery but also provide the most favourite traditional drinks to the Dongria Kandha.

The Dongria Kandha shift their settlement sites from one place to another within their Mutha boundary. The reasons behind such change are natural calamities, drought, outbreak of cholera and smallpox, loss of cattle wealth and menace of evil spirits. If there are repeated mishaps in a settlement site, it is considered inauspicious and villagers select a new site. Depletion of forest around the settlement that causes several problems of survival and inter-clan or intra-clan feuds are also some of the causes responsible for shifting of

settlement site. Sometimes newly married couples also leave for new settlements to establish their new households separately. There are several instances where some people come to stay in the villages of their close relatives. Sometimes the sons-in-law also go to live with their fathers-in-law. On special ground, one can live in the village of his maternal uncle or sister's husband villages or ritual friends who usually offers him some land for cultivation and raising plantations. Sometimes due to maladjustment, the Dongria Kandha prefer to shift to other settlements irrespective of any kinship affiliations.

Each Dongria Kandha village has the institution of youth dormitory. It is the centre where unmarried girls spend their leisure hours. The number of dormitories varies according to the villages. Boys from other villages belonging to different clans visit the girls dormitory and spend nights with the girls. The dormitory is the place where a girl socializes herself with the community living, social norms and cultural values. The boys and girls also get chance to interact with each other for choosing their life partners. The dormitory is the cultural centre for various activities of the boys and girls. By and large, it is a place for dance, merrymaking, enjoyment and learning things that becomes useful in future.

Like the girl's dormitory in every village, there is a community house popularly known as the 'Sadar'. The house is constructed on communal co-operative labour and here community level matters are discussed. Women are strictly prohibited to enter this house.

The Dongria Kandha have an intimate relationship with their forest. It provides them materials for their house construction. It serves as the major source of food and other essential consumable items. They collect a variety of mushrooms, tubers, roots, stems, green leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds from the forest for their consumption. The forest is the place where their gods, goddess, and spirits live. A Dongria cannot think of life without forest.

Apart from forest they also depend on land for their survival. Their cultivable lands can broadly be classified into three categories, viz. Dongar, i.e., the hill slope land for shifting cultivation where they grow pineapple, citrus plants, banana, turmeric, ginger, and varieties of other crops. Next comes Bhata type of land which is situated at the base of the hills and is comparatively more fertile than the Dongar land. In Bhata land they mostly take up wet cultivation. The third category of land is the kitchen garden, locally known as Bado which is kept more fertile by manuring and it is mostly used for growing different types of vegetables. These soil types of the area are red stony, clay and in some places patches of black soil and red soil are also noticed.

Marriage among the Dongria Kandhas is an expensive and a complex affair. It is very difficult to acquire a life partner. It involves a lot of risks and responsibilities. The selection of mate, followed by negotiations, bringing the bride home and leading a happy conjugal life give rise to a number of ceremonies and rituals. The prolonged inter-group hostility, involvement of risks, tensions, humiliations, frustrations, physical pains, and mental torture are some of the negative factors which sometimes lead to fatal consequences. At the same time, the hospitality, comforts, pleasure, interaction and group activities are the positive aspects of marriage, which binds not only two persons of opposite sex but also two different kin groups and strengthens inter-group relationship. The Dongria Kandha tries to maintain internal solidarity by establishing balanced marital alliances. Although clan exogamy is given priority attention, practice of village exogamy is also strictly observed.

In the Dongria society, the family is the smallest basic social unit. There are simple as well as compound families which are either monogamous or polygynous. There are also instances of joint and extended families where several brothers live together with their spouses and children. Many Dongria males prefer to have more than one wife because of economic necessity. Since they are shifting cultivators, they need more manpower and it leads to acquisition of more than one wife. It is noticed that the co-wives live together with the husband and undertake household and field activities on a co-operative basis. After the death of the husband, the sons of co-wives sometimes quarrel among themselves for partition of paternal property and it often leads to fatal consequences.

Beyond family and lineage, there are larger agnatic descent groups, called *punja*; the maximal lineage is divided into higher *punja* or the senior *punja*, and lower or junior *punja*. Each *punja* has its own traditional roles and functions. The community level magico-religious functions are conducted by the Jani *punja* assisted by the Pujari *punja*. The secular functions are taken up by the Mandal *punja*. The *punjās* are further subdivided into lineage groups. Above the *punja* or maximal lineage, lies the largest descent group, clan, locally known as Kuda. It has linkage with the traditional Mutha system.

Mutha is a territorial organization and all the kinsmen belonging to a Mutha behave as a corporate group. All the members of a particular clan (Kuda) live within the boundary of a particular Mutha and all of them are identified by a common name. Each clan (Kuda) has social significance and its own origin myth. Among different Mutha, mention may be made of Jakesika, Menika and Mandika. The people of Niska Mutha occupy the top position in their social

hierarchy. They have direct link with the Niyam Raja, the mythical ancestor of the tribe and they abstain from eating beef to maintain their ritual purity.

At the time of hunting, if the game animal is wounded by the members of one clan and killed by another clan, the clansmen who have wounded the animal should get back the body of the dead animal. The violation of the custom leads to clan feuds and the offender pays heavy fine to settle the dispute.

The clan plays quite vital role in possession and utilization of land and forest which are two very important productive assets of the Dongria Kandha. Each clan (Kuda) has its own territory well demarcated from all sides. The clans belonging to Mutha have absolute rights over their respective territories. Each Mutha is composed of clans and each clan of several villages, the number of which vary from one Mutha to other.

The Mutha territories are locally called, Padar and named after specific clans. When members of another clan live in the village of the founding clan, the former are expected to observe certain formalities. The people of the other clans can participate in all communal feasts and festivals of the village. They are allowed to fetch firewood for cremation of dead, because it is mandatory that all the households in the village are required to give firewood for the purpose. They can use the common land, pasture, forest, dancing ground, community centre, mango grove, tamarind trees and any other communally owned resources. But they cannot have the right to sell, lease out or transfer the lands which is prerogative of the bonafide members of the founder clan who enjoy exclusive rights of ownership of the village by descent and inheritance.

The women have no right over husband's property, only they can work and enjoy the residuary right for their maintenance. Women are considered to be living assets of the family. Sometimes the daughters raise some orchards and sell it out to earn their pocket money. The paternal property goes to the son and is equally divided among the brothers. They sell and purchase land by conducting a ritual and never claim the property once sold. The Dongrias also mortgage cultivable lands, fruits, trees and animals. The men and women in an organized group help each other at the time of need and hardship. The dormitory girl's traditional labour co-operative helps the needy families of their village in plantation, weeding, hoeing, sowing, bonding, harvesting and other such works.

Their kinship network is broad based and extensive. Other than the consanguinal and affinal kinship, they have ritual kinship ties. It is a very common practice among the Dongria that two persons of the same sex establish ritual kinship. The males, address their ritual friends as 'Sai' and the females address as

'Ade'. As per the tradition, a formal ceremony takes place in which both the friends take food from the same plate and since then their ritual friendship gets social approval. Some Dongria Kandhas also establish ritual friendship with the local Scheduled Caste people and others, belonging to same age-group.

The Dongria Kandha presents gifts to and accepts gifts from kinsmen and ritual friends. Within kinship network, it has been determined what kind of gift is to be given and expected in return. The forms of gift vary from a number of buffaloes to some chickens and few pots of sago-palm juice. It brings unity and solidarity among members of various clans and lineages. The exchange of gifts sometimes determines the relationship between two individuals and groups.

A Dongria Kandha person acquires different names during his lifetime. Starting from the very childhood, soon after the maturity, inside the dormitory, on the eve of marriage, and when he enters into his father-in-laws house, he is addressed and referred by different name. Sometimes during old age he is also given a separate name. The same person is called by the name Ratnu at childhood, Chichada inside the dormitory, Kudunja at the time of marriage by the in-laws and Kangapoi in his old age.

After a Dongria's death, the near and dear kinsmen are invited and they wait till the dead body is cremated. Next day the mortuary rites are observed as per their tradition and customs. The roles played by mother's brothers, members of the first descending generations, the father-in-law, and the uterine brothers, as well as close agnates of the deceased are quite significant. In mortuary rites, mother's brother and sister's son of the deceased are expected to present buffaloes. The deceased and his family accept cooked food from the neighbours. The villagers also have some roles to play in the period of crisis. The mortuary rites in exceptional cases are observed after seven days of the occurrence of death. Before conducting the mortuary rites, the bereaved family members observe certain taboos. For purification, some animals and birds are sacrificed for satisfying ancestors and other deities. The flesh of all the sacrificed animals is consumed in a communal feast.

The Dongria Kandha celebrate a number of feasts and festivals in which, on the one hand, they satisfy their deities and spirits and on the other, enjoy delicious food items. There are certain festivals and rituals which are organized at the individual household level and some at the village or community level. At the individual household level, they celebrate Ghanta Parba that mostly includes feasts and festivals and participation of all kin groups including members of different clan groups. The households observe it in collaboration with the



villagers and a formal meeting of all household heads takes place, prior to the celebration. According to the date fixed, guests, kith and kins are invited to attend the ceremony. In a Monday or Friday, the ceremony starts before which the host household head thatches his house and makes wall paintings with help of co-villagers and skilled persons. For the services rendered by the villagers, for collection of thatching materials and other works, the host serves them a sumptuous meal. The participation of magico-religious specialists, recitation of incantations, sacrifice of animals and birds, enshrinement of special stone by the villagers, enjoyment of special drink and eating of sumptuous meals are some of the major attractions of this occasion. The beating of drums, singing of the songs, sacrifice of buffalo and pig in the burial ground makes the occasions very lively and enjoyable. They celebrate the occasion with pomp and ceremony in order to satisfy their gods, goddesses and spirits as well as kiths and kins wishing for the prosperity of family members. Mostly, well-to-do households in collaboration with the villagers celebrate this festival according to their convenience and particularly when they get a good harvest.

Unlike the Ghanta Parba, another very important festival i.e. Illuiarpa is performed at the household level to worship household deities and ancestors. The kinsmen are invited to attend the occasion. This is a one day ceremony. At the community level, a festival called Pungalpom, i.e. the festival of flowers is observed in the month of January-February, especially when the villagers reap a bumper crop. They also observe sowing and broadcasting ceremonies, known as Bichhahapam. Besides, they celebrate Enda Penu Puja for appeasing various spirits and to enjoy feasts and festivities.

The most important and famous festival observed by the Dongria Kandha is Kodru Parba or Meriah sacrifice. It is supposed to be observed at the clan level, but practically organized at the village level. According to the need and situation, a particular village performs Meriah sacrifice to appease various spirits and deities with the hope of better health and happiness. Usually, this festival is celebrated once in every five to six years and the duration may vary. The people subscribe for the festival at the household level and all the villagers get ready for the celebration of the festival at least one year back. All the villagers equally contribute and purchase a good buffalo and the role of village messenger is unavoidable in this connection. The buffalo is first brought to Koteiwali Penu and given a bath with turmeric water.

All the kiths and kins and other clan people are invited well before the celebration of the festival. All the villagers get ready with sufficient foodstuff

and drinks. They make their houses well decorated with coloured mud. On the first day of celebration that is one day before the buffalo sacrifice, different animals and birds are sacrificed and guests enjoy feasts. On the next day the buffalo is sacrificed by the male adults belonging clan to touch the buffalo with the weapon. The buffalo is sacrificed in a fine morning and each of the participants from other clans is given a slice of raw flesh of the sacrificed buffalo. They return home with the raw flesh singing and dancing all the way. The festival is brought to an end after appeasing the earth goddess Dharani Penu. In this ritual several spirits in and around the village are appeased by offering animal sacrifice.

The Dongrias have their own traditional village council to handle their customary matters. The council holds its meeting at a place in the village called, Sadar, the seat of the earth goddess. Almost every day early in the morning the village messenger shouts loudly to call the villagers to Sadar. The meeting of the traditional council starts after the arrival of the traditional village leaders and other participants. Each member takes part in the discussion, but final decision is made by the secular chief. The matters that are put forth in the council meeting are related to fixation of dates, family contributions and sharing of duties and responsibilities for different rituals and festivals and other matters. The council also resolves disputes among persons and groups. While taking decisions, the council makes efforts to settle disputes amicably and peacefully. Sometimes, the offender is fined to offer a feast to the villagers. Heavy fine is demanded in case of sexual offences and for breach of rules of clan exogamy. As per the custom, one has to host a feast for encroaching upon the usufructuary right over a tree in other's land. The guilty is always punished irrespective of his socio-economic status. The community interest and personal security are always safeguarded by the council. The headman belongs to the founder lineage. Some leaders among younger generation are also given due recognition in the council. However, in decision making process the elderly persons and traditional leaders take active part. The village leaders take all care with seriousness to uphold the unity and maintain peace in the village. The lineage leaders also have some important role to play. The role of the village messenger, who usually belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, for settlements of deputed is very important. On several occasions, the Dongria Kandha chooses to act upon his suggestions. The Dongria Kandhas do not have a single political head, rather they believe in the consensus in the council. In spite of the latest changes in the politico-jural set up, the traditional leaders still enjoy the respect and confidence of the people.

During last few decades the development interventions made by the government, particularly through the Dongria Kandha Development Agency, (Kurli), Chatikona, deserves mention. The Dongria Kandha are quite aware of their age-old socio-economic problems. They realize that by participatory development approach and giving emphasis on natural resources and human resources development, they have brought changes in their standard of living. According to them, they have been directly motivated to help themselves and to develop spirit of competition among themselves in positive direction.

Now a days, they are raising orchards and food crops for cash and better living. Some of the elderly Dongrias hold the opinion that the recent strategy of development adopted by the government proved to be very effective and successful for of its culture and community specific approach. In these days they are seriously thinking several times before disposal of standing crops and utilization of hard earned money. The great achievement according to them is control of indiscriminate mortgage of their standing crops and selling of fruit bearing trees to the traders at a nominal price. The most striking and remarkable feature of the development process is their group consciousness about systematic and scientific management of their environment and society.

#### References :

- 1 Banerjee, Sukumar 1969 *Ethnographic study of the Kuvi Kondh*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta.
- 2 Barbara, M. Boal, 1982 *The Kondhs*, Aris and Philips (Ltd) Warminster Wilt, England.
- 3 Dalton, E. T. 1960 *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
- 4 Nayak, P. K., 1989 *Blood Women and Territory: an analysis of Clan Feuds of Dongria Kondhs*. Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi
- 5 Patnaik, N. & P.S. Das Patnaik. 1982 *Kondhs of Orissa*, T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar.

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH <sup>1</sup>

S. Routray <sup>2</sup>

The Christian era of 1975 was celebrated as the International Women's Year all over the world. The International conference which was held in Mexico in June-July of 1975 was a unique event. The convention highlights various handicaps and disabilities from which the women folk suffer. It stresses the importance of ameliorating the condition of women and providing them with better facilities to play an equal and effective role in contributing to international peace. The popular UNESCO slogan was "Educate a man and you educate an individual, educate a woman and you educate a family".

The Government of India has adopted various measures of welfare for women, among which the revised 20 Point Programme is one. The 12th point "Equality for women" is exclusively meant for the women. It comprises six sub-points such as:-

- To raise the status of women.
- To enhance awareness of the problems of women.
- To create mass consciousness about women's rights.
- To implement a national programme of training and development.
- To enable women to participate with equality in socio-economic development and nation building.
- To rouse public opinion against dowry and ensure effective implementation of anti-dowry legislation.

Besides, the Article No. 14 of Indian Constitution has provided for women's equality in the eyes of law. Article No.15 also says that "nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women".

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVII, Nos.2 & 3,1987, pp.31-37

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, THRTI (now SCSTRTI)

In view of this an attempt has been made to study the problems and status of women in the tribal areas of Orissa. As a first step a study was undertaken in the Dongria Kondh area of Koraput district. The central study village was '*Khambesi*' of Bisamcuttack block of Koraput (undivided) district. The village lying at about 3,000 ft. altitude, from the sea level is located in the 'Niyamgiri' hill ranges. It is situated in a relatively isolated and inaccessible area because of the natural barriers through which no road communication has developed and such situations have enabled the Dongria Kondh to retain their traditional form of economy, social organization, rituals and beliefs to a great extent. The Kondh society is generally homogeneous but the scheduled caste 'Domb' live with them as neighbours. From the field investigation it is recorded that at present the Kondh population of that village is 289 out of which female population is 161 accounting for 57 percent of the total population.

This report combines empirical data with theoretical concepts relating to various aspects of women in the Dongria Kondh society. An attempt has been made to ascertain the present status of Dongria women in the following pages.

Generally, the Dongria Kondh women wear simple dress with graceful gait and are frank and gentle in manners. They have short to medium stature with broad face, flat nose, and separated eye brows with thick lips. Their body colour varies from dark to light brown with straight hairs on head.

They dress themselves with two pieces of clothes (Kapda-Ganda) - one wrapped around the waist with a knot in the front and the second hanging around the waist, one end of which passes through the arm-pits and tied at the back to cover their upper parts. The adult women use a small piece of cloth (*langota*) as underwear. In the several holes made all along the ear-lobe earrings are worn. In the nose they wear three brass rings (Murma) one on each alae and one hanging from the septum. They neatly comb (Kokuya), and use many hair clips to keep the hair tight. A tiny knife (Pipli) is fixed in the hair which serves the purpose of cutting and self-defence. They put on bead and coin necklaces (Kekodika) in bunches. Some women of well-to-do families put on golden necklaces. Aluminium rings are put on by the young girls which they get as gifts from the young unmarried boys (Dhangdas). Besides this in ceremonial occasions women wear clean saris and dresses with brass wristlets (Paja) and silver anklets (Pahari-Andu) etc. All the ornaments are kept in a bamboo basket (Hakusa). The dress and ornaments they put on though poor in quality give us an idea about their fine aesthetic outlooks.

The status of women in Dongria society can be ascertained in terms of their opportunities in participating the social institutions, behavior of the men towards them and the ideology of religious beliefs prevailing in their society. Their status is also directly related to their role as a mother and wife in so far as child bearing and sexual life is concerned.

The data has been collected from the village 'Khambesi' with a population of 161 females and 128 males. Before studying the women, a census has been made in order to find out the distribution of women in various age groups. The age range covers from 0 to 60 years having interval of 15 years. It reveals that highest concentration of females numbering 55 is in the age-group of 30-44. Total number of female children are 47; married females, 90; old women, 3 and young women, 33. For collecting these data, methods like interview, observation and genealogy were adopted.

A special study was undertaken to represent statistically the position of married women including unmarried girls. This status has been broadly studied under five heads such as Social, Economic, Political, Religious and Educational, each grouped under three levels - 'High' 'Moderate' and 'Low'.

In the social life these women enjoy a high status. They have freedom in selecting their mates. The institution like marriage and family bestow a significant status to them. The marriage is generally monogamous in nature. Polygyny is also practiced by Dongria Kondh. A man may marry for a second time if his first wife is found to be barren or if he requires additional man power for shifting cultivation. A person having three to four wives is considered rich in the society because his yield becomes more with the help of additional man power. Therefore, women help in the enhancement of the social and economic prestige of men. In the study village 11 cases of polygynous families are seen out of which one sorrorate case is found.

The Dongria Kondh usually marry at a late age, i.e. the boys approximately at the age of 25 and the girls after 20 years. Widow remarriage is allowed by the society. In case of remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees, no marriage ceremony is performed. Only formal recognitions of villagers are required.

The procedure of marriage which they call 'Haidi' consists of a number of rituals. The village priest (Jani), assistant priest (Pujari) and the shaman (Beju) officiate in the ritual, which is supposed to bring a happy conjugal life of the married couple. A boy or a girl is considered to be a full-fledged adult member of the society only after they get married. In case of a woman she

becomes housewife by shouldering the responsibility of managing her family and looking after the members of her family. The institution of marriage binds the boy and the girl with each other to lead a conjugal life which is mutual. A Dongria Kondh girl enjoys the liberty to select her own mate. Cases of love marriage are found among them. The unmarried boys and girls try to find opportunities to meet with each other at various sites such as in the dormitory house (Adasbetta), the *dongar* (swidden) field, the weekly market, the forest and on the bank of a stream or at the foot of the hills. They develop familiarity by studying each other's attitude. Then they make up their mind and finalise their choice. After that they first chat and laugh together. When they feel to marry each other they inform their parents through some of their kinsman, who take initiative to perform the marriage ceremony. Sometime due to the unwillingness of the parents a boy elopes with his mate to a distant place and stay there in a relative's house. On their return their union is socially approved.

Sororate type of marriage is occasionally found but no cases of levirate were found in the study village. The exogamous clan such as Niska, Wadaka, Kadraka, Sikoka, Jakasika, Praska, and Pusika regulate the marriage. Each clan is exogamous unit within which marriage is prohibited. The 'Niska' clan members claim to be the superior most in the hierarchy as it is tabooed for them to eat beef and flesh of buffalo.

The Jani (priest) belongs to this Niska clan. He is only entitled to worship the Earth Goddess (Dharni Penu) during Meriah Festival. They cannot establish marriage alliances with 'Sikoka', 'Wadaka' and 'Kadraka' and 'Bengeska' as they eat snakes and insects.

The Dongrias always prefer hard working and able bodied girls for marriage. Sometimes a girl is bargained for a higher amount of bride price and poor people cannot afford to pay the high bride price demanded by the girl's parents which sometimes leads to lot of fissions or clan feuds in the society. In the study village there was a case of this type. The Kalanga Wadraka was demanded a high bride price for his marriage. The villagers had to fight against the bride's party and a feud took place. But lastly the situation was controlled and a compromise was reached.

In the Dongria Kondh society a divorcee is permitted to remarry. A Dongria Kondh woman has also privileges to divorce her husband if she is ill-treated by her husband repeatedly as a result of the habit of indulgence in liquor. Carelessness and irresponsibility in taking care of the family members, lack of

masculinity are also reasons which may compel her to desert her husband. In that case her family has to return the bride price which they received at the time of marriage. But incidence of divorce is rare in Khambesi. The number of male divorcees is more in comparison to the female divorcees because in most of the cases it is seen that the divorce is initiated from the male side.

Women in Dongria Kondh society are considered as economic asset of the family. They rise very early in the morning. First of all they grind the millet (Ragi or Suan) and then start cooking. By 6.00 A. M. they finish their cooking and all domestic works and they start towards their *dongar* fields carrying food and babies at their back. There difference between males and females so far as the division of labour is considered.

Women like men are generally non-vegetarians. They take meat, dry-fish, green vegetables. Mandia is their staple food.

They do not accept any *pucca* or *kutchha* foods from their Domb (Scheduled Caste) neighbours as they consider their social status higher than the Dombs. They do not go to any 'Domb' house, even they will not sit on their verandah. But as wage labourers they go with the Dombs in group for construction of roads. But some relaxation is allowed in case of their children. They play and read with the 'Domb' children and they also eat cooked food from the Domb's house. They do all these without the knowledge of their parents.

The Dongria males appear to be less active in economic activities than the females. As they are shifting cultivators, the help of women is indispensable to them. The women are very hard working and active. They also shoulder higher responsibilities of the family. Clearing the shrubs on the *podu* land, manuring, hoeing, dressing, reaping, winnowing the crops after harvesting etc. are exclusively done by the women. The women do not take part in any rituals connected with shifting cultivation. They are forbidden to climb trees. Therefore, they collect fruits while men climb trees to pluck mango, orange and jackfruits etc. The women also weave mat, with the leaves of the wild date-palm, stitch leaf cups and leaf plates at their leisure lime. Both men and women work as wage labourers. When they go for work, they go in group. The females and males form separate groups. Previously the Dongria Kondh women did not like to work as wage earner rather they preferred to work in their Dongar fields. In construction and repairing of house, women help men in all sorts of work except thatching which is a taboo for them. They take care of the domestic animals such as buffalo (Kodru), cow (Kodi), goat (Adda), pig (Paji) etc. They do all



sorts of household works such as cooking, fetching water from stream, tank or well, cleaning utensils, plastering verandah and walls with cowdung. As the care taker of family women shoulder higher responsibilities and act as the cashier and accountant of the family.

As mothers, the women are very affectionate to their children. They not only give birth but also take care of them, feed them and properly guide them to grow up. As mothers, they have more duties in socializing their children. Most of them are not aware of the sanitary habits. At the time of illness they only nurse their children in their indigenous way by taking the help of the medicine man or the village 'Beju' or 'Bejuni' (shaman) who performs *puchona* - shamanistic rite and gets one hen and some measures of rice as remuneration.

It is now seen that most of the mothers have developed interest towards the education of their children. Generally, they send their children to the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) School which is located at their village.

The religion of Dongria Kondh centres round the propitiation of Gods, spirits through rituals and sacrifices. Dharani Penu (Earth Goddess) is installed in a hut in the front yard of each village called 'Kuddi' and is represented by three elevated stones placed horizontally upon them. She is specifically worshipped during 'Bihon Laka' and Meriah Laka by the priests - 'Jani' and 'Lamba'.

The female shaman called 'Bejuni' has higher status in the society as they practise divination and cure diseases. She has to undergo a long course of training under a competent Bejuni before becoming a qualified practitioner. During her training period she puts on a red sari (Uchitrai Ganda), uses two metal bells as her anklets and holds a bundle of peacock feathers (*tanya*) that she fans over the head of a patient and utters some incantations. She can forecast the future events for which villagers pay respect to her. Her important role in the ritual-*Ghanta Parab* is elaborately described in the book "The Kondh of Orissa", (pp. 157) of Dr. N. Patnaik as follows:-

"The Ghanta Parab is observed for three days in the month of Baisakh. 'Ghanta' means earthen pot and each such pot with four cakes is offered to 'Takrani Penu' along with a sacrificial animal by the vow takers who suffers from small-pox and cholera. In this festival the role of Bejuni is remarkable. The 'Pat-Bejuni' and other 'Bejunis' sit in a row, each with a winnowing fan for divination. The Pat-Bejuni draws three squares representing three Penu with sundried rice powder and piles up a heap of rice ball in each of the three squares. Thereafter, all the Bejunis

start singing in chorus, and invoke three Penus while offering rice to them. After all the Penus are visualized the Bejunis along with drum beaters go-round the village and its outskirts for seven times waving a bunch of peacock feathers over their heads towards the evil spirits. On the second day, Pat- Bejuni sprinkles water with a mango twig from the earthen pot over their heads to purify the house from pollution and in return collects sundried rice presented to her by each housewife. On the third day, a Pat-Bejuni is possessed by 'Takrani Penu' and thereafter she behaves like Takrani. When she regains her senses the lamb is sacrificed by the Ichan Jani and blood is sprinkled over the piles of rice for three Penus. Thereafter, vow-takers sacrifice their votive animals on that altar one after the other in the 'Ghanta'. The Bejunis simply touch those 'Ghanta' in order to purify that.

When all the sacrifices are over, the Pat-Bejuni along with her team of Bejunis and drum-beaters goes in a procession to the western outskirt of the village and the villagers ...roll on the ground to get touch of the feet of the Pat-Bejuni. Then the Pat-Bejuni performs a ritual at the Jatra-Kudi in a manner similar to earlier ones and sacrifices a pigeon by piercing a sharp bamboo stab through its rectum.

After this the ritual comes to an end. The vow-takers take away their respective ritualistic food and offer only the head of the animals already sacrificed to the 'Bejunis'. The Pat-Bejuni alone receives the lamb. All the Bejunis distribute rice and head of the animals equally".

Besides the above ritual, the Dongria Kondh observe 'Salongi Puja' 'Mandia Rani', 'Pidika', 'Donger Puja', 'Bihan Puja', in general and 'Meriah Puja' in particular. This year the Dongria Kondh observed the *Nuakhia* (Marangi Laka) in a very simple manner. No communal feast or communal hunting was done. The village Sarapanch (Lachamana Wadaka) and Beju (Daitari Kadraka) and many members sitting together at the village Kuddi (Sadar Ghar) had decided not to observe the festival pompously for dearth of funds and they had to go to Bhubaneswar to meet the Minister on some political matters.

Irrespective of age and sex, all the Dongria Kondh must have to obey certain taboos like food taboos, totemic taboos, reproductive taboos and mortuary taboos, etc. to avoid mishaps. One parturient woman is required to observe certain taboos and restrictions as stated below –

- (a) She must not visit the burial ground which may harm the baby in her womb.

- (b) She must not go alone to any place in the evening or night so as to avoid coming under the influence of evil spirits.
- (c) At her advanced stage of pregnancy she is advised not to do any hard work like-carrying logs from the forest which may cause abortion or miscarriage. From the time of pregnancy, till her confinement for delivery, her husband shoulders more responsibilities and takes full care of his wife. It is because to a Dongria the child is considered to be the blessing of Dharani Penu and also he considers his wife as a better-half of his life.

During the survey, 43 households were covered and fertility data were recorded. The sex ratio is found to be 1,258 females per 1,000 males. Out of 161 females, the married females number 90. There are 4 cases of abortion, 4 cases of still birth, and 31 cases of infant mortality in the village. The rate of fertility of the females as well as the males is found to be very low. It is perhaps due to their usual pre-marital visits to the Dormitory house where they have sexual relationship with the unmarried boys (*dhangdas*). This data was obtained from Smt. Malati Biswal's Ashram of the Kasturaba Memorial Trust. The doctor endorses this opinion. Some Dongrias feel that the use of buffalo meat is also another cause for low fertility. But they are so much fond of taking buffalo meat with liquor that they cannot give up this habit.

Barrenness is a stigma in their society. The Dongrias have no herbal medicine for the cure of barrenness. On the contrary, they have ways to induce barrenness which otherwise helps them in birth control. For instance, they believe that if seven red 'Kaincha' seeds are cut by a woman, she never conceives after that. 'Bano beta' is an effective herbal medicine used by the Dongrias for child birth. This root is pounded and the juice is extracted and about half a cup of this juice is orally administered to effect quick and easy delivery. Three-year old castor bark, Kalara leaf and Bajramuli roots are pounded to extract juice that is orally administered for quick falling of placenta of the new born.

Dongria women's menopause occurs within the age of 46 to 50 years. There is a medicine for those who desire early menopause. Equal quantity of 'Korkati' (male Kankada), 'Denjani puyou', 'Mara', 'Diseniheru' and 'Penkaponga Daki' roots are pounded and the extracted juice is orally administered to the woman who desires early menopause.

In the socio-political domain, the Dongria women occupy a low position in their society. They are debarred from the membership and leadership of the traditional tribal councils. All of their traditional leaders except that of the

female shaman (Bejuni) are males and their posts go along the male line only. In the study village three tribal ladies named Bongari Kadraka, Sitari Wadaka and Singari Wadaka have become members in the Mahila Samiti. It is due to the sincere efforts of Mrs. Malati Biswal, a social worker of Kasturaba Memorial Trust, popularly known as 'Appa'. In every month, each of the ladies gets an allowance of Rs.30 from the Government. These women with some political awareness have earned social prestige in the village that helps them exercise an influence over their husbands in decision making at their family level.

The Dongria Kondh women enjoy freedom of participation in village dance and music. They spend most of their leisure hours through gossiping, merry making, dance, song, music and by sewing of the traditional scarf (*kapda ganda*) sitting at the backside of the house. They present this scarf to their near and dear ones with love and affection.

The Dongria women are born and brought up in the lap of nature and are educated in the traditional socialization process. Most of the women of this village are educationally very backward. Out of 161 females, 17 have class-III level of education, 17 have class-I level of education and the rest (majority) are illiterates. During this year (1986) not a single girl has enrolled in the Village School given the fact that being a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of Orissa, they get full help and assistance from the Micro Project (D. K. D. A.) functioning since 1978 which aims at their all-round development.

### Analysis

Economically they may lie below the poverty line, yet, in this regard they can be grouped in terms of acquisition of Dongar land and occupation. Women cultivating two or more Dongars are grouped under 'High'; having one to two Dongar come under 'Moderate' group and having no Dongar are grouped as 'Low'. It is seen that out of 161 females, 120 (74.53%) are 'Low', 39 (24.22%) are 'Moderate' and 2 (1.24%) are 'High' in economic status. But regarding division of labour, cent percent of them have 'High' economic status.

In social life the division is based on their present marital status. Married women are ranked 'High'; the widows 'Moderate' and divorces, 'Low'. In this ranking 67 out of 90 female (74.45%) are 'High', 20 (22.22%) are 'moderate' and 3 (3.33%) are 'low' in social status. Unmarried females –both adult and children also have good social status though they are illiterates. They have only received informal education from their parents, their kith and kin with

love and affection. They are allowed to visit their dormitory, relatives, market and to move around with their friends in the village.

In political and ritual life, those who are politically sensitive are grouped as 'High', those having political awareness are grouped as 'Moderate' and those having least awareness are grouped as 'Low'. Excluding 47 minor female children, out of the remaining 114 adult females, 7 (4.86%) have 'High', 15 (13.16%) have 'Moderate' and 92 (81.98%) have 'Low' political status. The division is based on their performances and practices relating to political affairs and rituals. Those who perform communal worship are called as 'Bejuni' and are given 'High' status, those who worship only their household deities are 'Moderate' and 65 (40.38%) of the females has 'Low' religious status.

As regards their educational achievements, few are educated up to primary level. These who have primary education and above are ranked as 'High', those who have lower primary education are ranked as 'Moderate' and the rest illiterates come under 'Low' rank. Out of 161 females 127 (78.89%) are illiterates, 34 (21.11%) have lower primary education and there is not a single female educated up to upper primary level of education. To eradicate this problems we have to take up certain measures to improve their educational status. Creation of awareness for education among Dongria mothers and girl children starting from the pre-school Anganwadi education leading to Primary and Post Primary education imparted through tribal lady teachers with certain incentives would go a long way to bring them into the fold of education.

### **Conclusion**

From the above analysis it is clear that though Dongria Kondh women are debarred from certain religious and managerial functions, yet their social status is high. It is also established that in various aspects of social life women enjoy status and freedom such as, in the choice of a husband, seeking of divorce and so on. But in other few aspects such as in political and ritual sphere they have low status.

There is urgency in helping these women through developmental programmes aimed at their social, educational and economic emancipation by which the inherent strength of these women can be channelized towards their empowerment and all round development.

# CHILD REARING PRACTICES AND SOCIALIZATION PROCESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH <sup>1</sup>

Florencia Bara <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Ethnography of primitive people gives us a picture of their culture and varied aspects of human life. However, a systematic account of human activities gives us very little insight into the mental attitude of the individual. His thoughts and actions appear merely as expressions of rigidly defined cultural norms to which he belongs. We comprehend little about his rational thinking, his feelings, his friendship and conflicts with his fellowmen. The personal side of life of the individual is almost eliminated in the systematic presentation of cultural life of the people. The way in which a person reacts to his culture is a matter and that should concern us deeply. Courtesy, modesty, good manners and conformity to definite ethical standards are universal, but what constitute courtesy, modesty, good manners and ethnical standard is not universal. It is more important to know how the individual reacts to these standards.

The human infant comes into the world, as a biological organism with animal needs. The basic needs of all the children are the same i.e. the infant must be fed when feels hungry, must be covered with warm cloths when feels cold, must be put into the lap of the mother or mother surrogate whenever insecure and thus, be made comfortable in all respects. But the differences between the culture and societies can be observed in the way in which these basic needs are met and the children are taught to manage with such situations with a consistent behavior pattern of a particular society. Thus, he is gradually moulded into a social being and learns social ways of acting, feeling and behaving. Every human

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 44, No. 1 & 2, ,2004, pp.56-67

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

being tries to adjust himself to the conditions and environment predominantly determined by the society to which he is a member. If he fails he is ridiculed and warned not to do so. If he becomes a social deviant, sometimes, he is brought back into line by the efforts of his social group. Thus, one of the most significant tasks that each human being must do is that of adjustment with other members of his society. The child must learn ways of developing effective social relationship with a different individuals within his society and environment.

The biological maturation of the child leads to his social development. Maturation is basic to the development of certain motor skills and some nerves and muscles used in language. These skills, motor and language are basic to a number of relationships. Thus, the child must also develop some capacity to differentiate empathies and to understand before he can react and function effectively in his social world.

Each society appears to have distinctive values, characteristic patterns of behavioral expectations and differences in child rearing practices. It furnishes a set of expectations and relationship, which influence the eventual development of social skills, behaviors and attitudes. The way a child relates to society is first learnt in the family with his parents, more specifically with the mother, the siblings and then eventually with his peers and finally with other significant adults.

Thus, socialization is a very broad concept and process. It is the process whereby original nature is transformed into human nature and the individual into a person. It is the process of adjustment through which an individual is fitted into a given society. The whole way of life concerned with, how a child becomes a social being, how he is born and brought up, how he is cared for, how he perceives and interacts with physical world around him, how he deals with his environment and problems of life. The chief actor in a process of socialization is the family, which inculcates in the growing child the basic discipline necessary for living with others. The family makes it easier for the child to internalize the social norms by creating the design to live up to the expectations of others.

The physical dependence of the child upon the parents and in particular upon the mother soon after birth develops into emotional involvement. This emotional involvement arises largely because the parents and sibling are a source of both frustration and satisfaction. The human organism does not suffer from deprivation and frustration passively. It reacts to it by manifesting rage, anger, hostility and aggression. As the child matures he is expected to control his impulse and part of his frustration and deprivation may be expressed as hostility and resentment against those adults who are the source of his frustration.

The new born infant is treated as a biological organism; he is taken care of and given physical attention. His primary need is food and his most important early experiences center round the act of feeding and being fed. Between maximum satisfaction and starvation lies a wide range of variations. Feeding habits differ from society to society, culture to culture and from family to family. In some groups the infant is fed whenever he cries, in others, only at rigidly prescribed intervals. He may be nursed well until childhood or may be weaned early. Some infants experience alternate period of satisfaction and neglect. The way the infant's biological needs are met with and the degree of satisfaction and deprivation he/she experiences, convey an image of the world as niggardly or indulgent, capricious or reliable. This image may remain as a permanent part of adult character, especially, if it is reinforced by later experiences.

The infant is also responded to an emotion-laden ways. The attitudes of acceptance or rejection, approval or disapproval, relaxation or tension depend on the physical care he receives. The mother's attitudes, affectionate fondling, caressing and physical posture during the act of feeding are prompted by cultural values.

As the infant grows to childhood, emotional responses to his behavior take an increased importance. The adult responses change from efforts to satisfy his bodily needs to attitudes of approval and disapproval designed to encourage him to exercise self-control. Thus, the child is encouraged to feed himself instead of being fed and he has to renounce the satisfaction of being fed. He must learn to control his elimination and to stop depending upon his mother for cleanliness.

The present report on Child Rearing Practices and Socialization Process of the Dongria Kondh society, a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of Niyamgiri hill ranges, is based on the field study conducted during November-2000.

### **Methodology:**

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared for collection of data on child rearing practices and socialization process. Personal interview and observations were made and case studies were collected to support the analysis of different events of the Dongria Kondh socialization processes.

## **II. Maternity & Child Birth:**

### **Carving for Children:**

Pregnancy followed by childbirth is one of the most important events in the life of a Dongria Kondh woman. The main purpose of her marriage is to beget children. To become a mother is the ever-cherished desire of a married woman



in their society. Children, as the binding force tighten the relationship between the husband and wife. Like all other societies, in Dongria Kondh society children are the source of joy and future hope of the parents. Being the economic assets to their parents, they share the burden of their parents from their early childhood by assisting them in all kinds of economic and domestic activities. Perhaps this is one of the most important reason for which the parents like more children.

The Dongria Kondh couples both men and women are very eager to have children immediately after their marriage. The husband and other family members anxiously wait for the news of pregnancy of a married woman, especially for the first issue which confirms whether she is capable of bearing children or happens to be a barren lady.

Sangari Sikoka of village Kolerpota in Muniguda GP was married to Katri Wadaka S/o Kokunda Wadaka of village Khambesi by way of bride capture. Being a matured lady she conceived within one year and delivered a son after nine months. She vividly remembered her nine months period of pregnancy. She avoided eating all non-veg food items in order to protect the fetus. She did not take dry fish, which was used to be of her favorite item in her meal after market days. She was loved more and appreciated by all her family members and neighbors when she became pregnant.

A married Dongria woman after her maturity and marriage has strong desire to have children. But if she does not conceive within two or three years she consults the Jani, Disari and Beju / Bejuni (magico-religious functionaries) for some herbal medicines and to know the supernatural power who is displeased and responsible for her infertility. She takes herbal medicines as given by the Disari. She also offers *puja* as prescribed by the Jani and Bejuni.

Palo Sikoka, w/o Sukur Wadaka of village Khambesi was married after she was captured by a group of 5 friends of Sukru about 15 years back. Sukru paid Rs. 500/- as *jhola*, (bride price). She was matured when she married, but she did not conceive after one year. She consulted, the Bejuni who performed Puja for her and she was paid Rs. 300/-, cloth and rice (5 *mano*). After two years she conceived and Bali was born after nine months. But, the child died at the age of 2 years by fever (*nambri*) and vomiting. The couple consulted the Disari and as per his advise went to Kalabandh near Mulundpur where Prasak Dombu - the Disari offered Puja to Dharani Debta and the couple vowed that if they are blessed with a baby and he/she grows to childhood they will come back with a buck to offer to Puja to the Dharani Debta. Harischandra was born after a year and when he became 7 (seven) years old the parents with their child and offering (a buck) went to Kalabandh and offered the Puja. Now, besides Harischandra they have 2 more sons and a daughter.

Though health centre, dispensary, PHC and a private hospital run by the missionaries are available at a distances of 15 Kms at Bissamcuttack, they rarely consult a medical personnel or avail any medical facilities, During the field visit it was found that a mobile health camp was organized by the health department but out of 3 expectant mothers only one was available in the village for undergoing medical check up.

In Dongria society, the married couple dislikes to adopt any type of birth control measures. However, recently due to wide publicity about family planning some of them have developed a positive attitude towards this practice.

Singari Sikoka, the second wife of Tunia Jakasika of village Kurli has adopted family planning measures after her fourth issue. She has two sons and two daughters from herself in addition to 3 children of her co-wife Sitari Mandika. Tunia - the husband allowed Singari to undergo this family planning operation. She used to have very painful period of pregnancy with waist and stomach pain and difficult delivery in all four cases. Last delivery was done at Bissamcuttack in the hospital after three days of difficult labour pain. They had to stay for eleven days in the hospital and so finally, they decided for the operation as they already have 7 children in their family. The 1st wife Sitari had delivered 5 babies out of which a boy and a girl died at the age of 5 and 2 half years respectively. Sitari explained to me about all her pregnancy periods and the related problems including difficult deliveries. She was married to Tunia before attaining puberty. She attained maturity after five years and since then each of her pregnancy period and delivery were very difficult. She used to suffer from general weakness, nausea, and waist and stomach pain. She works as a helper in the village Anganwadi centre. As such she came in contact with the Anganwadi worker and other health personnel at regular intervals. Being motivated by these personnel, she wanted to undergo birth control operation. But her husband disagreed as she is the first wife and their cultural norm does not allow this. Tunia reported that he is often being ridiculed by the neighbors for allowing his second wife to adopt family planning measure as if he cannot feed them and their off springs allowed one of his wives to undergo operation.. He feels sad when he hears such comments and sometimes, he feels that he has committed a mistake. But his first wife Sitari feels it was right because she has empathy for her co-wife who suffered so much in all her pregnancy periods and subsequent deliveries, because she herself had the experience of such pains.

#### **Confirmation of Pregnancy:**

The married Dongria Kondh woman on cessation of her monthly period for continuous two to three months and in some cases having nausea and vomiting becomes confirmed about her pregnancy. She proudly intimates her

husband and mother in law. All the family members and the society welcome the message with joy. It is considered a blessing from Dharni Penu (Earth Goddess). It enhances the social status of the woman in their society. The husband boasts over the message of pregnancy and proudly declares among his friends that his wife is rich as she is pregnant and will give birth to a child - "*Na Wadi Dukri Milaya mane-Fututa*".

On the other hand, the husband dislikes a barren wife and he is at liberty to have a second wife to beget children. No medical treatment is undertaken for getting children though medical facilities available at Bissamcuttack. But, such women use to take recourse to some indigenous medicines and make vows to sacrifice animals to become pregnant. In some cases, Disari also advices to offer *puja* to appease the gods and deities for the purpose.

#### **Preference for Sex:**

Although the birth of a male child is generally preferred to continue the family line, a female child is never disliked. It is equally welcomed and the parents treat a male and female child on equal footing as both of them provide economic assistance to their parents since early childhood. Girls fetch high bride-price to their parents where as boy's parents have to pay bride price to get them married. It is also observed that among the Dongrias that as compared to the boys, girls work more both in domestic front and in the *dongar* (swidden) field. However, in most of the tribal societies women work more than the men.

#### **Taboos and Restrictions:**

In the Dongria Kondh society maternal and child mortality is caused due to their ignorance, illiteracy and strong traditional belief system. Cases of abortions and stillbirths are reported due to lack of awareness of the mothers and their preoccupation with their works. They are not much careful about the general precautions and preliminary health care during early pregnancy and gestation period as a whole, which leads to further complications. Some of them fall prey to malnutrition due to lack of balanced diet. Extra or nutritious food is never a regular habit of an expectant mother. This is due to their ignorance, poor economic condition, combined with the prevailing social customs and food habits. It is reported by all the mothers who were interviewed that as soon as the gestation period starts, many of them stop taking even regular food due to nausea and vomiting whereas others abstain from taking non-vegetarian food except dry fish. Non-vegetarian food is an occasional item available to them. The pregnant woman is restricted to take pork. They believe that non-vegetarian food items will harm the baby or cause indigestion. They also fear that the baby

may overgrow and cause difficult delivery. Pregnancy is normal and causal occurrence after the marriage of a woman. No special attention is given to the pregnant woman who continues her normal household and outdoor duties till the occurrence of labour pain. She also takes her normal food during this period, which is not at all different from that taken normally by other members of the family barring some restrictions of a few food items. Occasionally, seasonal fruits like pineapple, banana, jackfruit, mango, orange, etc. form a part of her extra diet when ever available. Snacks like biscuits, fried rice, flattened rice, cake etc. are given to her in case of few well to do families.

The pregnant Dongria Kondh woman avoids visiting lonely and dark places in order to protect her fetus from the eyes of the evil spirits. She never visits the origin of the spring and fountains as the spring deities are considered to be harmful and feel annoyed if a pregnant woman goes to such places where spring deities are believed to stay.

**Special Treatment:**

In Dongria Kondh society the men or women do not have any idea about special treatment of the carrying mother and immature baby. They also never take special care for embryonic development to facilitate growth and ensure healthy off spring.

**Belief about Twins:**

Birth of twins is considered inauspicious among them and they apprehend it as a sign of some misfortune to the family. On query, they reported the case of Laxmidhar Wadaka of village Khambesi whose wife gave birth to a pair of twins in her second issue and her husband died after suffering from Nambri (Malaria) and stomach pain for continuous three years even after consulting the Disaris of 10 to 15 villages and taking herbal medicines as prescribed by them. They also reported the cases of Ghasi Wadaka of the same village whose wife gave birth to twin and both of them died after two days.

**Abortion:**

The woman does not disclose early abortions, as she is held responsible for this. Some among them believe it to be caused by some evil spirit. Stillbirth is considered a disease. Though most of the Dongria Kondhs believe stillbirth and infant mortality are caused by the evil spirits but in actual case, death occurred due to fever, malaria, diarrhea, measles and other such health related factors.

Abortion is resorted to in case of illegitimate pregnancy as it is always disapproved and looked down upon by the society. In case of unsuccessful

abortion, delivery takes place in the girl's parental home. If the male person involved does not accept the unwed mother voluntarily, the mother and the illegitimate child are often humiliated and teased by other members of the society. If any Dongria male agrees to marry the girl, the child may be accepted by her husband or can live at her parental home. Ame Wadaka, S/o Buklu of village Khambesi who was staying at Khajuri with his wife and children was excommunicated for life, due to his intrigue with another woman of his village.

### **Delivery:**

Usually delivery takes place at husband's house in the second room known as *Dhapa*. The neighbouring elderly women including the mother-in-law assist the parturient woman and delivery takes place in sitting posture. One of the assisting women cuts the umbilical cord with a small knife (*kati*) and places the placenta in an earthen pot and burry the same behind the house. After the delivery the mother cleans herself with tepid water. The neonate is wrapped with warm cloth anointed with turmeric paste and bathed with tepid water. During the confinement period, the mother has no other work except her attending to her personal cleanliness and caring the baby. The baby is breast fed whenever he cries or needs suckling. The mother is given *ragi* gruel and rice with some salt or vegetable curry. During the pollution period, the family members and consanguine kins are considered polluted. The villagers and other members of the community do not accept food or water from them. They are also restricted to participate in any common social or religious functions of the village. The family members do not take any non-vegetarian food and abstain from participating in any communal feast and festival.

The parturient mother and the neonate are treated as impure and are secluded in the *Dhapa* for a minimum period of one month. Seclusion period is also the time for drying and dropping off of the naval stump. After dropping of naval cord the child can be taken to the first room and taken to lap by the family members and others as it is considered clean.

### **Purification Ceremony:**

Purification ceremony is held usually after one month when the seclusion period is over. All the cloths used during her seclusion period are taken out to the stream for washing after boiling with ash. Those who can afford are now-a-days using washing soaps for this purpose. The *Dhapa* and backyard is cleaned and smeared with cow-dung. The parturient mother takes bath after head wash and then she is considered purified. Thereafter, she is allowed to resume her normal duties.

Name giving ceremony (*Mila-Daru*) is held as per their convenience. During this occasion, maternal uncle and grandparents are invited. The baby is anointed with oil and turmeric paste, bathed and made to sit on the mother's lap. Grain divination process takes place for selection of name of the baby. Usually, the names of dead ancestors are considered for the neonate because they believe in rebirth of one of the dead ancestors of their family. Now-a-days, due to external influences many new non-tribal names are being given to the children.

**Adoption:**

The kinsmen of the Dongria society usually adopt the orphan child. If the mother dies after delivery any of the lactating woman among the kins breast-feed the baby. In case no wet nurse is available, the baby is given *ragi* or rice gruel.

### III. Infancy

**Feeding:**

As soon as the seclusion period is over, the Dongria Kondh mother resumes her normal works, like attending to all household chores and other economic pursuits. As such, she fails to devote much of her time in attending to the need of the infant. Sometimes, she is so busy with her work that the infant has to wait crying bitterly to be fed. The mother, who usually devotes full time in nursing the baby in the first month, shifts her attention abruptly to other works. Such abrupt change in attending and feeding creates a sense of confusion and frustration in the infant's mind. In several such cases the Dongria Kondh women reported that the infants very often cry bitterly and even refused to suck for some time. They reported that they had to pacify them by caressing, fondling and then breast feed for long hours. Such situation arises when the mother goes to work leaving the baby with a child nurse or grandmother. In such case after return from the field the Dongria Kondh mother feels it to be her first duty to fondle, caress and breast feed the baby before attending to other works. The Dongria Kondh women use to breast-feed the baby in sitting and sleeping position. But it has been reported and observed that women while in journey tie their babies in a sling with a piece of cloth and the child can suck comfortably while walking over mountainous routes. It has been noticed that the babies being satisfied after being breast fed taking a deep slumber in this position while the mother is walking through mountainous route for long hours. But during the night the mothers usually feed their baby in sleeping position. Supplementary starchy food like *ragi* gruel or rice is given to the baby after 3 to 4 months. No such ceremony of first rice eating is held.

**Weaning:**

Weaning and discontinuation of breast-feeding depends on the liking of the baby and on flow of milk from mother's breast. Dongria women never like to practice forceful weaning unless the milk ceases to flow due to the unexpected pregnancy, disease or other reasons. They allow sucking till the child himself dislikes it after taking sufficient amount of solid food like rice and *ragi* gruel. In case, milk flow ceases before completion of a year or so the mother forcefully weans her child with much sorrow. In such case she consults the Disari or Jani for remedial measures. If there are lactating women in their family the child is given her breast if her milk flow is enough for two babies. It has been observed that Sitari Mandika of village Kurli, sometimes feeds Singary's (her co-wife) baby when she is busy in some domestic works. In their society, weaning is never practiced till the baby sucks or the next child is born. It has been observed that children of 3 to 4 years of age continue to suck milk from the mother. In case of weaning due to stoppage of milk for prolonged illness or unexpected pregnancy, the baby is given rice and millet gruel for about 5 times a day. For forced weaning the mother anoints some bitter paste around her nipples so that the child starts disliking the breast and gives up sucking. During early infancy the sleeping hours of the baby is long, but slowly it is reduced with age. The infant is usually made to sleep on the ground over a mat or gunny bag on which some torn clothes are spread. Now-a-days, some of the Dongria families are using small stringed wooden cots locally available for the purpose.

The Dongria Kondh parents and elders do not expect bowel and bladder control during infancy as the baby has no control over it. Elders do not mind if the child urinates or defecates anywhere at any time. The urinated clothes are dried under sun where as defecated clothes are washed with water. Now-a-days washing soaps are used for cleaning such dirty clothes instead of just washing. The baby's buttocks are washed or wiped with a piece of torn cloth if available. The infant, if gives indications about it, is taken out for defecation. The infants of walking stage who also start talking and can understand baby language, is taught to go outside for defecation. But infants who continue to urinate on the bed at night are sometimes awakened and taken out for urination.

The infant usually starts walking and talking at the stage of one and half years. The work oriented parents and elders in Dongria Kondh society find little time to help the baby in this stage. But a child nurse and old grandparents often teach and help the baby in learning to walk and talk through baby language. Thus, the infant listens, imitates that utterance and slowly develops his language.

#### IV. Childhood

Differentiation of sex among Dongria Kondh children is marked from early childhood. A girl child of about 5 years most often follows the sister, mother or grandmother whereas a small boy usually follows the brother, father or other male relatives while going to the work site. It is really interesting to see a female child following her sister, mother or aunt with a small vessel while going to fetch water from the stream. She learns household works, like sweeping and cleaning, bringing fire wood and looking after the younger siblings in the absence of the mother or when she is busy with her domestic chores. Subsequently, when she becomes 13 to 14 years old she learns to husk paddy, operate grinding stone and to plaster the house with mud and cow dung and do agricultural operations like wedding, reaping, threshing winnowing, cleaning and storing.

Boys in their early childhood do not have any work. They simply accompany the male members, especially the father and the brother observe them at work and learn the agricultural operations, watching the crop fields and assist in tending cattle. At about the age of 13 to 14 they practically start doing the work of cattle tending, ploughing, hoeing, tree felling, sowing, reaping, threshing, house building and other manual works.

During early childhood i.e. up to 5 years of age both the sexes go naked. Thereafter, boys wear small clothes and girls use loin clothes and small saris. Now-a-days, some boys and girls use modern dress like pants, shirts and frock etc. if their parents can afford.

Both parents and their children love each other very much and their love is expressed in terms of their affectionate talk and cheerful smile. Children anxiously wait for the return of their parents after day's work. On many occasions, the former accompany the latter when going outside their village. Although children have to participate in various works of the household the parents maintain them till they are married. They want their children stay with them till their marriage. The married daughters exchange visit to their parental home and maintain cordial relationships.

#### V. Adolescence

Adolescence is the most critical period in the life of an individual. The first phase of adolescence starts generally with the onset of menstruation in case



of girls and emergence of pubic hair in case of boys. No specific puberty ceremony is attached to the boys. In case of girls with the onset of her first menstruation symptoms she is confined in the *Dhapa*, (back room) for seven days when she is considered polluting. She is restricted to look at anybody; more specifically she should not look at the face of any male member. She has to put oil on her head. She is tabooed to enter the main room and touch any other belongings of the house. There is a restriction for her to participate in any communal or household ritual. Ragi cake baked upon fire is served to the girl as food besides in addition to her normal diet i.e. *ragi* gruel. She cleans and washes herself and her clothe at the back side of the house attended by her mother or other female members. On the seventh day, she is taken to the stream for purification. She puts on oil and turmeric paste on her body and takes bath washing her head. The Bejuni accompanies her and invokes the *Gangue Penu* the deity who is supposed to have entrapped her during this period. She also sacrifices a red-feathered chick and sprinkles the blood on the feet of the girl. She also utters incantation and puffs intermittently over all parts of the body of the girl to drive away the deity and after which the girl is treated purified and free from the clutches of the deity. In subsequent monthly periods, no such restrictions are imposed and a menstruating girl is free from pollution after her bath and she is allowed to go to the *Dhangdi basa*, the youth dormitory.

## VI. Training

The parents and other kinsmen do not give scope to their children to develop aggression and to become revengeful. Instead, they help them to lead a friendly and corporate life. They encourage bravery and want their children to be brave and courageous enough to face difficult situations in life. Inculcation of courage and bravery starts at the late childhood at about the age of 11 to 12 when a male child goes to the Jungle to fetch fuel wood or *dongar* field to watch and guard the crop field. Sometimes he also stays in the field at night with his father. There he learns to confront and chase wild animals with loud noise, making fire and use of weapons. Anger of the boys are tolerated and inspired in some cases, like clan feuds but anger of girls are suppressed and discouraged. Parents do not support their children who fight and quarrel among themselves. Verbal aggression, disobedience, defiance, temper, tantrum, etc. are dealt with by scolding and sometimes even beating.

Parents and elders are not much careful about giving cleanliness training to their children during their infancy and early childhood. During the first year sometimes up to the stage of walking they are given bath two times daily by their

mothers after which bathing and feeding routine often lies upon the grand parents or the child nurse. They mostly neglect daily cleaning of teeth as a primary cleanliness habit. Children below the age of six never brush their teeth and others above their age group are also very casual in brushing teeth.

Cloths are washed at an interval of fortnight by using ash or soap. The habit of spitting everywhere even nears the hearth inside the kitchen makes unhealthy surroundings. In the Dongria Kondh houses the children have very little in scope to learn about sanitation. Women do not do comb hair daily. They do it occasionally at leisure hours or while going to market or visiting friends, relatives and on festive days. However, in case of males, combing is also irregular. Young girls before going to dormitory often do combing regularly.

A girl at her teen-age goes to sleep with other girls of the village in the youth dormitory (*dhangdi basa*) house during night. This provides her the scope to develop friendly and corporate life in a wider circle. Thus, a part of her emotional attachment shifts to her friends from her mother and family. Likewise, the grown up boys form groups, gossip among themselves, play drums and go to *bandhu* villages to visit girls of *dhangdi basa*. Boys and girls develop friendship with the opposite sex and during this period they develop curiosity about sex. Dancing and singing are regular features of the Dongria Kondh villages during off-seasons. Sex knowledge is acquired during this period.

## VII. Adulthood

The girl attains her adulthood with the onset of puberty at the age of 14 to 15 years and she is fit for marriage in Dongria society. But there are cases when a girl is married before attaining her puberty. In case of Sitari Mandika, the 1st wife of Tunia Jakasika, she was married before puberty and she was matured after 5 years of her marriage.

A Dongria Kondh boy is considered matured only when he is physically fit and has acquired adequate knowledge in earning his livelihood independently. Only after this the parents think of his marriage. In some exceptional cases boys also marry early, so as to increase the number of working members in the family. An adult boy can participate in the village affairs. After marriage, a boy attains full adulthood and maintains his family independently. He becomes the master of his household. Likewise, a girl attains adulthood after her marriage and when she goes to stay with her husband. She becomes the active earning member of the household. Finally, she attains her womanhood after becoming a mother by which her relationship and attachment with her husband are strengthened.

Though women are submissive and obedient, they are at liberty to play their role in certain spheres. In case of unsuccessful marriage, the man or the women can initiate divorce and go for second marriage. Masculinity in case of men and fecundity in case of women are great virtues, which are framed by one's capacity to bear children, where as impotency in case of former and barrenness in case of the latter is ridiculed in Dognria Kondh society. Couples after marriage lead a conjugal life. They are loyal to each other, shoulder responsibilities of adulthood, bear children, rear them up, train them in economic activities, social mores and help them to achieve their adulthood.

### References:

1. Acharya, M & Mohanty, R. P. 1993 Games vis-a-vis Socialization: A case study Among Kondh Children, *Adivasi* Vol. XXXIII No. 2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, PP. 22-25.
2. Benedict, Ruth 1935 *Patterns of Culture*, Butler & Tanner Ltd, London.
3. Hurlock, E.B. 1959 *Developmental Psychology*, Tata Mc Graw – Hill Publishing Company Ltd. New Delhi.
4. Mead , M 1954 *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Penguin Books Ltd. Harmandsworth, Middlesex.
5. Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S. 1982 *The Kondh of Orissa*, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

# ETHNIC HEALERS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH OF ORISSA <sup>1</sup>

A.K. Gamango <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The Dongria Kondh is a primitive and backward section of the Kondh tribe. Through their age-old experience, they have evolved certain traditional mechanisms and institutions to meet their needs in everyday life. They have evolved their socio-religious and economic organizations and institutions for achieving different objectives. Religion is one of them, which plays a significant role in establishing peace, harmony, and solidarity in their society and guides them to follow the right path for prosperity.

Their age old institution of shamanism still has a powerful influence on them and their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni (Pejni)* respectively are among the most distinguished and respected magico-religious functionaries in their society. They are primarily religious in the sense that they seek help from the divine or spiritual world, or they can be more magical in that they attempt to manipulate the spirit of the supernatural forces. Such people who have special religious knowledge either control supernatural power out rightly to facilitate others in their attempt to influence it. These specialists are called shamans and priests. Though, the priest and the shaman coexist in the Dongria society, the latter acts as a vehicle for communication between human and supernatural. He often establishes a personal relationship with the supernatural beings and/or knows the secret medicines and spells necessary to use supernatural power. On the contrary, the priests as religious specialists also mediate between people and supernaturals but usually do not have powers to control the supernatural agencies. Thus according to Spradley and Mecurday, "Shamans control supernatural power, has no congregations, and direct rituals

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, No.1&2, 2007, pp.139-149

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

only when there is need for them. Priests mediate between people and the supernatural and lead congregations at regularly held cyclical rites” (1975; 454). “The shaman is a part time magico–religious specialist who is adept at trance, divination and curing. He derives his power directly from a supernatural source, usually through mystic experience, accompanied frequently by the use of hallucinations” (Olien, 1978; 378).

As described in ‘Notes and Quarries in Anthropology’, “The term shamanism has been applied generally for spirit possession of priests, and the manifestations have come to be called shamanism” (1952: 174). The shamanism being an archaic religious art is closely associated with religion. It has its own identity, value and jurisdiction in the realm of supernaturalism. The shamanic rituals and processes are mainly concerned with impersonal forces and powers living in natural and artificial objects. Shamanic performers call in the supernatural beings to act through charms and spells and adjurational observances. According to La Barre (1972:267) as quoted by Olien, “... the shamanistic belief system accepts nature as it is, as opposed to large states which transform the environment. The shaman merely manages the changing elements in it, such as life and death, the weather, and so on.”

In the Dongria Kondh society certain category of religious functionaries such as *Beju* and *Bejuni* (*Pejni*) perform the act of shamanism. They have their own adopted spirits whom they regularly worship to get their favour and help in occult practices. They can communicate with spirits and deities who are believed to be responsible for causing human problems. In order to communicate with spirits, they get into trance through divination, prayers, offerings, oblation and certain rituals. In the state of trance they tell people about their problems and solutions by contacting the concerned spirits. They prescribe the remedy through the rice supplication process called *puchana*, which is an important part of the shamanic ritual. They advise and sometimes, forcibly demand performance of rituals and animal sacrifices to appease supernatural powers.

The most important characteristic of Dongria religion is faith in magic. Both white and black magic are part and parcel of shamanism. The later is rarely practiced openly as it is believed to involve risk of life. As a matter of fact, the Dongria Kondh reacts violently when they suspect any person practicing black magic. They believe that it is used to harm and cause death.

The Dongria Kondhs strongly believe that shamanism is a magico-religious art, which is gifted to certain persons by supernatural powers. Their success in learning and practicing the art depends upon supernatural will and

sanctions. Becoming a shaman can be the result of a mythical experience, such as a vision or a period of special training or both. Practically, a shaman requires certain kind of training not in the religious doctrines which he interprets as a priest would, but in the methods he uses in his normal religious activities. Though in actual practice they learn the art from the veterans, they deny such learning and training and ascribe supernatural blessings to their practice. In reality the shamanic practices of the Dongria Kondh is a learned behaviour acquired by proper training and orientation to the trade by the persons having the interest and aptitude for such work. In the Dongria society, their shamans continue to retain their stronghold in the supernatural domain despite the acculturative impacts of the modern agencies of change. Hence, the study of shamanism in their society is needed to get some idea about their social system and way of life, which will ultimately help in effective developmental intervention.

This paper is based on a study of magico-religious beliefs and practices among the Dongria Kondhs in some villages located in the Niamagiri hill ranges covering the Kurli area of Bissamcuttack Block in Rayagada district of Orissa.

### **The Dongria Kondh**

Like other primitive section of the Kondh community, the Dongria Kondh are also shifting cultivators. Fruit bearing trees like mango, jackfruit and tamarind generally surrounds the Dongria Kondh villages. The seats of the two village shrines viz, the 'Darni Penu' (Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess) and her consort, 'Kotiasal' are established in a central place inside the village. There is also an open ground with seats of stone slabs earmarked for holding the meetings of their traditional village *panchayat*. The spinsters' dormitory called 'Adasbetta' located near the hill stream at one end of the village is another landmark of the Dongria Kondh village.

"The Kondh villages, ideally speaking are as much social entities as they are politically with huge measures of cohesion and continuity... The head of the village tribal council is also the headman of the village. Parallel to the secular position held by the village headman is the religious head called, 'Jani' who presides over all the religious functions organized by the people of the village. In some areas the leadership of both secular and religious functions combines with one person, which goes by one term 'Jani'. In addition to these secular and religious heads there is a functionary called, 'Dishari' who works as the medicine man in some areas and astrologer in other areas. In every village there is a peon called 'Barika' of Domb community who plays an important role in the village life. He calls the people to the meeting place when the village assembly sits, contacts

officials on behalf of the village and acts as an interpreter of the people. The tribal council enjoys considerable freedom in conducting its day-to-day activities. The Dongrias culturally have many other distinguishing features. One of them is their clan organization...In this case the clan is not totemic as is usual in other tribes. It is rather derived from the 'Mutha' system, a territorial unit that was devised for administrative purposes during the British rule" (Patnaik, 1982; vi)

For their so many striking features, the Dongrias draw attention of the anthropologists and outsiders. As a tribal folk, they are simple, sensible and quick in observation. "In almost all activities the people of the Kondh community reveal a corporate life. They help each other in economic activities and drink, dance and sing all in congregation. Religious ceremonies and festivals are performed communally. Crime is rare, adultery is common and the individual behaviour is marked by honest and truthfulness. Ideally hospitable, exceptionally candid and remarkably simple, the primitive section of the tribe particularly the Kutia and Dongria live in nature and fade away in its mystery. To the Kondh the nature is the greatest impeller, the scenery around forming the grand arena where the human drama of vicissitudes of the mortal life is staged".

### **Religious Functionaries among Dongria Kondh**

There are number of magico-religious and administrative functionaries in a village. They operate in their respective domains of duties and responsibilities. They propitiate deities and spirits through different types of rituals. It is believed that progress, peace and prosperity of entire community are not possible to be handled by one deity. Thus they have adopted number of deities and spirits to meet their various purposes and the responsibility of appeasing them also have been distributed among several functionaries. During festivals and functions they perform rituals offering liquor and animals sacrifice, pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessings and protection. Among the Dongria the sacred functionaries are called, *Jani*, *Lamba Jani*, *Ichan Jani*, *Pujari*, *Bejuni* etc. Besides, there are *Gurumeni* and *Barik* who assist them whenever necessary. In certain occasions the household heads perform certain rituals to appease ancestral spirits and other household deities and spirits at the family level.

In brief, traditionally *Jani* the high priest is also the secular head of a Dongria Kondh village. He plays most important role in both the religious and secular spheres. He is the principal worshipper of *Darani Penu*, the Earth Goddess and commands great respect in the society. There is an *Ichan Jani* from the *Jani's* lineage to assist *Jani*. He prescribes and arranges items for rituals and assists *Jani* during worship. The *Jani* who has vast experience and officiates in *Meria* festival

is called *Lamba Jani Pujari*, a hereditary, functionary performs special duties in the *Meria* festival. He makes an umbrella out of bamboo and during rituals he joins with *Jani*. He also takes part in other communal festivals and functions. The *Bejus* and *Bejunis*, have special responsibilities in their society. They are experts in magico-religious rituals. Gurumeni assists Beju/ Bejuni in magico-religious performances. Besides, Disari is the medicine man of the Dongrias.

**Shaman (Beju) & Shamanin (Bejuni):** Shamanism is defined as “Precisely one of the archaic techniques of ecstasy mysticism, magic and religion in the broadest sense of the term “(Eliade, 1951; xix). As it is commonly believed, shaman is not simply a magician and a medicine man. “But beyond this, he is a psycho pomp, and he may also be a priest, mystic and poet... This of course, does not mean that he is the one and only manipulator of the sacred, nor that religious activity is completely usurped by him. In many tribes the sacrificing priest coexists with the shaman, ... Magic and magicians are to be found more or less all over the world, whereas shamanism exhibits a particular magical specialty... By virtue of this fact, though the shaman is, among other things, a magician, not every magician can properly be termed a shaman. The same distinction must be applied in regard to shamanic healing; every medicine man is a healer, but the shaman employs a method that is his and his alone. As for the shamanic techniques of ecstasy, they do not exhaust all the varieties of ecstatic experience documented in the history of religions and religious ethnology. Hence any ecstatic cannot be considered a Shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld” (Trask, 1964; 4-5).

The Dongria Shaman, more or less, fits into the above description. But in Dongria society the medicine man is called “Dishari” who practices herbal medicine. There are persons who only practice medicine and there are also persons who combine the work of shaman and medicine man. The female shamanins (Bejunis) do not come under this category as they only conduct preventive and curative rituals for treatment of diseases and other problems but do not prescribe medicines like the Bejus do.

**Bejus and Bejunis in Jakasika and Wadaka Muthas:** From the study at Dongria villages it is found that there may or may not be any Beju or Bejuni at a particular village. In such cases the Beju of nearby village serves the villagers. In the Muthas, such as Jakasika and Wadaka, the Bejunis outnumber the Bejus. It is interesting to note that there are only four Bejus against 19 Bejunis in Jakasika Mutha. The probable reason behind the Bejunis overwhelmingly outnumbering



the Bejus may be that people rely more on the Bejunis than the Beju. However, the Beju and Bejuni undergo the same process of training and initiation, deal with the same problems and conduct the same rituals. Further, the Bejus go a step ahead of the Bejunis by their practice of herbal medicines. Yet the people are more inclined to avail the services of Bejunis.

The Beju and Bejuni can come from any clan. The remuneration for their services is not fixed. They are paid in cash or kinds comprising a small amount of money rice, meat or head of the sacrificial animals and alcoholic drinks. They do not demand anything and are satisfied with whatever they get from their clients. Moreover their jurisdiction is not confined to any particular village or Mutha. They can render services anywhere when called upon to do so. The veterans among them who have vast experience in this line are elevated to the status of Pat-Bejuni (the chief shamanin). But among the Bejus there are no Pat-Bejus in Dongria villages of our study area.

**The Domain of Beju & Bejuni:** Like all other religious functionaries, shaman and shamanin play an important role in magico-religious life of the Dongrias. They understand their special socio-religious responsibilities and perform both religious and shamanic rituals with utmost care and sincerity. It is because knowingly or unknowingly if they neglect in their acts deviating the age-old traditions, it is believed that misfortune befalls on the society.

**Various kinds of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis:** In fact shaman and shamanin are the representative of the people to whom supernatural powers have blessed to act as medium of communication between them and the humans. In that capacity they propitiate gods, deities and spirits on behalf of people. As they are specialists in divination by rice supplication process, in reciting incantations and dancing and in performing rituals, they try to find remedy to human problems by communicating with the supernaturals. They play an exceptional role in defense of the psychic integrity of society. They are the champions to encounter the spiritual forces. They not only combat against demons and diseases but also against the black magic.

The Bejus and Bejunis perform large variety of shamanic rites at the individual family level and at the community level. While the Bejus combine the works of shaman and medicineman, Bejunis restrict their field of activities to shamanism only, though there is no difference in their shamanic practices. But interestingly people consider Bejunis to be more effective in this art and therefore Bejunis outnumber the Beju in Dongria Kondh villages. It may be for

the reason that the Beju share time between practice of medicine and practice of Shamanism whereas the Bejunis are totally dedicated to shamanic practices.

### **Diagnostic and Curative Services for Illness**

So far as the diagnostic and curative services are concerned, the roles, functions and modus operandi of Beju and Bejuni differ. People accept the Beju as a physician; a practitioner of herbal medicine. The Bejuni is rather a witch doctor as well as a mental therapist. Patients come to her when the traditional medicine fails and involvement of supernatural agencies is suspected. Then it becomes the responsibility of the Bejuni to detect the troublesome spirit or deity, prescribe and conduct appropriate remedial rituals. The rituals are mostly directed towards appeasement of the deities and spirits by animal sacrifice.

As regards their traditional costume, the Bejus and Bejunis have nothing very spectacular except wearing red and semi red beads, vermilion marks on their foreheads and some heavy ornaments. They put on a chain of bells around their ankles, which jingles when they dance in trance. They hold a bunch of peacock feathers by waving which they drive out evil agencies. Another important paraphernalia is the winnowing fan with which they conduct rice divination.

### **Classification of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis**

Various kinds of shamanic jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis to serve the individuals families and the village community have been classified below. It is evident from the tasks that their services are more demanded to deal with a multitude of problems at the individual level than at the community level. Nevertheless their special role and responsibilities to interact between the concerned supernatural agencies and the village community and obtain the formers' favour in the interest of the latter during various seasonal festivals and rituals cannot be dispensed with in anyway. But both the Bejus and Bejunis undertake different kinds of shamanic jobs as discussed below.

I. For individual family they undertake diagnostic, curative & preventive practices for treatment of various kinds of illness such as to determine the cause and prescribe remedy for fever, various types of body aches and pains, small pox, chicken pox, unidentified diseases etc.

II. By exorcism they deal with Deities and Spirits to prevent and remove various kinds of diseases misfortunes and human sufferings (other than diseases), to ward off malevolent sprits causing trouble (including ancestral sprits), to appease benevolent ones to earn their pleasure and protection and to detect the spirit causing trouble at the individual level.

III. To serve the above purpose, Bejus and Bejunis perform shamanic rituals at individual family level in life cycle events.

#### **Services rendered by Beju & Bejuni**

(1) *Life Cycle Rituals* (pregnancy, childbirth, marriage & death) - to prevent miscarriage, infant death and facilitate easy delivery, to identify the ancestor taking rebirth in the new born baby, to conduct puberty rites for girls to ward off evil spirits, preventive rites during wedding to protect the couple from malevolent spirits and detect the cause and agencies responsible for abnormal and unnatural deaths and prescribe ritual remedies to prevent mishaps.

(2) *Agricultural Rites and Festivals*- They officiate in Dongar Puja (November – December) at individual family level to get a good harvest, Kuteli Perpa (April-May) (Worship of Lahi Penu, Budharaja and Niamraja) to appease and seek permission for felling trees from the Dongar, Pidika (September-October) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) to save castor from pests and insects and reap a good harvest and Mendo Puja /Mendo Dakli (December-January) (worship of Lahi Penu and Sita Penu) to start harvesting; and both at individual and community level festivals like, Bicha Hopa/Bihan Puja (worship of Darni Penu) (March-April) to start sowing and, Mandia Rani (July-August) (Worship of Koteiwali) to get a bumper Ragi crop and Balikorepa (April-May) (worship of Darni Penu) to prevent Kosla and Ragi crops.

(3) *Rituals and Festivals for first eating of seasonal crops and fruits*- They also perform rituals in Nuakhia/Marangi Laka (August-September) in which they worship Darni Penu, other deities and spirits to start first eating of newly harvested paddy and in Punahapadi (October-November) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) for first eating of Kosla, Kandul, Jana, other seasonal crops and fruits at individual and community level. Besides they also officiate in other seasonal rituals and festivals like, Meriah (January-February) (worship of Darni Penu) for all-round prosperity and wellbeing of the village, Ghanta Parab (April-May) (worship of Takrani Penu, Jatrakudi and Sita Penu) for fulfillment personal vows made to deities and spirits by animal sacrifice at village level and Enda Penu Puja (held as and when required) at village community level. In Salangi *puja* (May-June) (ancestor worship) to protect cattle and other livestock from disease and ill health and Male Manji (October-November) (Ancestor worship) the shaman and shamanin perform rituals for the well being of the family at the Individual family level.

### **Service to Individual Families**

To find out the services of Beju and Bejunis rendered to individual families, data have been gathered from two study villages, viz. Khambesi and Kurli in the year 2001-02.

As evident from data analysis of the shamanic practices, 3 Bejus and 5 Bejunis of Khambesi and Kurli villages have rendered various kinds of shamanic services to a total number of 146 individual clients belonging to both the villages. On an average each functionaries have served 18 clients during the last year. To analyse this information village wise separately, the four functionaries of Kurli village show a higher average figure of individual client service i.e., 21.5 each than that of their counterparts operating in Khambesi that is 15. The reason is that Khambesi is a large village as compared to Kurli and proportionately larger number of Beju and Bejunis are present in Khambesi. To be specific, there are 10 functionaries including 8 Bejunis and 2 Bejus working in Khambesi and only half of their number i.e., 1 Beju and only 4 Bejunis are performing in Kurli village. Based on the principle of demand and supply, the average figure of client service of the Bejus and Bejunis of Khambesi has come down as compared to that of their counterparts operation in Kurli.

If one looks data sex wise, the Bejunis of the both villages show a higher record of client service than their male counterparts. That is to say that, while the three Bejus have attended 49 clients with an average of 16 clients each, the 5 Bejunis have served 97 clients with a higher average of 19 clients each. This supports our finding about the higher demand for services of the Bejunis than the Bejus among the Dongria Kondhs since the former is believed to be more effective than their male counterparts.

Difference is also found in the level of individual performances of the functionaries. Among them the highest member of clients i.e., 28 have been served by Bejuni named Sonari Jakasika of Kurli and the lowest number i.e., 7 has been attended by the Bejuni named Maladi Kadraka of Khambesi. Among the 3 Bejus the highest (25) and the lowest (11) have been reported in cases of Daitari Kadraka of Khambesi and Namu Sikoka of Kurli respectively. Hence individual performances and rate of success of the functionaries' matters and the demand for their services vary accordingly.

The Bejus and Bejunis have rendered various kinds of services to their clients. These are classified into four major heads, viz. (i) diagnostic and curative services for illness, (ii) detection of trouble making spiritual agencies and

troubleshooting either by appeasement through rituals and sacrifices or by getting rid of them through exorcism, (iii) conduct of certain life cycle rituals for prevention and protection of mother and child and married couple from harmful supernaturals and (iv) performance of certain agricultural rites associated with stages of shifting cultivation and crop harvesting.

In these four categories of services the highest number of clients (90) has been covered under agricultural rites called Dongar Puja. The next in the order is diagnostic and curative rites for illness covering 43 clients. The services connected with life cycle rituals concerning child birth and marriage have been delivered only to 7 persons and the lowest number of clients i.e. 6, have received shamanic services relating to exorcism of trouble making spirits.

Analyzing the data village wise, the same trend is found. The service on agricultural rites covered the largest number of clients in both the villages. But the smallest numbers of clients have been served under exorcism in Kurli and under life cycle rituals in Khambesi. Also in both the cases the second highest number of clients has been served under the diagnostic and curative service category.

Comparing the performances of the 3 Bejus and 5 Bejunis of both the villages with regard to these four major categories of shamanic services, one finds that the 3 Bejus have served the largest number of individuals i.e., 29 out of total 49 under the diagnostic and curative services category on which they are more relied upon as compared to only 14 such clients (out of total 97) served by the Bejunis. The 5 Bejunis on the other hand, have performed agricultural rites for a majority of their clients (75 out of 97) as compared to only 15 persons served by their male counterparts under such kinds of services.

It is interesting to note that, in addition to their greater involvement in agricultural rites, the Bejunis retain their stronghold in life cycle rituals where the Bejus have no presence at all. But the situation reverses when it comes to dealing with the trouble making spiritual agencies involving exorcism. In this field, Bejus have a stronger presence than the Bejunis.

## A. CASE STUDIES OF BEJU / BEJUNI

### I. Namo Sikoka: A Young Apprentice Beju of Kurli village

In the village Panimunda, there is a Disari-cum-Beju named *Ado Sikoka*. When his wife died, there was no one to take care of his young son *Namo Sikoka*. So he was sent to Kurli to stay with his material uncle. Now the young child has attained his youth.

Two years ago, Namo fell ill and experienced dreams. He showed signs of fear and abnormal behaviour sometimes. His uncle called a Bejuni to treat him. The latter conducted divination and announced that two deities namely Simjodi Penu and Taku Penu are behind this problem. They want this young man to become a Beju.

Namo honoured the divine wish. The people of Kurli also encouraged him to do so because, there are four Bejunis in the village but no Beju and so they badly need the services of a Beju. Since last two years Namo has started practice as a medicine-man. But he is still an apprentice as he is yet to enter into “spiritual marriage” with his tutelary spirit.

## **II. Mandika Nilamani of Kurli village**

She is an old woman of above 60 years. Her parents were ordinary people. They never wanted their daughter, Nilamani to become a Bejuni. But she was destined to become so. In her adolescence, she received divine indications; it came in shape of a dream followed by prolonged fever. As usual a Bejuni was pressed into service. The cause was detected. That was Niam Raja, Kula Kene and Panji Guru, the Penus who wanted Nilamani to become a shamanin. Her parents did not agree. The Bejuni warned them of dire consequences. They had to agree at last. Nilamani started her career by learning the art from the experienced female practitioners and finally got married to her tutelary spirit. In course of time she married Chaita Mandika of Kurli village and lived with her husband. There she has been practicing shamanism for more than 40 years.

## **III. Maladi Kadraka of Khembesi village**

She inherited shaman hood from her natal family. Her mother was a shamanin. Her father was a Sisa, the assistant of the village priest, Jani and had knowledge of herbal medicines. They lived in the village Hingbadi.

From her very childhood Maladi was exposed to magico-religious activities due to her family background and developed an interest towards this service. The supernatural sanction came to her at 14 years of age. Lodasoni Penu appeared in her dream and persuaded her to marry and adopt him spiritually. In her dream, she was asked to pass the ordeal of walking over piece of thread connecting two hills. She had to walk to and fro three times carefully avoiding falling down. Falling down means disaster not only in the dream world itself as for the consequent fatal injury and the attack of hungry wild animals waiting on the ground, but also for the imminent misfortunes in real life. She came out of the ordeal successfully but fell ill soon after. As usual, an expert Bejuni was called in and she detected the spirit responsible for this problem. Acting upon her advice, her parents and Maladi herself decided to honour the wishes of Penus. They performed prescribed rituals to appease the Penu.

Maladi learnt the art form her mother as well as from the aged Bejunis. The next step was attainment of *bonafide* Bejunihood by solemnizing spiritual marriage with Lodasoni Penu. In course of time the girl grew up and got married to Pokru Kodraka of Khembesi. Incidentally, her mother-in-law, Rupeli was the Pat-Bejuni in the village. Her mother-in-law's strong influences prevented Maladi to practice during the life time of the latter. After the latter's death, she filled up the vacuum by starting her practice as worthy successor of her mother and mother-in-law. Now she has reached her ripe old age. Surprisingly her physical activities and agility have not diminished proportionately. She is capable of dancing for hours together in the state of trance.

#### **V. Hundadi Wadaka: A Bejuni of Khambesi village**

She was a charming maiden of 15 years old. Her step mother was a Shamanin. They were inhabitants of the village Kota belonging to Sikoka Mutha. The influence of step-mother on the girl was negligible. Like any other girl of her age, she was attending the village dormitory, meeting with her boy friends and dreaming about getting a sensible husband and leading a happy conjugal life. In this time, a dream came and changed her course of life.

A Penu visited the girl in her dreams and tried to win her heart. The innocent girl was mentally disturbed and confused. At first she felt shy to disclose the dream before her friends and parents. Sometimes she showed abnormal behaviour and also fell ill intermittently. Her parents were worried. They requisitioned the services of a Bejuni. The Bejuni went into trance and announced that Bira or Bhairo Penu is disturbing the girl. The deity wants to marry her so as to make her a Bejuni. The consequence of defying his wish might be disastrous. The girl and her parents were puzzled. Internally they did not want to comply but under the threat of the Penu's anger, they had to agree reluctantly. Hundadi was initiated into shaman hood first by apprenticeship and subsequently by spiritual marriage. After some days she was married to Driba Wadaka of Khembesi village and came to stay with her husband. There after she continued her practice as Bejuni in Khambesi.

### **(B) CASES OF PERSONAL PROBLEMS ATTENDED BY JAKASIKA ILLIME- BEJUNI**

#### **I. Problems Associated With Infant Mortality**

The three months old baby son of Jakasika Syama suffered from fever and passed away. Parents suspected displeasure of spirits behind this mishap and solicited the help of Bejuni, Jakasika who conducted 'Thana Puja' ritual near a stream. There she identified the malevolent spiritual agencies responsible for the misfortune and to appease them she sacrificed a goat, a pig and a pigeon supplied by the client.

## II. Prevention of Crop Failure

Jasika Illime in spite of being a reputed Bejuni of Kurli village once suffered from the misfortune of crop failure. Her family members faced hardship of food scarcity during that year. Illime decided to find out the cause of misfortune and detect the spirits and deities responsible for this. Hence she performed the *Malemanji* ritual in her house. She got into trance and discovered that household deities and ancestral spirits are displeased for being neglected by the family. To please them she sacrificed a fowl and a pigeon and hoped that the misfortune will not visit them again in the next year.

## III. Diagnostic & Curative Action for Illness

1. Surendra Kadraka of Kurli village regularly goes to work in his Dongar. One day while working there he felt uneasy and sick. His sickness was prolonged and did not respond to the herbal medicines prescribed by the Disari. His case was referred to the Bejuni, Illime Jakasika for diagnosis. The Bejuni and her assistant Gurumeni came to Surendra's house. Looking at the sick man, she suspected mischief of some Penu. There she drew a square with rice powder in the main room near the seat of the ancestral spirits, kept rice in three piles in the square and chanted verses. In the mean while the Gurumeni dropped some wine in the square, time and again. There they burnt incense and resin. The Bejuni started the process of divination by putting rice in her winnowing fan to identify the spirits causing trouble. While chanting incantations gradually she got into trance and began answering questions put by the Gurumeni. She revealed that Kalia Sundari Penu was mainly responsible for the problem. The spirit while wondering hungrily in the hills found Surendra alone and entered into his body. Then the Bejuni asked Gurumeni to sacrifice of a fowl, a goat and a pigeon to satisfy the hungry spirit and then request it to leave the patient. It was not possible to arrange the animals immediately. The family members of the patient promised to arrange it at a later date. However to manage the situation they sacrificed a chick to the spirit. The Bejuni waved peacock feathers thrice over the body of the patient and requested the deity to leave his body. The Bejuni was remunerated with ½ kg of rice, Rs.2/- in cash and the head of the chick. Later, the family fulfilled their commitment to the spirit during the next Dongar Puja.

2. Asi, the 8 months old baby son of Saiba Jakasika suffered from high fever for few days. His conditions become acute as he developed feets and fainted due to high temperature. His parents panicked and knocked at the door of the Bejuni, Jakasika Sonari to save the baby. The later responded immediately suspecting the involvement of ancestral spirits and she conducted rituals at Tulimunda, the seat of ancestors inside Saiba's house. She announced that the ancestor's spirits have taken an interest on the baby and wanted to play with the child. Appropriate rituals and animals sacrifice is required to please them. Saiba



vowed to comply after arranging the finance. The Bejuni communicated this to ancestral spirits and swept her peacock feathers over the body of the baby to remove the spirits. After sometime, Saiba honoured his commitments made before the spirits with the help of the Bejuni. She performed rituals and sacrificed a fowl and a goat to appease the spirits. He also paid the customary fees to the Bejuni. It was comprised of Rs.5/- in cash, some quantity of rice and heads of slaughtered animals. Now his son is cured.

3. Bangari Kadraka a widow of village Kurli aged 40 years fell ill. Even after taking herbal medicines from Disari she did not get relief. Then she thought that her sickness might have been caused by unhappy supernatural agencies. She approached a Bejuni, Sonari Jakasika. Sonari went into trance and found that Bangari's deceased husband's spirit has entered into her body and effected the sickness. The spirit will be pleased and leave her body by animal sacrifice. Bangari made promise to arrange the animal sacrifice latter, after arranging funds. After her recovery she fulfilled her promise by sacrificing animal. She offered the blood of a fowl and a pigeon to the spirit.

### **Conclusion**

Though not within their easy reach, today modern allopathic medicines and treatments are being made available to the Dongrias. They are slowly understanding the need for modern health care. Of course, in the last stage of diseases, when their magico-religious treatment fails, they go for modern treatment. In this context the fore-going discussions will help the tribal health development administrators and medicos to know the common health care needs of Dongrias and the indigenous method of magico-religious treatment by their ethnic healers. The knowledge of herbal remedies of the Disari, the medicine-man of the Dongria village, need to be documented for its better use. It is also expected that the Dongria ethnic healers may be invited to participate in the modern health projects introduced by Government and different voluntary organizations in preventing and curing diseases of the Dongria Kondh. For this the ethnic healers may be empowered through training in modern health practices and be provided with tool kits. Those, who are suitable among them, may also be given the chance to serve as Village Health Workers or ASHA in different health care projects.

## References

- Balikci Asen (1963) Shamanistic Behaviour among the Nestsilk Eskimos, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.19, pp.380-396, The University of New Mexico,
- Das Patnaik, P.S. (1972) Bejuni, Their Initiation into Shamanhood: *Adibasi*, Vol. XIV, No.1, pp.11-20.
- Friedl, J & J.E. Pfeiffer (1972) *Anthropology: The Study of People*, New York, Haper & Row.
- Majumdar, D. N & T.N. Madan (1986) *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Mayur Paper backs, Noida.
- Nayak, P.K. (1989) *Blood, Women and Territory; An Analysis of Clan Feuds of the Dongria Kondha*, Reliance Pub, Delhi
- Olien, Michel D. (1978) *The Human Myth; An Introduction to Anthropology*, New York, Harper & Row.
- Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S (1982) *The Kondh of Orissa: Socio-cultural Life and Development*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- Patnaik, N (1981) Primitive Tribes of Orissa & Their Development (Report, Unpublished), THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- Royal Anthropological Institute, London (1952) *Notes and Querries in Anthropology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Spradley, J.P. & D.W. Meurdy (1975) *Anthropology; The Cultural Perspective*, New York, John Wiky & Sons Inc.
- Trask, W.R (1964) *Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Eortary*, Princeton University Press (Translated from Mircea Eliade)
- Weber, M. (1922) *The Sociology of Religion*, (Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff) Methuem & Co Ltd; London.

# BEJUNIS; THEIR INITIATION INTO SHAMANHOOD <sup>1</sup>

Prabhansu Sekhar Das Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The Western part of the district of (undivided) Koraput of Orissa forms the present habitat of the bulk of the Dongria Kondh tribe. It is spread over in an area of about 250 square miles covered by the rugged and precipitous hills and mountains known as *Niyamgiri* Hills in the (undivided) district of Koraput. The entire area is situated at an average elevation of about 2,000 feet above the sea level. Mountain ranges attaining 4,000 feet height are not uncommon in this locality. The whole area is diversified in appearance by exposures of naked rocks, ranges of ancient *sargi* (*sal*) forest. The whole surface is thrown up into innumerable terraced *Dongar* plots for cultivation.

## Dongria Kondhs and their Religion

The denizens of this area are known as Dongria Kondhs. Economically, they are one of the most backward tribes of Orissa. The core of their religion consists of polytheistic beliefs in the cult of ancestors and a large pantheon to be propitiated in numerous occasions. Their magic is primarily concerned with mysterious impersonal forces and powers residing mostly in natural and artificial objects. The instruments employed in dealing with them are principally charms and spells, adjurational observations and taboos. The magical rites are organically connected with their normal activities of hunting, fishing and agriculture.

## Religious Functionaries and Roles of Bejunis

The religious functionaries who are entrusted with the propitiation of the village deities of the Dongria Kondhs are *Jani*, *Bejuni*, *Gurumai* and *Dishari*. The *Bejuni* (the female shaman) occupies a crucial place among them. There are

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XIV, 1972-73, No. 1, April, 1972

<sup>2</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

a number of *Bejunis*, under one head *Bejuni* in a village, who perform various religious ceremonies on behalf the public and participate in communal and individual functions. Besides their public role of the 'Shaman', they also practise black-magic in their private capacity to destroy or damage the normalcy of the society and as such they may be termed as sorceresses. They perform their duties in a frenzied state and are believed by the people to be in direct communion with the gods. By virtue of their position they command high prestige from the Dongrias.

### Qualifications to be a Bejuni

When a female practices this art, she is called *Bejuni* and a male is called *Beju*. But in a village, the *Bejunis* always outnumber the *Bejus*. Generally, the old women are eligible to become *Bejuni*, though there is no formal age-restriction. This is also not a hereditary profession but an acquired art and a personal accomplishment. Skill in dancing is essential for a *Bejuni*. It is the first step to appease the *Penus* (gods) and in course of frenzied dancing, she gets into a trance and makes prophecies and offers solutions to the problems of the clients. Names of different *Penus* are also to be memorized by a *Bejuni*. She should also know the art of divination with the movement of the winnowing fan, waving of peacock feathers and supplication through *arua-rice*. Simultaneously, she must know the kind of sacrifice, to be made for different *pujas* and for different diseases. To know all these techniques an apprentice undergoes training under a *Pat Bejuni* or Head *Bejuni*. Thus in a village there may be four to five *Pat Bejunis* who impart training to the interested candidates in the evening after the day's work.

### Basic Components of a Bejuni and respective Penus

The *Bejunis* are believed to acquire power through the grace of their own ancestor spirits or *Penus*. It generally comes to the persons who have an inclination towards it. With the increase of their earnestness or rather yearning and devotion, they begin to pass sleepless nights in contemplation of certain *Penus*. In the village Khambesi, there are nine *Bejunis* who have got different *Penus*. Arju Wadaka's mother (a *Bejuni*) worships *penus* like, *Kalia Patu*, *Sundar Patu*, *Kashaya Rani*, *Tamba Rani*, *Nidi Muta*, and *Tamba Muta*. Maida Wadaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Kumita Nani* and *Baruanaka Nani*. Drimba Jakishe's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Hira lai* and *Danda lai* *Penus*. Ludruka Wadaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Ghara-Deota* and *Nia-made-Deota*. Arju Wadaka's sister (a *Bejuni*) worships *Lada Penu*, *Sureni* and *Bai-Sureni*. Dheda Sikaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Lepruti*, *Thakrani* and *Maradi Deota*. All these *Penus* are ranked as ancestor-spirits.

### Preliminary Stage to become a Bejuni

It is evident from the above discussion that each Bejuni has her specific *penus*. Moreover, the Bejunis worship female ancestor spirits and the Bejus worship male ancestor spirits. But there is no difference among them as far as their power over men and nature is concerned. For days together, these different 'Penus' are contemplated deeply and incantations are made in their honour. Dances are performed regularly. During these processes, the Bejuni in her dream or in frenzied state visualizes the respective Penus and solicits their blessings. It is believed that the Penus want different sacrifices to be offered to them in various occasions. Once the vision is realized; she is possessed by the spirits frequently and remains in trance. Then the public comes to know that the concerned woman is at the first stage of becoming a Bejuni. At the second stage, the Bejuni contracts a 'spiritual marriage' with the Gods. This is done even if the woman is married. Beju and Bejunis are considered profane and inexperienced until such marriage is performed. To gain supernatural power, they must enter into conjugal relationship with Penus.

### Spiritual Marriage: The First Ceremony

To perform this type of marriage, a place is selected either near a stream or under a mango tree. On the scheduled date, the concerned Bejuni and her husband go to the marriage alter, arranged beforehand, after ceremonial bath in turmeric water. The concerned Bejuni becomes her own priest. She carries various articles like, a winnowing fan, earthen lamp, resin-powder., Siali leaf, *arua* rice, firewood, turmeric powder, mango leaves and *ragi* powder to perform the marriage ceremony. Another Bejuni (under training) also accompanies her. The bride Bejuni puts on a mark of *ragi* powder on her forehead and applies the same on the forehead of her husband. She also catches a hand full of *arua* rice. The assistant Bejuni in the meanwhile brings a pitcher-full of water from the stream, keeps it under the mango tree and puts into it a pinch of turmeric powder and fastens *sal* and *siali* leaves over it. The funnel of the pitcher is covered with garland of tender mango leaves. The bride Bejuni throws handful of *arua* rice over it while uttering incantations to Dharani Penu (the supreme deity of Kondhs).

In the meantime, the relatives and the friends gather at the spot. The relatives and friends prepare garlands out of tender mango leaves and fasten them to the pitcher. The bride Bejuni with the help of the assistant Bejuni invokes the specific Penu (with whom marriage is to take place) by uttering incantations. While doing that she shivers and develops hysteric feats with the beating of drums. Suddenly, with a perceptible jerking, she starts dancing and gets into trance. This is an indication that she is possessed by the specific Penu.

Her husband then dons a *saree* and joins his wife in dancing. Various questions are put to her by her friends and relatives which she answers in a state of trance. Immediately when the bride Bejuni starts dancing, the assistant Bejuni feeds *arua* rice to a cock and a pigeon for five times. Then she gives *arua* rice to the bride Bejuni and her husband and keeps her right hand over their heads. She also starts uttering mantras and moves round the mango tree for 15 times. The process of giving *arua* rice to the Bejuni and her husband is repeated during intervals of each round. The feeding of the cock and the pigeon is also repeated 15 times. It is the process of appeasing the concerned Penu. After circumbulating the mango tree repeatedly, a feather is taken out from the pigeons and cocks and the heads of bride Bejuni, her husband and the spectators are touched with it. Immediately after that the pigeon is killed by the assistant Bejuni and blood is sprinkled on the pitcher to satisfy the Penu. After this sacrifice, the bride Bejuni comes back to her senses and becomes free of the spirit.

### **The Second Ceremony of Marriage**

After some days the second phase of marriage takes place in an auspicious day. It is held at the altar of the first ceremony. In this phase the bride Bejuni stands facing east catching the little finger of her husband. The married couple goes round the mango tree for seven times followed by an assistant Bejuni. This circumbulation is called 'Sat-padia'. After this ceremony, new clothes, dyed with turmeric are tied to the head of the bride Bejuni and her husband. The people then carry them on their shoulders to the place where the pitchers had been kept. The right foot of the bride Bejuni is placed on the left foot of her husband. A cock is fed *arua* rice for seven times and then the assistant Bejuni kills it by crushing its head under her feet and sprinkles its blood over the feet of the bride Bejuni and its head is placed over the pitcher.

### **The Third Ceremony of Marriage**

The third ceremony then takes place after an interval. During this event the pitcher under the mango tree is taken out and its water is poured over the bride Bejuni and her husband. It is regarded as a holy bath during which the Penu gets into the body of both of them. Their feet are washed properly and the marriage rituals come to an end followed by a small feast. It is believed that the bride Bejuni hereafter attains the status of shaman equipped with spiritual knowledge. She is not to be dishonoured and disrespected after this.

### **The Fourth or 'Tapu' Ceremony**

'Tapu' means sacrifice. This is celebrated only when adequate funds are arranged. It is a very expensive function as a lot of expenditure is incurred to

purchase different animals and food accessories to satisfy different ancestors, spirits and also to feed the entire village. The function continues for three days. It may be mentioned here that each Bejuni has got different *Penus* and different animals are prescribed to be sacrificed for each. In this connection the case history of Malo, aged 40, wife of Jagli Sikora may be given.

### **Malo's Case History**

Malo is worshiper of four *Penus* such as Jati-Guru, Budi-Guru, Silka Peju and Bhangrai Peju. To observe this function, she purchased four earthen pitchers, six fowls, three pigeons, one goat, five *karies* (lambs), forty kilogram of rice and other food materials. Before the day of ritual an altar (*pat*) with an enclosure and temporary leafy-shed over it was prepared by the young men and girls (Dhangadas and Dhangidis) of the village.

#### **Observance on the First Day of Tapu Ceremony**

On the first day, about ten apprentice Bejunis came to her house along with Pat-Bejuni (Head Bejuni) after taking bath and put on clothes dyed with turmeric. The Pat-Bejuni held a bundle of peacock-feather and a winnowing fan and the Bejunis held a winnowing fan each. The music party also reached the spot. Malo appeared before the public with disheveled hair wearing a new *saree* and had vermilion marks on her forehead. There were chains of tinkling bells on her ankles. She held a handful of peacock-feathers. She also held in her hand an earthen pitcher with a narrow neck. This pitcher was full of water and mango leaves had been fastened to it. She handed over the pitcher to one of her apprentices and besmeared a portion of the altar with cow dung. After this she drew up an icon square on the besmeared place. This was done with a mixture of *arua*-rice powder, *ragi*-powder and vermilion. A lump of vermilion was placed at the middle of the square around which another square was drawn up. In the small square about 1/4th kilogram of *arua*-rice was strewn and the pitcher was placed upon it. When interrogated, it was said that the pitcher represented Jati-Guru *Penu*, a very powerful goddess. She protects life and property of the people. She is therefore properly worshipped with the supplication of *arua* rice after which adequate 'Tapu' (sacrifice) is offered to appease her.

The Bejunis (disciples), the Pat-Bejuni and Malo sat before the pitcher in a row. Pat-Bejuni first started uttering incantations and sprinkled water over the visitors to purify them. She offered *arua*-rice to Malo in a winnowing fan. Malo also started uttering mantras. Supplication of *arua*-rice and uttering of magical verses in a low voice started simultaneously. The disciples also joined them. Then the Pat-Bejuni raised her voice. Malo followed her and the disciples

also started making the same incantations. This continued for half-an hour after which a fowl, a pigeon and a lamb were placed one after the other over the head of Malo and then tied to different poles posted beside the pitcher. After that the Pat-Bejuni set fire to the resin powder and threw the same over Malo and on the pitcher. Immediately after this Malo started shivering and danced to the tune of the drum-beating. It started with a slow rhythm but became rapid in due course with the quick beating of drums. It was the sign of the Penu entering in to the body of Malo. The Pat-Bejuni and other Bejunis too started shivering and danced with Malo. The Pat-Bejuni dancing with Malo, bent down, placed left hand at her waist, waved the handful of peacock feathers and started dancing. The tinkling of ankle bells of the Bejunis was very loud. During the dance, the Pat-Bejuni embraced Malo twice and thrice and fed her resin-powder. Malo gradually became possessed by the spirit of the Penu and nodded her head frantically. The spectators tried to control her but she went on dancing in a frenzied manner till she fell down unconscious. The Pat-Bejuni too fell down. Other dancers were restrained by the spectators.

After few minutes they all came to their senses and the last phase of the Puja was performed by the Pat-Bejuni. Malo again supplicated with *arua*-rice and muttered the Mantras. The sacrificial animals were again brought one after the other. They were bathed and the vermilion was put on their heads. Then they were kissed by Malo. The fowl and the pigeon were again touched to the head of Malo and then strangled to death by the Pat-Bejuni. Their blood was sprinkled on the pitcher, the icon square and also on Malo's head. The lamb was not killed and tied again at the pole. Puja for the first day was over. It was 3 O'clock in the afternoon when it was completed. A small feast followed. The Mandal (village leader), Bishmajhi, Jani and some relatives cooked rice separately. This was eaten exclusively by Malo, her husband and the Bejunis who participated in the dance.

### **2nd Day Performance of Tapu Ceremony**

On the 2nd day the same process was repeated with some deviations. On that day another pitcher representing Budiguru Penu was placed instead of the first one. The first one was replaced at the back of the second one. This Penu is believed to bring rain, protect animals and enhance animal wealth if properly appeased. Hence she must be given Tapu. The Bejuni attains a greater identification with the Penu in the second day than on the first. As on the previous day, two fowls, one pigeon and one lamb were brought. Fowls and pigeon were killed but the lamb, instead of being tied, was set free. The children of the village chased it and drove it out of the village, so that it could not return or even look back. It is believed that the lamb is the messenger who conveys the



prayer of the concerned Bejuni to Budi-Guru Penu. Malo danced twice and became possessed by the spirit. She was applauded and garlanded by the spectators. Pat Bejuni taught Malo 'Puchna' i.e. the art of asking questions to the deity while supplicating with *arua*-rice. While asking questions, the answers from the deity are believed to be clearly audible to the Bejuni. The second ceremony continued from 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening.

### **3rd Day Performance of Tapu Ceremony**

On the 3rd day the ceremony started from 4 A.M. in the morning, continued for two hours and was completed before the dawn. Neither the drum beaters nor the public were invited. Only the Pat Bejuni and the apprentices were present. At 3 A.M. Malo took bath with other Bejunis, put on a new black *saree* and came out of the house with the third earthen pitcher. She placed the pitcher in a square drawn with charcoal powder. A black cloth was wrapped over the pitcher. This pitcher represented the spirits, Silka Peju and Bangarai Peju, who are considered to be very pugnacious and bring immense harm to the people.

During this performance the ritual procedure was almost the same as before. Supplication was made with *arua*-rice by the Pat Bejuni in a winnowing fan accompanied by spells and incantations. Two black fowls were kept one after the other on the pitcher. Vermilion marks were painted on them. Arua-rice was also sprinkled over them. This process was repeated for 15 times. A pigeon was brought and the same procedure was again repeated. Lastly a lamb was brought. The 3rd pitcher was lifted and placed on the back of the lamb and the animal was forced to move round the black square. Then Malo sat on the back of the lamb and rode thrice round the square. After all these rituals, Malo again started supplicating with rice and began to dance in a frenzied state. At the height of it she started rolling on the floor. The Pat Bejuni immediately got up and threw a lump of resin-powder at her and the apprentices caught hold of her and pressed her to the ground. This frenzied state symbolized her successful attainment of the status of Bejuni. When she came to her senses, she again supplicated with rice. The Pat-Bejuni, while doing this along with Malo, whispered thrice in her ear. This is considered as the final lesson taught to the apprentices. The animals and birds for sacrifice were killed one after the other. Their blood was sprinkled over the earthen pitchers and their carcasses were left at the altar.

### **Other Performances on the 3rd Day**

After completing the rituals on the 3rd day Malo, accompanied with Pat-Bejuni and other disciples went to Dharani Penu of their village and started dancing there. The Pat-Bejuni with other three Bejunis went round the village to ward off the evil-spirits which are supposed to be invading the village and the

Mutha during the three days of the performances. After warding them off the party returned to the altar where they were joined with others in a communal dance with the accompaniment of drum beating. This was done to give a public recognition to Malo becoming a full-fledged Bejuni. The villagers too assembled there and offered *arua*-rice and pigeons to Malo to solicit her blessings. Then Malo with her party moved round the nearby villages in the 'Mutha' to acquire wider public recognition and collected *arua*-rice and animals for sacrifice.

Persons in difficulties (such as disease, barrenness, etc.) promise to offer sacrifices of animals after getting proper remedy. They offer these sacrifices during the 'Ghanta Parab'. Ghanta is a small earthen pot in which the offerings are made. When Malo remained busy in moving round the village, the unmarried young men and women of the village made necessary arrangements for Ghanta Parab. The males piled up firewood on the altar and the women decorated the fourth pitcher with red ochre. The art is locally known as 'Linga' representing 'Thakurani Penu'. Further, *puja* accessories like plantains, edible roots, fruits, sweetmeats and a buffalo were also kept near the altar. The pendal was well decorated with flowers and mango leaves by the young girls. Each individual brought his or her own Ghanta (earthen pitcher) and Puja accessories. All these arrangements were completed by the evening, so as to start the Parab the next day.

#### 4th Day Performance of 'Ghanta Parab'

On the 4th day the Ghanta Parab otherwise known as the festival of the earthen pitchers, took place. *Kumte kane* and *Basume kane* are two principal deities, grouped together as 'Thakurani Penu', are worshiped during this occasion. It is believed that Thakurani penu is very ferocious and inflicts smallpox on human beings and animals if she is not propitiated. Therefore, the families where somebody had suffered from smallpox worship Bejuni and dedicate their children at her feet and satisfy her with offerings and sacrifice of animals.

On this day, Malo, Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices reached the altar with the drum beaters and the village leaders. Each worshipper carried a *ghanta* on the head, a winnowing fan with *arua*-rice and other *puja* accessories on the waist and either a fowl or pigeon with the right hand. The previous procedure continued. The sacrificial animals like, a lamb, a goat, a fowl and a buffalo were brought to the altar one after the other on whom Malo sat for a few seconds, after which these animals were taken back. The purpose was to make a public show of the animals and to make them fit for sacrifice by the ritual touch of the shaman.

The 'Ghantas' were passed on, one after another to Malo and she worshipped it, with vermilion and *arua*-rice. This process was repeated for 7

times. During intervals, the supplication with *arua*-rice and feeding of it to the fowls also continued. While this process was coming to an end she suddenly wept aloud. Then she shuddered and went on jumping about. The Bejunis and the females ululated. The males clapped. The drum beating became more loud and rapid. Malo danced in ecstasy, holding the fowl. Immediately the animals, meant for sacrifice were brought. Malo stood upon each for some time. She was also jumping over them. Then she stood upon the piles of firewood, where too she danced. After being possessed by spirit she lost her senses. The animals excepting buffalo were killed one after another by the Jani and the blood was sprinkled both over the pitcher and over Malo. Ultimately the buffalo was dragged by the young men of the village and tied to a post at the outskirts of the village where a small platform had been prepared. Malo came to her senses after resin-powder had been thrown at her. She took her pitcher (Ghanta) on her head and others followed her. They walked in a file towards the platform. Before reaching the platform the boys, girls, men and women who had suffered from smallpox came forward and lied prostrate on the road by which Malo was to pass. She walked on each adult and touched the children with her feet.

Malo reached the village outskirts and placed her 'Ghanta' first at the middle of the platform and others kept their respective 'Ghanta' on both the sides of the main pitcher. Malo, again became, possessed by spirit while supplicating with *arua*-rice. Simultaneously, the buffalo was slaughtered by the young mass and its head was placed over the main pitcher and then on the floor. Other animals were also sacrificed. The individual worshipers also sacrificed their own animals. The heads of the sacrificed animals were heaped up near the buffalo head. There was a pool of blood over the platform.

The platform specially prepared for Thakurani Penu is considered to be purified by this pool of blood. One 'Ghanta' was first broken by Malo on the blood and others followed it to drive away Thakurani Penu from the village, lest the villagers suffer again. They all came back with their respective animals excepting Malo. Jani and Mandal brought her animals to the village as the leaders of the village. In the evening a feast was arranged by Malo in honour of the participants. Persons belonging to the 'Domb' caste were also invited to share the feast. Malo thus became a Pat-Bejuni. All Bejunis cannot afford the expenses of the ceremonies. They cannot therefore attain the status of Pat-Bejuni and have to remain as ordinary Bejunis.

# FESTIVALS, RITUALS AND SHAMANS AMONG THE DONGRIA KANDHA <sup>1</sup>

A.K. Gomango <sup>2</sup>  
S.C. Mohanty

The Dongria Kandha, a picturesque tribal group constitutes a primitive section of the Kandha a major tribe of Orissa. They stand apart from others for their famous *Meria* festival, expertise in horticulture, separate language -*Kuvi* and colourful life style. They are also shifting cultivators. They inhabit the lofty *Niyamgiri* hill ranges spread across Bissamcuttack, Kalyansingpur, and Muniguda blocks in Rayagada district. It is an enchanting hill country endowed with bounties of nature. The Dongria Kandha with their colourful costumes and adornments, scintillating dance and music display their spirit of freedom and spontaneous joy of life in close harmony with nature.

Like other primitive tribes they, through their age-old experience, have evolved certain traditional mechanisms and institutions to meet their needs in everyday life. There are socio-religious and economic organizations and institutions for achieving different objectives. Religion is one of them, which plays a significant role in establishing peace, harmony, and solidarity in their society and guides them to follow the right path for prosperity.

They are polytheists. They have adopted number of gods, deities and spirits into their pantheon. They observe certain festivals and rituals round the year to worship and appease the supernaturals, and also for recreation. The Dongria Kandhas are well known even today, as in the past they had the custom of human sacrifice called *Meria*. Due to the intervention of the British rulers this barbarous practice was stopped and buffalo was substituted for the human bait.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVIII, Nos. 2, 2008, pp 7-24

<sup>2</sup> Research Officers, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

They are very sincere in observing religious rites and rituals and could go to any extent to get the blessings of supernatural beings. Like any other society they have their religious practitioners to mediate between them and their supernaturals and thereby help them to meet their religious ends. Their age old institution of shamanism still has a powerful influence on them and their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni (Pejuni)* respectively are among the most distinguished and respected magico-religious functionaries in their society.

Though, the Dongria Kandha might differ from other ethnic groups in their religious beliefs and practices, they have one thing in common with others that is, they have different kinds of magico-religious specialists like priests and shamans. Such positions are based on the premise that there will always be an uneven distribution of knowledge and of personal abilities and that individuals with higher level of ability are in a better position to relate to the super naturals. They can be primarily religious in the sense that they seek help from the divine or spiritual world, or they can be more magical in that they attempt to manipulate the spirit of the supernatural forces. Such people who have special religious knowledge either control supernatural power out rightly or facilitate others in their attempt to influence it. These specialists are called shamans and priests.

#### **Magico-Religious Functionaries among the Dongria Kandha**

There are number of magico-religious and secular functionaries in a Dongria village. They operate in their respective domains of duties and responsibilities. They propitiate deities and spirits through different types of rituals. The Dongria have large pantheon of deities and spirits to reign in different domains and the responsibility of appeasing them also have been distributed among several magico-religious functionaries. During festivals, rituals and ceremonies they perform rituals offering liquor and animals sacrifice, pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessings and protection. These functionaries are called, *Jani*, *Lambajani*, *Ichanjani*, *Pujari*, *Beju*, *Bejuni (Pejuni)* etc. Besides, there are *Gurumeni* and *Barik* who assist them whenever necessary. In certain occasions the family heads perform certain rituals to appease ancestral sprit and household deities and spirits at the family level.

In brief, traditionally *Jani* the high priest is also the secular head of a Dongria Kandha village. He plays most important role both in the religious and secular spheres. He is the principal worshiper of *Darani Penu*, the Earth Goddess and commands great respect in the society. There is an *Ichan Jani* from the *Jani*'s lineage to assist *Jani*. He prescribes and arranges items for rituals and assists *Jani*

during worship. The *Jani* who has vast experience and officiates in *Meria* festival is called *Lamba Jani Pujari*, a hereditary functionary performs special duties in the *Meria* festival. He makes an umbrella out of bamboo and during rituals he joins with *Jani*. He also takes part in other communal festivals and functions. The *Bejus* and *Bejunis*, have special responsibilities in their society. They are experts in magico-religious rituals.

### **Dongria Shamans**

The shaman is the kind of spiritual specialist who derives his power directly from the supernatural agencies usually through mystic experience. He/she is adept at trance, divination and curing. Though the priest and the shaman coexist in the same society, the latter serves as a medium of communication between human and supernatural. He often establishes a personal relationship with the supernatural beings and/or knows the secret medicines and spells necessary to manipulate supernatural power. On the contrary the priests as religious specialists also mediate between people and supernaturals but usually do not have powers to control the supernatural agencies. While the shaman controls supernatural power and conducts rituals as and when required, the priest mediate between human and supernatural and lead congregations at regularly held cyclical rites.

In Dongria Kandha society their male and female shamans called Beju and Bejuni (Pejni) respectively perform the art of shamanism. They have their own adopted spirits to whom they regularly worship to get their favour and help in occult practices. They can communicate with spirits and deities who are believed to be responsible for causing human problems. In order to communicate with spirits, they get into trance through divination, prayer, offerings, oblation and certain rituals. In this state they tell people about their problems and solutions by communicating with the concerned spirits. They prescribe the remedy through the rice supplication process called *puchana*, which is an important part of the shamanic ritual. They advise and sometimes forcibly demand performance of rituals and animal sacrifices to appease supernatural powers.

The Dongria Kandha strongly believe that shamanism is a magico-religious art, which is gifted to certain persons by supernatural powers. Their success in learning and practicing the art depends upon supernatural will and sanctions. Becoming a shaman can be the result of a mythical experience, such as a vision or a period of special training or both. Though in actual practice they learn the art from the veterans, they deny such learning and training and ascribe supernatural blessings to their taking up of the practice. In reality the shamanic

practices of the Dongria Kandha is a learned behaviour acquired by proper training and orientation to the trade by the persons having the interest and aptitude for such work.

### **Initiation to Shamanhood**

The path to shamanhood runs through a series of steps and stages. During this time the future shaman or shamanin is supposed to master his/her mystical techniques and to learn the religious and mythological traditions of his tribe. This preparatory stage, more often, commences amidst a series of rituals and ceremonies as well as apprenticeship under a veteran shaman/shamanin.

The process reportedly, begins with the receipt of supernatural message through dreams, vision, pathological sickness, ecstasies etc. The commonest kind of experience for the "chosen one" comes through a divine or semi divine being who appears during a dream, a sickness or some other circumstances, informs him/her that he/she has been chosen to follow the path of shamanhood. It is said, those who ignore such message face fatal consequences.

After the message is received through ecstatic experience, the next step for the chosen one" is to receive theoretical and practical orientation and instructions from the old masters. On successful completion of training and apprenticeship, the candidate goes through a series of prescribed rituals to attain full-fledged shamanhood and receive social recognition as such.

**The early stage :-** Vision, Early Signs, Test and Ordeal, Diagnosis and Detection, Apprenticeship etc.

When a person experiences such dreams he informs his family members, friends and relatives. Sometimes people become aware of person's early signs by observing certain behavioural changes. Whenever there is performance of dance and music during rituals and festive occasions, the person loses control of himself and starts dancing and gradually enters into a state of trance. At this time persons having joking relationship with him test him by giving him a handmade cigarette stuffed with chilly powders to smoke, or by putting the burning tip of a cigarette on his skin or by piercing his ears with a pointed twig. If the person comes out of the ordeal successfully he is recognized a prospective shaman. If he fails he is rejected and faces social ridicule of being a pretender.

When such behavioural changes are noted in a person, his family members consult an experienced shaman. The latter performs divination by rice supplication process and goes into trance to find out the cause and identity the

spirits responsible for this. Then he prescribes appropriate rituals to initiate the novice into shamanhood. But it takes sometime for the new candidate to achieve fullfledged shamanhood and join the ranks of the shamans. In the beginning he works with experienced shamans to gain experience. In this early stage of practice, his family members provide him with a winnowing fan and *ragi* for supplication instead of rice, because as a beginner he may not be able to control himself and thereby cause harm.

Every Beju and Bejuni has their personal deities of spirits whom they call *Penu*. Usually they worship ancestral spirits who help them for performing shamanic rituals. It is said that Bejunis adopt male spirits and Bejus, female spirits.

Other anthropologists have made similar observations. "The Bejunis are believed to acquire power through the special grace of their own ancestral spirits of *Penus*. It generally comes to the persons who have a temperament towards it with the increase of their earnestness or rather yearning and devotion, they begin to pass sleepless nights in contemplation of certain *Penus*... For days together there different *Penus* are contemplated deeply, incantations are made in their honour. Dances are performed regularly. During these processes, the Bejuni in her dream of in frenzied state visualizes the respective *Penus* and solicits blessing from them. It is believed that the *Penus* ordain different sacrifices to be offered to them on various occasions. Once the vision is realized, she is possessed by the spirits frequently and remains in trance. Then the public comes to know that the concerned woman is at the first stage of becoming a Bejuni. At the second stage the Bejuni contracts a 'spiritual marriage', with the Gods... Beju and Bejunis are considered profane and inexperienced until such marriage is performed... the Bejunis worship female ancestor spirits and the Bejus worship male ancestor spirits. But there is no difference among them as far as their power over men and nature is concerned". (Das Patnaik; 1972-73: 12-13)

#### **The Final Stage: Spiritual Marriage**

The next phase involves the spiritual marriage with adopted spirit(s) without which it is impossible to achieve full-fledged shamanhood. It is an expensive affair as it requires purchase of clothes, birds and animals for sacrifice, and hosting a feast for the participants at the end of the ritual. Hence the ritual is performed when the aspiring Beju / Bejuni can afford the expenses.

In this stage a series of rituals are conducted in a selected spot on scheduled dates and times. The spot usually lies under a mango tree near a stream. The ritual items consist of *arua* rice, turmeric paste or powder, *ragi*



powder, resin, vermilion, new clothes, fire wood, *siali* leaves, mango leaves, sacrificial birds such as cock and pigeon etc. Apart from the apprentice, the shaman and his/her spouse, who are the main actors, the fellow villagers, friends and relatives, experienced shamans, assistant shamans (Gurumai) other apprentice shamans and the Dom musicians participate in the proceedings.

#### First Ritual –

The day before the ritual, the aforesaid ritual spot is cleaned and an altar is made below the mango tree enclosed under a wooden structure covered with mango branches and leaves at the top. On the scheduled date the apprentice Bejuni accompanied by her husband, another apprentice Bejuni or an assistant called Gurumai, drum beaters belonging to Dom caste, and some fellow villagers proceed to the spot carrying all the ritual items and accessories and the birds for sacrifice. The Beju couple takes bath in the nearby stream and put a mark of ragi powder on their foreheads. Their assistant also takes bath. They bring a pitcher full of water from the stream, put a pinch of turmeric paste or powder in the water, cover the mouth of the pitcher with *sal/siali* leaves and fasten a garland made of mango leaves around its neck.

While the Dom musician beat drums, the Bejuni throws a handful of *arua* rice over the holy pitcher uttering incantation first to solicit the blessing of their Supreme deity -Darni Penu and then to invoke concerned patron spirit to whom she intends to marry. Suddenly with a jerk she starts trembling and dancing showing hysteric fits and losing self control gradually. This is taken as the sign of spirit possession. At this time her husband wearing a new saree along with some onlookers join with her in dancing and her assistant fills the air with the smoke of the burning resin and incense. When the rhythm of the dance and drum beat enter into a frenzied state, the Bejuni goes into trance. At this moment, the onlookers ask her question which she answers satisfactorily.

After the question –answer session, the assistant Bejuni, gives *arua* rice to the bride Bejuni and her husband and keeps her right hand over their heads. Then she moves 7-15 times around the mango tree chanting verses and repeats the rice giving process. During these rounds she also feeds the rice each time to the cock and the pigeon brought there for sacrifice. Completing the rounds she pulls a feather from these birds and touches it over the heads of all the participants including the Bejuni couple. Then she kills birds and sprinkles the blood over the holy pitcher to appease the patron spirit. After that the bride Bejuni comes out of her trance and regains her senses. The music and dance stops. The first rituals ends and all of them return home.

Second Ritual -

The ritual takes place after a couple of days following the first ritual and it symbolises the wedding ceremony.

On the scheduled day, the bride Bejuni stands at the spot facing east holding her husband's little finger. Accompanied by her assistant and husband she circles around the mango tree seven times. It is called Satapadia. New clothes dyed with turmeric are tied around the heads of the couple. The onlookers carry the couple on their shoulders to the spot where the holy pitcher is kept. The right foot of the bride Bejuni is placed over the left foot of her husband. A handful of *arua* rice is placed on their feet and a cock is made to peck the rice seven times after which the assistant Bejuni kills it and sprinkles the blood over the feet of the bride Bejuni and offers the head to the groom spirit by placing the birds head over the mouth of the holy pitcher. The wedding ritual ends here.

Third Ritual -

It is the concluding part of the wedding ceremony. It may either be done sometimes after the preceding ritual on the same day or be postponed to a later date as it includes a feast to all the participants.

It is the ritual of holy bath. At the same spot, the participants take out the holy pitcher containing turmeric water and bathe the Bejuni couple pouring the holy water over their heads and also wash their feet. The Bejuni couple entertains their companions hosting a feast with alcoholic drinks. It is believed that with this holy bath, the patron spirit enters into the body of Bejuni and the latter attains full-fledged shamanhood. She gets social recognition and respect to enter into the rank of Shamanins.

**Rituals & Observances for becoming a Pat Beju or Pat Bejuni**

Among the Bejus and Bejunis, few attain the rank of principal shaman and shamanin i.e., Pat Beju and Pat Bejuni. To qualify for this prestigious and coveted rank, a Beju or Bejuni is required to have long years of practice and experience. Then he or she must conduct a series of elaborate rituals, which are very expensive. Thus the status of principal shamanhood comes at a price. The Beju of Bjuni aspiring for this title should have the capability to afford the price.

The Bejus and Bejunis interviewed during our study agreed on the point that professional experience is the first and foremost criteria for qualifying for the post of principal shaman or shamanin. But they remained tightlipped about

the ritual performances. However with the help of the data from secondary sources, a brief account of the ritual described as a case study is given below.

The rituals and observance continue for 3 to 4 days. "It is a very expensive and a lot of expenditure is incurred to purchase different animals and food items, accessories to satisfy different ancestors, spirits and also to feed the entire village. ...each Bejuni has got different *Penus* and different animals are prescribed to be sacrificed for each. In this connection the case history of Malo, aged 40, the wife of Jagli Sikora may be given." (Das Patnaik, 1972-73:12)

"Malo is the worshiper of four *Penus* such as Jati-Guru, Budi guru, Silka-Peju and Bangari-Peju". For this ritual "she purchased four earthen pitchers, six fowls, three pigeons, one goat, five *Karies* (lambs), forty kilograms of rice and other food materials .....Before the day of ritual an altar (*pat*) with an enclosure... covered with leaves was constructed" (Ibid, 1972: 13).

#### *Ist Day:-*

"On the Ist day the Pat Bejuni and ten apprentice Bejunis, came to her house...The Pat Bejuni held a bundle of peacock- feathers and a winnowing fan and the other Bejunis held a winnowing fan each". The Domb musicians also came to the spot. "Malo appeared... with disheveled hair. She was wearing a new saree and had vermilion marks on her forehead. There were chains of tinkling bells on her ankles. She held a hand full of peacock feathers"... and "an earthen pitcher...full of water and mango leaves fastened to it. She handed over the pitcher to one of her apprentices and besmeared a portion of the altar with cowdung. After this she drew up an icon square on the besmeared place ...A lump of vermilion was placed at the middle of the square around which another square was drawn up. In the small square about 1/4<sup>th</sup> kilograms of *arua* rice was strewn and the pitcher was placed upon it...the pitcher represented Jati-Guru Penu, a powerful goddess... She protects the life and property of the people. ...The Bejunis (disciples), the Pat-Bejuni and Malo sat before the pitcher in a row. Pat-Bejuni first started uttering incantations and sprinkled water over visitors to purify them. She offered *arua* rice to Malo in a winnowing fan. Malo also started uttering *mantras*... The disciples joined them ...This continued for half an hour after which a fowl, a pigeon, and a lamb were placed one after the other over the head of Malo and then tied to different poles posted beside the pitcher. After that the Pat-Bejuni set fire to the resin powder and threw the same over Malo and on the pitcher. Immediately after this Malo started shivering and danced to the tune of the drum-beating. It started with a slow rhythm but become rapid in due course with the quick beating of drums. It was the sign of

the Penu entering into Malo's body . The Pat-Bejuni and other Bejunis too started shivering and danced with the Malo. The Pat-Bejuni ...bent down, placed left hand at waist, waved the handful of peacock feathers and started dancing. The tinkling of ankle bells of the Bejunis was very loud. During the dance, the Pat-Bejuni embraced Malo twice and thrice and fed her resin-power. Malo gradually became possessed by the spirit of the Penu and nodded her head frantically. The spectators tried to control her but failed ...she danced till she fell down unconscious. The Pat Bejuni, too fell down. Other dancers were restrained by the spectators. After a few minutes they all came to their senses and last phase of the *puja* was initiated by the Pat-Bejuni. Malo again supplicated with *arua* rice and muttered the *mantras*. The animals were again brought one after the other. They were bathed and vermilion was put on their heads. After this they were kissed by Malo. The fowl and pigeon were again touched to the head of Malo and then strangled to death by the Pat Bejuni. Their blood was sprinkled on the pitcher and the icon square and also on the head of Malo. The lambs was not killed and tied again to the pole. Puja for the first day was over... Small feast followed. The Mandal (village leader), Bishmajhi, Jani and some relatives cooked rice separately. This was eaten exclusively by Malo, her husband and Bejunis who participated in the dance". (Ibid)

#### *2<sup>nd</sup> Day :-*

" On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day the same process was repeated with some divinations. Another pitcher representing Budiguru Penu was placed in place of the first one. ... As on the previous day, two fowls, one pigeon and one lamb were brought. Fowls and pigeon were killed but the lamb was set free. The village children chased it and drove it out of the village, so that it could not return or even look back. It is believed that the lamb is the messenger who conveys the prayers of the concerned Bejuni to Budiguru-Penu. Malo danced twice and become spirit possessed. She was applauded and garlanded by the spectators. Pat-Bejuni taught Malo "Puchna" ie, the art of communicating to the deity while supplicating with *arua* rice. While asking questions, the answers from the deity are believed to be clearly audible to the Bejuni" (Ibid). The second day ceremony ended there.

#### *3<sup>rd</sup> Day :-*

"On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the ceremony started from 4 A.M. in the morning and continued for two hours and completed before the break of the day. Neither the drumbeaters nor the public were invited. Only the Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices were present. At 3 Am. Malo took bath with other Bejunis, put on a new black Sari (cloth) and came out of the house with the third earthen pitcher. She placed the ... pitcher in a square drawn with charcoal powder. A black cloth was

wrapped over the pitcher. This pitcher represented the spirits, Silka Peju and Bengrai Peju, who are considered to be very pugnacious”.

“During this performance the ritual procedure was almost the same as other occasions. Supplication was made with *arua* rice by the Pat Bejuni in a winnowing fan...two black fowls were kept one after the other on the pitcher. Vermillion marks were painted on them. This process was repeated for 15 times. A pigeon was brought and the same procedure was again repeated. Lastly a lamb was brought. The 3<sup>rd</sup> third pitcher was lifted and placed on the back of the lamb and animals were forced to move around the black square. Then Malo set on the back of the lamb and rode thrice around the square. After all those rituals, Malo again started supplication with rice, and began to dance in a frenzied state. At the height of it she started rolling on the ground. The Pat-Bejuni immediately got up and threw a lump of resin-power at her and the apprentices caught hold of her and pressed her on the ground. This frenzied state symbolized her successful attainment of the status of Pat Bejuni. When she came to her senses, she again supplicated with rice. The Pat Bejuni, while doing this along with Malo, whispered thrice in her ear. This is considered as the final lesson taught to the apprentice. The animals and birds ...were killed one after other. Their blood was sprinkled over the earthen pitcher. The carcasses were left at the altar”. (Ibid).

“After completion of the rituals on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day Malo, accompanied with Pat-Bejuni and other disciples went to Dharni Penu of their villages and started dancing there. The Pat-Bejuni with other three Bejunis went round the village to ward off the evil-spirits...the party...joined with others in a communal dance with the accompaniment of drums beating. This was done to give a public recognition to Malo as a full-fledged Bejuni... Then Malo with her party moved round the nearby villages in the Mutha to acquire wider public recognition and collected *arua* rice and animals for sacrifice”. (Ibid)

“Persons in difficulties (such as disease, barrenness, etc) promise to offer animal sacrifices after getting proper remedy. They offer these sacrifices, during the ceremony ...called Ghanta Parab. Ghanta is a small earthen pot in which the offerings are made. When Malo remained busy in moving round the villages, the unmarried young men and women of the village, made necessary arrangements for Ghanta Parab... All these arrangements were completed by the evening so as to start the Parab next day”. (Ibid)

**4<sup>th</sup> Day:** The Ghanta Parab:-

“On the 4<sup>th</sup> day the Ghanta Parab the festival of the earthen pitchers took places. Kumte Kane and Bamune Kane are the two principal deities,

grouped together as 'Thakrani Penu', are worshiped during the occasion. It is believed the Thakarani Penu is very ferocious and inflicts small pox on human beings and animals if she is not propitiated..." (Ibid). Ghanta Parab though a communal festival, it is not observed regularly every year like other seasonal festivals. Observation of this festival is scheduled as and when required to help a Bejuni to attain the rank of Pat-Bejuni on one hand and on the other, it provides a ritual occasion to the villagers to fulfill their vows to their deities and spirits to come out of their personal crises by offering foods and sacrifices.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, Malo, Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices reached the altar with the drumbeaters and the village leaders. Each worshiper carried a Ghanta on the head, a winnowing fan with *arua* rice and other puja items occasions in the left hand and a fowl or pigeon in the right hand. The previous procedure continued. The sacrificial animals like, a lamb, a goat, a fowl and a buffalo were brought to the altar one after the other where Malo sat for a few seconds after which those animals were taken back.

"The 'Ghantas' were passed on, one after another to Malo and she worshiped it, with vermilion and *arua* rice. This process was repeated four times. During intervals, the supplication with *arua* rice and feeding of it to the fowls continued. While this process was coming to an end she suddenly wept aloud...The males clapped. The drum beating became more loud and rapid. Malo danced in ecstasy, holding the fowl ... After being possessed by spirit she lost her senses. The animals, except the buffalo, were killed one after another by the Jani and the blood was sprinkled both over the pitcher and over Malo. Ultimately the buffalo was dragged by the young men of the village and tied to post at the outskirts of the village where a small platform had been prepared. Malo came to her senses. ...She took her pitcher (Ghanta) on her head and others followed her. They walked in a file towards the platform. Before reaching the platform the boys, girls, men, and women who had suffered from small pox came forward and lied prostrate on the road by which Malo was to pass. She walked on each adult and touched the children with her feet".

"Malo reached the outskirts and placed her 'Ghanta' first at the middle of the platform and others kept their respective 'Ghanta' on both the sides of the main pitcher. Malo was again, possessed by spirit while supplicating with *arua* rice. Simultaneously, the buffalo was cut by the young men and its head was placed over the main pitcher and then on the floor. Other animals were also sacrificed. The individual worshippers also sacrificed their own animals. The heads of the sacrificed animals were heaped up near the buffalo head... the

platform specially prepared for Thakrani Penu is considered to be purified by this pool of blood. One 'Ghanta' was first it to drive away Thakrani Penu from the village, ...All Bejunis cannot afford the expenses of the ceremonies. They cannot therefore attain the status of Pat Bejuni". (Das Patnaik; 1972-73: 14-20)

### **Services of the Shamans rendered for various kinds of Rituals & Festivals**

The Bejus and Bejunis perform large variety of shamanic rites at the individuals' family level and at the community level. While the Bejus combine the works of shaman and medicineman, Bejunis restrict their field of activities to shamanism only, though there is no difference in their shamanic practices. But interestingly people consider Bejunis to be more effective in this art than their male counterparts and therefore Bejunis outnumber the Beju in Dongria Kandha villages. It may be for the reason that the Beju divide their time between practice of medicine and practice of Shamanism whereas the Bejunis are totally dedicated to shamanic practices.

Various kinds of shamanic jobs are undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis to serve the individuals families and the village community. It is evident from our study that their services are more demanded to deal with a multitude of problems at the individual level than at community level. Nevertheless their special role and responsibilities to interact between the concerned supernatural agencies and the village community and obtain the former's favour in the interest of the latter during various seasonal festivals and rituals can not be dispensed with in anyway.

### **Life Cycle Rituals**

#### **Birth**

The services of the Bejuni is not only required for problems like sterility and miscarriage, but also for the attendant problems of child delivery and post delivery periods. The post-delivery services of the Bejuni mostly include performance of purificatory rituals and identification of the ancestors taking rebirth in the newborn baby and preventive rituals to check infant mortality.

A case study is cited below as an example. In this case Shri Mandra Kadraka of Kurli has availed the service of a Bejuni named Jakasika Illime of the same village to perform the post delivery ritual following the birth of a son.

This ritual was held when his son was 21 days old. Both the mother and child bathed anointing turmeric paste. The Bejunis drew a number of squares with rice powder near a wooden post called Tulimunda in the main living room

representing the seat of ancestors. Jani, Pujari and Gurumeni were also present there. They put piles of rice on every square. The Bejuni began her incantations to invoke the deities and spirits while her assistant Gurumeni poured Mahua liquor in the squares. After prolonged recitations the Bejuni got into trance. At this state she answered the questions put by Gurumeni. The question in this case was to name the ancestor taken rebirth in the newborn son. The reply was – “grand father Tose Kadraka”. Then the Bejuni regained her senses. The ritualized fowl and pigeon were sacrificed to appease the ancestor. The blood mixed with ritualized rice was anointed on the forehead of the child. Then they sprinkled holy water for purification in all directions with the help of mango twigs. The holy water was prepared by mixing the pounded bark of the mango tree with water. After the ritual the functionaries and guests were entertained with food and liquor. The *Bejuni* was remunerated with ½ kilo of rice, the heads of the sacrificed animals, food and liquor.

### Puberty Rites

The onset first menstruation of a girl is treated as a period of crises in the Dongria Kandha society. She is kept in seclusion in a back room of the house for a period of seven days. In the past they used to stay in the dormitory. Presently she is confined to the back room of her house and attended by her mother, sister and other female members. She is not allowed to do any work especially household works and tabooed to attend any rituals and functions, during this period of pollution.

During this period the girl is considered vulnerable and susceptible to the attack of malevolent deities and spirits and evil eye. Therefore she is subjected to certain taboos and restrictions as a preventive measure. A Beju is called upon to perform rituals to save her from the evil agencies and especially a deity called Gangu Penu, who becomes very active in this time.

On the seventh day the girl goes to a stream with her companions and the Bejuni. She takes bath in the stream anointing turmeric paste on her body. After bath she stands on the bank. There the Bejuni performs rituals offering *arua* rice, vermillion, and burning incense to the *penus*. She recites hymns, ritualizes the chicken and handful of rice and waves them from head to feet of the girl. She repeats the process thrice and throws away rice, to ward off the spirits. The chicken is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the pile of rice and on the girl's feet. She is considered free from pollution after this ritual.



## Classification of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis

Nature and kinds of jobs undertaken		Level of the job
1. Diagnostic, Curative & Preventive practices for treatment of various kinds of illness	a) to determine cause and b) to prescribe remedy for various types of fever, body aches and pains, small pox, chicken pox, unidentified diseases etc.	Individual family level
2. Dealing with Deities and Spirits (Exorcism)	a) To prevent and remove various kinds of diseases, misfortunes and human sufferings (other than diseases) b) To ward off malevolent spirits (including ancestral spirits) causing trouble c) To appease benevolent ones to earn their pleasure and protection d) To detect the spirit causing trouble	Individual family level
3. Performance of Life Cycle Rituals	a) Pregnancy and childbirth - To prevent miscarriage, infant death and facilitate easy delivery. - To identify the ancestor taking rebirth in the new born baby b) Puberty rites for girls to ward off evil spirits. c) Preventive rites during wedding to protect the couple from evil spirits. d) To detect the cause and agencies responsible for abnormal and unnatural deaths and prescribe ritual remedies to prevent future mishaps.	Individual family level
4. Agricultural Rites and Festivals	a) Dongar Puja (November – December) -To get a good harvest (Lahi Penu Laka)	Individual family level.

	b) Bicha Hop an/Bihan Puja (worship of Darni Penu) (March-April) -to start sowing	Both at individual and community level.
	c) Mandia Rani (July-August) (Worship of Koteiwali) -to get a bumper Ragi crop.	Individual & community level.
	d) Pidika (September-October) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) -To save castor from pests and insects and reap a good harvest.	Individual family level
	e) Mendo Puja /Mendo Dakli (December-January)(worship of Lahi Penu and Sita Penu) –To start harvesting)	Individual Family Level
	f) Baliko Repa (April-May) (worship of Darni Penu) –To prevent Kosla and Ragi crops)	Village community level
	g) Kuteli Perpa (April-May) (worship of Lahi Penu, Budharaja and Niamraja) – To appease and seek permission for felling trees from the Dongar	Individual family level
5. Rituals and Festivals for first eating of seasonal crops and fruits.	a) Nuakhia/Marangi Leka (August-September) (worship of Darni Penu, other deities & spirits) –To start first eating of newly harvested paddy.	Individual and community level
	b) Punahapadi (October-November) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) –For first eating of Jana, Kosla, Kandal, other seasonal crops & fruits	Individual and community level
6. Other seasonal Rituals and Festivals	a) Meria (Jan-February) (worship of Darni Penu) –For allround prosperity and wellbeing of the whole village.	Community level

	b) Ghanta Parab (April- May) (worship of Takrani Penu, Jatrakudi and Sita Penu) -for fulfillment personal vows made before deities and spirits by animal sacrifice.	Community level
	c) Salangi (May-June) (ancestor worship)- To protect cattle and other livestock form disease and ill health	Individual family level.
	d) Male Manji (October-November) (ancestor worship) - For the well being of family	Individual family level.
	e) Enda Penu Puja (worship of Enda Penu held as and when required)	Village community level.

### Marriage

All the religious functionaries including the Bejunis have certain responsibility to solemnize the Dongria Kandha marriage. The Bejunis chant verses and weave peacock feathers to drive away malevolent spirits from affecting the newly wed couple.

The Bejunis perform a ritual during the wedding ceremony. After the arrival of the groom in the bride's village on the day of wedding the Bejuni accompanied by Domb drum beaters, goes to a stream to fetch water in an earthen pitcher and then she cooks rice with that water. This food is offered to ancestral spirits- Dumba in the sleeping room of the bride. At that time the Bejuni invokes spirits and deities and prays them to take this food and protect the life of the married couple.

After marriage, the bride accompanied by the Bejunis and others again goes to the stream. There she prepares food. The Bejuni performs rituals in which a fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed. Then the blood of the animal and cooked food are offered to the deities and spirits by the Bejuni. Then she wards off the evil spirits with the help of peacock feathers and *arua* rice

### Death

In normal cases of death the Bejunis have no role to play. But in unnatural deaths caused by suicide, snake bite, small fox, cholera, pregnancy and child birth, tiger attack etc. and incase of serial deaths occurring in a family or

Dongria Kondh

village, the action of evil and disgruntled spirits are suspected. Further, the unhappy and restless spirits of the victims of abnormal deaths are believed to turn into dreadful ghosts and attack the humans at the earliest opportunity. During such time, the Dongrias badly need the services of the Bejuni to conduct protective and preventive rituals for identifying and appeasing the concerned supernatural agencies.

### **Agricultural Rites**

#### **Dongar Puja:**

These important seasonal agricultural rites are connected with the beginning and closing stages of shifting cultivation. As these are connected with the swidden (Dongar), they are commonly referred as Dongar Puja. One of them called Kuteli Perpa is linked with the starting phase of shifting cultivation and the two others called Lahi Penu Laka and Mendo Puja are connected with the concluding phase i.e., the harvesting of crops.

#### Kuteli Perpa:-

This ceremony is held every year in the month of Chait (March-April). The Bejuni performs rituals to appease deities like Lahi Penu, Budha Raja and Niam Raja and obtain their permission before felling of trees in the swiddens. No one starts cleaning the swiddens before performing this ritual. Before this ritual a spot in the Dongar is cleaned and a square is drawn and crossed. On the appointed day the Bejuni accompanied by the owner and his family members goes to the spot and fires a bundle of dried twigs. In the square three balls of rice are kept for Lahi Penu, Niam Raja and Budha Raja. Then the Bejuni offers items like incense sticks, liquors and worships the deities by her incantations. Gradually she goes into trance, talks to the deities and conveys their desire for animal sacrifice. After getting her indications a fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed and the blood sprinkled on the heap of rice. Then the cleaning of the swidden plot starts. This ritual is observed by all the families possessing swiddens.

#### Lahi Penu Laka:

This ritual is also observed in the Dongar before harvesting of crops independently by every family. Both the Beju and Bejuni can perform this ritual. But most often people prefer the services of Bejuni for this purpose.

Beju and the owner of the Donger land with his family members go to the spot with all the *puja* items. The spot is cleaned and plastered with cow dung. Bejuni draws there a square and cross it with *ragi*/rice powder. She keeps *bel* leaves, three pits of rice, burning incense, resin and heaps of different crops,

in and near the square. She recites the names of Darani Penu, Lahi Penu and Loda Penu and other local deities. She feeds rice to a fowl and a pigeon before sacrificing them. After sacrifice she sprinkles the blood over the spot and keeps their heads in the square. The heart of fowl is roasted in fire and offered to the Penus in leaf. The family members prepare food and everybody present there enjoys it. After the ritual they expect to harvest a good crop from their *dongar*.

Mendo Dakli/Mendo Puja:

Like other two agricultural rites called Dongar Puja, this ritual is held in the *dongar* with the help of a Bejuni. This is performed by individual *dongar* owners in their respective *dongars* during December - January after the Lahi Penu Laka and just before starting the harvesting operations. In this ritual they worship the deities of *dongar*, namely, Lahi Penu and Sita Penu and solicit their permission to harvest the crops.

On the scheduled day the Bejuni, the farmer and his family members go to the site carrying *puja* articles and sacrificial animals. The ritual procedure is same as other two *dongar puja* rites. A fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed to please the deities. Well-to-do families may offer a goat and a pig instead. Then threshing and processing of crops start and grains are kept in a cleaned spot. A person carries some Kosla grains in a bamboo basket to the owner's house. On reaching there, the family members wash his feet with turmeric water and sprinkle some water on his head. After that he goes into the house to store the grain. Then the operation of harvesting and storing of crops begins there after.

Besides the above three rituals, there are some others conducted by the Bejus and Bejunis for the individual Dongria Kandha families as described below.

Mala Manji:

It is observed in every household, in the month of Kartika with the help of the Bejunis on days like Wednesday Sunday or Tuesday. It is meant to appease household deities and ancestral spirits to keep the family well. For this ritual articles like *tingulu* (small earthen pot), winnowing fan, wine, pigeon, fowl, *arua* rice, *ragi* gourd, *ragi* and rice powder, incense are required. After drawing squares with rice or *ragi* powder, the shamanin starts the proceedings. In front of the squares she keeps piles of rice and *ragi* on which *tingulu* and gourd are placed. She offers some rice, burn incense, recite incantations and shakes rice in her winnowing fan and gets into trance and answers questions. Then the fowl and the pigeon are sacrificed. The ritualized rice and *ragi* are put into the *tingulu* and gourd and hung in the ceiling of the house.

## Services rendered by the Bejus and Bejunis at the Community Level during observance of Rituals & Festivals

### Meria Parab

Meria or Kodru Parab is and the most important communal festival held in the month of Magha (Jan-Feb) to worship Darani Penu and other village deities. It is believed that this festival brings them good rain, good crops peace and prosperity. This festival is observed in all the villages belonging to a Mutha in rotation. Hence each village makes arrangements for this festival when its turn comes after a gap of several years depending upon the number of villages in its Mutha. It is a great socio-religious occasion to which the heads of other villages of Mutha and neighbouring villages, friends and relatives are invited to attend. Preparations are made much before the date of the festival, which is observed with pomp and ceremony for 8 days.

The villagers erect a *munda*, a wooden post under the supervision of Jani before two months of the festival. During this time the Domb musicians beat drums and play other musical instruments. Soon after the Bejunis recite incantations and dance to get into trance to tell if any mistake made during the installation. They perform a ritual there sacrificing a fowl and pigeon to please the deities.

Lamba Jani plays a leading role in the festival. Other functionaries have their specific respective roles to play, which are never considered minor. On the first day Lamba with others brings utensils and ritual items, keep them at Sadar and perform rituals. Pujari's main duty is to prepare a Meria Chhatri (umbrella). It is used in the processions to ward off evil spirits and fixed at Jankad.

The festival starts on a Friday or Saturday morning. Bejunis led by the Pat Bejuni go to the seat of Darani Penu. There they chant and dance to the tune of the music to please Darani Penu. Then Pat Bejuni gets into trance. There they sacrifice fowl, pigeon and a goat, under the supervision of Lamba Jani.

In the mid night Lamba Jani, Ichan Jani, Pujari and Pat Bejuni perform rituals at the Darani Penu. At that time near Koteiwali the sacrificial animal i.e., a buffalo is brought for *meria* sacrifice is bathed with turmeric water by the Bejuni to purify it.

In the meanwhile every household also sacrifice goats, sheep, fowls and pigeons in their individual capacity before Jatrakudi. The *meria* buffalo is tied to a wooden post erected for the purpose. Before sacrifice all the functionaries utter *mantras* to pray Darani Penu to accept this sacrifice. The Bejunis and Lamba

Jani get into trance time and again. They dance in the state of trance. At the auspicious moment i.e., just before the down the Pujari gives the first blow with this axe to the buffalo thrice obeying the direction of Lamba Jani. Then the madding crowd joins the torturous killing spree to cut the animal into pieces, which are shared among them. The head of the animal is offered to Darani Penu. The main ritual ends with this. The remaining days, they spend in dancing, drinking, feasting, merry making and socializing with their near and dear ones.

### **Enda Penu Puja**

Enda Penu is revered as a dancing deity. Her seat lies in the village Batiguma. She is to be worshiped at any time according to her wish. However, the worship is invariably conducted during the months of October-December. This festival is a grand festival next to the *meria* Parab that involves participation of the Bejunis, the unmarried boys and girls and the villagers of a number of villages for a fortnight to a month.

It starts from the village where the deity appears in a dream of a Pat Bejuni and expresses her desire to visit some neighbouring villages. The concerned Pat Bejuni being possessed by the deity announces her wish before her assistant and fellow villagers. The villages make necessary arrangements for the celebrations. It begins with the worship of, the village deity, Koteiwali. There, the Pat Bejuni accompanied by fellow Bejunis, her assistants and unmarried village youths get into trance and starts dancing. In the meantime, the villagers prepare a schedule for the visit of the deity to different neighbouring villages on different dates. Accordingly, the dancing party led by Pat Bejuni who is possessed by the deity moves from village to village in a procession. They cover 10 to 15 villages in one or two weeks in a circle and finally return to their own village completing the full circle. During their visit they are given grand reception in every village. The villagers and the Bejunis of these villages also join the procession. They are entertained lavishly with food and drinks. While the dancing party makes rounds in the villages the unmarried youths collect rice in a winnowing fan from each and every household as a matter of custom. These movements are called Enda Penu Trepaha.

On their return to their native village the villagers organize a festival called Enda Penu Jatra. During this festival, they worship Koteiwali with the sacrifice of a fowl and pigeon and also appease Jatra Kudi Penu by sacrificing a buffalo. This celebration concludes with a grand feast attended by the whole village and the guests.

### **Balikorepa**

It is observed at the village level in every three years to solicit the protection of Darani Penu for Kosla and *ragi* crops. It is held in the month of April for 8 days in which Bejunis play important role.

It starts on a Wednesday. Near the seat of Darani Penu a wooden structure is raised and shaded with green branches. Below the shade a rectangular sand bed is laid.

The Bejunis conduct rituals under the structure and worship the deities offering steam cake made of *ragi* powder, incense, resin, and flowers. The Pat Bejuni along with other Bejunis chants verses and goes into trance. Then she dances to the tune of music and answers questions. At the end of the ritual green gram and maize seeds are sown in the sand bed and watered for germination. This ritual is called Dongabali. The rituals are repeated for days together in the evening and morning hours. Bejuni in charge of the rituals observes fasting through the day and takes food during night only. In the mean while when sprouts come out of the bed, people consider it a good omen indicating supernatural blessing and become very happy. They take proper care of the seedlings till the 8<sup>th</sup> day. On the closing day, they offer these seedlings to Jatrakudi Penu. There they sacrifice a fowl, a pigeon and a goat to please the deity and consume the meat in a feast.

### **Bichahopan**

It is a week long agricultural festival held in the month of Chait (March-April). It is observed to ritualize seeds of various crops before sowing in the field. The deities worshiped during this festival are Darani Penu, Hira Penu and Sita Penu. It is held both at the village level and the individual level. Jani, Ichan Jani, Pat Bejuni and other Bejunis take an active part in the ritual. While the Jani collects crops from every family and conducts rituals at the seat of Darani Penu sacrificing a fowl and pigeon there, the Bejunis render services to individual *dongar* cultivators by conducting rituals in latter's *dongars* to appease Hira Penu and Sita Penu with the sacrifice of a chicken.

In the evening hours of the festive week another ritual performance is held. A young boy carrying a string cot over his head moves around the village dancing to the tunes of the drums encircling the seat of Darni Penu and women throw turmeric water over him. Others join the dance by throwing crops at each other. As a result the village street is littered with a variety of crops, which the Dombs collect in the morning.



Also during this festival communal hunting expeditions are organized. Before the expedition, the weapons such as bows, arrows, swords, axes, guns etc are ritualized before the village deity. If the hunting party returns to village after successful hunt, the celebrations reach a feverish pitch. The kill is shared among all land women are forbidden to share the meat.

### **First Fruit Eating Rituals**

The Dongria Kandha observes, some seasonal festivals associated with the first eating of seasonal fruits and various crops harvested from their *dongars* in succession. Puna padi is one of such ritual connected with the first eating of Kosala, Arka, Jana and Ganthia crops after offering the same to Jatrakudi Penu and ancestral spirits.

#### **Puna Padi**

It held in the month of Kartika (Oct-Nov) at community level. The Bejuni of the village officiates in the ritual. A day before the observance of the ritual, the temporary thatch of Jatrakudi Penu is repaired and new bamboo-splits are replaced by the Dhangdas (youths) of the village. Three of the Dhangidis (maidens) go from door to door for collection of new crops and pile them up in front of the *penu* and watch them for the whole night.

Next morning, after the arrival of the Pat Bejuni along with three other Bejunis, three Dhangdis carry three new pitcher-full of water from the stream and place them separately on the pile of various crops. The Bejunis start their chorus and the Pat Bejuni gets into trance. She gets into trance three times, and each time when she regains consciousness, she pours unboiled rice from her winnowing fan into the water filled pitcher. It is believed that three dreadful disciples of Jatrakudi Penu are satisfied by that. Ultimately the Pat Bejuni is spirit possessed for the fourth time indicating the presence of Jatrakudi Penu. Other Bejunis then start reciting incantations forcefully and throw burning incense on the pile of crops. The Pat Bejuni after regaining her senses, sacrifices a pigeon and two fowls one after the other in the name of Darani Penu, Jatrakudi Penu and for her disciples respectively

The relatives, who are present on the spot, also offer animals for sacrifice. It is called Bopani.

Ultimately a buffalo, brought for sacrifice, is tied at a tree by the Barika. The Pat Bejuni stands over it and starts dancing. In the meanwhile, three other Bejunis throw crops from the pile at the buffalo. While dancing the Pat Bejuni is

again spirit possessed, which is indicative of the fact that the Jatrakudi Penu is asking for food. Immediately after she regains her senses, the buffalo is slaughtered by the Barika and blood is sprinkled over the pile of crops. The meat of all the birds and buffalo is cooked separately which are eaten by the villagers in a feast. After this usually crops can be sold or eaten.

### **Conclusion**

In the tribal society beliefs and practices connected with religion and shamanism go side by side. So it cannot be separated. It is true that shamanism is strongly linked with their socio-economic and religious life.

The Dongria shamanic functionaries like the Beju and Bejuni play most important role in their respective societies. They receive great respect as experts in performing magico-religious rituals and festivals. It is believed they stand between supernatural agencies and people. They are capable to carry message of people to gods, spirits and ancestors and get their blessings in the shape of prosperity, peace, good harvest, good health etc. for individuals and society.

Shamans are part and parcel of the Dongria Kandha society. They still have preserved their values and traditions to great many extents from the influence of advanced cultures and societies. Yet there are magnitude of factors slowly and steadily shaking their age old magico-religious importance, utility and its spiritual significance.

Usually factors which disturbed their traditions, more or less are development interventions, spread of education, visit of outsiders, actions of voluntary organizations, invasion of mass media, etc. It is found that most of younger generation showing interest in modernization while older people still like to follow their tradition. However belief in magico-religious tradition still exists. The services of shaman and shamanin are still in demand for various purposes.

Religion is a cultural system. The understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of a society would require a sound knowledge of its culture. On the other hand the study of the religious system of a society would provide some understanding of its society and culture. In the Dongria Kandha society, their shamans continue to retain their stronghold in the supernatural domain despite the acculturative impacts of the modern agencies of change. Hence, the study of shamanism in their society is needed to get some idea about their social system and way of life, which will ultimately help, in effective developmental intervention.

**References:**

- Das Patnaik, P.S. (1972) Bejuni, Their Initiation into Shamanhood: *Adibasi*, Vol-XIV, No.I, pp.11-20.
- Nayak, P.K. (1989) *Blood, Women and Territory; An Analysis of Clan Feuds of the Dongria Kandha*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, pp. 155-171.
- Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S. (1982) *The Kondh of Orissa: The Socio-Cultural Life and Development*, Tribal and Harijan Research cum Training Institute, Bhubaneswar.
- Spradley, J.P. & D.W. Meurdy (1975) *Anthropology; The Cultural Perspective*, New York, John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Trask, W.R. (1964) *Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Ecstasy*, Princeton University Press (Transtated from Mircea Eliade).
- Tribes of Orissa (1990) Harijan and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, pp.245 - 54
- Thruston, E (1909) *Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol-VIII*, Madras.
- Watts, Neville A. (1970) *The Half Clad Tribals of Eastern India*, Orient Longmans, Bombay.
- Elwin, V. (1957) *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, Oxford University, Press, London.

# LIQUOR AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH OF ORISSA<sup>1</sup>

P.S. Das Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

The Dongria Kondh are one of the most primitive and backward tribes of Orissa. They are easily distinguished by their very quaint attire; the males clad in loin cloth wearing nose rings over their moustaches and sometimes in addition, a sharp and polished white bone thrust through the cartilage of the nose, two long and curved daggers hanging down the thighs and by their proud and dignified bearing. They are a sub-tribe of Kondh numbering about 5,618 who have not been enumerated separately by census. They live on the top of the Niyamgiri Mountains which lie in the Kalyansinghpur, Bissam-Cuttack, Muniguda and Biswanathpur Blocks in the Koraput district and in the adjoining Lanjigarh area of the Kalahandi district. They maintain themselves by growing a lot of plantain, jackfruit, orange, pineapple, turmeric and castor all of which they make over to the people of the Domb caste for a song, a few pegs (drinks) of illicitly distilled liquor, or a few rupees or their usual requirements of salt, tobacco, dried fish, clothes, ornaments, etc. Shifting cultivation, being their main occupation they grow millet, *kosla* and *kandul* (red gram) which they consume. As the mountains are sparsely populated and the Dongria Kondh owns the entire hill slopes demarcated by unwritten tribal custom among the different villages there and are traditionally reputed as fruit growers they should, in the fitness of things be rich but they live in ramshackle huts in poverty and squalor. The Dongria Kondh are poor because they are not able to market their produce at any reasonable price. Some people of the Scheduled Caste, Domb (also called Pano elsewhere) generally hailing from Kalahandi have settled down among them on the hills and taking advantage of the inaccessibility of the area, the simplicity of the Dongria Kondh, their ignorance, superstition, weakness for drink, lack of credit facilities, their isolation from the rest of the world, have been exploiting the Kondh to an unimaginable degree and carrying away all the produce from their trees and their fields.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XVI, No. 3, 1976, pp.52-57

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

Whatever may be the fact, the high terrain on which the Dongria Kondh inhabit, the topography, the climatic factor, etc. have shaped their living conditions and made them addicted to liquor. The very flavour of Mahua-liquor (*Irpi Kalu*) and sago palm juice (*Mada-kalu*) make the Kondh almost wild. Liquor has special charm for them. Except a few, all are habituated to drink and will avail any opportunity irrespective of the distance of either liquor shop or sago-palm-trees and conditions of the purse. They are so much addicted to it that they can forego their meals. For example, an old man of Kurlu village said “*salpa* tree is more than my wife; I can forego my wife but not the *salpa* tree.”

### Types and Processing of Liquor

Liquor is locally called Kalu. Various kinds of liquor are brewed domestically such as *Arckhi-Kalu* (Mahua liquor), *Amba-Kalu* (Mango liquor), *Panasa-Kalu* (Jackfruit-Liquor), *Kadali-Kalu* (Plantain liquor) and *Guda-Kalu* (Molasses liquor). Sago palm juice (*Mada-Kalu*) - an intoxicated drink is collected from locally available sago-palm-trees.

Arkhi is secretly brewed, but not in large scale. Domestic brewing being prohibited, the Kondh are afraid of local preparation and therefore, depend upon the market and their next door neighbours, the Domb. The Domb are experts in brewing Arkhi and make it a professional source of income. Some of the Domb purchase Arkhi from the licentiate liquor shops at the foot of hills and resell it in their respective villages at a higher cost. The Kondh also on special occasions like *Mandia-Rani* festival *Meria Parab*, marriage and death ceremonies etc. brew Arkhi secretly with the help of the Domb.

Mahua is purchase at the rate of 75 paise from the local market or collected from the forest. About 5 to 6 kg. of Mahua is soaked in water in an earthen-pot for a week or until it is fermented after which it is rinsed and kept in another pot. About a bucket of water is poured and another clay pot is dumped over it. The pot at the bottom is entirely plastered at the outside with clay. An oven is prepared at the bank of the stream and both the pots are placed over the fire. A hole is made at the body of the pot placed below through which one end of a hollow bamboo is inserted. Another end of the bamboo is similarly inserted in another pot placed on the ground beside the fire-pot. Inside those pot herbs of *Badhuni* (Broom-stick), roots of *Paintira* tree are kept and a napkin is covered over the rim of the pot. Clay is besmeared over that pot also. Thus with proper heat smoke is formed which does not get an outlet to go out but passes through the hollow bamboo to the other pot placed nearby. Cold water is sprinkled over the body of the pot to cool the heated smoke which ultimately turns into water

and becomes liquor. It gets more intoxicated with the addition of various herbs and roots, stated earlier.

The same process is adopted while preparing liquor from other types of fruits and molasses. Fruit-liquor is prepared out of ripe variety and only after extraction of juice. More the Juice is fermented, the more it is intoxicated. The same roots and herbs are also added to it make it palatable and more intoxicant. Liquor from the fruits and molasses is prepared only by the well-to-do families and as such it becomes a luxury alcoholic drink. Sometimes, a few families prepare this type of seasonal liquor and sell it to others, if there is any surplus.

*Duri Kalu* (Beer) is prepared out of rice, ragi, *arka* and *kangu*. Raw seeds are powdered and diluted with water to make a paste. The paste being covered in a *Siali* leaf-cup is kept hanging for a fortnight to make it dry completely. Within this estimated period the paste dries up which can be broken into pieces. Each piece is again made powder and soaked with water in a container for 8 to 10 days. This process enriches the alcoholic value and makes it more sour. Thus after 8 to 10 days sediment is formed at the bottom and the water over it which is used as *Duri-Kalu*. When the first stock is exhausted again water is poured and kept for 8 to 10 days. Thus the process continues for two months after which the sediment loses alcoholic value.

Except these country-made liquors, Sago-Palm Juice (Juice of *salpa* trees) is used as intoxicant. Salpa trees wildly grow on the hill tops and are possessed individually according to the customary division of hill terrains. These trees are considered prized possession of the family inherited across generations. Trespassing into any body's tree is seriously viewed to the extent that the trespasser may risk his life. The shoots of the tree come out during October-November and lasts until March-April without being withered away and within that period ample juice is available from each shoot. Each shoot is cut and the juice trickles down in a container, tied beneath it. The juice with the increasing heat of the sun becomes more alcoholic and intoxicating. Moreover, to add more alcoholic value to it, roots of *Kosla* plant, *Kanikutra* plant and broomstick plant are added to it. The entire process gives a tremendous alcoholic relief and at the same time fulfils the appetite of the consumers, as it is told.

Toddy-tapping is not a common practice in the area because of lesser growth of such trees. Moreover, the local people are not conversant either in climbing the trees or in tapping the toddy. The experts are therefore, called upon payment of wage to tap the toddy from the few trees mainly found in the forest.

### Customs, Norms, Beliefs and Practices associated with the use of Liquor

Consumption of liquor in any form is not socially prohibited irrespective of sex and age. A child picks up the habit, when he develops senses. It is a common practice approved by the society. *Mahua* liquor is considered to be the bit alcoholic drink and taken throughout the year irrespective of sex. Fruit liquor is seasonal and taken only by those who can afford to prepare or afford to purchase at the rate of Rs.2 per bottle. Beer is taken only during harvest of various crops. Sago-palm juice is taken for four months.

Usually the male members are habitual drinker and consume more. The women drink only during harvest and on social feasts and festivals. Children, above six years of age, generally drink sago-palm juice and casually drink Mahua liquor.

During and after harvest, the people celebrate most of their social and religious functions and therefore consume liquor to a large extent. But its consumption goes down during lean months when the people face economic distress. Despite paucity of fund, the habitual drunkards do not hesitate to drink by incurring loans or mortgaging their cropped field and fruit bearing trees.

Liquor is always taken in a group. The eldest one serves it to others in leaf-cups. From his share the eldest member first offers a little of it to the Mother Goddess (*Basumati*) by pouring it on the ground. Then he trickles the liquor thrice in his fingers above his head. Thus he offers it to *Niyam Raja*, the great God of Niyamgiri hills. Then only he touches the leaf cup on his forehead and drinks. Once he starts, other follows him. Even in individual consumption the same norms are observed. In case of sago-palm juice, the owner of the tree first sips to prove that it is not poisonous and then offers it to the participants. In case of trespassing, the defaulter is assaulted. It is believed that, if the trespasser dies after taking sago-palm juice he becomes *Dumba* (ghost) and harms the owner.

Liquor is a must in all the Kondh worship. There is hardly any religious ceremony or ritual in which *Mahua* liquor is not used. Each family believes that liquor is not only a religious necessity but a means to please gods. The priest must drink well before communicating with the spiritual world. Liquor is, therefore, offered to gods as well as to the priest.

Liquor is an important item in all the ceremonies connected with death. On the day of *Dasha* (10th day of the death), mourners assemble and drink with fullest content.

Liquor has religious and social significance in the marriage ceremony too. It is a prestigious item both for the parents of bride and groom. It is

included in bride price's item and on the other hand the bride's father also entertains large number of guests with liquor. Barrels of liquor are consumed in the marriage ceremony. Liquor is offered to *Niyam Raja*, *Sita Penu* and other deities in the marriage ceremony. The leaf-cup containing liquor moves round, round and round till everyone has drunk to his full capacity. Their financial conditions determine the quantity to be supplied. On average Rs.150 to Rs.200 are spent on liquor at the time of marriage by both the parties.

Mahua liquor has a still more important place in the Kondh's social life. A leaf-cup-full of liquor is a medium of social intercourse. It creates and sustains friendship. It is through which *Sai* system of bond friends is made and two friends became bosom to each other. Old friends' accidental meeting culminates in a mutual exchange of liquor cups. A casual meeting between the two strangers at the liquor-shop may lead to permanent friendship. A happy drink is the best form of friendship between strange neighbours or friends. All hospitality and reception have got no meaning without liquor. Liquor is an energetic solace for all dances and festivals. All the Kondh dances therefore begin with drink. Not only men, but women also drink to enjoy the happy moment. It is the main item in tribal feasts. In the Panchayat meetings, the participants are more keen for drinking than to the usual proceeding. The whole village, however, meets the expenditure on drink in case the Panchayat has to decide an inter-village dispute. In most of their verdicts the Panchayat awards penalty of a communal feast and drink.

In actual practice magic and drink are interlinked among the Kondh. A *Dishari* (magician) or a *Bejuni* (shaman) must drink excessively, for it is believed that a magician invokes his mysterious wisdom and probes into the world of evil spirits with the help of liquor. Most of his magical operations are preceded by drink. He is not paid in cash but in the form of liquor.

Mahua liquor is used as medicine to cure various diseases. The Kondh believe that diseases are caused not due to any infection or contagion, but due to the wrath of various deities and spirits who are looming in nature. In order to prevent or cure these natural diseases, benevolent gods and goddesses must be propitiated and appeased. To appease them liquor is indispensable.

Thus liquor plays a vital role in the tribal life. The Kondh believe that sago-palm juice and Mahua liquor has got food value. Fresh distilled liquor has got more food value. Liquor is an energetic stimulant which breaks the monotony and a food which satisfies the starving belly. It is a recognized means of relaxation and lessening of stress and strain. Being shifting-cultivators, they undertake enough of hazardous jobs. They ransack the forests to eke out their



livelihood. They ascend and descend the hill-tops for visiting market centers. All these strains are to be lessened and liquor is therefore, a charming energetic drink for all these strains.

### **Drinking and its Effect**

About 82 per cent of the families surveyed, were found having deficit budget, though it has not been possible to establish any direct relationship between debts and drink yet it is obvious that if expenditure on liquor could be reduced, many families could balance their budget. I recorded 92 transactions of the Dongria Kondh with the Domb. Nearly 68 i.e. about 73 percent of the transactions were made for liquor. The Domb illicitly distilled liquor, offered it to the Kondh and took leases of jack fruit trees, and sometimes pine-apple gardens in return of liquor. In one instance  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of turmeric field was leased out for a year in return for 25 bottles of liquor. In another, 12 jack-fruit trees were leased out for a year for 7 bottles of liquor. In yet another instance  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of pineapple garden was leased out for a year in return for 10 bottles of liquor. In majority of the cases, liquor has been sought in exchange of jack fruit and orange trees. The village streets are occupied by the Domb with tins of liquor during market days. They secretly sit at the back of the bushes and entice the Kondh with liquor bottles. All the surplus produces brought by the Kondh are knocked off by the Domb in exchange of liquor. The Domb are well informed of each feast and festival of the Kondh. They therefore, before the commencement of any function of any family in the village, make a contract with the family head to supply the required quota of liquor. The Dongria mortgages his fruit-bearing trees, orchards or turmeric field in this deal and at the time of harvest, the yield is carried away by the Domb.

I recorded seven cases of accidents with sustained vital injuries caused by taking liquor. Of course, there was no case of death. But out of seven cases, three cases were grave; the injured persons become invalid.

I recorded five cases where trespassers have been assaulted. Especially one case requires mentioning. It was a chilly night in the month of December. I had to open the door of my camp at the screaming sound of a man. I flashed my torch over him and found with astonishment that his entire body was in pools of blood. The pharmacist in charge of Primary Health Centre was called upon who rushed in and gave all possible medical relief. The victim was Tode Zakiska who trespassed for sago-palm juice and was assaulted by his uncle, Kona Zakiska of village Khambesi. When Tode was drinking the juice stealthily, Kona's son Budda saw it and intimated the matter to his father. Both father and son charged

Tode for his fault but the latter did not admit. There were some altercations and ultimately Tode was severely assaulted with the axe (Tangia). The matter was reported to the police. Two police constables appeared in the village on the next morning who arrested both the alleged and the victim. The case was decided on the way to the police-station with the intervention of village messenger (Barik). They were released. It was told that Rs. 120 was bribed to the police and the Barik got Rs.38 as commission. Again an emergency meeting was convened in the village. Both the alleged and the victim were fined Rs.80 i.e., the cost of a buffalo for a community feast. The buffalo was supplied by the Barik and a feast was organized and the matter came to an end with the rapprochement of both the victor and the vanquished. Such instances of violence for taking Mahua liquor and sago-palm juice are frequent. There are also instances of inter-group fighting, over the issue of taking liquor.

Thus the social evils of drink are glaring among the Dongria Kondh. The erotic effect of alcohol leads to many maladjustments in the family. Moreover, the liquor-dealer is often a money-lender, who also procures the surplus forest and agricultural products of the tribals. He is interested mainly in keeping the tribals as an easy prey to his tricky dealings. However, alcoholic drink is a great social evil, which is gradually eroding the economy of the community. But without that the community cannot survive. It is a fact that the tribals do drink and drinking in the tribal culture is a must but not an alternative choice, as it gives them nourishment and zest in life. It is therefore, necessary that the Anthropologists and the Administrators should seriously think of this problem.

To combat this liquor-dealing-monopoly of the Domb, any Public Marketing Agency, may act as wholesale supplier of liquor to the tribals. The Domb may be appointed as Commission Agents to deliver liquor to the tribals at a rate fixed by the centre. This may reduce exploitation to some extent. In the meanwhile a team of workers may be appointed to analyse the benefits and potentialities of the drink usually purchased by the tribals. Through research an unarmful drink or drug may be invented to substitute alcoholic drink to solve the liquor problem of the tribals.

# DUNA : ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE DONGRIA KONDH CULTURE <sup>1</sup>

P.S. Das Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

As the name signifies, 'Duna' is a bamboo-made money container, largely used among the Dongria Kondhs of Orissa and is considered as a key cultural device to achieve prosperity in both social and economic level.

Numbering about 6,000 in population the Dongria Kondhs inhabit the lofty Niyamgiri hill ranges in the district of (undivided) Koraput. From the point of view of cultural peculiarities they occupy a very special place among Orissan tribes. One can see in the Niyamgiri hills vast stretches of land in the hill slopes under banana and pineapple plantations amidst jack-fruit trees which the master hands of the Dongria Kondh have raised. Expert horticulturists as they are, the Dongria Kondhs have proved that the skill, ingenuity and perseverance of man can tame any rugged terrain without even the application of any improved technology for the prosperity of mankind.

Like any other tribe, the Dongria Kondhs form a species by themselves as far as their social organization and cultural pattern are concerned. Almost a century and a half ago, this tribe featured very prominently in the report of Mr. Russell for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice. Their superstitious beliefs and practices made the tribe known to the administrators as well as academicians. Preparation of the Duna among them is one of such peculiar beliefs and practices.

It will not be out of place to mention here in brief the details of Duna's conception to appreciate the cultural sanction lying behind it. Every Dongria Kondh has in his house a Duna or number of Dunas which is either inserted at

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1-4, Nos. 1-4, 1982-83, pp.1-3

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI), Bhubaneswar

the roof of the kitchen or buried on his own swidden. Duna is a money container, about one foot in length, made of bamboo, one side of which is kept open and the other side is closed with clay to protect the paper notes from being affected by insects. It is an apparatus for saving money. Any lump-sum earning is hoarded in this bamboo socket instead of being spent until the socket is packed up. Once it is packed up a tattered piece of cloth is covered round the opening over which clay is plastered upon a *siali* leaf. Subsequently, it is baked in the fire to protect it from decay when it comes in contact with the soil in the pit in which it is buried i.e., mainly near the seat of *muldei* (Ancestor's-spirit) or near the small hut (*Jadi*) constructed in his own swidden for watching the crops.

Once it is buried, it is revered as Sita Penu (Goddess Laxmi) and its owner is tabooed against opening it spending a pie from it during the life time of a person. It is believed such money represents Sita Penu; the Goddess of wealth and to spend money out of it may cause grave loss to the family.

Each Dongria Kondh family have one or two or more such containers, which are buried secretly by the head of the family without letting any other members of the house to know about it. Once the fact is disclosed, the owner loses the entire wealth and thereby his virtues to be a good man are lost. If the fact is kept undisclosed, the owner passes his life time happily as this treasure brings peace, prosperity and wealth for him as well as his successors.

This conception of Duna among the Dongria Kondh has its tremendous impact on the socio-economic life of the community.

### **Impact on the Social Life**

The entire Dongria community is divided into various clans, such as Niska, Kadraka, Huika, Pengeska, Wadaka, etc. Niska claims to be the superior most of all the clans as it is believed that almost all the predecessors of that clan possessed at least 5 of such Dunas. It is also believed that their mythical Ancestor King - Niyam Raja who created this clan handed over such Dunas to the members of this clan. He commanded them to bury these Dunas in their respective swiddens to bring peace and prosperity for their posterity. As the story goes only five families of Niska clan who lived in that vast wilderness could produce bumper crop without knowing any technicalities and technology of agriculture. Subsequently, other clans inherited such conception of the Niyam Raja to be more prosperous in their socio-economic life.

In the Dongria Kondh Society birth of a daughter is cherished very much because she is considered to be an asset of the family. She occupies a key

position in the family and virtually accomplishes all the tasks concerning to her home and outside. It is believed that if a man possesses at least two Dunes he becomes father of 2 daughters for which he is boastful of himself. Because right from the birth of a daughter in a family, the girl's parents are contacted in advance by the parents of the prospective grooms for marriage. In addition to that, the boy's parents compete among themselves to make payment of higher amount of bride price to acquire the girl as the daughter-in-law of their house.

While leaving her natal family after marriage, the daughter is only entitled to receive one Duna from her father which she hands over secretly to her husband to begin their new family of procreation. Her husband never discloses the fact to anybody and inserts it at the roof of his newly constructed house. This gives an impetus to the husband to start hoarding of his own money in a new Duna of his own for his socio-economic prosperity. When it is filled up the earlier one is buried somewhere else and the second one is replaced at the roof of his house. In case, the married girl does not bring such Duna to her neolocal family, her husband is believed to face a disastrous economic situation.

Though, divorce is permitted for marital incompatibility in Dongria society, it is hardly seen in such family where the daughter-in-law brings her father's Duna with her. They believe that the force and magical power of Duna patch up marital dissensions and mal-adjustments of the couple. Even in the worst situation if the husband dies without any heir, his younger brother marries the sister-in-law so that, the magical force of the Duna does not go away from the house. At the funeral of the head of the family, the last Duna kept at the roof of the house is thrown into the pyre. It is believed that the burning of the Duna in the pyre increases the virtues of the deceased and paves his way directly to the abode of Ancestor-spirits.

### **Impact on Economic Life**

Considering Duna, a supernatural device to bring opulence and wealth to the family, it is buried in the swidden. It is unaccounted money hoarded for all times to come in the bamboo tube. In the olden days, the people of the community used to hoard coins. But during my study in the year 1974, the people used to hoard new currency notes of various denominations.

The people say that the funnel contains about Rs. 500 to Rs 1,000 worth of currency notes and the coins worth of Rs. 100 to Rs 200. Whenever any crop is sold, the cash received in the form of currency notes and coins directly goes to the Duna except a few coins which are kept aside to meet the family consumption expenditure.

This hoarding of money has led the people to incur loan as and when required. Even during any emergency the money kept in the Duna is never brought out to be spent rather; loan is incurred to solve the problem. This has indirectly pushed the entire community in the doldrums of loan and become victims of socio-economic exploitation by the dishonest local money lenders. Their unscrupulous Domb neighbours taking advantage of the situation extend loan and exploit the Dongrias. Under no circumstances, even when a Dongria person dies and his or her funeral is to be performed on the next day, a pie is taken out from his Duna. It is firmly believed that, once the money goes to the Duna, it becomes the property of Sita Penu. Sita Penu has given the land free of cost to the people and She must therefore, be paid in coins (now, currency notes). If neglected, the wrath and arrogance of Sita Penu may bring colossal loss to the family. This is the belief deeply rooted in the Dongria culture for which the Dongrias keep the bulk of their hard earned money in their Dunas and fall prey to the cunning Domb money lenders at the time of need.

### **Impact on Religious Life**

On the full-moon day in the month of December (Push) after all the crops are harvested, goddess Sita Penu, represented by a dry gourd (*tumba*) and the Duna is worshipped ceremoniously by the housewife of the concerned family at the eastern side of the courtyard of the house. For seven days, Duna is kept inside the dry gourd as a token of reverence to Sita Penu and then again it is inserted at the roof of the house.

The Dongria female shamans (Bejunis) who are mostly widows are believed to have acquired two such Dunas from their husbands - once during marriage and another during their course of training for shaman hood. Even after ten years of marriage if a woman does not beget any child, she prefers to be female shaman and undergoes training under a Pat Bejuni (Head female shaman). During her life time, if she cleverly acquires two Dunas from her husband, she is believed to beget child in her next birth.

During Meriah festival, the Jani (Priest), who summons Earth-Goddess (Dharani Penu) on behalf of the people is only entitled to bring his own Duna and worships it along with Meriah animal. Since he is considered to be the most pious and virtuous, he alone is allowed to do so, and solicits benediction to be Jani again in his next birth. Since other people cannot do that as per prevailing custom of the society, they invite Jani to their respective houses to have his auspicious touch over their respective Dunas, which are buried secretly on the

day of Meriah festival. This day is considered very auspicious and a Duna buried on this day brings fabulous wealth and fortunes for the family.

Occurrence of repeated deaths in a family is ascribed to non-possession of Duna by the head of the family. The causes of unnatural deaths such as - murder, suicide, snake-bite, attack of wild animals and victim of small-pox, cholera, labour pain etc. are ascribed to the expenditure of money from the Duna in emergency situations. In such rare and unavoidable circumstances when it is felt inevitable to open a Duna, to save the concerned family members from such fatal mishaps the services of about half a dozen expert Shamans along with the Jani are sought for to worship to satisfy Sita Penu with adequate rituals and sacrifices, after which they prescribe opening of the Duna. The family members are cautioned to make good the amount of money spent from Duna immediately.

### **Impact on Political Life**

The traditional leaders in the Dongria Kondh society are Mandal, Jani, Bishmajhi, Pujari and Dishari. Mandal is the Mutha head or territorial head. A Mutha territory constitutes about 8 to 10 Dongria villages. Jani, Bishmajhi, Pujari and Dishari are village leaders. It is believed these leaders could achieve such status only because they possessed Dunas in their previous birth. The following leaders are believed to have possessed varying numbers of Dunas in their previous birth as given below.

Mandal	..	7 Dunas
Jani	..	5 Dunas
Bishmajhi	..	4 Dunas
Pujari	..	4 Dunas
Dishari	..	3 Dunas

The Mandal, who has achieved the highest status, is considered the most blessed son of Sita Penu. He is therefore, highly respected and his command are treated as the command of Sita Penu. Similarly other leaders are respected in the village and due importance is given to their decision. Even if the new leadership pattern has emerged after imposition of the democratic election and statutory *panchayatraj* system after independence, the election of modern leaders is considered on the consideration of possession of Duna by the candidate.

### **Persistence and Change:**

Thus this cultural element is so deep-rooted that, the Dongria Kondh can forego his food but not this sanction. To survive, this sanction is to be followed to keep their social structure intact. It is a fact that there are various

external agencies to influence them and their culture. From the year 1964, the Government and non-Government agencies are working in the Niyamgiri hills to develop the Dongria Kondh and to bring them at par with the society at large. But they have not been able to influence this aspect of their core culture which remains still intact.

This can be substantiated with a few case studies, collected during the Year 1980. Seven cases were collected from the villages - Hundijali, Tuaguda and Kadragumma. In five out of the seven cases, the Dongria Duna holders have been able to hoard idle money in two Dunas each even though they are within the age-group of 35 to 45. Now they are said to earn more by cultivating more cash crops and selling their surplus and for that matter, their number of Dunas may increase depending upon their life span. It is because now, surplus commodities are sold for hard cash in the Fair-Price centers established by government in their area. This cash income goes to the Duna instead of being spent extravagantly. In the remaining two cases, the subjects have not yet started, because they are teen agers.

But the question arises here is that, can we have realistic development planning for this tribe, who really earn by hard labour but keep the money idle and unutilized for their age old beliefs and practices? The average annual income per household of a Dongria Kondh family during the year 1964 was Rs.507 which has doubled to Rs. 1,037 during the year 1974. With this extra income, they would have been more solvent. But are they so? Where does the extra money go? It goes to their Dunas.

Yet there is a silver lining in the sky. With spread of education, awareness and reach of mass media and the impact of onslaught of the powerful waves of change and modernization in these days as well in the imitate future, there will be positive change of mind set, attitude and the world view of the Dongria in which they and more particularly their younger generation may come up to make the best of both the worlds – traditional and modern.



# CONCEPT OF DEBT AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDHS <sup>1</sup>

P. S. Das Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

The subject of primitive economy has not been popular among the social scientists as yet. Very little work has been done so far by the economists and anthropologists in this field. Indebtedness, one of the important aspects of primitive economy has also not been properly investigated.

All primitive societies have some sort of economic organisation. What all societies have in common are that they make use of natural resources, technology, division of labour, use of markets and some form of money. But the specific institutionalization of these may vary radically.

The credit system and its concept have not been properly attended to both by the economists and anthropologists though the credit structure is studied in a stray manner among the aboriginals of Australia, New Guinea and Africa. Credit, as it functions in the ordinary and ritual exchange of a society having a relatively complex economic structure has not been studied systematically as yet. In India, it is almost a virgin field for research. To quote Herskovits "Markets and middlemen are frequently encountered in non-literate societies as aids to business enterprise of various sorts." (Herskovits,1952) It is a challenging problem for the scientists, the administrators, the philanthropists and the social workers that the tribals are heavily indebted and they are outright exploited by the middlemen at the cost of their simplicity and ignorance.

In the year 1966, while undertaking a study on the school-going children among the Dongria Kondhs, one of the primitive sections of the Kondh Community, I had an opportunity to observe the credit relationship between the two communities, the Dongria Kondh and the Domb, a Scheduled Caste

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, 1988, pp 11-15

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 751003

community. About thirty-six persons belonging to both the communities confronted the then Special Officer, Tribal and Rural Welfare Department, Orissa to discuss the debt position of the Dongria Kondh and to liquidate their outstanding debts. During the discussion, the Dongria Kondhs put forth animated allegations against the Dombs daubing the latter *as* Patkars (cheats). From this, an onlooker would get an impression that both the communities are at daggers drawn towards each other. But to my utter surprise, it was found out that the same Dongria Kondh who was so animated in his accusation against the Dombs, again approached the same persons later for loan on the strength of their ritual relationship of Sai (bond-friends). This contradiction in human behaviour poses a problem which prompted me to undertake the present study. Another factor of my interest was introduction of Purchase-Sale and Fair-Price Shop Scheme in the Dongria area by Government at that time. The scheme was introduced primarily to protect the tribals against the exploitation by the money-lenders. It was believed that by introducing such a scheme the tribals would take advantage of it and get fair-price for their products. It was anticipated that this would eradicate indebtedness from among them and ensure their better economic condition. But the findings were just opposite of the objective which could not be attained as the Dongria Kondhs could not be conclusively persuaded to free themselves from the network of their traditional socio-economic relationships with their money lenders.

In view of the specific limitation of this problem, the following hypotheses were formulated for undertaking the study. First, the credit relationships of the Dongria Kondhs encompass a composite series of activities both economic and non-economic. Secondly, the concept of debt has a different cultural connotation for the Dongria Kondh which is to be discussed here in this article. They do not go by the modern concept of debt. Anything borrowed either in cash or kind at the time of need is not considered to be a loan. Similarly anything extracted in exchange of this timely help either through fair or foul means is not considered to be undue for the Dombs. These feelings are the outcome of a network of symbiotic relationships between the Dongria and the Domb established since the past.

This reciprocal relationship has been historically evolved and has structurally resolved the apparently conflicting interests of the two communities. The Dongria Kondh economy is so organized that the allocation of labour and land, the organization of work in production process and the disposition of produced goods are expressions of underlying kinship obligations, tribal affiliation and religion and moral duty. In such an economy the bulk of

resources and products are transacted in non-market spheres, when their economy different from our own are analysed, the concepts prevalent are different to their structures or performances. Indebtedness, which is an economic behaviour is largely governed by different principles of organizations, different sanctions, different institutionalizations of economic mechanisms and different moral values for judging worth and performances. This economic transaction cannot be understood without the social obligation. The entire economic motive—why the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the Dombs alone but not from other sources, is only due to certain non-economic relationships which motivate the Dongria Kondh to borrow from the Domb. The non-economic motives are patently incorporated into the economic models when we analyse the relationship between the two communities. As Ortiz (1927) says "Economic model can readily incorporate supposedly non-economic activities". However, to analyse this credit relationship, it is but indispensable to analyse the natural interaction of social, cultural and economic activities, institutions, roles and relationships within the society—the entire social process.

The vast area of 250 square miles, studded with sky-scraping hills, surrounded by lush green forests is called the Niyamgiri hills – the abode of the Dongria Kondh, one of the most backward tribes of Orissa. The Niyamgiri hill ranges are situated in the Bissam-Cuttack police-station of Gunupur and Rayagada Subdivisions in the district of (undivided) Koraput. Almost a century and half ago, the British officials (Macpherson, 1852 & Campbell, 1864) reported about this tribe very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice. Another scheduled caste, locally known as the Domb also reside with the Dongria Kondhs. Almost all the villages are exclusively inhabited by these two communities. The Dombs are immigrants from the plains of the districts of Balangir and Kalahandi and have permanently settled in the Dongria Kondh area.

The Dongria Kondhs are primarily shifting cultivators. Other than millets and cereals which they produce from their swiddens, they are also renowned tribal horticulturists of the Niamgiri hills. Almost all of their economic activities, social relationships and religious practices are integrally connected with shifting cultivation and horticultural practices.

Indebtedness is the most acute and complicated problem among the Dongria Kondh. Ordinarily they glean and reap adequate amount of food crops to live in primitive affluence. This balance with nature is seriously dislocated by the economic process for their perpetual indebtedness.

Since the past, the Dongria Kondhs are being perpetually exploited by their Domb neighbours resulting in a severe deficit in their budget of individual families. The accumulated debts always exceed the economic input of the indebted families. A small survey of 22 families during the year 1982-83 reveals that the *per capital* annual loan (including both current and old) is Rs. 72.90 only.

#### **A Case Study**

Wadaka Paji of village Gartoli, borrowed Rs. 6/- and 8 Manas (1 Mana = 1 Kilogram) of Kosla rice in the month of July 1981 from Sikoka Basu (a cousin) of the same village. The purpose was to repay his outstanding loan received earlier from Palkia Kandapani, a Domb of the same village. In the year 1979, Paji had incurred loan from the Domb in order to meet the expenses towards performing a shamanistic ritual for the treatment of his ailing child. Against this loan he had mortgaged three of his jackfruit trees.

When Paji delayed the repayment, Palkia got annoyed and demanded 2 more jackfruit trees with fruits towards interest accrued there upon since 1979. To repay the loan of Kandapani, he approached his own cousin, Basu and borrowed Rs. 6/-. Basu extended the loan with an understanding that Paji should repay it at the time of his the next harvest in kinds with 25 per cent interest.

Paji repaid the principal amount of the loan to the Domb but not the interest for which he could not release his 5 jackfruit trees.

In the year 1982, Paji paid back 12 ½ Manas or (12 ½ Kilograms) of Kosla-rice to Basu, his cousin as per the contract but could not pay the cash loan. In lieu of that, he gave 6 numbers of plantain trees.

In the year 1983, when Kandapani demanded interest, Paji gave 2 more jackfruit trees towards the interest. On enquiry it was ascertained that Paji died in the same year and his son Wadake Drimba paid interest for one year only to Kandapani and got released 2 of his jackfruit trees. Thus even Paji's son could become free from the loan incurred by his father.

However, in English Dictionary, debt means "something owed to another, a liability and an obligation". In Encyclopedia Britannica, debt is defined as, "a definite sum due by one person to another". In general use it means that something not owned by the user but temporarily taken from another for use with the understanding of returning the same either with an excess over it or without any excess. To the Dongria Kondhs anything taken for use and given

back after some time is not considered as debt. It is rather conceived as a kind of mutual give-and-take relationship. The case cited above makes further clear the usual conception of debt among them. Some of salient features of the Dongria debt system are detailed below.

1. A Loan is sought for when needed. Loans are contracted when a person is not able to meet his normal requirements from his own income or when unforeseen events demand extra expenditure.
2. A loan is incurred either in cash or in kind or both.
3. The standard for determining the time limit of a loan depends on the creditworthiness of the debtor and the financial standing of the creditor.
4. (a) The rate of interest is determined in every case by mutual agreement between the two parties depending upon on the personal relationship between the two parties.
  - (b) In case of a breach of contract or if the loanee becomes a defaulter, the rate of interest is enhanced from the rate originally contracted. This enhanced rate of interest is collected either in cash or in kind but in most cases in kind. The Dongria Kondh creditor may be liberal towards another Dongria Kondh defaulter whereas, the Domb creditor does not.
  - (c) It is also evident that instead of interest being charged, an excess interest (*faida*) is collected in kind along with the principal amount. It so happens when the creditor is a Domb and the debtor is a Kondh. In such cases the creditor makes a pre-calculation of his profit and accordingly contracts assets to be mortgaged. The debtor too, does not mind to part with such assets. The feeling is that when the debtor is immediately helped, the creditor must be helped in the long run.
  - (d) The debtor may be exempted from paying the interest in case he can please the creditor with humility or establishes a good relationship be it the Dongria Kondh or the Domb.
5. (a) Almost all the loans are sought on oral contracts. No written document is maintained either by the Kondh or the Domb creditor. Records are maintained only for the transactions with statutory credit agencies like Banks and LAMPs.

- (b) The Domb creditor does not maintain any records for two reasons: firstly in the absence of a written document he could easily exploit the illiterate Kondh and secondly in the changing context of growing awareness his identity as money-lender can never be disclosed.
6. (a) All loans are obtained for a specific purpose which is considered as urgent in nature. In almost all the cases, the purpose is clearly revealed by the debtor to the creditor.
    - (b) The rate of interest also varies according to the acuteness of the requirement. The more urgent the need, the more is the rate of interest. The Domb, creditor always takes advantage of the urgency of the Kondh. This is because lending is considered as a reciprocal obligation by the Kondh creditor where as for the Domb it is a profitable business transaction. Usable personal assets like, cropped-field, plantains, trees of economic value are kept mortgaged by the creditor for getting a loan. The creditors in general and the Domb creditors in particular make use of those mortgaged productive assets and earn a living –fully or partly out of it.
  7. If the debtor is not well known to the creditor or the creditor has doubt on the integrity of the debtor, personal surety is sought for extending a loan. This practice is more frequent among the Kondh debtor and creditor than among the Kondh debtor and Domb creditor. It is because, the Domb creditor is cunning enough about how he can collect his amount from the Kondh even in the worst situation and secondly, he wants to keep the transaction secret between him and the debtor. Whereas, the Kondh creditor when extends loan to another Kondh, he bears in mind the fact that personal surety is a must because he cannot rely his own men as they are bound to one another in such a way that at some or other level there may arise a rift between them.
  8. Any advance payment by the creditor to the debtor for any purpose is also considered as loan.
  9. Repayment is made if loan is taken. Payment is made before or just after the expiry of the term. As is evident, repayment should be made in full but not in installments which is considered to be a defaulting act by the debtor. Recovery by installments is not grievously viewed but the debtor thereby loses his own right over his leased out property. On the other

hand the creditor is put to a favorable position by not losing his claim over the mortgaged property and goes on enjoying the benefits for years together until the final repayment is made.

- I0. A compound rate of interest (*faida*) in excess of the repayment of loan is also given by the debtor while repaying loan. It may be taken forcibly without the consent of the debtor.
- I1. Loan is also brought from the Government Agencies. It is received mainly in cash.
- I2. Government loan is interest free for the; Dongria Kondh.
- I3. A Bond-paper loan agreement is executed by the Government before extending the loan.
- I4. Government loan is disbursed before a witness - who belongs to the debtor's community.
- I5. An asset register is maintained by the local Government agency against the loans advanced to the Dongria Kondh.
- I6. Thus, all these above mentioned transactions constitute a 'Debt' for the Dongria Kondh.

Thus, loan according to the Dongria Kondh can be broadly defined as follows - Loan embraces all types of transactions whether cash or kind which a person receives as per his requirement either from a Domb, a non-tribal creditor or from a tribal creditor or from the Government Agency for a specific period and for a specific purpose; either orally or executing written document, with interest or without it, either by keeping mortgages or without doing so, either by giving excess (*faida*) for default in repayment or without that, either by personal surety or without that and it must be repaid within the stipulated time either partially or fully or in excess without breaching the contract. If these elements are not present in any transaction the Dongria Kondh is reluctant to accept it as debt.

So far as the legal definition of loan is concerned, it is as follows - An advance whether of money or in kind on interest made by a money-lender having dealt the transaction on a document bearing interest executed in respect of past liability any such transaction which in substance, is a loan (Orissa Money lending Act, Section 2 of Act of 1969—as amended by Act-XVIII and XVII of 1949 and XVIV of 1951 and Regulation V of 1949 and 1951 and Rules up-to-date).

What amounts under the Act—(i) An advance in money or in kind, (ii) The advance must carry interest and (iii) There must be a condition of repayment.

If the conception of loan as prevalent among the Dongria Kondh is compared with that of legal definition of loan, we find that loan according to the Dongria Kondh is an advance either in cash or in kind but it is necessarily not extended always with interest. In the Kondh society loan is also extended free of interest when the transaction takes place within the Kondh community and between the Kondh and the Government Agency. Secondly, no written agreement is made when the transaction takes place - within the community or with the outsiders; that is, the Domb, except with the Government Agency. Thirdly, a condition of repayment though involved in the transaction, is not legally followed or strictly adhered to, especially when the transaction is made with the Domb. Thus, the tribal conception of loan is different from the legal conception of loan. However, the Dongria Kondhs have a limited view of incurring loan which is confined to their own society and culture. The communities living in the hills have further narrowed the scope of understanding loan in the context of wider society.

The Dongria Kondh has his way of consideration of incurring debt within the bounds of the socio-cultural ties among them and between them and the Domb and nobody else. That is why the Kondh is reluctant to approach any other Agency for loan as he considers it undignified and undesirable. The Kondh believes in maintenance of socio-economic ties than the temporary economic relationship with the creditor. Without the socio-cultural consideration which is of paramount importance for their life and living in the rugged hills far away from the modern society, the Dongria Kondh hesitates to seek loan from external agencies.



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH AND THE JUANG <sup>1</sup>

Arati Mall <sup>2</sup>  
Trilochan Sahoo <sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

The term of indebtedness is synonymous to borrowing, debt, loan and credit. As mentioned in New Webster dictionary (1981-487), "Indebted means being under or having incurred a debt required to pay a loan burden and indebtedness implies obliged by something received for which gratitude or restitution is due". 'Indebtedness' in broader connotation implies the feeling of gratitude for somebody's help, kindness that the debtor cannot pay back in equal amount in reciprocity. But the term is generally used to signify a sum of money owed to or deferred payment of goods and services received at present.

Though the meaning of these two terms 'debt and borrowing' appears to be the same and are used interchangeably from the layman's point of view, there is a little difference between these two. The dictionary meaning of the term 'debt' is 'bound to pay or perform for another an obligation'. 'Borrowing' means 'to obtain something as loan, trust or credit with the intention of returning the same or an equivalent to adopt from another source for one's own'.

Generally in debt the debtor pays back the principal along with the interest but in case of borrowing the debtor returns the exact amount taken from the creditor may be without any interest. Moreover, debt is used for long term loan and borrowing for short term. In case of borrowing if the amount (cash or kind) is small, the creditor, at times, does not mind if the debtor fails to return the same, which generally does not happen in case of debt.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXIV, Nos. 1& 2, 2004, pp.68-96

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The tribal society is a closed and simple one. Tribal indebtedness forms a part and parcel of their socio-economic and cultural behavior and credit practice indicates their economic life. The Scheduled Tribes in general and the Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) in particular are at the level of subsistence economy. Expensive marriage ceremonies, birth and death rites and rituals and worships of gods and goddesses largely account for their indebtedness. These lead them to drown in debt. Their principal source of debt is local moneylenders. Often the tribals remain in debt to moneylenders in perpetuity, and after their death, their indebtedness is handed down to their descendants. Due to indebtedness some tribals lose their lands and fall victims to the practice of debt bondage and land alienation. Indebtedness thus becomes a form of exploitation of tribals by non-tribals and this has weakened the tribals' economic conditions.

The problem of indebtedness is primarily attributed to poverty of the tribals. It also reflects their under-economic malaise, i.e. lack of education, low purchasing/ bargaining power and lack of resources for investing in gainful activities and meeting culturally inevitable expenditures. The legal measures to restrict the activities of private moneylenders have failed to reduce the severity of the problem. This is due to ineffective enforcement machinery and lack of alternative source of credit for meeting consumption and productive needs. Lack of suitable National Policy to provide consumption credits to poor tribals have tended to make them dependant on unscrupulous moneylenders.

Indebtedness is a wide spread and chronic problem in tribal societies. It is very acute among Primitive Tribal Groups living in remote and inaccessible areas. The problems of indebtedness are economic and social in nature. The former aspect pushes the people into penury while the latter, explains the conditions, like social inequalities, deprivation and social and ritual obligations.

The study on indebtedness poses two important aspects to be discussed before unveiling the problem, as it would be seen from the field situation. The 'concept of indebtedness' and the transaction of 'money lending in tribal areas' needs through examination.

### **Money Lending in Tribal Areas**

To study the role of private moneylenders it is essential to understand the failures of various Government and Institutional credit agencies to extend loan to tribals. The transactions of traditional moneylenders are very simple and convenient to the tribal debtors. They are the nearest neighbours ever present in the scene. Whenever a tribal needs money for whatever reason, he first goes to

the nearest local moneylender's house where he is always welcome. The moneylender advances him money without any conditions, sureties, guarantees and guarantors since an average tribal has very little to offer in this regard. But the moneylender recognizes his honest desire to fulfill his loan obligation out of his earning and that is treated as good surety against his loan.

On the other hand, institutional credit sources are situated at far off places from the tribal habitat. Again elaborate formalities, cumbersome procedures, like security, guarantee and time lag between date of application and date of disbursement of loans that is too productive purposes only dishearten the tribals to borrow from these agencies. The poor tribal generally need loans for consumption and fulfillment of social and ritual obligations and the traditional moneylenders offer loan for such purposes instantly and unconditionally.

### **Findings of Earlier Studies on Tribal Indebtedness**

The earlier studies on tribal indebtedness show that it is a socio-economic phenomenon, and is too rampant among the tribes. The moneylenders have established a symbiotic relationship with their tribal clients. In spite of debt legislation, the fraudulent and evasive practice of unscrupulous money-lenders continues and that has reduced the effectiveness of the Government and statutory credit agencies. The non-institutional loan is taken either in cash or kind and the rate of interest is generally very high. The non-tribal creditors extract the major portion of the tribal produce from the fields and forest. At times, fresh loans are made to repay the old ones. With the spread of moneylenders' business the incidence of debt is high. The debt owed for non-productive purpose is substantially high among the tribals. Poverty pushes the tribals into indebtedness which in turn forces them to become bonded labour.

The earlier studies on indebtedness of the Dongria Kondhs highlight the following points. The Dongria Kondhs borrow money for their inevitable traditional socio-religious obligations and to meet the requirement of food and drinks. Under the guise of ceremonial friendship the Domb neighbour maintains a symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kondhs and exploits the former in the process of economic transactions. The contracts between the Dongria Kondh and the Domb are established through annual lease of fruit-bearing trees by the former, partly for cash and partly for few bottles of liquors. The price of the produce offered to the Dongria Kondh is lesser than the prevailing market price.

The earlier studies on indebtedness of the Juangs, another PTG, though appear to be few, highlights the following aspect. Very often the Juangs are

unable to repay and free themselves from the clutches of the moneylenders. In the process, they lose all they own, their lands and houses. The aftermath of indebtedness lead to land alienation and loss of property of the Juangs.

### **The Present Study**

The earlier studies suggest further study on the issues, like understanding the socio-economic implications and indentifying the problems. With this backdrop, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar had conducted a comparative study on indebtedness among the Dongria Kondhs of Raygada district and the Juangs of Keonjhar district in the State of Orissa. This paper is a concise form of the comparative study on indebtedness of the Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs by the first author conducted during 2000-01 under the guidance and supervision of Prof. (Dr) P. K. Nayak, the then Director and Shri B.B. Mohanty, Deputy Director of the Institute.

The study was conducted among the Dongria Kondhs of DKDA, Kurli area in Bissam-Cuttack block of Raygada district and among the Juangs of Gonasika area of Bansapal block in Keonjhar district of Orissa. The objective of the study were to find out the social and economic aspects of indebtedness, its magnitudes and impacts on the lives of Dongria Kondhs of Southern Orissa and the Juangs of Northern Orissa, and to evolve a comparative profile of the system operating among both the PTGs in their respective areas.

## **INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDHS**

### **Study Area and the People:**

The Dongria Kondh constitutes a primitive section of the principal Kondh tribe of Orissa. They inhabit exclusively in the forest-clad Niyamgiri hill ranges, lying in the boarder of Raygada and Bissam-Cuttack Police Stations. The study village Kurli is situated at an altitude of 3000 ft. above the sea level and is surrounded by hills. The village comes under Kurli Gram Panchayat of Bissam-Cuttack block of Raygada district. It is one of the adopted villages of Dongria Kondh Development Agency and comes under Gunupur ITDA. The Dongria Kondh and the Dom, a Scheduled Caste community, live together in the same village. The Dongria Kondh males, like their female counterparts keep long and use varieties of hair clips.

As per the survey, the village Kurli comprises 105 households and 537 persons. Of the households, 70 belong to the Domb caste and 35, to the Dongria Kondh. The Dongria Kondhs constitute one third and the Dombs two

third of the total population of Kurli village. Therefore, at the village level the Dombs are numerically preponderant over the Dongria Kondhs.

The Domb is the immediate neighbour of the Dongria Kondh. Nayak says, “previously in a Dongria Kondh village only one or two Domb families were allowed to stay with the Kondh to render some traditional services like acting as messenger (Barika) and/ or acting as sweepers and cattle herders for all the villagers” (1989: 188). The Dombs are, therefore regarded as helping hands to the Dongria Kondh for management of their essential services. Sometimes they are also tied to them as ritual friends. The Dombs carried out petty business on fruits and forest products of the Dongria Kondhs. As their number increased and they practised their trade in the hills and started the business of money lending taking lease of fruit-bearing trees or orchards of the Dongria Kondhs. The Dombs sometimes act as intermediaries in settlement of quarrels that take place among the Dongria Kondhs or between the two communities. Besides, they also take the responsibility of collection of cash/kind from each individual household for arrangement of feasts and festivities. In course of time, the Dongria Kondh and the Dombs have developed their relationship as the debtor and the creditor, respectively.

#### **Dongria Kondhs’ Concept of Indebtedness:**

The Dongria Kondhs use the terms, *Rina* for loan and *Adi* or *Kantari* for interest. They consider loan from non-institutional source i.e. Domb as borrowing rather than loan. According to Das Patnaik “anything borrowed either in cash or kind is not considered as loan. Similarly anything extracted by the creditor from time to time or at future in exchange of this temporary help at present either through fair or foul means is not considered to be undue. These feelings are the outcome of a network of symbiotic relationship established with the creditor since past. It is considered as mutual give and take” (1990: 28-41). To them ‘Indebtedness’ is generally an economic transaction tied with social obligation especially with Domb. Further the emic views of Dongria Kondh about loan is; “to Dongria Kondh ‘loan’ embraces all type of transactions, whether cash or kind which a person brings as per his requirement either from Domb, a non-tribal creditor or from a tribal creditor or from a Government Agency for specific period and for specific purpose, either orally or executing written documents with interest or without paying any interest, either by keeping mortgage or without keeping any mortgage, either by giving any excess (*faida*) or without giving any excess, either by personal surety or without any personal surety and it must be repaid within the stipulated time either partially or fully in excess without breaching the contract” (Pattnaik & Mohanty, 1990:28-41).

But the views of Das Patnaik are not applicable to transaction with both non-institutional sources and institutional source. Loan does not embarrass economic transaction with non-tribal or tribal creditors. Loan embraces economic transactions with Government agency or institutional and is found with execution of written documents, which carries a fixed rate of interest, and with personal surety. The loan amount is always paid in cash. In case a person fails to repay the loan within stipulated time, it becomes compound, merge with the principal amount of loan.

The Dombs, constitute the main non-institutional loan source. The Dongria Kondhs do not think that they are in debt when they receive cash/kind from the Dombs in exchange of their orchards or fruit trees. Sometimes they also take advance (cash/kind) from the Dombs at the time of their necessity on the condition to give them fruit orchards. Though exploitation exists in the process of the transactions, it is in a disguised form of mutual help and social relationship. The Dongrias do not feel shame or think themselves as debtors and the Dombs, as creditors. In their view it is mutual exchange and the extraction of Dombs from them is due to foregoing the use of his money/article at present. On the other hand, they feel themselves to borrow from their relatives or kins group as in exchange of loan amount; the creditor does not receive anything. Thus borrowing from kin groups or blood relation is a rare incidence, which takes place in dire necessity when the Dongrias fail to get the required amount from the Dombs in exchange of their orchards.

#### **Extent of Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondhs:**

According to the survey out of total 35 Dongria Kondh households, 26 (74 %) households are indebted. Most of the households have incurred loans from more than one source (see table below).

#### **No of Households incurred Loans from difference sources**

Sl. No.	Source	No. of Indebted Households		Total Indebted Households
		Previous loan	Current loan	
1.	Non-Institutional	13	7	20
2.	Institutional			
	i) Bank	2	2	4
	ii) Co-operative Societies	4	7	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15 *</b>	<b>14 *</b>	<b>26 *</b>

Total number of indebted households is not equal to the total number of households, as one person has taken loan from more than one source.

The total loan amount of 26 Dongria Kondh households comes to Rs. 2, 53,450/-. Out of the total loan amount, Rs.1, 57,950/- (62.32%) has been taken from non-institutional sources and Rs. 95, 500/- (37.68 %) from institutional sources. Further Rs. 1, 02,150/- (40.30 %) is taken during the year 1999-2000 and the remaining loan amount of Rs. 1, 51,300/- (59.70 %) has been standing from the previous year. Out of institutional loan, Bank loans constitute (19.73 %) and loan from co-operative society (17.95 %). Loans from non-institutional source include the Dombs, own community members (Dongria Kondhs) and community fund whereas loans from the institutional sources include Niyamgiri Fruit Growers Co-operative Society and commercial banks. The average loan outstanding per household is Rs. 9748/- (see table below).

#### Total Loans of Dongrias of Kurli Village from different sources up to 2000

Sl. No	Loan from Different Sources	Amount of Loan (in Rs.)		
		Current Loan	Previous Loan	Total Loan
1.	Non-Institutional	39,150	1,18,800	1,57,950 (62.32)
2.	Institutional			
	i) Bank	32,000	18,000	50,000
	ii) Co-operative Society	31,000	14,500	45,500 (17.95)
	Sub -total (i + ii)	63,000	32,500	95,500 (37.68)
	<b>Grand total (I+2)</b>	<b>1, 2,150 (40.30%)</b>	<b>1, 51,300 (59.70%)</b>	<b>2, 53,450 (100.00%)</b>

#### Causes of Indebtedness

The Dongria Kondhs spend lavishly while observing social functions like marriage, birth and death rites, religious ceremonies etc. Besides, they are often involved in clan feuds, which arise out of child betrothal and dormitory system and due to stealing of *salap* juice or fruit from the other's trees. To settle the disputes, they require spending a lot of money towards payment of penalty. Further the poor section among them having no horticultural plots is forced to borrow in cash and kind for their consumption. The specific purposes for which they incur loans include the following:

- To meet the expenses of feast to be arranged for the kinsmen, relatives and villagers during birth and death rituals, marriage ceremonies and festive occasions including the payment of bride price and festive occasions.
- To meet the expenses of settling a conflict arising out of clan feuds due to breach of betrothal and forcible capture of bride for marriage and stealing of sago palm liquor and fruit of an individual of a clan by another person of a different clan.
- To bear the heavy expenditure for celebration of *Meriah* festival held communally in which buffaloes are sacrificed before the *Dharani Penu* for a bumper crop and for purchase of cattle to be sacrificed before their traditional deities.
- To meet the expenses of cultivation of horticultural crops. Persons having large number of orchards sometimes employ co-operative labour to take up different works connected with horticultural plantations.
- For expenditure towards construction and repair of houses, inevitable treatment of chronic diseases, investment by way of purchasing agricultural lands in the plains, repayment of old loan and even payment of LIC premium amount.
- To meet expenses of day-to-day consumptions during the lean season mostly the poor people having no horticultural plots borrows both in cash and kind for meeting the day-to-day necessities.

#### **Purpose of Indebtedness**

The study shows that out of 35 households at village 'Kurli', 26 (74.29%) households have incurred loan for more than one purpose. It reveals that maximum number of persons, 19 (73.08%) have taken loan for celebration of marriage and other festivals and rituals. For consumption and shifting cultivation / agricultural purposes 8 (30.71%) persons in each case have taken loan. Only one (3.85%) person in each case had taken loan for repayment of old loan and payment of fine, treatments of diseases, construction of houses and for education of the children.



## Utilization of Former and Current Loans by Dongria Households of 'Kuri' Village

Purpose	Non-Institutional Sources				Institutional Sources				Total		
	Current Loan 1999-2000		Previous Loan		Bank		Co-operative Society		Current Loan	Previous Loan	Total Loan
					Current Loan 1999-2000	Previous Loan	Current Loan 1999-2000	Previous Loan			
Consumption	4,100	5,350	-	3,000	-	7,000	5,000	4,100	13,350	17,450 (6.89)	
Celebration of marriage festivals/ rituals	25,300	67,650	-	15,000	-	7,000	-	32,300	82,650	1,14,950 (45.35)	
Shifting cultivation, Agriculture	9,750	7,900	12,000	-	-	14,000	9,500	35,750	17,400	53,150 (20.97)	
Payment of old loan	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	-	10,000	-	10,000 (3.95)	
Payment of fine	-	3,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,000	3,000 (1.18)	
Self Treatment	-	25,900	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,900	25,900 (10.22)	
House Construction	-	-	20,000	-	-	-	-	20,000	-	20,000 (7.89)	
Children's Education	-	9,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,000	9,000 (3.35)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,150</b>	<b>1,18,800</b>	<b>32,000</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>14,500</b>	<b>1,02,150</b> <b>(40.30)</b>	<b>1,51,300</b> <b>(59.70)</b>	<b>2,53,450</b> <b>(100.00)</b>		

The table below shows that out of total loan amount, 55.28% was spent on rituals and ceremonies, 11.05 % on farming, 6.88% on consumption, 3.55 % on children's education, 3.95 % for old loan repayment, 1.18 % for payment of fine, 10.22% for treatment of diseases and 7.89% for house building. Loan amount spent on different purposes are given in case studies.

- Current loan (40.30%) is less than previous loan (59.70%)
- The current loan from institutional source (Rs. 32,000/- + Rs. 31,000/-) is more than non-institutional source (Rs. 39,150/-)
- Though loan is obtained from institutional source for productive purpose, like cultivation, horticultural plantation, etc. it has been utilized for non-productive purposes like consumption and celebration of marriage, rituals, etc).
- A portion of loan amount from non-institutional source has also been utilized for productive purpose like shifting cultivation and agriculture.
- Total loan (current + previous) from both the institutional and non-institutional source shows that a major portion (45.35 %) has been spent in the festival, marriage and rituals.
- Loan from non-institutional source has been decreased by approximately 3 times the previous loan amount.

#### Utilization of Loan Amount (source wise) by Dongria Households of 'Kurli'

Purpose	Private loan		Bank		Co-op Society		Total	
	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)
Household consumption	6	9,450 (5.98)	1	3,000 (6.00)	1	5,000 (10.99)	8	17,450
Rituals Festivals, Marriage,	14	92,950 (58.84)	1	15,000 (30.00)	3	7,000 (15.38)	18	1,14,950
Shifting cultivation/ Agriculture	3	17,650 (11.18)	1	12,000 (24.00)	5	23,500 (51.65)	9	53,150
Payment of Old Loan	-	-	-	-	1	10,000 (21.98)	1	10,000
Payment of Fine	1	3,000 (1.90)	-	-	-	-	1	3,000
Self treatment	1	25,000 (16.40)	-	-	-	-	1	25,900
House building	-	-	1	20,000 (40.00)	-	-	1	20,000
Children's Education	1	9,000 (5.70)	-	-	-	-	1	9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1,57,950 (100.00)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50,000 (100.00)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>45,500 (100.00)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2,53,450 (100.00)</b>

*(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)*

- The loans from both the institutional and non-institutional sources have been utilized for both productive and non-productive purposes.
- 36 % of the Bank loans have been utilized for non-productive purposes.
- Similarly, 48.35 % of total loan from co-operative society has been spent on non-productive purposes (out of these 21.98 % have been spent for repayment of old loans taken from non-institutional source).
- Of private loan, 66.72 % have been spent for non-productive purpose, 16.40 % on health and 5.70 % on education.

### Sources of Credit

As said earlier the Dongria Kondhs borrow from both the non-institutional and institutional sources. The former is the main source, which includes the following:

- i) ***The Neighbour.*** The Dombs, the immediate neighbour of the Dongrias, are their principal providers of credit. They help each other at the time of necessity. The Dongria Kondhs possess Donger lands, whereas the Dombs are landless. Traditionally, The Dongria Kondhs were the patrons and the Dombs were the clients, but gradually by virtue of their skill, knowledge and expertise in trade and business and outside contacts, the Dombs emerged as a major trading community. They started supplying Dongria Kondhs their day-to-day necessities, like salt, dry fish, kerosene, oil etc. in exchange of food grains. Gradually the Dombs became rich and emerged as creditors. At times the Dongria Kondhs borrow money and animals (for sacrificial purposes) from the Dombs to meet their ritual urgencies.
- ii) ***Community Members.*** The poorer sections among the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the well-to-do section mostly in the shape of kind, like food grain, seed etc. in small quantity for a shorter period. The borrowed articles are returned at the quickest possible time, preferably after of the harvest. In case of seed loan, double the amount (100% rate of interest) of the seed is returned after date of maturity, which is not applicable to food grain loan. According to the survey, out of 26 Dongria Kondh households, (7.59%) have borrowed from their own community members.
- iii) ***Community Fund.*** The Dongrias also take loans from the community fund called, 'Kutumb Taka' or 'Kutumb Manjiga' at the time of need. Community fund is raised through co-operative labour, by selling fruits of the trees owned by the village community and collecting grains from individual

households. They select a person as the custodian of the community fund from which the needy households take loan. The borrower repays the loan without paying any interest. The survey reveals 3 (11.54 %) cases of borrowing from the community fund amounting to Rs. 4,000/-.

Besides the above sources, the Dongria Kondhs also depend on loans from the institutional source, which includes the following:

- (i) **Co-operative Society:** A co-operative society, named “Niyamgiri Fruit Grower’s Co-operative Society” (NGFCS) was registered on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1979 by the Micro Project (DKDA, Chatikona) for marketing of their horticultural produce and also to supply them necessary consumption articles and to advance loans for improvement and expansion of horticultural fields and for agricultural purposes. The main purpose behind establishing such a society was to save the Dongria Kondhs from the clutches of exploitative Doms and the local traders. The headquarters of the Society is located at Chatikona and to provide credit to its members for horticultural and agricultural activities. Besides, it also looks after the marketing of the surplus agricultural and horticultural produce by purchasing it from the members at a reasonable price. The survey reveals that as many as 10 (previous loan 4 households + current loan 6 households) have taken loan from the NFGCS.

#### Loan from Institutional Source

Years	No. of Loanees	Loan Amount (In Rs.)	Repayment of loan			Loan outstanding till Nov. 2000		
			Principal	Interest	Total	Principal	Interest	Total
1987-1995	19	16,000	3,372	6576.5	9948.5	14,118	8735.31	22853.31

(Source: DKDA/NFGCS, Chatikona Office)

It was found that out of 35 Dongria families of Kurli village, 19 have taken loan for agricultural purpose from the NGFCS. Of them, 5 are males and 14 are females who have taken it from their respective branches of the NFGCS. The total loan given to them during the 9 years amounts to Rs. 16,000/- of which the repaid amount is Rs.9948.50/- (Rs.3372/- principal and Rs. 6576.50/- interest). The loan outstanding during the period of survey is Rs. 14,118/- that is more than 4 times, than the repaid principal amount. Outstanding interests are also much more than the amount of interests already paid to the society.

The above data reveals that the capacity of Dongria Kondh for repayment of loan seems to be poor. This is either due to low productivity or misutilisation of fund. The other reason which prompted them not to repay the outstanding loans is that they were misguided that they would be exempted from the total loan amount after a long time gap which had already happened in the year 1964-65, as per the government decision, whereby these poor tribal farmers were exempted from repayment of debts due to drought conditions.

**II) Commercial Bank:** Besides the co-operative society, a branch of the Panchabati Gramya Bank located at Bissam-Cuttack caters to the credit needs of the people by providing loans to the needy Dongria Kondh families to meet the expenses of cultivation and horticultural plantation. In the study village only as 4 (15.38%) families have been advanced loans by the Bank. A portion of the loan amount (36%) has otherwise been spent by the loanees, like meeting the expenses of marriage rituals and festivals and in consumptions. Generally Dongria Kondhs having fixed assets like plain lands etc, who could pledge security, have availed loans from the Bank.

### Process of getting Loan & Security for Credit

The Dongrias do not require intermediaries while taking loan from the known creditor. But while taking loan from the creditors staying in other villages and personally unknown to him intermediaries, witness or written documents are required. This rarely happens because Dombs of the same village rarely give a scope to their debtors to go to other villages for obtaining loans.

Previously the Dombs were the traders of horticultural produce of the Dongria Kondhs. With the development of horticultural orchards and phenomenal increase of fruit production and spices like turmeric and ginger in the Niyamagiri hills, the Dombs emerged as trader-cum-creditors. The Dombs also became richer due to their monopolization as the only trading community in the locality. Taking the advantages of the symbiotic relationship between the Dombs and the Dongria Kondhs, the former developed a business motive. Dombs gave advance of the cash and kinds, like buffalos, goats, hens, pigs, rice etc. to the Dongria Kondhas against the temporary pledging of different types of the latter's orchards like turmeric, pineapple, oranges, fruit trees, like mango, jackfruit and cereals or pulses, like *jhudunga*, *kandula*, etc.

At the outset of functioning of the Micro Project and the Co-operative Society, the monopoly of the Domb traders seemed to be reduced. But latter due to malfunctioning of the Co-operative Society once again the Dongria Kondhs

returned back to the clutches of the Domb moneylenders. With the expansion of their area of horticulture, most of the Dongria Kondh families are not able to take proper care of their fruit-orchards and prefer to enter into a type of transaction with the Dombs in which they mortgage their orchards for a temporary period against cash advance agreed upon by both the parties through bargain. The types of crops and the period of lease determine the value so fixed for particular orchard. Such type of transaction is made through oral agreement between both the parties based on mutual trust and belief. But now-a-days, in some exceptional cases, the Dombs are insisting upon written agreement due to distrust on Dongria Kondhs. The field investigation reveals two to three such cases where particular orchards/fruit trees of one Dongria Kondh have been mortgaged to more than one Dombs (see case studies I3 & I4).

While borrowing from the community members, they prefer their own clan groups and consanguinal kin. Since the clans members are morally bound to help and trust each other, usually the question of demanding any security for any amount of loan borrowed from community members does not arise.

While advancing loan, the co-operative society also does not insist on any security from its Dongira Kondh loanees and member beneficiaries. To obtain loan from Panchabati Gramya Bank or from any Commercial Bank located nearby, the security in the form of fixed assets, like own land, house site, gold etc. are to be pledged, failing which no loan will be sanctioned.

### **Rate of Interest**

The system of indebtedness that operates among the Dongria Kondhs is quite peculiar and unique and such system is not found in any other tribal communities. It is a kind of economic transaction, which does not involve payment of interest in cash. The Domb being very clever apply a method of taking lease of fruit orchards/fruit bearing trees on payment of contractual amount either partly or fully for a certain period of time, when the Dongria Kondh need money. In such type of transactions, the Dongria Kondhs being very simple and having unsound knowledge regarding the market price of their produce are cheated by the Dombs. As for example, an orange tree yielding 1500 fruits was leased for a single bottle of liquor for a year and turmeric field worth of hundred rupees of harvested crops was leased out for a few bottles of liquor or about Rs. 10/- (Aparajita, 1994:163). During the field study such types of transactions were also noticed. The pineapple/orange/turmeric field worth of Rs.10,000/- Rs.15,000/- was leased out to Domb traders for Rs. 4000/- Rs.5,000/-. However, the Domb bears certain amount of risks that in case there

is any failure of crops due to some reason or the other, in that particular plot which is taken on lease, the Dongria Kondh is not obliged to return the money taken in lieu of the crop. In such a situation, the Domb insists upon taking the same plot of land for another period on lease in order to compensate his loss on the basis of fresh agreement.

Thus the rate of interest calculated in terms of cash is 2 to 3 times (200% to 300%) more than the amount of loan taken by the Dongria Kondh. But as the interest is not paid in cash or kind directly to the creditor, the Dongria Kondhs do not feel its burden directly on them as it happens in case of loans from institutional sources though the rate of interest is quite lower than that of the non-institutional sources. Loan taken from *Sahabuti* fund is returned with addition of extra amount of rupees that varies between 10-20 as per the condition made with the member. Well-to-do Dongrias also advance loan in shape of seed, food grains, and small amount of cash to their needy community members. Seed loan carry 100% rate of interest where as other loans including cash loan are interest free. In case of loan from institutional sources the rate of interest is 12.5 % per annum.

### **Repayment of Loan**

In Dongria Kondh society, the son or legal heir inherits the debt liabilities of his deceased predecessor. Extending loans to Dongria Kondh are more or less secured as loans are advanced against pledging fixed assets, like orchards or standing crops. So the Domb never bears any risk of uncertainty of repayment of loans. However, at the end of the lease period if the mortgagee wants to extend the terms on the ground that the loan could not be recouped due to crop failure or some other reason, he has to enter into a fresh contract with the son or legal heir of the deceased loanee. Otherwise the loanee or the legal heir regains the possession of the pledged land. In case of any dispute in the loan transaction, the matter is referred to the village council for settlement.

Loans from Community Fund and community members are repaid as per the terms and conditions fixed at the time of taking the loan. Loan from institutional sources (Bank) if not repaid in due time, notice is sent to remind the loanee and if the loanee fails to repay then, the principal is merged with the interest and it becomes compound. After the date of maturity, the security of the loanee comes under the possession of bank. In case of Co-operative Society, the loan amount is added with interest. From the survey it was found that loanees of the year 1985 had not repaid the loan amount yet.

### **Limitations of Borrowing**

The Dombs creditors on the basis of Hindu belief and ideology do not lend money on Monday and Thursday. However, this restriction is not followed very strictly. The Dombs lend everything like rice, salt, chilly etc, animals like buffaloes, goats, etc to the Dongrias, whenever he is in need, may it be at midnight.

A peculiarity among the Dongria is that they hesitate to borrow from their own relations or clan groups. In a Dongria Kondh family one brother may be well to do having property more than his requirements. His own poor brother neither does ask him money nor does he lends to his poor brother at the time of need on the belief that he may not return the same. The Dongria also feel shame to borrow from their clan groups or relatives as the lender would not mortgages anything and this lowers the prestige of the debtor. Under unavoidable circumstances, when they fail to get a loan from the Dombs, they may approach a relative for which he does not have to pay interest while making payment of the principal amount. This perhaps happens rarely.

Institutional sources, like Niyamagiri Fruit Growers Co-operative Society and Banks extend short-term loans to Dongria Kondhs for production purposes. But as most of the Dongria Kondhs require money for non-productive purposes and institutional sources have their own constraints against advancing such loans, the borrowings from non-institutional source is resorted to.

### **Literacy and Indebtedness**

Literate Dongrias seem to be aware of the economic transactions with the Dombs. They have developed the bargain powers while leasing orchards and standing crops in the fields and taking right decision in fixing the price of their orchards. Out of 35 heads of households of the Dongrias in Kurli village, 28 (80%) are totally illiterate. On the other hand, the creditors (Dombs) are highly literate and educated. This may help the latter to cheat them. As per the table below all the Dongria Kondh literates (including just literates) have incurred loans where as from illiterate mass, 19 (68%) out of 28 head of households are indebted. As the literate Dongria Kondhs know little arithmetic calculation they use to bargain the price against pledging their orchards. Therefore, the education has enhanced the bargaining power of the Dongria Kondhs.

As revealed from the following statement among 26 debtors who are the head of the families. 19 (73.08 %) are illiterates, 6 (23.08 %) are just literate and only 1 (3.84%) have studied up to primary level. Among the illiterates the extent of indebtedness is 68% where as among the literates it is cent percent.



## Literacy and Debt among the Dongria Kondhs at Kurli village

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Total number of Households	Number of debtors and % to total Indebtedness	Percentage of Indebtedness among Educated Households
1.	Illiterate	28	19 (73.08%)	68%
2.	Just literate	6	6 (23.08%)	100%
3.	Primary	1	1 (03.84%)	100%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>74%</b>

**Income and Indebtedness**

The table below presents the grouping of families in different income ranges and their involvement in debts. It reveals that 66.66 % are below poverty line (BPL) and the rest, in the APL category. But the percentage of debtors (82.35%) is more in APL families than the BPL families (66.66%). This may be due to high expenditure in rituals and community festivals for social prestige which is a status symbol in the Dongria society. Thus Dongria families in higher income groups have developed propensity to get into debt for incurring higher expenses in these rituals and festivals to achieve higher social status and prestige.

**Income Range and Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondh of Kurli Village**

Sl. No.	Annual Income Range	No. of Total Households	No. of Debtors	Percentage of Debtors
1.	Up to Rs. 5,000/-	4	1	25.00
2.	Rs. 5,001/- to Rs.10,000/-	8	5	62.50
3.	Rs.10,001 to Rs. 15,000/-	6	6	100.00
<b>Sub Total (BPL HH)</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>66.66</b>
4.	Rs.15,001/- to 20,000/-	9	7	77.78
5.	Rs.20,001/- and above	8	7	87.50
<b>Sub-Total (APL HH)</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>82.35</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>74.29</b>

The frequent contacts of the Dongria Kondhs with Micro Project (DKDA) Officials, researchers, academicians, businessmen and the vendors make them aware of getting more profit through sound investment (i.e. purchasing paddy land at plains, preparing more orchards etc) and to avail loan facilities at a lower rate of interest from the available institutional sources. Therefore, a few of them have obtained loans for purchasing paddy lands and payment of LIC premiums, which shows their foresight for future security. As observed, even some of them have taken mutton on credit from the Dombs on eve of *chhadakhai*, the day following *Kartik purnima* observed by the neighbouring castes.

### **Savings of Dongria Kondhs**

Previously the Dongria Kondhs used to hoard their money without saving. In order to hoard, the Dongrias used to dig a hole in the floor near the hearth inside the kitchen and putting notes and coins inside an earthen pot, locally known as *birgadoka* sealing it properly they were burying the same under the earth and plastering the floor maintaining safety and secrecy. Another way to hoard money was that money is kept in a bamboo pipe (*duna*) and tightly sealed by clothes, it is either hidden under the soil or hung from a nail on the wall of the house at a greater height on the wall. At the outdoors, the Dongria often hide their money kept in *duna* under the ground near a tree where watch shed is constructed in the swidden field. Before his death the Dongria male discloses about the location of his *duna* before his son or wife.

Now there is a drastic change in the saving pattern of the Dongrias under influence of modernization. Now many of them have LIC policies for future security. Out of 35 households, 8 (22.86%) households at Kurli village have LIC policies the amount of which varies from Rs.15, 000/- to Rs.80, 000/-. They are paying the LIC premium by selling their produce or by mortgaging their orchards. Besides, a few of them who have extra incomes have developed the habits of saving in the local banks.

### **A Resume of Dongria Kondh Indebtedness**

- The Dongria Kondhs to a large extent (77%) depend on loans from non-institutional sources than from institutional sources.
- The Domb creditors take the advantage of the symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kondh debtors and become the key players in the network of Dongria Kondh economy.
- The local customs of Dongria Kondh (like bride price payments, feuds, elopement with girls for marriage etc) drag them to debt net and therefore, open the way of exploitation.

- The loans of Dongria Kondhs from institutional sources meant for agricultural purpose is utilized for non-productive purpose, like payment of bride-price, domestic consumptions and such other emergency needs.
- The loan from the non-institutional source carries different rates of interest. Except seed loan, which carries 100% interest, the borrowing from the community members is interest free.
- Irrespective of their income ranges, the Dongria Kondhs are indebted. The percentage of loanees in higher income groups is found to be more than that of lower income group.
- The prodigality of the Dongria Kondhs gives more scope to the Domb creditors to exploit the former. The Domb LIC Agents have gained the confidence of the Dongria Kondh customers and help them to be LIC policy holders by extending credits to them.
- Dongria Kondh people are most often pulled into the trap of the debt for raising their social status by spending more than their earnings.
- Illiterate Dongria Kondhs often get scared of literate Dombs because the Dombs may drag them to the court of law or police station on any false allegation.
- At times the indebted Dongria Kondhs work in the mortgaged dongars for clearing the debt amount of Dombs.
- Despite many debt legislations, economic development programmes, Government measures for exemption of the agricultural loans and expanding further loans from institutional sources, the propensity of the Dongria Kondhs has not stopped them to get new loans from the private creditors. Overtly they have become habitual debtors.

## INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE JUANGS

### Study Area and the People

The Juangs are a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) exclusively found in Juang *pirh* of Keonjhar district and Pallahara subdivision of Angul district of Orissa. Linguistically, Juangs are Munda (Austro-Asiatic) speaking people and racially belong to Proto-Australoid stock. Juang settlements are scattered, hidden inside hills and forest of Gonasika region. They eke out a subsistence pursuing shifting cultivation and collecting minor forest produce. The Juang village community owns and manages all the productive and useful natural resources, like swiddens, forests, grazing land, and habitation sites etc, which lie within their village boundary. Another important feature of the Juang society is their

traditional youth organization and dormitory called, 'Magang' or 'Mandaghar'. The Majang serves as a community house for the youth, court house for the elders and *barabhai* (the traditional council of village elders and leaders), guest house for visitors, cooperative store for storage of common grains, place for keeping musical instruments, a venue for communal rituals, cultural center for dance and music and a museum of Juang art and crafts.

The study village Kadalibadi is situated at an altitude of 290 ft. above the sea level and is surrounded by hills and forests. The village comes under the Gonasika GP in Bansapal block of Keonjhar district. It is one of the adopted villages of the Micro Project namely, Juang Development Agency (JDA) and comes under Keonjhar ITDA. The Bathudi and the Bhuyan tribe are found living in close proximity to Juang. The Juangs and Gouda (milkman caste) inhabit the study village, Kadalibadi. Both the ethnic groups live in separate wards.

The study village consists of 48 households of which 36 belong to the Juang and 12 to Gouda community. The total population of the village is 243. The Juangs constituting the four fifth of the total population of the village are numerically dominant over the Goudas. The sex ratio at village level is 1077 for the Juang 1277 for the Gouda. The household and population composition of the Juang and the Gouda of Kadalibadi village is given below.

**Composition of Households and Population of Kadalibadi Village**

Sl. No	Community	No. of Households	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1.	Juang	36 (75.00)	95	99	194 (79.84)
2.	Gouda	12 (25.00)	22	27	49 (20.16)
<b>Total</b>		<b>48 (100.00)</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>243 (100.00)</b>

(Source: SCSTR TI Survey, May 2001-02)

### The Neighbours

The Bhuyan and Bathudi live side by side with the Juang. Besides, in each Juang village two or three Gouda families are found settled, brought by the Juang to supply them milk and milk products for communal rituals and to tend their cattle. Now the Gouda population is gradually increasing and they have started living in separate wards. Besides the Gouda, the Pano, Chasa, Teli communities are also residing in the Juang *pirh* areas. They are playing the role of intermediaries, traders and moneylenders and supplying paddy, rice, animals, like goat, hen, pig, and buffalo to Juangs at the time of their need and charging exorbitant rate of interest. Besides, they are carrying on petty business by supplying

the Juangs their day-to-day necessities at a higher rate than the prevailing market price and simultaneously cheating them in weights and measures.

### **The Juangs' Concept of Loan**

To a Juang, indebtedness means taking loan, which he has to pay back in future. They make a little difference between loan (*thika*) and mortgage (*bandhak*). In case of *thika* (loan), the land is mortgaged for a certain period against an advance and the creditor takes the produce of the land. After the expiry of the loan period, the debtor gets back his land. In this case, loan amount is not paid back. In case of mortgage (*bandhak*), the same process is followed, but the debtor has to clear the loan and interest amount before getting back his mortgaged land. Unless the debtor repays the loan amount, the creditor does not return the land and keeps the land under his control beyond the period of agreement. The Juang prefer *thika* than *bandhak* unless acute necessity arises.

### **Beliefs associated with Lending /Borrowing**

In the Juang society, all articles and properties, except house can be mortgaged. They usually borrow both in case and kind. Among the kinds are paddy, rice, salt, chili, oil earthen pots etc, different domestic animals like hens, goats, pig, bullocks, etc. which are borrowed from other caste people and also from their own kinsmen which are paid back after certain period.

The Juang follow certain injunctions while extending loans to their villagers or kinsmen. They do not lend either paddy or rice on Thursday because they believe that Goddess Laxmi (Goddess of wealth) would get angry and may leave their house. They do not lend lime (*chuna*), turmeric or wood at night to kinsmen because of the belief that young babies would cry at night if such articles were given. They also do not lend salt at night on the belief that tear would appear in cow's eye, which is an inauspicious sign. They also do not extend anything as loan in *Akshya Tiritiya* festival - the first showing of seeds in the field at the beginning of the monsoon.

### **Extent of Indebtedness**

The survey of Kadalibadi village (2001) reveals that all the 36 Juang households have borrowed Rs. 32,398/- from different institutional and non-institutional sources. The average loan per household was Rs.900/-. Out of 36 households, 26 (72%) had loans outstanding prior to the year 2000-2001. During the year 2000-01 all the 36 households had taken loan. The average amount of loan of 36 households during this year was Rs. 9,200/- whereas, the amount of previous year loan outstanding was Rs, 23,198/-. The average

amount of loan per household during the year 2000-01 and during the previous year it was Rs. 892/-. The extent of indebtedness of the Juang is furnished in the statement below.

#### Extent of Indebtedness among the Juang of Kadalibadi Village

Total number of Households	Indebted Juang Households		Total amount of Loan (in Rs.)	Average Loan amount per Household (in Rs.)
	Number	Percentage		
36	36	100%	32,398/-	900/-

#### Causes of Indebtedness

Although most of the Juang live hand to mouth, they do not like to borrow unless compelled to do so. The necessity of borrowing arises at the time of sowing seeds, during observation of rituals and festivals and domestic consumption needs. The specific purposes for which they ask for loans are to meet the expenses (i) of birth and death rituals and marriage ceremonies, (ii) of agricultural activities, (iii) of day-to-day consumption during lean season, (iv) for construction /repair of houses and for treatment of disease and often for paying LIC premium, purchasing land, wine and meat.

All 36 households of the study village have borrowed grains for sowing seeds in the field and for consumption purposes. The following Table shows different sources of loan and purposes of getting loan by Juangs of Kadalibadi village during the year 2000-01. Out of 36 households; all have borrowed for cultivation, 28 (77.78%) households for consumption purposes and 2 (5.56%) for marriage rites and festivals. Of all the 36 households, 30 (83%) have incurred loans from outside moneylenders. These loans are extended in kind comprising rice and paddy. The loan from private sources comes to 49.4 *khandi* (720Kg) rice and 12 *khandi* (125Kg) paddy, whose money value is Rs. 6,700/-. Similarly loan from community fund consists of 44.9 *khandi* (625Kg) paddy worth of Rs. 2,500/-. The paddy loans from community fund were used for seed purposes. The total loan amount from non-institutional sources (private source and community fund) comes to Rs. 9,200/-.

#### Purpose of Juang Indebtedness (source wise) during 2000-01

- Juangs have not availed any loan from institutional source (Bank) during 2000-01.
- All the Juang households have taken seed loan from the non-institutional source (community fund) and non-productive loan (consumption purpose and celebration of rituals) from private source.

### Grain Loan

The Juangs do not like to have loans in cash and kind. Loans in kind mainly comprise of rice and paddy. Loan is meant mostly for seed purpose and is usually taken from community grain bank at the *mandaghar* before sowing of seed starts. This is called as seed loan. This carries 50% rate of interest. The entire community is involved in the process. Besides paddy, the other kind of loan is rice loan. The rice and paddy are utilized generally in festive occasions, marriage ceremonies and ritual occasions.

For kind loans, they mainly depend on non-institutional sources like the Gouda creditors and their *mandaghar*. During the year 2000-01, 36 (100%) Juang households have taken kind loans amounting to 7045 qtls of paddy and 7.20 qtls of rice.

### Source of Credit

The Juangs mainly depend on the loans from the non-institutional sources like private moneylenders, employers, traders, relatives and friends. Lack of communication and an altogether different social environment stand as obstacles for availing any loan institutional facilities to the Juang at the time of their need. There is no credit co-operative society of *grain gola* in their village or nearby. Therefore, only those infiltrators, who live either in the village or near about and have intimacy with the Juang, advance loan to them.

According to the survey cent percent of Juang households have borrowed 37.46% of the total loan amount from non-institutional sources and only 20 (55.55%) have borrowed from the institutional sources and the amount constitutes 62.34 % of the total loan.

The Juang take loan from private moneylenders belonging to different castes, like Teli, Chasa, Gouda, Pano and Sundhi residing in their area. These creditor groups generally extend credits in shape of kind like paddy and rice and take back in more valuable cash crops like *til* (Rasi). All the Juang households of the study village have borrowed Rs. 9,000/- from the private moneylenders. At the time of dire necessity when one does not get loan from any other source, go to the community members who are little above the poverty line. In this case the creditors charge 100% interest, which is twice of the normal lending interest rate. This is because the loan is advanced instantly neither observing any cumbersome process nor asking for any security.

## Purpose of Juang Indebtedness (source wise) during 2000-01

Purpose	Private source			Community fund				Bank loan		Total Loan Amount
	No	In Kinds	In Cash	Total Amount (In Rs.)	No of debtor	In Kind	In cash	Total amount (in Rs.)	No.	
Household consumption	28	46.4 khandi or 650 Kg rice @ Rs.8/kg+12 khandi or 125 kg @ Rs 4/kg.	-	5700/-	-	-	-	-	28	5700/-
Celebration of marriage, festivals, ritual etc.	2	5 kandi or 70 kg rice	440/-	1000/-	-	-	-	-	2	1000/-
Shifting Cultivation / Agriculture	-	-	-	-	36	625 kg Paddy	-	2500/-	-	-
Total	30	720 kg rice+125 kg paddy	440/-	6700/-	36	625 kg paddy	-	2500/-	36	9200/-

Total no of indebted households is 36 as they have taken from multiple sources.



It is a traditional practice that in a Juang village the community fund is kept in shape of paddy in their *mandaghar*. The paddy is loaned to the needy families, mainly to be used as seed for agriculture as well as for consumptions purposes. A selected literate Juang person maintains the record of transactions. The loan amount is repaid with 50 % rate of interest. At the village Kadalibadi, all the Juang (36) households have borrowed seeds from the community fund amounting to 625 kg of paddy.

### **Process of Getting Loan**

When a Juang approaches a non-Juang creditor for loan, he generally takes some gift with him to the creditor, but it does not happen in all cases. If the creditor is staying at a distant place, sometimes the needy Juang go in a group with some gifts like hen, goat or any other rare variety of agricultural produce like *suturi dal*, *pejua biri* (a good variety of black gram), different types of minor forest produce to present these the creditor to please him and get the loan easily. The creditor keeps note of their names and extends loan. Sometimes, the Juang takes the help of intermediaries to get loans from the creditor easily. The intermediary usually does not charge anything for the help, but debtor may show him hospitality by offering a bottle of liquor or tiffin. With the development of communication facilities, some businessmen of Keonjhar are coming to the area to extend loans in kind, like rice and paddy in lean seasons and collect the same along with the interest after the harvest.

### **Security for Credit**

The Juang do not borrow a lump sum amount. They ask for loan in small amount or quantity according to their needs. Majority of them have hardly any surplus agricultural produce before two to three months of the harvest. So when a Juang badly requires a loan, he surrenders his claim over future yield of his land as a security against the loan to the Sahukar. Most of the villagers have taken loan from the people belonging to Gouda or Sundhi caste of the same village or nearby village by mortgaging their cultivable irrigated paddy lands.

Thus exploitation takes place at the time of bargaining when the creditor wants either to take more acres of land or more productive/ fertile land or land for a longer period over and above the due against the loan amount. Sometimes, the creditor does not agree to return the land if he gets more profit out of its produce. Those types of temporary land alienation cases are found in the Juang area where the mortgaged lands are cultivated by the creditor who belongs to other caste (see case study). In case the creditor extends loan without any security and

the debtor fails to repay the same, his household belongings or cattle are either taken away by the Sahukar or are sold off on the spot to recuperate his loan amount. But this usually does not happen, if the creditors belong to their own community. Sometimes, the debtor has nothing to offer as security, except his labour and work as *goti* (bonded labour) in the house of the creditor.

### **Rate of Interest**

Ordinarily the rate of interest charged by the creditors varies from 50% to 100%. In majority cases loans are advanced against security of land. Usually the outsiders charge 50% interest but if the price of goods is calculated by exchange value; the interest may exceed 100%. The economically better off Juang creditors who are rarely involved in lending business, charge 100% interest. This is because the debtor gets the loan from them easily and immediately without going to a distant place and without involving in any cumbersome process. Again the getting of the loan amount does not involve any bribe or gift, which sometimes he has to pay to other community members for getting the loan and also run several times to the creditor's house for the purpose. It does not happen for the loan taken from a community member.

### **Duration and Repayment of Loan**

Most of the Juangs live almost at the subsistence level. They frequently resort to loan after four to five months of their harvesting which they usually repay soon after the harvest. So during the month of May-June they take seed loan from the community grain fund and during July-August they approach the moneylenders to get new loans to celebrate various festivals and rituals.

Generally the Juangs repay their loans in kind. In village Kadalibadi loans are repaid in terms of *til*, a cash crop, usually exchanged with the paddy in the ratio of 1:2. But for loan repayment, the exchange value of paddy and *til* is in the ratio of 1: 1: 5. Thus they pay 200% interest when for the loan taken from outsiders. Creditor's investment at the time of debtors' dire need fetches the creditor huge profit. The bank loan is repaid in cash with 14% rate of interest.

During the year 1999-2000, out of 36 indebted households, only 10 (27.78%) had repaid their loans amounting to Rs.21, 880/- (50.75%). The striking aspect of their loan repayment is that some of the old loans are renewed by new loans and most of the loans are repaid in kind leading to exploitation.

Out of 36 Juang loanees, 30 (83.33%) have repaid Rs. 5,700/- as against the total amount of loans (Rs. 8,700/-) from the private source. The loan recovery in case of community fund has been reported to be cent percent

whereas loans from the bank have been partly paid (36.31 % of the loan amount). The reason of such perpetual indebtedness among the Juangs reflect their socio-economic and psychological conditions.

Loans are incurred by mortgaging cultivable lands to the creditors living in nearby villages. Sometimes the creditor becomes unwilling to return the land as per the agreement. Temporary land alienation cases are found among the Juang where the creditors are found cultivating the land of the Juangs. Some of the land alienation case studies collected confirms this.

### **Literacy and Indebtedness**

It is presumed that acquired social abilities change the people's behavior especially in economic sphere. Education is believed to be the key to development, which brings about social-cultural changes. Education generally plays positive role in distracting people from getting involved in indebtedness, unless they presume a huge amount of return in capital investment by incurring loan.

But paradoxically, literacy has little role to wean the Juangs away from indebtedness. This is because of shrinkage of economic resources and avenues by way of shrinkage of landed property through land alienations, eviction of sharecroppers etc. There is no distinction between the literate and illiterate persons as irrespective of their educational level as all of them are in debt and are victims of exploitation. The table below reveals that out of 36 households, 15 (41.67%) are fully illiterate and 21 (8.33%) are just literate, 16 (44.44%) have education up to primary level and 2 (5.56 %) up to secondary level. Among all these categories the percentage of indebtedness is 100.

**Educational Level and Indebtedness of the Juangs of Kadalibadi Village**

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Total No. of Household	Debtors Household	
			Number	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	15(41.67)	15(41.67)	100
2.	Just literate	3(08.33)	3(08.33)	100
3.	Primary	16(44.44)	16(44.44)	100
4.	Secondary	2(05.56)	2(05.56)	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>36(100%0)</b>	<b>36(100%)</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Income and Indebtedness**

Irrespective of their incomes all the Juang households of Kadalibadi Village are found to be indebted. The table given below explains that. It shows that the annual income of all the 36 households at Kadalibadi village is less than

Rs.10,001/- and thus they belong to BPL category. Among them 26 (72.22%) are within annual income up to Rs.5000/- and only 10 (27.78%) come under income range of Rs.5000/- Rs. 10,000/-.

#### Income Range and Extent of Juang Debt at Kadalibadi

Sl. No.	Income range (in Rs.)	No. of Households	Debtor households	
			No	Percentage
1.	Upto 5000	26(72.22 %)	26	100
2.	5001-10,000	10 (27.78%)	10	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>36(100%)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Savings of the Juang

Majority of the Juang live below the poverty line. They spend whatever they earn. It is a customary practice among the Juangs that after harvesting, the community save the paddy in the seed bank of their *Mandaghar*. The circulation of money is very limited among them. They usually put the cash in a small cloth and put it in the wooden plank in the thatched roof. The well-to-do Juangs often keep their money in banks. During our study in Kadalibadi village, no such case of saving of the Juangs was reported. This explains their abject poverty.

#### A Resume of Juang Indebtedness

- The Juangs by and large depend more on loans from non-institutional sources. At times they borrow from institutional sources. But due to repayment of outstanding loan, they revert back to the private moneylenders to meet their expenditure in the dire necessities.
- Most of the loans are used for non-productive purpose like consumption, ritual expenses including the payment of bride price and social obligations.
- Loans are incurred in cash and kind like rice and paddy. Paddy loans for seed as well as for consumption purposes carry 50% rate of interest.
- The repayment of loan by households is 50.75% and the households who repaid loan is 20.78%. The most striking point of the loan repayment by Juangs is that some of the old loans are replaced by the new loans and most of the loans are repaid in kind leading to their economic exploitation.
- All the Juang households reported to be indebted in previous year are also found to be indebted in the succeeding year. This explains perpetual indebtedness of the Juang due to poverty and socio-psychological network.
- The rate of interest charged by non-institutional sources varies between 50% to 200% while that of the institutional sources is around 14% per annum.

- At times, barter operates during the transaction of kind loan. Repayment of paddy loan is made in exchange of cash crop, i.e. til, which is largely produced by the Juangs in the hills.
- All the Juang households of different income ranges and educational level are indebted. Thus income and education have no impact on indebtedness.
- The custom of saving of grain seeds at *mandaghar* as community fund has been quite useful for providing paddy seeds to the needy Juang farmers as well as security against their food insecurity during the scarce season.
- Loans are also taken by the Juangs on pledging small chunks of lands. In some cases pledging of land leads to land alienation of the Juangs.

### **Comparative Study of Indebtedness between the Dongria Kondh and the Juang**

The statement of the problem of indebtedness between the Dongria Kondh and the Juang as discussed in this paper speaks of two distinctive aspects of indebtedness between the two Primitive Tribal Groups. The Dongria Kondhs are a primitive section of the Kondh tribe of Southern TSP area of Orissa. They dwell in the Niyamgiri hill ranges of Raygada district. The Juangs dwell in Gonasika hills of Keonjhar district in the northern TSP area of Orissa. Dongria Kondhs are indulged in clan feuds frequently and thus appear to be aggressive in nature whereas the Juangs are known to be simple and mild in nature.

The Dombs are the immediate neighbour of the Dongria Kondh. The Juangs live along with the neighbouring communities, like the Pano, the Sundhi and the Gauda. In Dongria Kondh area, the Dombs are numerically preponderant, almost double in number whereas in Juang area it is just the reverse, the number of Juang people, the debtors, are more than the Gauda people. The Dongria Kondh's social relationship with the Dombs is more intimate and cordial than the creditor-debtor relationship between the Juangs and the Gaudas. These caste-groups, like the Dombs and the Gaudas act as the creditor and lend money and goods to the Dongria Kondhs and Juangs respectively at the time of the latter's need at exorbitant rate of interest.

The Dongria Kondh claiming of royal affinity with the Niyamgiri King refrains them to be involved in the derogatory works, like watch and ward of the orchards and selling of the produce at the market. On the contrary, the Juangs have neither such royal feeling nor such propensity for the work. Both the tribes are victimized by the economic exploitation of the creditors through the process of credit transactions. It is found that the extent of exploitation is more in case of the Juangs than that of the Dongria Kondhs.

Both the PTGs pursue uneconomic shifting cultivation and use primitive technology and tools. Economic awareness of the Dongria Kondhs is much more than that among the Juangs. The Dongria Kondhs are economically better off in comparison to the Juangs, because most of the Dongria Kondh families are owners of the orchards. Because of their royal affinity and lack of time to give proper attention to these orchards, they mortgage the same to the Dombs for temporary period and get money in lump sum, which is considered as their extra income. They do not think it as a loan but an economic transaction. But most of the Juang families possess small chunk of land. They are forced to mortgage the same to get loan to meet their necessities. In case of urgency, the Juangs voluntarily present some gifts to the creditors in order to get loan. The Dongria Kondhs rarely present gifts to their creditors.

Both the groups take loans from private sources, community fund and banks. For the Juang, community fund and private moneylenders are the major source of getting loans whereas for the Dongria Kondh temporary sale of orchards to Dombs constitute major source of getting money. The Dongria Kondh prefers to take cash loans whereas the Juangs prefer taking loans in kind. In Juang area usually 50% rate of interest is charged for the loan extended for one year whereas in the Dongria Kondh area they do not have any fixed rate of interest. The rate differs depending upon the bargaining capacity of the parties.

The Dongria Kondh are economically better off than the Juangs. It is found that 48% of the Dongria Kondh families of the study villages are living above poverty line whereas all the Juang households of the study village are found below poverty line. But irrespective of their financial conditions, all the Dongria Koandh and Juang families in the study area are found to be indebted. The Dongria Kondhs utilize the loan amount mostly in different social functions and rituals whereas the Juangs utilize the same for the consumption, purchase of daily necessities and for agricultural expenditure.

Awareness of Dongria Kondhs in the matter of knowledge in simple arithmetic, cheating and exploitation is more than that of Juangs. In case of indebtedness the bargaining power always lie with the creditors as it happens in Juang area. But in the Dongria Kondh area the reverse happens. The debtor's bargaining power in valuation of orchards to be mortgaged is much stronger unless otherwise he is in dire necessity of money.

The saving propensity of the Dongria Kondhs differentiates them from that of the Juangs, who mostly live below poverty line and have no attitude towards savings. It is important to note that besides their traditional way of

saving secretly, many of the Dongria Kondhs have long-term LIC policies and some of them have incurred loans for payment of their policy premiums. The Juangs have neither the means nor any attitude for savings.

Though there is a great difference in the process of indebtedness between these two Primitive Tribal Groups, both of them are exploited to a great extent by the creditor communities. Thus the root cause of this basic problem is to be eradicated to protect them from exploitation.

### **Some Suggestions**

Indebtedness among the tribals cannot be seen in isolation from the network of the other economic and social interactions. External forces play a pivotal role in controlling and influencing the economy of the Dongria Kondhs and Juangs. Being economically weaker and backward sections, they often become victims of exploitation. Indebtedness among the tribals has become almost a ubiquitous factor because whatever economic benefit is brought to the tribal villages to fight against their poverty, it gets ready outlet through various ways of indebtedness. Moreover, prevalence of many of their traditional belief and practices brings about many such economic and social maladies. As a result they suffer from the deficiencies under development. In most cases they possess uneconomic land holdings and lack entrepreneurship for taking up commercial cropping or establishing themselves as traders. It is a common experience that in several cases tribals become the victim of their backwardness.

Most often lack of cash and kinds seriously handicaps them to manage the food insecurities and manage their socio-cultural needs like meeting the cost of domestic consumption, rituals and ceremonies. Institutional finance has been inaccessible and inadequate to eliminate the non-institutional finance in their areas. Further, institutional finance also finds it difficult to meet the credit requirements of the Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs due to lack of assessment of their credit needs and consumption loans. As a result the poor tribals have no alternatives but to depend largely on private lenders. This leads to falling of Juangs and Dongria Kondhs into clutches of moneylenders- the Gaudas and the Dombs respectively. The credit provision of common fund of Dongria Kondh and Juang Mandaghar is meager and inadequate to meet their dire needs.

All the plans for development have greater chances for success if the relevance of cultural and social factors are integrated into planning. Thus credit through micro finance (provision of small working capital to self-employed) can help them, especially their women folk to take up farm allied activities of Dongri

Kondhs, like processing, packaging and marketing of turmeric, ginger, pineapple, lemon, orange and forest based cottage industries, such as broom making, mat making, leaf cup and plate making of Juangs. This can be made possible by formation of Self Help Groups of 10-20 women and inculcating in them the habit of regular saving and rotating the saving amongst them for productive and non-productive purposes (consumption) under the self Help Group Bank linkage programme of NABARD. The existing DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) groups in Dongria Kondh and Juang areas may be strengthened and the new ones may be organized taking 10-15 women into groups for effective utilization of credit under DRDA and ITDA programmes.

The project authorities of JDA and DKDA and their concerned ITDAs should know the tribal traditional ways of solving the food crisis in the lean period and may take effective steps to ameliorate the situation. The Juangs are used to save and store grains in their '*Mandaghar*' and distribute the same among needy people to tide over the food crisis. ITDA/ Micro Project authority should come forward to provide financial assistance for promoting the activities, like more procurement of grains and storing them in the '*Mandaghar*' of Juang and '*Kudi*' of Dongria Kondhs for distribution of the same to poverty stricken people during crisis period and recover the same after harvest.

The Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs need to be saved from the debt net. To make them free from the clutches of private moneylenders, like the Dombs and the Gaudas, we may take care of the following facts.

- Steps may be taken to identify the poverty-stricken villages in the Dongria Kondh and Juang areas and to establish Grain Banks along with formation of new SHGs and DWCRA groups and to strengthen the existing ones.
- Awareness campaign and publicity of various protective and legislative measures against tribal exploitation may be organized in remote tribal areas. Preferably, the campaign should be in tribal tongue with the help of folk songs, street plays, dance and music through the participation of the tribal artists.
- Special efforts may be made for creation of awareness among them about the existence of Money Lending Act, establishment of market Intelligence cell in areas where barter economy is gradually changing into money economy and awareness building about the change in price of different tribal produce.
- The local tribal development agencies may extend support to the Dongrias and the Juangs with the extension services, like training for up-gradation of agro-forest-based livelihood activities, input supply and market support.



## Bibliography

1. Aparajita Upali 1994 *Culture & Development; Dongrias of Niyamgiri*, pp.163-170, Delhi, Inter India Pub.
2. Basu, S.K. 1974 *Indebtedness among the Tribals of West Bengal, Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute*, Govt. of West Bengal Calcutta
3. Census of India 1961 *A Village Survey. A Monograph on Village Daanla (In Sadar Sub-division of Keonjhar dist)*
4. Das Patnaik, P.S. 1988 *Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs, Adibasi*, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, pp. 11-15
6. Das Patnaik, P.S. & Mohanty B.B. 1990 *Dongria Kondh of Orissa- Then and Now, Adibasi*, Vol. XXX, No. 2 & 3, pp. 28-41.
7. Goitonde, M.G. 1982 *Tribal Economy; some indication from the All India Debt and Investment Survey-1971-72, Economics of the Tribes and their Transformation (Ed) K.S Singh*, pp. 34-39, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
8. Govt. of India 2001 *Report of the Working Group for Empowering the STs during the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) Ministry of Tribal Affairs , New Delhi*
9. Govt. of India 2001 *Report on the Steering Committee on Empowering the Scheduled Tribes for the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2002-2007) pp. 40:41*
10. Govt. of India 1989 *Report of the Working Group on Development & Welfare of STs during 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (1990-95), Ministry of Welfare, New Delhi.*
11. Mishra, B. 1992 *Problems of Tribal Economy in Orissa, Adibasi*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, pp. 20-22.
12. Mohapatra, K. & Choudhury, B. 1973-74 *Report on the Survey on Indebtedness among the STs of Parlakhemundi Sub-division in Ganjam dist Adibasi*, Vol.15, No.1-4,pp.33-74
13. Mohanti, K.K (ed) 1991-92 *Development Handbook for the Juang of JDA Area, Gonasika, Keonjhar district (An Action Plan based on Techno Economic Survey) Welfare Deptt, Orissa.*

14. Nag, D.S. 1958 *Tribal Economy*, pp. 288-337 Bhartiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangha, Kingsway, Delhi
15. Nayak, P.K. 1989 *Blood, Women and Territory*, pp. 126-128, Reliance Publishing House.
16. Nayak, R & Others 1993 *The Juangs, A Hand Book for Development*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.
17. Pravathamma, C. 1984 *Scheduled Castes and Tribes- a Socio Economic Survey*, pp. 146-170, Ashish Pub., New Delhi.
18. Patel, M. L. 1992 *Economic Constraints of Tribal Development; Tribal Transformation in India*, Vol. II, Inter India Pub, New Delhi. Choudhury, B (Ed)
19. Pattnaik, N. 1989 *The Juang*, Popular series on Tribes, THRTI.
20. Pattnaik, N. & Das Patnaik, P.S. 1982 Financing and Credit Facilities, *The Kondh of Orissa*, pp. 116-123, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
21. Rout, S.P 1969 Handbook on the Juang, *Adbasi*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1967-68 THRTI, Orissa.
22. Sharam, S.L. 1992 *"Tribal Development: Perspective and Issue"*, Tribal Transformation in India, Vol.- II, Inter India Pub, New Delhi , Choudhury, B (ed)
23. Singh, K.S. 1982 *Economics of the Tribes and their Transformation*, pp. 34-39, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
24. Vyas, N.N . 1980 *Bondage and Exploitation in Tribal India*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.

## HILL KHARIA: SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE

S.C. Mohanty<sup>1</sup>

The Kharia is a major tribe of Odisha. They inhabit the northwestern region of the State. Their principal concentration is in the district of Mayurbhanj. The total population of the tribe is 2,22,844 (1,09,817 males and 1,13,027 females) as per 2011 Census recording a decennial growth rate of 18.33 per cent from 2001 census. The sex ratio is estimated at 1029 females for 1000 males. The percentage of literacy is 58.46 %. For males it is 66.42% and females, 50.78%.

The tribe has been subdivided into three major sections on the basis of their geographical location,, group identity and relative level of socio-economic development, such as, (i) Pahari Kharia, (Hill-Kharia), (ii) Dhelki Kharia and (iii) Dudh Kharia. While the Dhelki and Dudh sections represent a relatively advanced culture with their settled agricultural economy and occupational diversification, the Hill Kharias live in a primitive condition, pursuing a forest based subsistence economy and, more or less, a semi-nomadic life-style.

In Mayurbhanj district, the Hill Kharias are largely concentrated in and around the Similipal forest region. Small Hill Kharia settlements are found scattered inside the remote parts of this hill region. They claim themselves to be autochthones of Similipal.

They have a dialect of their own which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the Mundari branch. But now they have forgotten their dialect and have started speaking Oriya, the regional language.

The Hill Kharia of Similipal live amidst remote forest and mountainous habitat. Generally their settlements are situated at the foothills but neither at the top nor on the slope. Their settlements are mostly smaller in size, hardly exceeding thirty families. In the surrounding plains they live in big villages of

---

<sup>1</sup> OSD, (Research), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

heterogeneous ethnic composition of different tribes and castes. In these villages they live in separate wards usually located at the periphery of the main village.

The huts in their villages are scattered here and there in a haphazard manner. The rectangular huts have walls made of a wooden frame plastered with mud. The roof has a double-sloped wooden superstructure thatched with wild grass or straw. Generally, it has only one room without any window and it serves the purpose of living, sleeping, cooking and storing. Sometimes domestic animals, like goats, poultry birds etc. are accommodated either in the same room, or on the front verandah. But cattle if any are kept in a separate open shed inside the courtyard. Every house has a courtyard but there is no community hut or dormitory inside the village. Therefore, community activities are conducted under mango groves or under big trees. The seat of the village shrine (Sal) is located in a secluded spot at the periphery of the village under the shadow of tall trees. The villages have no proper roads but linked by footpaths.

The household belongings of the Hill Kharia are quite simple and small in number including house implements, string cots, earthen-ware vessels, utensils, bamboo baskets, leaf mats, grinding stone, leaf-cups and plates etc.

They do not take proper care in keeping themselves and their surroundings neat and clean. As a result, they suffer from a number of physical ailments, like, malaria, influenza, yaws, typhoid, skin diseases and stomach troubles. When they suffer from prolonged and acute diseases they usually take recourse to their traditional magico-religious treatment rather than availing the modern medical facilities. It is found during our study that apart from other diseases, malaria and malnutrition are very common 'among' them.

Rice is their staple food. But they do not get rice always. Their food is supplemented by seasonal collections of edible fruits, roots, leaves and tubers from the jungle. Having expertise in honey collection, they collect honey from the forest, eat it and sell the surplus in the local market. They are very much fond of drinking honey and alcoholic drinks such as *handia* (Rice Beer) and *mahuli* liquor. They also chew tobacco and smoke *biris*. Occasionally, they get meat of the wild animals by hunting and also get fish by fishing in the nearby streams and rivers. They are experts in hunting but not so in fishing.

There is nothing so remarkable about the dress pattern of the Hill Kharia. Their low economic status is a big constraint against fulfillment of their minimum and basic needs, and so, they have scanty clothing. Scarcity of clothes

makes the small children to remain naked up to 5 to 6 years of age. After that they put on a loincloth. Adult male members wear small *dhotis* and women wear white cotton saris falling up to their ankles. Now days, due to culture contact and modernization they are using dresses like shirts, pants, banyans and frocks and blouses which they purchase from the local markets. Kharia women adorn themselves with various kinds of ornaments, such as brass necklace, bead necklace, earring, finger ring, armlet, hairpin etc. mostly made of brass and silver.

The Hill Kharia of Similipal is a pre-agricultural and pre-literate community. Forest based subsistence activities, like hunting, food gathering and collection of minor forest produces have become the mainstay of their economy. While their counterparts living in other parts of the district are entering into agrarian economy they continue to pursue their living as forest gatherers. Most of them are landless and not acquainted with agricultural practices. They gather variety of minor forest produce, such as resin, wax, honey, arrowroot, tapioca, *tussar* cocoon, gum, *lac*, etc. it is their major source of income. They engage themselves in forest collection activities round the year. The rainy season is the lean period for such operations. For seasonal collection Kharia families camp inside the forest till the collection is over. These collections are individually owned other than honey, which is collectively collected, and shared among the households who join the pursuit. Cases of inter-group conflicts and disputes are rare since collections are made on sheer individual efforts. The minor forest produce items are either sold to forest agents or to the local traders and *sahukars* (money lenders). Very often the Kharias are cheated in the transactions.

The life-cycle of Hill Kharia begins with conception and child birth and passes through certain successive stages and events, like childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, old-age and ends in death. The birth pollution is observed for nine days. On the ninth day the mother and child come out of seclusion and take a ritual bath. After this purificatory ritual the mother resumes her routine activities. Name-giving ceremony is held either on the ninth day or any day afterwards. The next important ceremonial event is the “ear-piercing ceremony” which is held on any auspicious day during the period of early childhood i.e. before the child completes five years of his/her age.

The socialization process of the Hill Kharia is designed to prepare the young men and women to face the hard crises of life for survival. It further makes the children to learn to become obedient, disciplined and self-dependant. As a matter of routine, parents go to the forest to gather edible and minor forest produce everyday and in some seasons they camp in the forest for a couple of

days leaving their children in their homes. During the absence of parents, the children manage to look after themselves. Grown up children take care of infants and younger children and also look after the household. At the age of ten or so a Hill Kharia girl learns to perform ordinary household chores, like husking and pounding of grains, cooking, serving food, preparing leaf cups and plates, fetching water, cleaning utensils, plastering the walls and floor of her house with cow dung and mud, nursing the infants, taking care of the livestock and household pets etc. "The girls get a more consistent training and so as to develop a constructive and careful mental outlook (Vidyarthi, 125, 1980).

As compared to the girls, the boys are more privileged. They are given certain amounts of freedom to spend their early childhood days by playing and merry-making. On their late childhood, they learn to attend minor household chores if necessary and also some outdoor subsistence activities. After the age of 10-12 years i.e. during their adolescence the boys are imparted practical training, slowly and gradually by their parents and elders on forest based subsistence activities. They learn the skills, techniques, expertise, norms and customs associated with their vocation by assisting their parents and elders. By the time they grow up and step into adulthood they become self-sufficient and thus, full-fledged earning members of their respective natal families. When they are found to be capable of earning their livelihood they are considered fit to marry and establish their own family of procreation after leaving their natal family i.e. the family of orientation in the Hill Kharia society.

To sum up, the late childhood and adolescence among the Hill Kharia "is the important period in which they come to adjust themselves to the norms and values of their society for surviving in the jungle. It is at this age, they start developing their personalities."(Vidyarthi, 125, 1980)

Marriage is the most significant event in Hill Kharia life. The Hill Kharia sub section of the tribe is strictly endogamous. Marriage outside the tribe is strictly prohibited. A Hill Kharia marrying a non-Kharia is severely punished and often ostracized from the community.

Further, the Hill Kharia is divided into several exogamous clans and marriage within the same clan is a serious offence as it amounts to incest. The regular type of marriages are, marriage by negotiation, marriage by elopement, love marriage, marriage by capture, marriage by intrusion, marriage by service and son-in-law in house. Other forms of marriages, such as widow remarriage, junior levirate, sororate and remarriage of divorced and separated persons are

also permitted. Parallel cousin marriage is prohibited and classificatory cross-cousin marriage is allowed. The groom's party pays bride price to the bride's. The groom's party pays bride price to the bride's party in the regular type of marriages and sororate marriages excluding marriage by intrusion, marriage by service and 'son-in-law in house' types. Monogamy is the ideal and common practice though polygamy is not prohibited.

The Hill Kharia prefers adult marriage. The boys and girls are considered fit for marriage after attaining the age of eighteen and sixteen, respectively. They enjoy liberty in choosing their mates and so, the consent of both the partners, especially; the consent of the girl is a deciding factor in finalizing the matrimony.

The Hill Kharia society is patrilocal and neolocal in nature. After marriage, the Hill Kharia couple set up their separate residence in the groom's village. However, depending upon individual situations the couple may stay at the bride's village or the groom's maternal uncle's village or with any of their kins.

Family, as the smallest basic unit of their social organization is patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal in nature. Nuclear type of family is common and joint and extended families are rarely found. It normally consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. The average family size does not ordinarily exceed four persons. The family functions as a corporate unit in which all the members contribute towards the upkeep of the family according to their age and sex. The father or the eldest male member acts as the head of the family.

Women do not take an active part in communal matters. But they are very hard working. They are good at collecting minor forest produce, such as edible roots, tubers, fruits, leaves, etc. Major items of agricultural works, like weeding, transplantation, reaping, harvesting etc. are done by women folk except ploughing which is tabooed for them. Women exclusively do household works. Though the authority of household lies with men, women play very important role in the management of domestic affairs and economic pursuits. In Kharia society theoretically women are subordinate to men but in practice they enjoy equal status with men. They are regarded as valuable economic assets of the Kharia households and their society at large.

No dormitory organization is found in the Kharia villages. But social status and respect grow with successive age groups. During childhood and adolescence, a Kharia learns the art of living under tough circumstances. With

adulthood comes marriage. With marriage he acquires full-fledged membership of his society and enters into his own family of procreation being separated from his natal family. As he grows old he becomes a respectable member of his society. He continues to remain economically active instead of depending on his younger kins as long as possible. So the old men and women are given a position of honour in the Hill Kharia society. Their valuable advice is sought for in all-important matters and they are called to participate in communal affairs.

No dormitory organization is found in their society. This does not stop them to enjoy their leisure time and ceremonial occasions with recreational activities by performing their folk dances and songs. A circular drum, called Changu (tambourine) is used as a musical instrument in their songs and dances. Both men and women dance together. Sometimes old men and women participate in the dance. The dance is accompanied by songs and riddles.

The stronghold of religion is conspicuous in the Hill Kharia way of life. They worship a number of supernatural beings and their propitiatory rituals and festivals are associated with their traditional subsistence activities i.e. forest collections, all round the year. "Thakurani" or the Earth Goddess (Dharani Devata) and the Sun God (Dharam Devata) are the supreme deities of the Hill Kharia. The Hill Kharia have strong faith in spiritual beings endowed with personality who preside over various fields of human life and capable of influencing the destiny of man. Their religious beliefs and practices comprise the propitiation of the spirits in various ways, like rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices etc. The spirits are also believed to control the nature. The powers and forces of nature are personified by different supernatural beings. There are several hill-spirits or "Pats". Besides, there are village deities, clan spirits and other malevolent spirits or ghosts. The Kharia also believe in black and white magic. But now a days, their religious ideas, beliefs and rituals show traces of Hinduism owing to the impact of neighbouring caste Hindu communities.

The Hill Kharia observes a number of rituals and festivals round the year, which are mostly, connected with their subsistence activities, like hunting, food gathering and honey collection, agricultural activities, first eating of seasonal fruits as well as prevention of diseases and epidemics etc. Some of these festivals have been adopted from their Hindu neighbours. The Hill Kharia who live from hand to mouth celebrates these occasions rather with austerity. The important festivals are, Phagu, Paridhi (ceremonial hunting), Am Nuakhia, Karma Puja Chait, Kalipuja, Pus Parab, Makar, Simadeota Puja, Jeth Nuakhia, Raja, and Dassara etc.



The traditional socio-political system of the Hill Kharia have evolved in course of time for the purpose of enforcing social control, conformity and discipline by way of administering customary law and justice. The system functions at two levels - the village level and regional (inter-village) level. At every level there is a corporate and representative body of community leaders and elders and office bearers to shoulder the responsibilities of decision-making and providing leadership.

At the village level, there is a traditional village Panchayat headed by the village chief, called Pradhan. In Similipal area where many Hill Kharia settlements form a part and parcel of multi-community villages, the village headman - Pradhan usually belongs to the non-Kharia community which is the influential and dominant community of the village. In some remote and interior Hill Kharia villages, the village headman, called 'Dehuri' manages both secular and sacerdotal functions. In large, multi-community villages the Pradhan's responsibilities are mainly secular though he attends to some important sacerdotal matters while Dehuri acts as the village priest. A subordinate called 'Dakua' assists both the office bearers.

The traditional village *panchayat* composed of the household heads is a very powerful body. It decides cases of inter-personal, inter and intra familial disputes and offences relating to incest, adultery, prohibitive marriage, divorces, separation, partition of family and property, breach of taboos, theft, assault, misbehaviour, non-payment of bride-price, adoption, property inheritance, witchcraft, sorcery, black-magic and the like. Punishments are awarded in the form of fine, feast and liquor. In extreme cases, corporal punishment is awarded and in very serious cases, the offender is excommunicated or ostracized. The Panchayat meetings are also held to take decisions on certain important social, religious, economic and political matters concerning the village community. These include, organization and arrangements to celebrate communal rituals and festivals, commencement of communal hunting expeditions, getting rid of disasters and epidemics etc. The meetings are usually held in leisurely hours in the evening either in a central place of the village or in the house of the Pradhan or Dehuri or on the courtyard of the accused or before the seat of the village shrine, as the case may be.

The inter-village council at the regional level called 'Parha Panchayat' or 'Bhira' comprises the village chiefs and elderly representatives from a group of adjacent villages. An elderly and influential Pradhan of one of the member

villages presides over the meetings of the Panchayat. The Parha Panchayat meetings are held to decide, inter-village and intra-village issues. It has power to revoke the decision of the village councils and restore the social and ritual status of the offender ex-communicated and ostracized by the village council or inter-village council.

This traditional political system of the Hill-Kharia had been duly recognized and reinforced by the erstwhile feudal administration of the ex-Mayurbhanj State and later by the British administrators as they did not want to interfere with the traditional way of life of the natives. But with the introduction of democratic system of elections and welfare administration as well as superimposition of Panchayat Raj system, after independence, the importance of their traditional political institutions has declined. Now the elected representatives, like the Sarpanch, Ward Member, Block Chairman, M.L.A. are assuming greater prominence in their village and regional spheres. However, the traditional leadership and councils still continue to regulate their traditional and customary affairs because the people have confidence in their indigenous institutions.

Culture-contact, external exposure and the forces of modernization have created some awareness among the Hill Kharia and brought some changes in their way of life. Their increased interaction with Government and non-Government welfare agencies has accelerated the pace of change. Government of India has recognized the Hill Kharias of Similipal as one among the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha. Thereafter, the Hill-Kharia Development Agency, a Micro Project, has been functioning in Jashipur of Mayurbhanj district since the eighties to take care of their specific felt needs and implement different development programmes for them. Currently, one may look forward to the primitive Hill Kharia to advance socio-economically and come up to the level of the general population in course of time.

**Bibliography & References**

- Archer, W.G. 1943 In Indian Riddle Book, Chhotnagpur Kharia, *Man in India* No. 23, pp.284-288
- Ball, V. 1968 Notes on Kerriahs, Proceedings of Asiatic Society, Bengal.
- Banerjee, H.N. 1959 The Kharia of Madhupur, Singhbhum District and Neighbouring Regions. *Bulletin of Department of Anthropology*, No.2, pp.91-104
- Cardon, L. 1903 Marriage Ceremonies of the Kharias. *Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol. 27, pp.225-29.
- Dalton E.T. 1872 The Kharias. Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta, pp.158-67
- Das, Nityananda 1967-68 Hill Kharias of Similipal Hills, *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No.2, pp. 44-49.
- Das, T.C. 1905 *The Wild Kharias of Manbhum*, Calcutta.
- Ibid 1931 *The Wild Kharias of Dalbhum*, Anthropological Papers No.3, Calcutta University, Calcutta.
- Datta, B.N. 1935 'Kharias' Ethnological Notes on Some of the Castes of West Bengal. *Man in India*. No.15, pp.196-224.
- Deb, P.C. 1962 Marriage among the Dhelki Kharias. *Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute*, Chhindwara, Vol.2, No.1
- Despande, R.K. 1951 "Kharias": Tribes of India, Part-II, New Delhi, Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangha, pp.154-159
- Drover. W.H.P. 1881 "Notes on Some Kolarian Tribes"(Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 57, No.1, pp.7-18
- Ibid 1946 Two Kharia Weddings. *Man in India*, Vol. 26, Nos. 3 & 4, pp.215-219
- Ibid 1891 "Notes on some Kolarian Tribes" (Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), *Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol. 60, No.1, pp.24-37
- Enthoven, R.E. 1922 "Kharia": Tribes & Castes of Bombay. Bombay, p.199.
- Floor, H.V.G. & G. Durat 1934 Dictionary of the Kharia Language, Calcutta Tea District Labour Association.

- Gupta, S.P. 1975 "A Reconnoitral Survey among the Hill-Kharia and Proposed Action Research Programme". *Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Research Institute*, Vol. 17, pp. 25-72.
- Haffman, J. 1933 "Kharia": Encyclopedia Mundarica, p-8.
- Harimohan 1961 Socio-Economic Organisation and Religion among the Hill Kharia of Dalbhum". *Bulletin, Ranchi*, Vol.3, No.1, pp.180-212.
- Hutton, J.H. 1951 'Kharia', Caste in India, Bombay, p.282.
- Mc Fee, M 1976 "Social Organistion : Marriage and the Family" in the Study of Anthropology, Ed. Hunter and Whitten, Harper & Row, New York, pp.188-207.
- Mitra, S.C. 1944-45 "On a Kharia Astronomical Myth about the Metamorphosis, the Dove and her Eggs in to Stars." *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol. 35, No.1.
- Mohammed, L. 1937 "Kharia, Khadia". Census of Mayurbhanj State, 1931, Vol. I, Calcutta, pp.155, 212.
- Mohanty, U.C. 1963-64 "Kharia", *Adibasi*, No.3, (Spl. Issue) pp.175-78
- Risley, H.H. 1981 "Kharia": Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Calcutta, Vol.I, pp.466-472
- Roy, S.C. 1935 "Past Migration of the Kharia Tribe". *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*.
- Roy, S.C. & R.C. Roy 1937 The Kharias, Man in India Office, Ranchi, Vol.I & II
- Russel & R.V. & Hiralal 1916 "Kharia": The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol.III, London, p.445
- Sahoo, T. 1990 "Kharia". Tribes of Orissa, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, pp. 135-139
- Senapati, N. & N.K. Sahoo 1967 Orissa District Gazetteers: Mayurbhanj Govt. of Orissa, O.G.P. Cuttack.
- Vidyarthi, L.P.& V.S. Upadhyay 1980 *The Kharia: Then and Now*, Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.

# THE HILL KHARIA OF SIMLIPAL HILLS : A STUDY OF AN ISOLATED FOOD GATHERING COMMUNITY <sup>1</sup>

Nityananda Das <sup>2</sup>

Simlipal hills in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa has an area of nearly 1,100 square miles. These hills are spread over all the four revenue subdivisions of the district. The main area lies in Panchpirh subdivision. The entire belt is cut off during the rains by hill streams from all sides. River Bolang takes its origin from these hills descending through a number of waterfalls both big and small. The fall at Boraipani is the highest and the most attractive one. The fall at Joranda is another picturesque one with steep clefts on sides. The area is full of luxuriant growth of Sal and other forests and once had the most exhaustive fauna. It was declared as a National Park during the First Five-Year Plan period.

In consideration of the vast area the population is rather scanty. In some of the valleys, there are a few settlements of Ho or Kolha. Some of them are converted Christians who migrated from Chotanagpur. In and around Gudgudia, there are a few Bathudis. Among the other castes and tribes there are a few others like Bathudi and Kharia and artisans, who had come only to help the tribes in agricultural pursuits. The Hill Kharia whose population is approximately about a thousand or so, are found only in a few centres.

Khajuri on the road from Gudgudia to Garh Simlipal is the principal centre of Kharia. Moreover, there are 9 families at Jenabil, 12 families at upper Barakamra, 6 at Sano Makabadi and 8 at Buddhabalang. The present study was projected to assess their social life in relation to their food gathering economy and adjustment in relation to the peculiar habitat and to suggest ways and means to ameliorate their condition.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.2, 1967-68, pp. 44-49

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Director, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

The Kharia is an ancient tribe extending over a large area of Chotanagpur belt, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. They have subdivisions like Hill (Pahari, Dudh and Dhelki. The first is relatively backward and eke out their living by primitive agriculture or shifting cultivation on hill slopes, but principally by food gathering. The other sections are fairly advanced and have been recently converted to Christianity. In fact there is very little resemblance between the Hill Kharia and other Kharias. One is a semi nomad, constantly changing their settlement in search of minor forest produce. The others are settled agriculturists with well built houses, farms, etc. One looks emaciated and dejected, as their future is always charged with uncertainties. The others are fairly developed and even converted to Christianity. Hence although these divergent groups have a common tribal name, they are widely different from each other from social and economic standards.

It could not be ascertained definitely whether the Hill Kharia are autochthons of Simlipal hills. They are found in Dalbhum subdivision of Bihar and other adjoining areas of Orissa. Simlipal hills are farther away from those areas. The economic life of the Hill Kharias elsewhere as in Simlipal has resemblance and identity. Hence it could be construed that Hill Kharia's pursuits to collect minor forest produce like honey, resins arrowroots, etc., might have guided them to Simlipals which abound with those.

Simlipals were not opened to human habitation for a pretty long time. Areas around Gudgudia and Boraipani have some ancient shrines of the Bathudi tribe. The latter are an assimilated tribal group in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. They revere Asta Deuli in Simlipal and stress their origin to a place nearby. Their legend attributes their origin to those areas from where they had wandered to other places whether the hill Kharia came to Simlipals after the Bathudi left the area, or at the same time when the latter were still preponderating is difficult to stress out in absence of any legendary or documentary evidence. However, other castes and tribes around, describe Simlipals as the homeland of Bathudi and Kharia. The Kharia have adopted local dress and common pattern of house building, which clearly show that they have come in contact with other tribes quite early. They also speak Oriya, and whether they had ever a language of their own, which belongs to Austric group is difficult to ascertain.

Towards the eastern parts of Simlipals in Udala subdivision there are Birhor or Mankadia (a local nick name, attributed due to the habit of catching and eating monkey). They are a nomadic tribal group living in conical leaf huts

at the outskirts of forests. They are rope-makers and hunters. They move from place to place in the forests in search of games and barks for rope-making.

The nomadic Birhor and semi-nomadic Kharia have some identities. Those are the nomadic life, clinging to forests, meagre material apparatus incumbent on a nomadic life and social adjustment peculiar to the changing habitats. Simultaneously there are wide divergences. The Birhor has a language of their own akin to Mundari. They build conical leaf huts (*kumbha*), with a narrow passage to one side. The Kharia build houses with wooden planks and thatch those with grass. The houses are small but are regular ones. Kharia have forgotten their language and now speak only Oriya.

Birhor migrate too frequently over a wide area. Kharia limit their itineraries only to those sites which are predetermined and often continue to live there for a few years. The Birhor are rope-makers and monkey catchers, hunting other games occasionally. The Kharia are known as collectors of honey, resins and arrowroot. Both live on tubers, roots, honey and other produce and sell ropes or honey and arrowroots to buy grains.

In this context the adjustment of the hill Kharia particularly in Simlipals is worth discussion. As stated earlier, the Kharia are not strangers to Simlipals. At present the main population in those parts is the Hos and Kolhas. Peculiarly enough the affluent Santals are not seen in Simlipals, although they predominate the entire district of Mayurbhanj. Hos are divided into various sections like Bamanghatia, Raijanghai and Singhbhunia according to their places of original emigration. The first group denotes that they were from the neighbouring Bamanghati area and came first to settle in Simlipals before other groups. However, they are few in number and mostly live on Agriculture and forest labour.

In the early part of the 19th century the then state administration considered seriously to populate Simlipals to facilitate exploitation of forests. There upon the authorities granted Sardari or overlord rights over Simlipals to one Peter Dubraj, a Ho from Singhbhum. He was a Christian and was working as a village Post Master. He settled near village Astakuanr, which is known as Garh Simlipal. It is said in many present settlements that the Hos from Singhbhum were induced to come to settle down in Simlipals by Peter Dubraj, who granted them lease of land and Amarnama or record of rights. Thus several Ho settlements grew up in Simlipals.

Collaterally in other areas around Jenabil, M/s. Barua & Co. were granted monopoly of forest contract by the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. There were hardly usable roads in the area. Labourers had to be frequently brought from Bihar and other parts for forest operations. The roads required constant maintenance due to ravages of elephants and gales. After rainy season the roads were to be elaborately repaired to make those useable for vehicular traffic. The company therefore encouraged some of their labour to settle down in Similipals. These were in early thirties. These settlers obtained record of rights from the State in due course. After independence there came the third spate of migration. Some Mundas mostly converted came down from Ranchi district and reclaimed forests in the area after independence. They encroached forest land without authority and built big settlements around Jamuna, Makkbadi, etc. Recently those encroachers have been ousted from all those areas, which raised some political controversies between the leaders of Bihar and Orissa.

In this background the position of the Kharia has to be analysed. Kharia have no land, nor have they taken to agriculture. They have been obliged by traditions to collect honey, arrowroot, etc., which they sell to petty traders or in the local markets. They sometimes earn some wage as day labourers in forest operations, but they do not show any preference towards that avocation. Only compelled by circumstances they rarely take up the engagement. On other occasions they collect tubers and roots to supplement their diet.

Arrowroots are collected from January till March. The roots are gathered in baskets and soaked in a water course for a few days. Thereafter, those are rubbed on a stone and kernels are taken out after several washings to remove the peels. Then those are pestled in a hole and grounded. The soft parts are washed repeatedly and are dried up in small pellets. Honey is collected during summer months of April and May. For this the Kharia have to risk their persons. A look at the precipice at Joranda falls studded with beehives will scare a stout heart. Yet Kharia descend with ropes to tap those hives. A slight slip leads to disaster, yet they risk, because collection of honey is the main source of their livelihood.

However, all these labour and risk of the Kharia do not yield all the benefits, due to them. The sly traders advance them grains and money and in exchange appropriate the fruit of their toil at a very cheap rate. Recently, the National Park authorities of Forest Department are collecting honey and arrowroots at the rate of Rs. 1.50 per Kg. Those are sold at Jashipur at the rate of Rs. 4.50 and elsewhere at the rate of Rs. 5 per Kg. The traders collect those



at a still cheaper rate. The economy of those transactions is not difficult to visualise. The bargaining power of the Kharia is very low. Being in subsistence economy, they have to procure food to maintain themselves. They do not practise agriculture to assure them food supply, at least for a few months in a year. Wage-earning is limited to four months during fair-weather when forest operations continue. But there again Kharia are never preferred as a useful labour force and they exhibit little inclination for that occupation. Being ignorant of agricultural practices they are not engaged in that job by other tribes. Hence they have limited opportunity of assured income from any source. Food and other collection is a hazardous and risky job. It is fraught with unforeseen vagaries beyond human control. The forest which abounds in those produce, is full of wild animals, and there are chances of being attacked by wild beasts. Moreover rainfall in Simlipals is widespread. There are leeches and treacherous hill streams which make passage arduous. During the rainy season the area is cut off from all sides. All these factors make food and collection of forest produce extremely difficult. Hence the Kharia have to depend on the mercy of traders and forest authorities and lose bargaining power. Particularly after declaration of National Park, hunting as a source of food supply has been discarded. The subordinate staff of Forest Department does not deal with them sympathetically.

Thus one sees the hill Kharia as a completely broken group of tribals, absolutely lacking self-confidence. The vast expanses of forests in which they live and survive with innumerable risks are also something which is studded with restrictions. Sometimes due to sympathy of a few officials they are allowed certain concessions, but those are denied on other occasions. A typical instance is the transfer of Kharia settlement from Tinadiha to upper Barhakamra. When the Forest Department required the former area for starting a nursery, the Kharia there, were asked to vacate and they left with all their belongings to Barhakamra. Some Kharias migrated to different villages from Khajuri. After being hard pressed in those new settlements they returned to Khajuri. Recently out of 12 families at Jenabil, 3 have returned to Khajuri. All these incidents developed indomitable capacity among these tribals for adjustment. Being denied with modern trends of development and settled life, they toil under multiple dangers and risks and they are scuttled from place to place with no aspiration.

Marriage expenses and corresponding bride price among the Kharia have been reduced to a small amount. Women are entrusted with food gathering and other domestic occupations while the males are busy in honey and arrowroot

collections. Men learn skills associated with those professions. They feel that with proper observance of magical rites and taboos the stings of bees become ineffective. Hindu Gods and deities have been adopted long since and tribal faith has been twisted to incorporate them. Ceremonies and festivals connected with agriculture and animal husbandry have not been adopted.

Recently they have acquired *dhotis* and saris by selling honey, etc. A few aluminium utensils have also been purchased, from the markets. Contact with outsiders at Jashipur, Dengam and other market centers have generated new ideas and values but they have not been able to adopt those due to the factors discussed above.

In this context it is being proposed to settle the Hill Kharia in land and agriculture. Land is available in Simlipals in plenty. Particularly the reclaimed land vacated by encroachers could be easily settled with Kharia. But this is not a simple task, as Kharias have never practised agriculture and are extremely tradition-directed to adopt it straight way. Collection is a hazardous occupation, but less cumbersome. Agriculture without protracted irrigation remains a gamble between alternate drought and downpour. A reserve stock of grains and other subsidiary occupations enable the agriculturists to tide over the vagaries of nature. Agriculture needs resources. All these are not within the reach of the Kharias, nor could they think of those in their present mental frame work. They have no livestock and do not rear cattle. All those are to be provided to them. But more than supplying material part is to imbibe among them the mind to adopt the change. Their cultural base has to be widened to incorporate the new mode of life. They have to be provided with regular houses. They must feel the pride of ownership and possession, over houses, land and cattle.

Hence their rehabilitation has to be planned with precision and on scientific lines. The help of an anthropologist should be imperative in such a venture.

This little community has to fore shake their traditions and age-old social values. These require to be planned with full understanding of their cultural life. The transformation of their norms and standards is not a simple affair. This is the greatest folly we generally commit while dealing with human groups. Our ethnocentrism does not permit us to give due credence to the cultural traditions of preliterate groups. Thus our *bona fide* intentions fail to draw their admiration and our efforts turn out infructuous. Hence it becomes essential to take into account the imponderabilia of Kharia life and traditions before settling them in land and agriculture without thwarting their opportunity to collect minor forest produce.

Before the aforesaid aspects are fully dealt and tackled any large scale rehabilitation of outsiders within Simlipals will, do more harm to the Kharia there. In their present social and economic life, exposure to abrupt and wanton change in the ecological balance will make this tribe fall prey to cunning and undesirable outsiders. Even other advanced tribes will be no exception in exploiting the Hill Kharia. This, in due course will lead to total annihilation of the tribe, as has been the case in many parts of the world. Of course the present isolation is doing no good to any. But isolation has somehow kept the existence of the tribe so far. Hence before the Simlipals are opened up, the Kharias should be given the lease of settled life with associated amenities. Their collection should fetch higher price by raising their bargaining power. For this purpose the forest and district authorities should combine and prepare a plan with the help of an anthropologist. In course of a decade or so the hill Kharia should be brought to the level of other tribes in Simlipals.

# PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE AMONG THE HILL KHARIAS OF SIMILIPAL, ODISHA: A STUDY OF CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS <sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

Oxford dictionary defines property as 'possession (s)' or 'things owned'. In reality the term 'property' simply does not mean 'things' or 'possessions' only but the relationship between people and things. The concept of property assumes or set of things or possessions and social relationship in the socio-cultural nexus of every society that is universal in character. According to Mac Iver, 'Property' is not wealth or possessions but the right to control, to exploit, to use or to enjoy wealth or possessions (1945). Hence, to understand the concept of property in any society, it is not important only to know who owns what but who holds what kinds of rights or exercises command over things called 'property'. Since, these rights are different and applied at different levels under different circumstances, generalizations about who owns what may be misleading.

Further the 'things or 'possession' called 'property' does not mean tangible material objects only such as land, house, and livestock etc, which are called 'corporeal property'. It is also includes intangible and non-material possessions like song, music, art, literature, knowledge, skill, expertise and the like called 'incorporeal property' which cannot be divided like corporeal property but can be shared and inherited.

"In fact property is as heterogeneous as the societies within which it is found; among every people convention limits the opportunities which property affords; the law resting upon customs disbursts ownership between individuals and the community and morality restrains even the pleasure of a man to do as he will with his own" (Hamilton; 1933; 529). Since the concept and usage of property differ from one society to another, it has been established by several

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXV, Nos. 1& 2, 1995, pp.35-45

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTR TI, Bhubaneswar

anthropological studies in tribal societies in various parts of the world that, the tribal people not only have their specific connotation of property but also have a larger inventory of possessions than the modern man can conceptualize.

In essence, property is a conditional equity in the valuables of tribals community. It is a conceptual way in their folk system for linking the system of material culture with their social system. It is their society but not the individual, which specifies what, is considered property. These are social in nature, for they may change over time.

In this paper an attempt has been made to look into the concept of property and the customs and traditions regulating the property and rules of inheritance among the Hill Kharia, a Primitive Tribal Group of Similipal in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. The Hill Kharia are primitive and backward section of the Kharia tribe who earn their livelihood by pursuing a subsistence economy of hunting and food gathering. Currently they are in a transitional state, aspiring for a shift from the traditional subsistence economy to a settled agricultural economy. In this context it is significant to comprehend if at all they have realized the value of land as an important productive asset and an item of immovable property. The paper seeks to analyze the socio-cultural and economic implications of property and the rules of inheritance from the view points of anthropological study of customs and traditions of the tribe in particular and the domain of customary law in general.

The Hill Kharia have developed their own concept of property and the customs and traditions regulating inheritance, transmission, management and control of property as a part of their socio-economic system. Their inventory of the possessions includes a verity of objects. The territory which they inhabit; the beasts that move upon its wilderness; their domestic animals graze upon it; the forest and its resources that they exploit to earn their livelihood; the dwelling huts they erect to live in; the clothes they wear; the weapons implements and artefacts they use; the shrines Gods, deities and spirits they worship; and also their song, music, dance, verses, magic, medicine and many more items are their property.

#### **Private and Public Property:**

Their concept of 'property' and 'public' property is not very clear. Since the recent past they have come across certain state managed public utilities and infrastructures, like roads, wells, tube-wells, tanks, irrigation structures, Government buildings, schools, community centers, health centers, electrical installations, etc. They call these assets as "Sarkari" meaning 'belonging to Government' or 'Government Property'.

### **Private and Communal Property:**

The notion of their 'private property' is linked with 'communal property' in one way or other. As they were leading a semi-nomadic band life in the past, everything that is useful to them and specially the productive assets belonged to the community. The territory of land and forests that provided them with the means of subsistence was divided among the local groups. The local groups in turn were administering the management, distribution, redistribution and allocation of economic resources among the families within the groups. Now with the growth of population, competition from the immigrant non-Kharia tribal groups into their traditional territory, rapid depletion of forest region their socio-economic life is undergoing changes. In course of their transition from a hunting and food gathering economy to a productive agricultural economy, they are beginning to understand the importance of land and allied productive assets as items of private property and distinguish the private property from communal property in terms of "mine" and "ours".

### **Forest: A Communal Property:**

The forest which they regard as their foster mother as it nourishes them and provides all their needs, has been their communal property. Every one of them has right to exploit its resources freely without encroaching upon the rights of others. But the items collected from the forest by an individual become his/her personal property because he acquires them by his personal endeavor. Further the customary law of the Hill Kharia provides that every one of them should exploit as much resources as required to meet his consumption needs. No commercial exploitation by individuals for earning profit is allowed. The Hill Kharia believed that such selfish acts displease their Gods and deities and results in disastrous consequences. The following case study will explain this point.

#### **Case Study (I):**

Ramjodi is a Hill Kharia settlement located in the interiors of Similipal forest. In the village the seat of village shrine (*salagram*) lies in a sacred grove having tall trees. Once a villager felled a tall tree from that grove and sold the logs to an illegal timber trader to meet his needs. The villagers were angry on the man for this selfish, highhanded and unholy act. They were also afraid of the village deity who was supposed to be angry and punish the villagers. Before, they could take any corrective action by punishing the culprit and appeasing the angry Gods, harsh supernatural punishment came to the culprit. There was an outbreak of fire in the house of the culprit. Despite all the efforts of the villagers to put out the fire, the house was reduced to ashes.

Another customary law relating to exploitation of forest resources is that when a Kharia person detects a bee-hive, resin or any other produce on a tree inside the forest and he is not in a position to collect the produce at that time, he puts a mark on the trunk of the tree to establish his exclusive right to collect that produce later. If another person sees that mark later, he does not touch that produce respecting the right of the first person who has put his mark. If the second person violates this custom by ignoring the mark and stealing the produce, then the first person tries to identify and locate the offender and lodges complaint against him before the traditional village Panchayat. The Panchayat hears such cases and punishes the culprit by realizing a fine in cash and kinds and compensating the aggrieved party. Such a case study is presented below.

**Case Study (II):**

J, a man of Budhigan once detected a bee-hive full of honey in a tree in the forest. He left after putting an identification mark on the tree trunk to collect the honey the next day. After his departure two Kharia men of Kabatghai saw the honey. Ignoring the identification mark they collected the honey. As they were hungry and thirsty, they consumed the honey at the spot and sold the surplus to a trader. The next day J was surprised to find the bee-hive gone. He enquired in the neighboring villages and gathered clues about the offenders. Then he went to Kabatghai and complained before the village chief, Dehury. A village Panchayat meeting was convened by the Dehury in which the accused confessed that they had to steal the honey to quench by their thirst and hunger. They were asked to tender apology to the avenged party and entertain him with food and liquor.

Now the forest is the state property. As aboriginal inhabitants of the territory, The Hill Kharia have been granted limited rights to exploit the forest resources only for the purpose of their own consumption but not for commercial purpose. Their age old freedom has been further squeezed with the Government notification declaring the Similipal forest as “National park” and “Wildlife Sanctuary” and with execution of “Project Tiger” subsequently. The Hill Kharia who claims themselves to be autochthones of Similipal find it hard to accept the fact that, their beloved forest which was theirs for centuries no longer belongs to them. Still they claim the forest as their exclusive property both private and communal, though now they can exercise their limited usufructuary rights over it.

**Land: an item of Private Property:**

Land, a most valuable item of immovable private property is yet to assume importance in the economy of Hill Kharia because their traditional forest based subsistence necessitates a semi-nomadic life within their forest habitat. But certain changes have taken place now affecting their traditional life style. Their population

growth, depletion of forest and restrictive forest laws have forced them to settle down and seek alternative means of livelihood in the surrounding peasant economy predominated by many advanced tribal and non-tribal communities.

Since the community was self-sufficient and happy with their forest based subsistence in the past and attached little importance to acquire cultivable lands, the majority of the Hill Kharia families living in the Similipal region are landless and very few of them are marginal farmers. Now when they are beginning to realize the importance of land and trying to graduate into a settled agricultural economy, their scope appears to be limited. Over period of time, advanced peasant communities - both tribal and non-tribal such as Munda, Ho, Santal, Gond and Hindu castes have migrated into the area, cleared the forests and acquired the best variety of cultivable lands. Further, whatever cultivable lands the Kharia possessed in the past have passed into the hands of these advanced communities through debt redemption, trickery and manipulation. Hence, the poor and landless Hill Kharia have no other alternative but to serve the local landlords as agricultural laborers, bonded laborers or contractual laborers to earn a meager wage in order to keep their body and soul together.

The following table presents comparative data on the present situation of possession of land holdings by Hill Kharia households in the Similipal region which have been based upon three surveys conducted between 1981 and 1992.

**TABLE**  
**Size of Land Holding Possessed by Hill-Kharia Households**

Year of Survey	No. of villages Surveyed	Total No. of Households	Distribution of land possessing Households according to land holding size					No. of Landless households
			Up to- 1 Ac.	1 Ac.- 2.5Acs	2.5 -5 Acs.	Above 5 Acs.	Total	
1981	20	314 (100)	59 (18.79)	3 (18.79)	....	....	62 (19.8)	252 (60.2)
1991	19	187 (100)	55 (29.41)	1 (0.54)	....	....	56 (29.95)	131 (70.05)
1992	2	61 (100)	20 (32.26)	2 (3.23)	3 (4.84)	1 (1.61)	26 (41.90)	36 (58.06)

(Percentages are given in brackets)

*Source-- 1981- Action plan for Hill Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency(HK&MDA)- G.B. Sahoo & S.C. Mohanty. THRTI, Bhubaneswar (unpublished)*

*1991- Action Plan for Hill Kharia of Additional Villages of HK&MDA, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj district- B. Choudhury and G. B. Sahoo, THRTI, Bhubaneswar (unpublished)*

*1992--Author's own survey for Study of Customs and Traditions of Hill Kharia.*



The table reveals that only 19.8 per cent of the Hill Kharia Households were possessing land in 1981 which increase to 29.95 per cent in 1991. It further increased to 41.94 per cent in 1992. But this remarkable increase in 1992 can be attributed to allotment of house and the land adjoining the house site below 0.5 Ac to each landless Hill Kharia household in both the surveyed villages namely, Ramjodi and Matiagarh under development programmes implemented by the Micro Project, the Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HK&MDA). Thus the number of landless households which constituted 80.2 per cent of the total households was reduced to 70.05 per cent in 1991 and 58.06 per cent in 1992. It is significant to note that among the land owning households the largest number i.e. 18.79 per cent in 1981, 29.41 per cent in 1991 and 32.26 per cent in 1992 come under the category of marginal farmers each of whom have landholdings within one acre. They are followed by small farmers having land 1 acre to 2.5 acres who accounted for 0.96 per cent in 1981, 0.54 per cent in 1991 and 3.23 percent in 1992. There were no medium farmers (2.6 Acres to 5 Acres) in 1981 and 1991. In 1992 only 4.84 per cent of the households entered into this category. Similar trend is also noticed in case of medium farmers under 5.1 Acers to 10 Acers category. There was no household under this category in 1981 and 1991. Only one household belonging to Ramjodi appeared under this category in 1992. This clearly shows that possession of land holdings by the Hill Kharia of Similipal is quite negligible and marginal and majority of them are landless. Though current economic and environmental pressures create a desire in the typical Hill Kharia to possess some cultivable lands like their prosperous neighbors, the situational constraints discussed above as well as their poverty and ignorance limits their scope for fulfillment of their desire. Therefore, the land is yet to adorn the Hill Kharia economy like a feather in the cap.

#### **Inheritance:**

The customary rules of inheritance among the Hill Kharia reflect the total ideology of their society. All though both the sexes contribute, more or less, for acquisition and management of property, only the dominant male sex enjoys the monopoly of the right of inheritance and ownership of property. Being a patrilineal society, social position, rank, office and property are inherited / succeeded along the line of patrilineage.

The pattern of inheritance and management of property is governed by customary rules of kinship and descent. The Hill Kharia family forms the basic corporate socio-economic unit to administer and perpetuate transmission of

private property and other attributes across generations. It keeps property in tact while distributing rights among the members. It also deals with the practical problems of relationship between people and possessions and maintains continuity of rights across generations.

The father or the patriarch is the head of the family as well as the sole owner of his family's properties. Only he can take decisions on management and transaction relating to his property. In actual practice a good patriarch consults his family while taking such decisions. On the other hand, an autocratic father who squanders away his properties at his will and pleasure instead of augmenting the economic assets and utilizing them prudently for the welfare of his family is publicly criticized and his family members disregard him.

In the event of death, disability and prolonged absence of the household head, his son, preferably the eldest one or any other legitimate direct male heir assumes the responsibility of managing his family and its assets. But the successor should have to be an adult male and he should be capable and willing. If the heir apparent is a minor or when the household head dies, remains absent or becomes disabled leaving minor children, his widow officiates as the head of the family and manage the family's assets till the son or male heir reaches his adulthood and becomes capable of shouldering the responsibility. If there are no male heirs and there are only female children, then one of the girls is married to a man who is willing to stay with the girl's natal family as a son-in-law-in house to look after the family and its property. In case of an issueless man who has no direct male heirs in his family, his properties are inherited by his close agnatic kins - both lineal and lateral. Usually a major share in such cases is claimed by the kin who has maintained close ties with the concerned family and rendered timely service and assistance during the period of crises, like death, disease, accident, etc. occurring in the family. Especially the kin who arranges and pays for the mortuary rites of the dead person gets a larger share of the latter's property.

#### **Order of Inheritance:**

As per the customary norms of inheritance of private property which follow the lines of kinship and descent, the order of inheritance begins with primary agnatic kins and then covers secondary and tertiary kins as the case may be. In the first order are immediate lineal kins like, sons and grandsons. In absences of these first and second order kins, the right of inheritance passes to the third order comprising the brother, cousin brother, his sons and grandsons. If there are many claimants and disputes arise, the traditional village *Panchayat* intervenes to appoint the heir successor. In absence of any claimant the

properties of an issueless person are taken over and administered by the village community through the traditional village *Panchayat*.

### **Property Rights of Women:**

Theoretically, Hill Kharia women are not eligible to inherit property. But they enjoy residuary property rights to claim maintenance out of the properties of their fathers, brothers or husbands as the case may be, depending upon their marital status and place of residence. A daughter or sister whether she is unmarried or married, a widow or a divorcee, is liable to be maintained in her father's or brother's family if she lives and works there. A married woman even if she is a widow, is liable to be maintained by her husband or deceased husband's agnatic kins who take over the properties as long as she continues to stay with the family and does not remarry or gets divorced or deserts to live elsewhere.

A Kharia woman may not inherit property but as stated earlier, but a married woman can manage her husband's properties in the event of death, disability and prolonged absence of her husband when the children especially the male heirs are minor. In this situation she officiates as the head of the family till the male heir becomes adult and capable of shouldering the responsibility of managing the family and its assets. If there are no direct male heirs, the woman continues as the head of the family till her death, disability, divorce, departure or remarriage to an outsider.

But while officiating as the family head she has no right to sell or otherwise dispose off the properties at her will and pleasure except for the purpose of meeting the exigencies of death, disease, marriage, bride-price, accidents, disputes, debt redemption etc. affecting family or for the welfare of the family. Further she cannot take such decision all by herself but is required to consult and obtain approval for her husband's agnatic kins and the village elders before doing anything in this regard.

Ordinarily, a Hill Kharia woman is not eligible to inherit her paternal property as only male heirs i.e. sons inherit father's properties. However as stated earlier, when there are no male heirs but only the daughters, sisters or grand daughters available, one of the girls is married to a man who is willing to stay with her girl's natal family as a son-in-law in house (*Ghar Jamai*) after the marriage to look after the girl's dependant old parents or grandparents and other family members and manage the properties. After the death of the old parents, the girl inherits her parents' properties but not her husband. After her, her male children inherit the property. But the girl can inherit her father's property

provided she to stays at her father 's place after her marriage and does not shift elsewhere, say to her husband's place. Such a case study is given below.

### **Case Study (III):**

P. Dehury son of late M. Dehury of Chiligan was an orphan boy. Both of his parents died when he was a little child. His maternal uncle late C. Dehury of Matiagarh assumed the responsibility of maintaining him. When he grew up, he did not want to become a burden on his uncle who had a large family to support. So he went to his mother's sister's house at Baniabasa and lived there. There he married a Kharia girl who was the only child of her parents and lived at his father-in-law's house as a son-in-law-in house (Ghar Jamai). After the death of his father-in-law, his wife inherited his father-in-law's property and he managed the property. Now P and his wife have become old. They are blessed with a son who is the heir apparent to inherit the property from her mother.

### **Partition of Property:**

For division of private property among the sons or heirs, the Hill Kharia custom provides for equigeniture. All the male heirs are entitled to get an equal share of the property belonging to their father or predecessor. Even an adopted son can get a share.

In actual practice, grown up sons get married and set up separate residences during their father's lifetime. Though they are physically separated from their natal family, they jointly manage the natal family's productive assets, share the yields among themselves according to their needs and do not usually claim formal partition of joint property as long as the father is alive. Ordinarily formal partition of property does not take place during the life of the patriarch.

A conscientious father may divide his property among his sons during his life-time to avoid conflicts and tensions. Sometimes he is compelled to do so under pressing circumstances arising out of the aggressive demands of arrogant sons after they get married and set up separate residences. In that case he keeps a share for himself that is for his own maintenance. After his death, his share is again equally divided among his sons. If he does not keep a share for himself and distributes everything among his sons, then it becomes the obligation of his sons to maintain him and his wife. It is the duty of the sons to look after their old parents during their old age even though their father has no property for them to inherit. If the sons neglect their old parents they are publicly criticized.

Though married sons live separately, their emotional lies with their parents, unmarried brothers and sisters and other members of the natal family remain intact. They maintain close links by looking after the good health and

wellbeing of their natal family members. They assume the responsibility of guardianship and maintenance of their widow mother, minor children and other handicapped and dependant members of their natal family after father's death.

A Kharia father who has only one son, persuades the boy not to live separately after his marriage because old parents remain physically and emotionally dependant on him especially more so during their old age. After the death of his parents, the boy inherits all their properties including the paternal house.

More often it is noticed that, Kharia parents having more than one son become dependent on their youngest son who even after his marriage stays with and support them at their old age unlike other elder sons who live separately after their marriage. For such special and indispensable services, the youngest son gets the paternal house and the personal belongings of his dead parents.

While inheriting the paternal property, the sons also inherit their father's liabilities. It is their duty to attend to the liabilities jointly even though their father left no property for them to inherit. Failure to do so invokes public criticism. Daughters are not liable to do so as they do not inherit paternal property. But a widow who manages her deceased husband's property when her sons are minor, may be asked to repay her husband's debts

#### **Case Study (IV): (Partition of Property after Father's Death)**

Late C. Dehury of Matiagarh had three acres of cultivable land which he had acquired by reclaiming some patches of forest land. He was the father of eight children - five sons and three daughters. When the children grew up, they worked in their father's field and assisted him to reclaim another two acres of forest land. In course of time, C. the patriarch grew old and died. At that time all of his three daughters were married off and two elder sons J and K living separately after getting married. But they had not asked for partition of their paternal property during father's life time as they were managing somehow from external sources. Subsequently, the three unmarried sons living with the widow mother got married and two elder ones B, and D lived separately. The youngest son, L continued to stay with his mother. In the meantime the mother also died. But formal partition of paternal property had not been made till the year 1991. Till then, the brothers were cultivating the land jointly and sharing the produces according to their need and capacity. There were no quarrels and tensions among themselves in this regard.

Formal partition of paternal property among five sons took place during 1992. The paternal landed property measuring five acres approximately has been divided into eight plots. By way of partition, the eldest brother J got one big plot, the next two brothers K and B got two small plots each, the next one D got

one big plot and the youngest one L got the remaining two plots. The sharing of plots has been done on mutual basis. Last year they had cultivated the lands jointly and harvested twenty five quintals of paddy. Each of them had got a share of five quintals.

Besides the cultivable lands, the following items of property were there at the time of C's death.

Livestock - Cow-1 head, Goats-2 heads, Poultry birds- 2 Nos.

Trees - Kusum- 1 No, Drumstick-2 Nos, Papaya- 2 Nos, Jackfruit- 2 Nos.

Ornaments - Gold nose-ring-1 No, Silver Necklace- 1 No.

Utensils - Brass and Bell-metal utensils- 12 Nos.

The cow and the silver necklace belonging to the mother were sold to meet the expenses for father's funerary rites. The goats and poultry birds were also sacrificed for the death rites. The gold nose-ring was gifted to the youngest sister. The old mother who was staying with the youngest son L died a few years ago. L sold all the brass and bell utensils to spend for her death rites.

As the regards the trees, one jackfruit tree was sold for Rs. 300 and the sale proceeds were equally shared among all the brothers. The second jackfruit tree became old. The brothers fell the tree and shared the logs for use as firewood. The papaya and drumstick trees grew old and died. When these trees were bearing fruits, all the brothers were sharing the produces among themselves.

#### **Case Study: (V) (Partition of Property during Father's Lifetime):**

A is an old man of Ramjodi. Years ago his first wife died after giving birth to four sons and two daughters. 'A' faced difficulties to manage his family and take care of his minor children. So as advised by his friends and relatives, he went for second marriage. He remarried R, a young widow of Kumudabadi who had two children - one son and one daughter from her deceased husband. 'A' agreed to adopt the widow's two children. In course of time all the A's children grew up one after another, got married and lived separately.

'A' is an industrious man. During his lifetime he has acquired 21 plots of cultivable lands measuring 10 acres approximately. All his sons after their marriage and physical separation from the natal family were jointly cultivating A's cultivable lands and mutually sharing the produces among themselves according to their need while leaving a share for the maintenance of their old parents. Unfortunately there was some misunderstanding between A and his sons. The four sons of A's first wife felt that their step-mother was influencing their father to give a larger share of property to her own son. Hence, they quarreled with 'A' to get an equal share of his property. At last A' yielded to their demand and divided his landed property among all the sons after two years of his youngest adopted son' marriage. Out of 21 plots all his five sons including

the adopted son got three plots each. A' being a self made and self dependant man did not want to become dependent on his sons during his old age. So he kept an equal share of property i.e. three plots of cultivable land for the maintenance of himself and his second wife. One plot of land was gifted to one of his son-in-law D' who has married to the youngest daughter of his first wife. D was an orphan boy who was brought up by his mother's sister in the village Ramjodi. So after his marriage with A's daughter continued to live in Ramjodi. Considering his poor conditions A and his sons agreed to gift him a plot of cultivable land. The remaining two plots were sold off by 'A' to a Gond peasant of Panposia to meet some urgent expenditure.

At the time of partition, A has some live stocks such as a pair of bullock, six goats and eleven poultry birds. He kept the bullocks with himself. All the five sons got one goat and two poultry birds each. The remaining one goat and one poultry bird came to A. The utensils and ornaments were not shared but remained with A and his wife. These items will be shared by the sons after the old couple's death.

There were fruit bearing tress like jackfruit (6 Nos) and tamarind (2 Nos) which have not been distributed but kept as common property. A and his sons are sharing the fruits.

Now A and his second wife are living alone independently. Though they have grown old they are struggling hard to support themselves instead of becoming a burden on their sons. The sons who live nearer to the old couple also help them at the time of need.

#### **Disqualification for Inheritance:**

There are certain circumstances under which a son or heir is not allowed to get his due share of paternal property as discussed below.

I. When a man leaves his father's village and settles in another place. Such cases arises out of adoption migration, long term private service, like bonded labor, regular institutional employment, becoming Ghar Jamai (Son-in-law-in-house) and the like. Since the man gets an alternative means of livelihood other than his paternal property, he gives up his right to get a share of his paternal property which is shared among his brothers who live in their father's village and depend on the paternal property for their sustenance. If the man comes back to his native place leaving his service later, his brothers or kinsmen who have shared the paternal property in his absence give him a part of it to enable him to settle down and earn his livelihood. Some case studies of this nature are reported below.

**Case Study (VI):**

D of Kiajhari married T, the daughter of late N of Ramjodi. After his marriage he shifted to Ramjodi i.e. his wife's village at the insistence of his wife. His father-in-law and brother-in-law did not give him a share of their family property as he was not granted the status of a Ghar Jamai. On the other hand his own brothers living in Kiajhari did not give him a share of his paternal property, as he has shifted, to his father-in-laws place instead of staying with them. Losing his share of property on both the sides, poor N is now living in Ramjodi and earning his livelihood with difficulty by collecting and selling forest produce.

**Case Study (VII):**

Years ago, B, a Kharia man came and settled down at Ramjodi. He had three sons named T, D and S. He had reclaimed few patches of forest lands for cultivation with the help of his two elder sons T and D. At that time, the youngest son S was working as a cattle-herder under a Gond landlord in another village. Since S could not help his father and brothers for reclamation and acquisition of the landed property, he did not claim any share when his brothers shared the property among themselves after B's death.

After the partition the second brother D shifted to his father-in-law's place leaving his share of property with his elder brother, T. After fifteen years, D, return to Ramjodi and retrieved his property from his elder brother.

2. When a Kharia marries a non-Kharia of opposite sex belonging to a lower social order violating the rule of tribal endogamy, he is not entitled to inherit any property from his father or any other kin, because he is socially boycotted and disowned by his family and kin group. His parents and nearest kins perform prescribed purificatory rituals and pay the penalty imposed by the traditional village council so as to restore their social and ritual status. In the recent past this social sanction was being strictly enforced to preserve the purity and social identity of the community. Currently, there have been some relaxations. The socially boycotted offender can be readmitted into the society after breaking off his marital ties with the lower caste partner and then paying the prescribed penalty and then undergoing the purificatory rites. After his readmission, he is eligible to inherit property and regain his social status.

**Case study (VIII):**

B the daughter of late G. of Ramjodi married a man of the same village and became a widow after a few years of her marriage. Then she remarried a married Kharia man of Chardiha who had a living wife. The first wife quarreled with her and at last drove her out of her house. Her new husband could not help her. She had nowhere to go except the house of her married cousin sister in Kabatghai.



There she developed intimacy with a man of Pano community and eloped with him. In the mean time, her parents were no more and her three brothers had shifted their residence from Ramjodi to Jabuna. Owing to her marriage with a man of lower caste, the Kharia villagers of Jabuna demanded a penalty feast (Jati bhat) from her brothers. They were readmitted in to the community after paying the penalty and undergoing purificatory rites. They also disowned their sister and cut off all ties with her.

Insanity, disease, disability and any other kind of mental and physical handicaps are not taken as grounds for disqualification of an heir in respect of inheritance of property. Their share of property is managed by their kins who take care of them.

### **Conclusion :**

The Hill Kharia of Similipal are a pre-agricultural community. Being a primitive food gathering community, they are custom-bound and tradition-oriented. Gone are the days when they were enjoying considerable freedom to live inside and exploit the forest of Similipal. In these days with the growth of population, immigration of other advanced communities into their natural habitat, rapid deforestation and stringent forest laws, their traditional dependence on the forest based subsistence is a declining day by day. But the change from hunting and food gathering to settled agriculture is becoming difficult as majority of them are landless and the existing cultivable lands in the area are under the possession of other tribal and non-tribal communities. Thus land is yet to feature as a valuable item of private property in their economic life.

As a regards inheritance of property, it is governed by customs and traditions that they have inherited from their forefathers. Though property is transmitted along the male line of kinship and descent, women enjoy residuary rights of maintenance depending upon their material status and place of residence.

Currently the forces of modernization are knocking at their doors. Some new modern items, such as torch light, bicycle, transistor radio, tape recorder, wrist watch, cycle rickshaw, etc. have found their way into the Hill Kharia households. The Hill Kharia are showing a tendency to acquire these objects. There is also a growing interest to acquire cultivable lands, raise livestock and take up diversified modern economic pursuits in order to minimize their dependence on diminishing forest resources. Further the Hill Kharia of Similipal has been identified as a primitive and economically backward tribe. A primitive tribe development Micro-Project, named the Hill Kharia Development Agency is

functioning at Jashipur since 1987 to look after their socio-economic development. The agency is making attempts to bring them to an agricultural economy by developing waste lands wherever these are available and allotting the lands among landless Hill Kharia families. Modernized agricultural practices and economic crops are also being introduced. It will take some time for the Hill Kharia to realise the importance of land and agriculture and depend upon them for their sustenance. Then only perceptible changes will be seen in their concept and practices relating to private property.

### Bibliography

- Choudhury, B. & G. B. Sahoo (1991-92) Action Plan for Additional Villages of Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency, Jashipur in Mayurbhanj District, THRTI. Bhubaneswar (Unpublished Report).
- Das, N. (1967-68) The Hill Kharia of Similipal Hills, *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No. 2, pp 44-49.
- Glukman, Max. (1968) *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Goswami, M.C. (1982) *The Customary Laws and Practices of the Pati Rabha of Assam*. The Law Research Institute, Eastern Region, Gauhati, Assam.
- Gupta, S.P. (1975) A Reconnoital Survey among the Hill Kharia & proposed Action Research Programme. *Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Welfare Research Institute*, Vol. 17, pp 25-27.
- Hamilton, W.H & Lrene, Till. (1933) "Property", *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. XI-XII, Macmillan & Co, New York, pp 528-538.
- Hoebel, E.A. (1954) *The Law of Primitive Man*, Cambridge Mass, Havard Univ. Press.
- Lobingier, C.S. (1930) "Customary Law", *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. III-IV. Macmillan Co. New York, pp 662-667.
- Mohanty, S.C. (2008) *Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Kutia Kondha of Belghar, Phulbani Dist. Orissa*. SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- Ibid (2008) *Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Lanjia Saora of Puttasaing, Koraput*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

- Ibid (1992-93) *Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Kharia of Similipal Mayurbhanj Dist, Orissa*. THRTI, Bhubaneswar (to be published)
- Ibid (1992-93) *Social Position and Property Rights of the Kutia Kondh Women of Belghar, Phulbani*. Adivasi, Vol.XXXIII, No.2, 1993, pp.16-21
- Ibid (1992) Birinda- The Agnatic Lineage System of the Lanjia Saora, *Orissa Review*, Vol- XLVIII No. 6 pp. 24-28.
- Mohanty U.C. (1963-64) *Kharia. Adibasi*, No. 3, pp. 175-178.
- Radin, Max. (1930) "Tradition", *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. XV, Macmillan & Co, New York, pp-62-67.
- Roy, S.C. (1935) Past Migration of Kharia tribe, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*.
- Roy, S.C. and R.C. Roy. (1937) *The Kharias*, Man in India Office, Ranchi, Vol. I & II
- Sahoo, G.B and S.C. Mohanty. (1982) *Action Plan for Hill Kharia & Mankirdia Dev. Agency Gudugudia, Mayurbhanj District*, 1981-1985, THRTI, Orissa. (Unpublished)
- Sapir, E. (1930) 'Custom' *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. III & IV. Macmillan & Co, New York, pp. 658-662.
- Sahoo, T. (1990) "Kharia", *Tribes of Orissa*, THRTI, pp. 135-139.
- Senapati, N. and N.K. Sahoo. (1967) *Orissa District Gazetteers*, Mayurbhanj Govt. of Orissa, O.G.P. Cuttack.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. & V.S. Upadhyay. (1980) *The Kharia-Then and Now*, Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.

# JUANG

S.C. Mohanty<sup>1</sup>

The Juang tribe is found nowhere except in the state of Odisha. They are largely concentrated in the district of Keonjhar followed by the adjoining district of Angul. In fact, their habitat is a continuous belt extending from the hills in the west of Keonjhar to the hill ranges of Pallahara of undivided Angul and its adjoining plains.

## Location & Physiography

Keonjhar district is located in the northern part of the State between 21.1'N and 22.10'N latitude and 85. 11'E and 86. 22'E longitude with an area of 8330.7 Sq.Kms. The district is divided into two divisions, the upper Keonjhar consisting of the hill ranges of Gonasika, Mankadanacha, Gandhamardan and the lower Keonjhar, which is a plain area. The hills of Gonasika are the abode of the Juang. The rocky and forested surroundings guarantee the tribe an isolation in which they lead their life in their own style.

The district of Angul lies between 20. 41'N latitude and 84.16'E longitude with an area of 1082.70 sq. kms. Here the Juangs are spread over the valleys of Pallahara and the plains of Kamakhyanager and Sadar Sub-divisions.

The area covering both districts has a large number of hills and valleys intercepted by a network of perennial streams and rivers like Boitarani and Brahmani. The soil varies from rich loam to gravelly detritus of the hill slopes except plains that are fertile.

## The Juang Country

The Juang claim Keonjhar as their homeland. Their stronghold area in the district is called *Juang pirha*. It is a contiguous triangular piece of country divided into four traditional maximal territorial units like Jharkhand *pirha*, Sathkhand *pirha*, Rebena *pirha* and Kathua *pirha* with a roughly north to south alignment along a range of hills with Keonjhar at its apex and Kuanr and Basantapur at its

---

<sup>1</sup> Officer on Special Duty (Research), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

base. In the center of the Juang country lies Gonasika, the holy birth place of the Juang tribe and is surrounded by other Juang villages. From this place the holy river Boitarani originates and traverses through the whole district.

The *Juang pirha* of Keonjhar district is a rugged, mountainous highland country predominantly inhabited by the **Primitive Tribal Group (PTG)**- the Juang, recently redesignated as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG)**. This picturesque territory with its undulating terrain, rolling hills, perennial hill streams and patches of lush green forests lies at an average elevation of 2000'-3000' above the sea level. This lovely highland country is dotted with hundreds of Juang villages of which 35 have been covered by the PTG Development Micro Project named **Juang Development Agency (JDA)** headquartered at Gonasika. It is situated at a distance of 35 kilometers from the district headquarters of Keonjhar town and approachable by all-weather *pucca* road.

The present study has covered 10 Juang villages of JDA spread over 5 Gram Panchayats (GPs) namely, Tala Champei, Gonasika, Kodipasa, Baragada and Kuanr under Bansapal Block of Keonjhar Sadar Subdivision and ITDA.

### Flora

For abundant rainfall and variation in altitude in this region, the forests here support varieties of vegetations. The important species are *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*), *Amba* (*Mangifera Indica*), *Panasa* (*Artucarpus heperphyllus*), *Kendu* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), *Gambhari* (*Gomelina arborea*), *Kusum* (*Schleichera trijuga*), *Karanja* (*Pongmia Globra*), *Jamun* (*Eugenia Jambolana*), *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*). Clumps of bamboo (*Bambusa stricta*) grow in abundance in this area particularly in Pallahara area. A kind of tall grass known as *Sinkunda* grows around the villages and is used as thatching grass. *Siali* creeper whose stem is used for rope making and leaves for cups and plates is also abundant.

The contribution of forest to the economic life of the Juang is very significant. In the past, the area was under thick forest cover. But now only patches of vegetations are left. The practice of shifting cultivation and destruction of forests has made the wild animals scarce in the area.

### Fauna

In the yester years it was a wild country rich in its natural wealth of flora and fauna. Tigers, panthers, leopards, bears, wild dogs, jackals, elephants, porcupines, fowls, *Sambars*, deers, wild pigs, wild goats, monkeys, peacocks, pythons, cobras were roaming in its wilderness. Now the fauna is almost

depleted with the forest. However, elephants, leopards, hyenas, bear, deers of various kinds, wild boars, *Sambar*, monkeys, cobras, and python are still found in the forests in small numbers. The wild birds include peacocks, wild fowls and pigeons. Tigers are rarely found now, although occasionally one hears of a stray panther or a leopard, their number and appearance by no means of any consequence. Herds of elephants still cause some damage to the crops and march into the human habitations in search of food.

### **Climate**

The area experiences a mild and moderate climate, with a short and mild summer, moderate monsoon and a long winter. The summer season commences by the beginning of March when temperature begins to rise rapidly. May and June are the hottest months when the temperature rises to 40°C. But in higher ridges the climate is cool and enjoyable. With the onset of monsoon, the climate becomes cool and pleasant. In October, temperature decreases further. The winter lasts from December to February. The monsoon breaks in the month of June and continues till the middle of October. During this period rains are continuous and heavy and nearly 80 per cent of the annual rainfall is received during these months. The annual average rainfall of the project area is about 1400 mm to 1550 mm.

### **Socio-Cultural Profile**

The Juang, one of the Primitive Tribes (PTG) of Odisha, are found in the districts of Keonjhar and Angul. According to Verrier Elwin, a noted ethnographer, the meaning of the term 'Juang' is 'Man'. They claim themselves to be the first humans on the earth, originating at the sacred Gonasika hills as descendants of their legendary ancestors, the *Rusi* couple. The district of Keonjhar in general and Gonasika in particular is said to be their original homeland. The place of their mythical origin is Gonasika, which is also the place of birth of the sacred river Boitarani. In the past, they were being called *Pattoos* for wearing leaves. It is unique that this tribe is found nowhere else in India, except in Odisha State.

The Juang classify themselves into two sections i.e. the *Thaniya* (natives) and the *Bhagudia* (escapists); the former claiming superiority over the latter. The *Thaniyas*, live in their own homeland called Juang *Pirha* located in and around Gonasika hills, while the *Bhagudias* are those who have fled away from their homeland to the Pallahara area of neighbouring district. The migration had largely taken place in the past during the Bhuyan rebellion in 1861.

Linguistically, Juangs are Munda speaking people (Munda being one of the Austro-Asiatic language families) and racially they belong to Proto-Australoid

stock. Now-a-days, as a result of contact with Oriya speaking people, they can speak Oriya. As per 1991 census their total population was 35 665, sex ratio was 1059 and their level of literacy was 14.46 percent. By 2001, their total population has increased to 41339 including 20524 males and 20815 females registering a growth rate of 15.91 percent. Their literacy level has improved to 25.35 percent.

The Juang inhabit a block of hills and forest clad country in south and west of Keonjhar; the hills end in plains of Pallahara to the east and the plains villages of Angul along the southern border. In Keonjhar the Juang are found in four *Pirha* areas (maximal traditional territorial organization) namely, Jharkhand, Sathkhand, Rebena and Kathua.

The Juang of Satkhand and Jharkhand *Pirhas* consider themselves superior to the Juang of the other two *Pirhas*. They state several reasons to account for their superiority. The important reasons are that they live in and around their place of origin i.e. the sacred hill of Gonasika and have retained the originality of their culture whereas the inhabitants of Kathua and Rebena *Pirhas* who are plain dwellers have diluted their originality as they live in close proximity of caste Hindus and other tribal communities.

The Juang live both in small and big villages. The typical Juang settlements in Gonasika region are scattered, hidden inside hills and forests. Some settlements are found in the plains. A unique feature of the Juang settlement pattern is their periodic change of village site in tune with the cyclic rotation of their swidden sites. Each village has a number of habitations sites and the villagers live in one site for a number of years after which they move to another site. Several reasons are attributed to the change of village site, the main reason being the shortage of *toila* (swidden) land around the site, outbreak of epidemic, attack of wild animals and occurrence of frequent death in the village, etc. Now-a-days they live in permanent villages and in the colonies made under the Indira Awas Yojana.

In each and every Juang village, there is the institution of a community center called *majang* or *mandaghar*. It is a rectangular house standing conspicuously in the center of the village serving as a dormitory house for the youth, court house for the traditional council of elders (*barabhai*), guest house for visitors, cooperative store for storage of community fund of grains, place for keeping musical instruments, a venue for communal rituals, cultural center for dance and music and a museum of Juang art and crafts. The *majang* plays a central role in the socio-political and economic life of the Juang.

Another important feature of the Juang society is their traditional youth organization and dormitory associated with the *majang* or *mandaghar*. The unmarried boys and girls become members of this institution. They are a well-organized group that carries out various community services and social and cultural activities for their community. Boys and girls together sing, dance and make merry in moonlit nights in front of *majang*. The educative role of the *majang* is very vital. Here the younger boys and girls learn from their elders the traditional customs and manners and values and norms of their society. The main objective of the youth organization is to perpetuate the tribal solidarity and promote their culture.

The typical Juang villages are compact settlements with the *majang* at the center and the houses of the individual families scattered here and there encircling it. There is no regular street passing through the houses. In front of the *majang*, there is spacious ground where the boys and girls dance with their *changus* (tambourine) and communal festivals, feasts and meetings are held.

The Juang houses are small in size barely having enough space to accommodate a couple and one or two unmarried children. The walls are made of wooden pillars plastered with mud and cow dung. The roof is thatched with wild grass. The cattle are kept in a separate shed built close to the main house. Guests and relatives are accommodated in the *majang*.

The Hill-Juang eke out subsistence pursuing shifting cultivation and collecting minor forest produce. The plains-Juang earn their livelihood by pursuing small-scale settled cultivation and wage earning

Rice is their staple food. The plains Juang who cultivate lowland paddy fields produce more paddy for household consumption than the hill Juangs who has the least chance of getting a bumper paddy harvest from their rocky *toila* fields because, paddy cultivation on the hills always depends on the rains and is exposed to the ravages of wild animals. However, the latter produce varieties of crops like beans, pulses and millets in their swiddens, which are consumed in lieu of rice. Fruits, roots and tubers collected from the jungle, also supplement their diet. The cash crops, such as *rasi* and mustard are exchanged for paddy and *ragi*, which are eaten during the lean season. In summer jackfruits and mango begin to ripe and these are consumed in plenty for a month or two as a substitute for rice. Rainy season is the busiest season of the year for the agricultural operations and in these months the Juang like to eat well. Surplus rice is stored for rainy season. Hunting and fishing are pastimes rather than economic pursuits for them. The



Juang get meat by occasional hunting. Ceremonial hunting is done during *Am-Nua* (new mango eating) and *Pus Puni* festivals. With gradual depletion of forest the sustenance derived from the forest by means of hunting and collection of minor forest produce is declining over period of time.

There is no peculiarity in the dress pattern of the Juang. The men wear *dhoti* and women put on white or coloured *saree*. The school going children wear shirts while other children wear napkins. The Juang put on the same type of dress all the year round. The Juang women take pleasure in adorning their bodies with various kinds of ornaments such as, bangles, anklets, armlets, earrings, nose and toe rings, waist chain made of brass or aluminum and different varieties of bead and coin necklaces bought readymade from the market. Tattooing is preferred by Juang women to enhance their beauty.

Family is the basic social institution of the Juang society. It is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. It is the primary unit of production, distribution and consumption. Basically the Juang have nuclear families consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. After marriage the grown up sons build their separate houses. Transitional extended families having married couple and old parents are also found.

The most remarkable event in the life of the Juang is marriage. There are certain rules and regulations for arranging the matrimony. Firstly, marriage within the same clan (*kili*) is not allowed since clan members are treated as brothers and sisters. Secondly, not only each clan is exogamous, but also each has a number of associated *kutumb* or brother clans among which marriage is not permissible. Thirdly, marriage in either higher or lower generation is considered improper though not strictly prohibited. The fourth factor for finalizing a marriage is to forecast its future sanctity and success by reading omens. More over payment of bride price is customary in all regular types of marriages. The Juang practices the following forms of marriage.

1. Marriage by arrangement, 2. Marriages by capture, 3. Love marriage, 4. Widow remarriage, 5. Marriage by elopement.

Other distinguishing feature of the Juang is their strong kinship organization dividing them into *kutum* (kins), and *bandhu* (affines). As most of the Juang villages have uni-clan composition, village exogamy is the rule.

The Hill-Juang villages of Gonasika area are grouped under four *pirhas* - territorially organized confederation of villages, which had received due recognition

and patronage of the rulers of ex-Keonjhar State. A traditional tribal chief designated as Sardar leads each *pirha*. Each Juang village is an autonomous socio-political unit managed by a set of traditional leaders and a corporate body of village elders called *bhalabhai* or *barabhai*. The village community owns and manages all the productive and useful natural resources like swiddens, forests, grazing land, and habitation sites etc., which lie within their village boundary.

The Juang observe various festivals and rituals throughout the year to worship their deities and ancestors. Their important festivals are *Pus Puni*, *Am Nua Tirtia*, *Asadi*, *Pirha Puja Dhan-Nua* etc. Among these, *Pus Puni*, marking the beginning of the agricultural cycle, is most auspicious and important and they observe it for three days with pomp and ceremony. Dance and music form an integral part of Juang's celebrations. Besides, the boys or girls of one village visit another village on dancing expeditions. Their characteristic *changu* dance continues for two or three days without break. The Juang are fond of dance and music. They have several folk songs, legends and folk tales, which depict their origin, cultural values, day-to-day activities, love and sorrow. The Juang believe that their life is controlled and guided by various deities and deified spirits who live around them in hills, forests, rivers and sky.

The Juangs are socio-economically backward. The Juang *pirha* area of Keonjhar comes under the jurisdiction of Keonjhar I.T.D.A. for the purpose of execution of various development programmers. Besides, one Micro Project named the Juang Development Agency (JDA) having its headquarters at Gonasika, has been functioning with the sole objective of bringing down all-round socio-economic development of the Juangs they have been identified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group of Odisha. The Micro Project has been implementing various income generating and infrastructure development schemes for the tribe giving major thrust on promotion of modern agricultural practices and education, prevention of *podu* cultivation an extension of health care services. The impact of the development interventions has noticeable impact on the way of life of the Juang.

## Bibliography &amp; References

- Bose, N.K. 1928 Marriage and Kinship among the Juangs, *Man in India*, Vol, VIII, pp. 233-42
- 1929 Juang Associations, *Man in India*, Vol. IX, pp.47-53
- 1930 A Juang Ceremony, *Man in India*, Vol. X, pp.178
- Dalton, E.T. 1978 *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta.
- Das, H.C. 1962 The Juang of Dhenkanal and Their Games, *Orissa Historical Research Journal*. Vol.XI, No.2, pp.128-33
- Debi, Binodini 1957 Juang Manankara Maghparab (Oriya), *Adibasi*, Vol. I, No.4, pp.25-27.
- Debi, K.B. 1990 'Juang', *Tribes of Orissa*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, pp.126-31.
- Elwin, V. 1943 Ten Juang Dance Songs, *Man in India*, Vol.23, pp.31-34.
- An Anthology of Marriage Sermons (Juang of Pallahara), *Man in India*, Vol.23, p.109
- 1948 Notes on the Juang. *Man in India* Vol.XXVII, No.1-2, pp.1-146
- Mc Dougal, C.W. 1964 Juang Categories and Joking Relations. *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, Vol, XX, No.4, pp.319-45.
- 1963 The Social Structure of the Hill Juangs: A Précis. *Man India*, Vol.43, No.3, pp.183-90
- Mishra, K.C. 1981-82 Aspects of Juang Folklore, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXI, No.1-4, pp.11-30.
- Mohanty, S.C. 1994 Traditions & Customs of Juangs, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar (to be published)
- Mohanty, S.C. & B.K. Paikaray 2012 *Effects of Deforestation on Tribes of Odisha*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar
- Patnaik, N. 1976 An Integrated Tribal Development Plan, Keonjhar District, Orissa, NICD., Hyderabad.
- 1989 'The Juang', *Popular Series on Tribes-2*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.

Juang

- Patnaik. P. 1964 *Odisar Adibasimbka Madhyare Juang* (Oriya) *Navajivana*, Vol.VIII, No.II. pp. 665-701.
- Pradhan. R.K. 1963-64 Juang, *Adibasi*, Vol.V, No.3, pp.61-64
- Ray, A.K. 1955 Lifeway of the Juang of Keonjhar, Orissa, *Orissa Tribes Research Journal*, Vol. I, No.1, pp.25-28
- Risley, H.H. 1891 *Juang' Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol.1, Calcutta
- Rout, S.P. 1962 Types of Marriage among the Juang of Keonjhar District, Orissa, *Orissa Historical Journal*, Vol. XI, No.3, pp.168-177.
- 1963-64 Dormitory Organisation of the Juang of Keonjhar. *Adibasi*, Vol. V, No.1, pp.37-47.
- 1963-64 Functions of Juang Dormitory in Keonjhar District, *Adibasi*, Vol. V, No.2, pp.29-34.
- 1966-67 Economic Aspects of Juang marriage, *Adibasi*, Vol. VIII, No.3, pp.8-16.
- 1967 Socio-economic implication of Pus Punei Ritual of the Hill Juang of Keonjhar, *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No.2, pp.28-34.
- 1967-68 Folk Songs of the Juang *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No.3, pp.13-19.
- 1969-70 Hand Book on the Juang. *Adibasi*, Vol. XI, No.1-2,
- Sahu, L.N. 1953 'The Juangs' *Modern Review* Vol. 42 and *Vanyajati*, Vol.1, No.2.
- Samuells, E.A. 1856 Note on the Forest Race called Puttoa or Juang Inhabiting Tributary Mahals of Cuttack, *Journal of Asiatic Society*, Bengal, Vol. 25, pp.295-303.
- Smith, A.M. 1914-15 Juang, Primitive Tribe in India. *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol. V, No.4.
- Vyas A.P. 1951 Juangs, *Tribes of India*, part II, New Delhi. Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, p. 175

# LIFE-WAY OF THE JUANGS IN KEONJHAR <sup>1</sup>

Ajit Ray <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

In the following paper an attempt has been made to describe the life-way of Juangs of Keonjhar. The Juangs form one of the most important tribes in the pre-Dravidian, central belt of Orissa. The cultural heritage of the Juang shows certain common elements which inspite of local variations, clearly indicate their historical relationship with the Mundari speaking group of central India.

The Juangs are essentially a hill people and their home is in the high valleys of the hill ranges, the slopes and spurs of the foot-hills and the narrow gorges of the river Baitarani. The Juang country is watered by streams and rivulets that flow off the slopes into the valleys below. It is an area of heavy rainfall ranging round 60" every year. The perennial streams exercise a profound influence on the life and movement of the people inhabiting these lands.

The tribe inhabits the central region of Orissa formed by the districts of Dhenkanal and Keonjhar; they are most numerous in the latter, where they preserve their unique traditions and customs till to-day. The warm and thinly populated valley inhabited by various castes forms one part of Keonjhar, while the surrounding hill-tracts are occupied by the Juangs and the Pauri Bhuiyas. Juangs form a large segment of the tribal population in Keonjhar. They claim that they are the autochthones of Keonjhar and are the direct descendants of the first human beings created by God. They consider the village of Gonasika (21' 30" lat. and 85' 37" E, long.) as the place of their origin.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in the Inaugural Volume of ADIBASI that took birth in the name of "Orissa Tribes Research Journal", Vol.I, No.I, TRB, 1955, pp.25-28.

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar, Odisha

In the process of development of the Juang character, the geo-physical factors must not be ignored, for they are of far-reaching importance. The natural diversity of the country has fostered diversity in customs. The hilly character of the country and its ruggedness present a barrier to the easy social intercourse.

**Population**

From the census figures of the last sixty years, it seems that the Juang population has fluctuated rapidly, especially in recent decades. In order to determine the manner in which the specific biological elements that influence fertility have been, and are acting in the direction of its restriction, Government of Orissa have been carrying out a detailed study of the problem of biological growth and decay of this tribe. The census figures show that their population increased from 1891 to 1911; then there was a sudden fall in 1921 followed by period from 1931 to 1951 when the population grew again; while there seems to have been sudden decrease between 1941 and 1951 as will be relevant from the following tables.

Table I

Years	Population
1951	12,559
1941	17,032
1931	15,024
1921	10,454
1911	12,823
1901	11,159
1891	9,173

Table II

Period	Variations:		Percentage (%)
	Increase (+)	Decrease (-)	
1941-1951	(-) 4473	(-) 26.26	
1931-1941	(+) 2008	(+) 13.36	
1921-1931	(+) 4570	(+) 43.61	
1911-1921	(-) 2369	(-) 18.49	
1901-1911	(+) 1664	(+) 14.91	
1891-1901	(+) 1986	(+) 21.65	

### **People and Personality**

The Juangs as a whole are elusive and morose. They are shy and timid before the strangers. Very few men and women seem to be unaffected by the general unfriendly atmosphere which surrounds them; particularly since the time when shifting cultivation has been restricted severely both by official and non-official agencies. In spite of this, many young people are very amiable, gay, cheerful and light-hearted when they are met alone. Before outsiders, they frequently change their attitude and relapse into sullen moodiness. Within the sphere of his own culture, the Juang observes accurately and acts rationally. But it is only when he is confronted by an entirely different atmosphere, he acts differently. The Juang is simple minded and easily deceived or exploited. Crime is rare among these people.

They are honest simple and very innocent. They cut a poor figure beside the shrewd traders during the barter of goods and services. Though they live in the wild, they are a very in-offensive people, and even friendly people to those who are sympathetic towards them.

The predominating physical characteristics, from the observational point of view, are these. They are medium in stature with long-heads. The cheek bones are prominent and the nose is broad, often with concave depression at the root.

The ridges over the eyebrows are moderate. The hair is black, coarse and wavy with a rich growth on the head, while it is scanty on the rest of the body. The skin colour varies from brown to light black. The shape of the face is oval or pentagonal, but square faces are also found. The eye slit is straight, but sometimes also oblique; the epicanthic fold is however absent. The body build is not so strong but well proportioned.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

The dress of the Juangs is of the simplest kind. Juang women's dress consists only of a Sari (Sari Kate) - a small loin cloth which is woven by local weavers of the Pana caste and bought from bazaars. Women wear saris, which they wrap several times round the hip, throwing one end over the left shoulder. Young girls generally see that the folds cover the breasts, but once a woman has a child she frequently leaves her breasts uncovered, and it seems quite usual for a women to work in the fields or in the hut with nothing but a cloth round the hips. Juang women wrap a very small piece of loin cloth, underneath the sari, as the saris they generally wear are very short and narrow. Juang men generally wear a piece of short loin cloth, but unmarried boys wear long loin cloths during

dancing and other festivals. Boys and girls up to the age of ten invariably wear a thin strip of cloth between the thighs.

The custom of adorning the body with various ornaments is not uncommon among Juangs. Formerly the Juangs made necklaces (Kunti) of earthen beads manufactured by themselves but to-day Juang women adorn themselves with multi-coloured bead and brass necklaces which are purchased in the local bazaars. Young girls wear brass bangles (Thada) on the arm, a number of brass bangles (Kharu) on the wrist, nose rings (Guna), ear-rings (Phirphira) etc.

### **Village and Huts**

The founding of a new village depends upon good water supply and suitability of cultivable land. Juangs shift their village sites from time to time when cultivable land becomes exhausted. The landscape of the Juang village is impressive and charming and has a character and distinction of its own. He prefers a landscape consisting of rolling downs, while here and there the ground rises higher in great masses of rocks. The Juangs choose the village site so skillfully that it merges in the landscape so as to be hardly visible from a short distance away. Juangs also try to give their homes the effect of concealment more inconspicuous by surrounding the village with thick cactus hedges, while the actual entrance to it is carefully concealed from the intruder.

There is no order in a Juang village. The huts climb up and down the hillside in complete confusion and there is no arrangement of regular lanes and by-lanes. The huts face all directions according to convenience, and none of the huts is enclosed with fences, from which it appears that they do not encourage family exclusiveness and independence as among many tribes of Chotanagpur. The *darbar* or village community house is enclosed in the central portion of the village by lowly huts. The Juang village is democratic; it is very difficult to distinguish a rich man's house from one belonging to a poor man.

The hut of the Juangs was described by Dalton in 1866 in the following terms: 'The huts are amongst the smallest that human being ever deliberately constructed as dwellings'. Even to-day Dalton's observation seems to be true. The raw materials for the construction of the hut are gathered from the jungle. The form of the hut is rectangular; its breadth being about two-thirds of its length. There is only one entrance to the hut in the middle of the long wall. The roofs are low sloping both ways thatched with grass. The walls are made of posts or planks, plastered over with mud, both within and without. The plinth is often high and may be with or without a verandah in front. In many cases, two huts



are joined together and the cow-shed, goat-shed etc., are also attached to the hut, but as a separate apartment. The hut is divided into three portions used for sleeping, cooking and stores. In the kitchen portion the oven is situated in one corner and the Juangs believe that the ancestor spirits have their seat in that place. The store is a raised platform where paddy, rice, millets, maize, clothes and utensils are stored. The middle portion of the hut is also used for grinding, husking grains, clearing rice and millet and also for making mats. With the transition to plough cultivation among them, domestic animals like cattle have recently gained importance and have become virtually a necessity for the Juangs. Not the least important among the Juangs' domestic animals is the fowl. In nearly all religious rites and ceremonies the sacrifice of chicken is indispensable and there is no deity to whom chickens are not acceptable. Though eggs are sometimes eaten, they are never offered to the gods. The Juang also keeps pigs and goats and they say that they prefer pork to any other meat. Pigs are not sacrificed, but goats are sometimes needed for that purpose.

### **Land and Cultivation**

The Juangs are agricultural people, but their dependence on nature's wild produce is still very great. Food gathering occupies a very prominent place in their economy.

No private ownership in forest and land suitable for shifting cultivation is recognised by the Juangs. Amicable settlement is the keynote of the distribution of cultivable land in Juang community. The village communities communally own tracts of land, the boundaries of which are usually marked by prominent trees. The members of the community who enjoy common ownership of the tract generally live in a common settlement. In some of the villages where wet cultivation is permanent, privately owned field exists side by side with shifting cultivation and the individualistic trend seems to be on the increase with the spread of wet cultivation.

Besides ploughs, the main agricultural implements used by the Juangs are hoes, which are again of two types with or without an iron point. This is used for digging up roots and tubers.

The Juang life-way is inextricably bound up with shifting cultivation, which is carried out in a very crude manner. About the end of January when the undergrowth and creepers begin to wither and the jungle is dry and brittle, the Juangs select a hill-slope for cultivation and start felling the trees, sparing only the big trees which are used as stalks for creepers like the beans etc.

Between February and March there is practically no rainfall in the Juang country, when the felled trees which have been cut down, dry up. These are set on fire in about the second week of April. Then they deliberately kill the big trees which were left standing by heaping combustible materials round them. After the first firing, half burnt branches are collected in heaps and reduced to ashes which are raked and distributed over the soil. The preparation of the cultivable land begun in January is completed by the first week of May, but sowing has to wait until the first showers of the monsoon moisten the parched earth.

In the first year of cultivation, they sow oil seeds and pulses while in the second year, rice and millets of various kinds are sown in the same land. Juangs cultivate a field according to their needs for one, two and three successive years. When the fertility begins to fall, then they abandon the field and proceed to a new hills-lope.

The felling of the trees is men's work while the brushwood is cleared by women. Men, women and children work together in tidying up and burning the jungle.

# DORMITORY ORGANIZATION OF THE JUANG OF KEONJHAR <sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

Dormitory is one of the oldest institutions in Tribal Societies which exercised considerable influence in the formation of the character of tribal people. The dormitories have prolific functions of social, economic, religious, political and educative importance for their members. But unfortunately under present circumstances this valuable institution is gradually vanishing out from various tribal societies. The impact of modern culture, the growing effect of industrialization and the influence of the missionaries have created conditions leading to the decay of the dormitory system. Such influences have brought about considerable changes in the traditional patterns of tribal life. Dormitories in many tribal societies are either vanishing out or are getting thoroughly changed. In this crucial situation it is necessary for the anthropologists to study various dormitory organizations in tribal society.

The present article on the dormitory organization of the Juang, is based on the data collected during a year's stay in two Jung villages – Baruda and Phulbadi of Keonjhar District.

## **Majang, the Dormitory House of the Juang**

Juangs, one of the most primitive tribes of Orissa have the dormitory organization of their own. Their dormitory house is called *Majang*. The *Majang* is usually bigger in size than the ordinary houses and is situated at the centre of the village. It is constructed by the unmarried boys known as *Kangerki* who sleep here at night. The unmarried girls (called *Selanki*) plaster it in every two or three days. Inside the *Majang* are kept the drums, the *changus* and food grains of the village common fund. A fire is kept burning day and night at the centre of the *Majang* and the boys sleep encircling it.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.1, 1963-64, pp.37-47

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, TRB, Bhubaneswar

They sleep on mats of date-leaves woven by girls and wave a wooden structure as their pillow. While sleeping they keep their feet towards the fire and their heads to the direction of the *Majang* walls.

### **Factors determining the admission into the Dormitory**

The factor of age determines that the members of certain specific age categories are permitted to be or are formally admitted into the dormitory as its members. Generally the dormitory is the organization of the unmarried youths and one ceases to be its member after his / her marriage. The term unmarried, as used in this context includes the persons of both young and old age, and hence the bachelors and the spinsters are also considered to be the formal members of the Juang dormitory.

Marriage, as described earlier, militates against both sex and age categories in dormitory house, but the cases of the widows or the widowers furnish an exception to the standard norm. The widowers always sleep in the *Majang* with the unmarried boys, and one or two widows always sleep with the *Selanki*. Infact, the widowers (generally old persons who have no inclination to marry again) and the widows (old enough so that there is least chance of them getting remarried to somebody) are considered as *Kangerki* and *Selanki* respectively in an informal way. Besides sleeping with the unmarried youths they also co-operate and take active part in the group activities of the youths.

Sex and age are the two important factors for *Majang* organization, but these are not the only factors determining whether or not one is to be considered a formal member of the *Majang*. In this connection it may be mentioned that the membership is not compulsory. A person of proper age and sex may not necessarily have to be the member of dormitory. The factor of wealth fosters the usual trend and acts as an important determinant. A person desirous of becoming a member of *Majang* should have enough money and crops to contribute to the common fund of the *Kangerki* and should be able to afford the cost for undergoing the initiation ceremony marking off his membership in the dormitory.

An unmarried boy of twenty years in Phulbadi was found to be not recognized as a formal member of the *Majang* due to three reasons, i.e., for his poverty in contributing money and grains to the common fund of the *Kangerki* and for undergoing the initiation ceremony to be a *Kanger*; for his incapability to beat *Changu* (circular drum) with the *Kangerki*; and for not sleeping in the *Majang* with other unmarried boys. Since he is not considered to be a member of the *Majang* he is debarred from enjoying the powers and privileges of the formal members of the dormitory.

### Admission into the Majang

Membership to the dormitory is not casual in Juang society. It is always accompanied by 'rites-de-passage'. The term *Kanger* is a general term to mean the unmarried boys of marriageable age. But to be considered as a formal member of the dormitory, i.e., to be a full-fledged *Kanger*, a boy should undergo an initiation ceremony on *Am Nua* (the ritual for first mango-eating).

*Am Nua* is observed in the month of February-March when mango fruits are ceremonially offered to the village deities and ancestors before the first eating by the villagers. The *Kangerki* play special roles in this ritual. They worship their *changu* and drums and offer shares of chicken and rice piles to *changu* gods. On this day fresh candidates are admitted into the *Majang*. A new candidate contributes some rice and a chicken for the ritual. The old members of the *Majang* cook food near the stream. The new candidate offers shares of cooked rice to the ancestors in a kneeling posture keeping one of his legs on a pole spread horizontally over two forked pillars of 4 to 5 feet high. The elderly members throw hot water at his pelvis and private parts and the boy has to face the ordeal boldly without complain. A torn piece of mat is tied around his head and a bell hung at his waist. He runs around the *Majang* seven times with other members of the *Majang* accompanied by a small boy beating *changu* with a stick in front. While the boys keep running around the *Majang* the older people shout loudly and throw ashes at them from inside the *Majang*. After this that the boy is formally admitted into the dormitory and becomes a full-fledged *Kanger*.

The significance of tying a mat around the head of the new *Kanger* is not known, but tying bell signifies some use. It rings when the boy runs and by hearing the sound the villagers come to know about his admission into the dormitory. Running seven times around the common house signifies that his life is formally attached to the association and the activities concerning the dormitory.

### *Rites-de-passage for Girls to be Selanki*

Every Juang girl, after attaining her puberty is called a "Selan" but before becoming a full-fledged *Selan* she cannot take part in some of the activities of the formal *Selanki*. For example, she cannot make gift to *Bandhu* boys and cannot get a share of the gift which the *Bandhu Kangerki* makes to the village *Selanki*. She also cannot accompany the *Selanki* when they pay formal dancing visits to their *Bandhu* villages. No big ritual is performed for a girl to step in to the status of a formal *Selan*. When a girl wants to be a *Selan* she asks the older *Selanki* and they give a share of the gift of their *Bandhu Kangerki* to her. It is after eating this, that a girl assumes the status of a formal *Selan*.

### Age-Grades in Juang Society

The life of a Juang is based on a nine fold age-grade classification. According to this the males and females are divided into nine classes. The distinctive paraphernalia and privileges of each group will be discussed afterwards.

**Table – I**  
**Age Grades in Juang Society**  
 (A) *Age Grades for Juang Males*

Sl. No	Age Grades	Approximate Age	Residence	Remarks
1.	<i>Wadi</i> (Child)	Up to 8 years	At home with parents	...
2.	<i>Sana Kanger</i>	8 - 15 years	At <i>Majang</i> , or at home	...
3.	" <i>Kanger</i> " (unmarried boy)	15 years till marriage	At <i>Majang</i>	Not a formal <i>Kanger</i>
4.	<i>Kanger</i>	-do-	-do-	Undergone initiation ceremony
5.	<i>Kamathara Kanger</i> (married man)	After marriage till old-age	At home with wife	Continues to be a formal member of the <i>Majang</i> till he gives a chicken and rice to <i>Kangerki</i> on <i>Amb-Nua</i>
6.	<i>Burha or Bauntae</i> (Old man)	After 50 Yrs	-do-	...
7.	<i>Widower</i>	After the death of wife	At <i>Majang</i>	...
9.	Bachelor	...	-do-	...

(B) *Age Grades for Juang Females*

1.	<i>Wadi</i> (Child)	Up to 8 years	At home with parents	...
2.	<i>Tokiali Selan</i> or <i>Kaniari Selan</i>	8 to 13 years	With girls or widows	...
3.	" <i>Selan</i> "	After puberty till marriage	-do-	Not a formal <i>Selan</i>
4.	<i>Selan</i>	-do-	-do-	Admitted as a formal

				member after certain observances.
5.	<i>Guruta Selan</i> (married lady)	After marriage	At home with husband	Before sleeping with her husband must offer cakes, tobacco, and mat to her village dormitory members
6.	Burhi (old lady)	After marriage in old age	-do-	...
7.	<i>Kamanda Rae</i> (wife of a Kamanda)	-do-	-do-	After the husband becomes a <i>Kamanda</i> and assumes an office
8.	<i>Ala bok dae</i> (widow)	After the death of the husband	In her house alone or with girls	...
9.	Spinster	...	-do-	...

The discrepancy between the biological and social age groups is bridged up within the framework of youth organization. The social norm does not favour an ordinary person to joke with anybody who stands in adjacent generation to him or her, but the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* of own, alternate, and adjacent generations are allowed to joke with each other within their own group. This is because, in broad sense, all the *Kangerki* are considered as brothers and all *Selanki* as sisters to each other.

#### Formal observations for distinguishing between the unmarried and married:

After marriages, a *Kanger* automatically steps into the status of a Kamathara Kanger but he continues to work and co-operate with the *Kangerki* till he can afford to get himself detached from the *Kangerki* through a special observance. Right after the marriage the groom does not sleep with his wife. A new house is built for him and on the consummation day of the marriage he has to take farewell from the *Kangerki* by giving them cakes, tobacco, and a mat.

After this formal observance the boy is permitted to sleep with his wife, but he still continues to be a regular member of the boy's dormitory and fulfils most of the obligations of his association group. When he wants to resign from the group of the *Kangerki* he gives one *pai* or more rice and a chicken to the other *Kangerki* on the *Am Nua* ritual day. It is after this only that he ceases to be a working member of the youth's group.

Similar is the situation for a girl to get herself detached from the membership of the youth organization. After her marriage and before starting to sleep with her husband she comes to visit the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* of her village. She brings cakes, tobacco and a new mat for them.

**The Role System:**

Every age group is entrusted with special roles and responsibilities under the preview of the dormitory and youth organization. The roles of certain specific are groups as directly concerned with the dormitory life would be discussed here. The boys and girls of *Majang* choose a sponsor of their own known as *Tandakar* who acts as their guardian and moral advisor. The role of the *Tandakar* is also described in this connection. The following table summarizes the duties of such age groups.

**Duties of Various Age Groups in Juang Youth Organization**

I.	<i>Kangerki</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bringing firewood for the <i>Majang</i> fire</li> <li>2. Thatching and repairing of <i>Majang</i> and construction of new <i>Majang</i> in case of changing village sites.</li> <li>3. Installing stone emblem for <i>Gram Siri</i> in a new village.</li> <li>4. Making <i>changu</i> and drums.</li> <li>5. Contribution of goats, pigs, or sheep on major village rituals.</li> <li>6. Cooking for <i>Kamandaki</i> on ritual days.</li> <li>7. Collecting rice and other food stuffs from every house for guests and visitors and for feeding <i>Bandhu</i> girls on their dancing visits.</li> <li>8. Help cooking and fetching water in feasts and marriages.</li> <li>9. Beating <i>Changu</i> over night on ritual days.</li> <li>10. Obeying <i>Tandakar</i> and the village elders.</li> <li>11. Getting hired as a communal working party by <i>Tandakar</i> or by other villagers.</li> <li>12. Bringing firewood to the house of the groom or bride on the occasion of marriage, and for <i>Tandakar</i> and village officers on major festive occasions.</li> <li>13. Helping outsiders to carry their bags and baggage to the next nearest village.</li> </ol>
2.	<i>Selanki</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plastering <i>Majang</i> and sweeping the plaza in every three or four days and positively on ritual occasions.</li> </ol>



		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Supplying leaf cups and plates on feasts, and festivals, and for guests and visitors. Grinding spices on above occasions.</li> <li>3. Husking paddy of the common fund of the village.</li> <li>4. Grinding cakes on certain village rituals.</li> <li>5. Getting hired as a working party.</li> <li>6. Dancing overnight on ritual and festive days.</li> <li>7. Obeying the <i>Tandakar</i>, the widows, and the village elders.</li> </ol>
3.	<i>Widows and spinsters sleeping with the girls.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking care of the girls and keeping an eye as to what they do.</li> <li>2. Decide and select the village to which the girls should go on dancing visit.</li> <li>3. Accompany the girls in their dancing trips.</li> <li>4. Help in courtship between the girls and <i>Bandhu</i> boys.</li> <li>5. Carry the gifts the girls send to their <i>Bandhu Kangerki</i> and bring the information back from the latter.</li> </ol>
4.	<i>Widowers and bachelors</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keeping an eye on the activities of the <i>Kangerki</i> and helping them in co-operative works.</li> </ol>
5.	<i>Sana Kangerki and Tokiali Selanki</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fagging for the senior members and helping them in doing menial works and running errands.</li> </ol>
6.	<i>Tandakar</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking care of the <i>Kangerki</i> and <i>Selanki</i> and helping them in their need by lending money, rice and other things.</li> <li>2. Can hire the boys and girls to work on his field.</li> <li>3. Should watch and see that the boys and girls do not violate any norm of the society or neglect in discharging their duties.</li> <li>4. Can punish them for neglecting in their duty.</li> <li>5. Must be consulted before anybody hires the boys and girls as a working party.</li> <li>6. Should give cooked rice to the boys and girls on major festive occasions, and should slaughter a goat or sheep for them when he retires from his office of <i>Tandakar</i>.</li> </ol>

Failing to do the duty, as prescribed by the norms of the society, is considered as a deviation for which the offenders must be punished by the village elders. The punishment may be of four kinds.

1. Expulsion from the *Majang*.
2. Physical punishment like standing on one leg, holding the ears, putting the second finger in excreta etc., in minor offences, and beating in case of adultery and incest.
3. Fines – of money, liquor, goat and rice.
4. Verbal scolding and caution not to repeat the work again.

Both the girls and the boys are punished for failing to discharge their duties properly. The boys are generally punished for not bringing firewood to the *Majang* and for not obeying the village elders. Similarly the girls are found fault with if they do not plaster the *Majang* and sweep the plaza regularly. It first attracts the attention of the village elders when the boys or girls are found irregular in performing their duties. They first accuse the *Tandakar* for not supervising the work of the *Kangerki* and *Selanki*. Sometimes he is fined one or two rupees for the fault of the boys or girls. Then the blame falls on the actual offenders. One of the main features of the Juang youth organization is the collective responsibility of its members. Negligence of one's duties or failure to carry out any assigned task in case of one member of the dormitory results in punishment for the whole group. Its members are fined and they have to give rice (generally one to two *Khandi*), a goat or a pig and about two to five rupees for liquor to the village elders. They collect these things from their own houses or borrow from somebody to be repaid by working on the creditor's field. The stuffs collected by fines are used for holding a feast in the village.

#### **Remuneration for the Different Age Groups**

I have mentioned earlier that every age group has its powers and privileges affiliated with its rights and responsibilities. In other words, each responsibility is rewarded in the formal structure of the society. Each status enforces certain duties and the rewards motivate the duties to be translated into action. The privileges and the remuneration of the various age groups associated with the dormitory organization are described briefly.

##### **A. *Kangerki* and *Selanki***

- (i) During marriage the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* always associate with the groom's party (no special rites are observed in bride's village since the bride is taken to the groom's village for marriage). They bring fire-wood and the *Selanki* brings leaves to the groom's house. During the marriage period they are given food to eat by the groom's parents.

- (ii) A major portion of the bride wealth which the groom's party gives to the bride's villagers goes formally to the *Kangerki* and the *Selanki* of the bride's village, though the amount, in fact, is shared by all the villagers. Two *khandi* of paddy and two *khandi* of rice (out of the total amount of seven *khandi* of paddy and six *khandi* of rice) are given for the cost of the turmeric and oil for the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* (*Kanger Selan Ojan Sasang*).
- (iii) For giving constant company to the bride and the groom in groom's village, the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* get a special share of rice (about ten *pai* or a *khandi*) and a goat or a chicken. The *Kangerki* and *Selanki* cook it and distribute among themselves.
- (iv) After marriage the bride and the groom make a ceremonial visit to the bride's village with the bride wealth. The *Kangerki* and *Selanki* of the groom's village also go with the bride and the groom. During their stay they are fed by the bride's parents.
- (v) On major ritual days the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* bring fire-wood and leaves to the *Tandakar* and they are fed by him.
- (vi) The day the *Tandakar* is selected by the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* he gives one share of cooked rice and meat curry to the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* of the village. Similarly when a *Tandakar* resigns from his office he provides cooked rice and meat curry to the *Kangerki* and *Selanki*.
- (vii) The same is the situation when a man becomes a *Kamanda* then office by virtue of which he can take active role in rituals of the village) he gives a special share of cooked rice and meat curry to the *Kangerki* and *Selanki*.
- (viii) On every ritual occasion the *Kamandaki* get the head meat of the slaughtered animals which no other married people except them can eat. This meat and the rice grains used in the rituals are cooked in the *Majang* by the *Kangerki*. Both the *Kamandaki* and the *Kangerki* eat this food.
- (ix) Lastly, the *Kangerki* and *Selanki*, when hired as a working party by anybody are given rice and goat which they cook and eat in the field on any convenient day.

### ***B. Tandakar***

- (i) It has already been pointed out that on major ritual or festive occasions the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* are given a meal by the *Tandakar*. On the

above occasions the Tandakar is supplied with fire-wood and leaves by the *Kangerki* and *Selanki*.

- (ii). When the *Selanki* and the *Kangerki* of a village get gifts from their *Bandhu Kangerki* or *Selanki* they give a share of their gift to the *Tandakar*.
- (iii). The Tandakar has the right to ask the *Selanki* and *Kangerki* of his village to work on his field even though he cannot pay them anything for their labour.

### ***C. The Widows and the Widowers***

They do not get any remuneration from the village. Only those widows and widowers who associate more with the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* are given share of the gift the latter receive from their *Bandhu* friends. The social, economic, and other group activities of the married boys and girls concerning the *Majang*, and the various functions of *Majang* are to be discussed in a subsequent paper. All these would be able to give a complete picture of the life entered around the dormitory in Juang Society.

# FUNCTIONS OF JUANG DORMITORY IN KEONJHAR DISTRICT <sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

My previous article on “Dormitory Organization of the Juang of Keonjhar” deals with such aspect like the age-grade structure of the male and female population, factors determining admission into the dormitory, rites for becoming formal members of the dormitory, role and responsibilities of these members and rewards privileges enjoyed by each age group. This paper describes the functional aspect of the dormitory. Here I have discussed about the organized group activities of the dormitory members. Organized behavior as manifested in communal and group endeavour is a special feature in the tribal societies and is in full swing in the dormitory life of the Juangs. It is interesting and important to observe how such group activities are organized and how these are translated into action. Co-operation of the group members and their common interests find full expression in two situations, i.e. dancing visits exchanged between *Bandhu* boys and girls and their common economic pursuits like cultivating common patches of forest land, working as hired labour parties for wages, collecting oil-seeds from the jungle, etc.

## Dancing Expeditions

In Juang *pirh*, most of the Juang villages are strictly uni-clan villages. Marriages are strictly forbidden in one's own village and in villages which are related as *Kutumb*. Marriages are only performed between *Bandhu* villages. All these rules also apply to the dancing organization of the boys and the girls. Dancing visits are exchanged only between *Bandhu* villages. If the *Kangerki* (unmarried boys) develop special love and liking for the *Selanki* (unmarried

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V. No. 2, 1963-64, pp.29-34.

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, TRB, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

girls) of a particular *Bandhu* village, they make gifts of fried rice, ribbon for buns, combs, etc. to the girls and invite them to pay a visit to their village. In order to convey their eagerness for *changu* dance, the boys might tie the gifts in a piece of cloth and leave the cloth with the girls telling them to return the cloth on their trip to boys' village. Sometimes, they also appeal for the girls consent in a joking manner by saying- "if you do not come to our village, then let your own brothers marry you". While making gifts the boys' party and the girls' party try to flatter each other. The boys identify themselves as "the sons of untouchables" and address the girls as "the daughters of kings". The girls also answer in the similar manner describing themselves as inferior to the boys. The girls distribute the gifts of their *Bandhu Kangerki* among themselves and give a small share to the *Kangerki* of their own village. When the boys distribute the gifts of their *Bandhu* girls they also give a small share to their village girls (*Selanki*).

Before making a dancing trip, the *Selanki* collect rice or paddy from their houses and prepare cakes to take for *the Bandhu Kangerki*. They also take tobacco and liquor with the cakes as gifts and reach the boys' village with some widows and old ladies of the village. They take shelter in anybody's house but generally the house of a close relative is preferred. The girls call the *Bandhu* boys to this place and ask about their health and happiness. The boys always give funny replies to attract the girls- saying that "some of them were sick". "Some had broken their legs on their way back home from the forest. Some could not walk for crushing their feet with an axe while chopping firewood" etc. The boys also ask about the health of the girls and the girls reply in the usual funny manner. The girls give cakes, tobacco and other gifts they brought for the boys and say jokingly that the boys might not like the things brought by the "untouchable girls".

During their stay in the boys' village, the girls and their party members are fed by the *Kangerki* and the village elders. Both the villagers and the *Kangerki* equally share the burden of feeding the girls party. The *Kangerki* provide rice, *dal*, etc. for the girls' meals from their common fund, if they have any stock, otherwise they collect such things from their own houses or bring on loans from the well-to-do families. The villagers also collect their share in similar fashion.

Food is cooked by the villagers on the plaza outside the *Majang* at night and inside the *Majang* under shade during the day. It is sent to the girls in leaf cups, prepared by the *Selanki* of the boys' villages.

*Changu* dance goes on day and night, but it is more free at night. At night the village elders retire from the *Majang* and go to sleep in their own house. A strong competitive spirit develops between the boys' and girls' parties and each party tries to defeat the other. The boys try to beat *changu* overnight and challenge the girls to dance. They beat *changu* in alternate groups. The girls also split into two groups and dance intermittently. If the girls try to flee away to sleep and the boys drag them and force them to dance. Likewise, the girls do not let the boys fall asleep and try to keep them alert by pouring water on them. It is really painful for the boys to get themselves drenched by the girls in cold winter nights.

During the dance, both parties try to display fun to each other. The girls kick and step on the foot of the boys while dancing. They also throw black dyes, mud water and turmeric water at the boys and the boys throw the same things back at the girls. Juang girls never sing in *changu* dance. The boys get full scope to display their joke towards the *Bandhu Selanki* during *changu* beats, and the girls cannot reply to it except by kicking, pulling *changu* from their hands and throwing ash and water at them. The singing competition between the boys and the girls takes place when each party sings and answers to each other on their way back home from market places, fairs, or while working together in the field. Each party sings in chorus to the other and both exchange joking answers through singing. They sing so sweetly and work so smoothly that they forget to go back home and eat their noon meals.

At the dead of the night when all the villagers fall asleep, the boys take the girls to a secluded place for massaging. The girls are coaxed and are lured to go for massaging. The boys tell the girls "Let us go to the forest to collect tooth twigs" (this is a figurative expression of massaging). The girls reply jokingly, "We do not know how to search for tooth twigs". The boys say, "Come, we will teach you". On certain occasions, the *Selanki* of the boys' village insist the *Bandhu Selanki* to massage their brothers. The boys get themselves massaged in a group seating close to each other or may pair off with one girl each to different places, but in no case they sit wide apart from each other. While getting massaged a boy may fondle the breasts of the girl but the joking behavior does not lead to actual sexual indulgence.

On the parting day, the girls are entertained with a meat meal. A goat, a pig, or a sheep is slaughtered for them and shares of cooked rice and meat curry are given to the girls both for their meals and for carrying one share with them to eat on their way home. They are also given *rasi*, *saru*, *mandia*, maize, jackfruits and other seasonal crops. The boys' go up to certain distance to see the girls off.

On the way the girls massage the boys and the boys decorate their buns with wild flowers.

### **Common Economic Pursuits**

The formal members of the dormitory i.e. the *Kangerki* and the *Selanki* have to present gifts to their *Bandhu* partners. Besides, they have to provide food for their *Bandhu* friends on the occasion of the latter's visit on dancing expeditions. Such being the collective responsibilities of all the members of the dormitory, they all work collectively to enrich their common stock of paddy and other things for meeting such expenses. Thus the boys and the girls cut one or two patches of forest every year and raise various crops like paddy and *rasi*. In the months of June and July, the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* collect *bangrur* (oil-seeds) from the jungle. *Rasi* and *bangrur* are either sold for money or exchanged for paddy and rice. Money is used for buying gifts for *Bandhu* friends; and rice, *dal*, etc. are used for feeding them.

The *Kangerki* and *Selanki* also go to work as hired labour parties. They cut trees for others, weed their fields, help them in harvesting crops and bring wages which are used for common purposes.

### **Functions of the Majang**

The *Majang* institution of the Juang has manifold functions for people of all age groups. The *Majang* has its social, economic, political and magico-religious uses for the Juang. Some of these uses are described here.

1. The *Majang* provides sleeping accommodation for the unmarried youth, for the widowers and for the guests and relatives. Outsiders coming to anybody's house become personal guests of the person concerned and are fed by the latter. Those coming to the village become the guests of the village and it becomes the duty of the villagers to feed them. Whatever they eat, the guests and outsiders always sleep in the *Majang* at night.
2. *Majang* is common meeting ground where the village elders gather for sometime after the day's toil to gossip and relax before retiring to sleep. They talk and amuse sitting around the sacred fire of the *Majang* which is kept lighted day and night. Similarly early in the morning, before the cock crows and before the sun appears in the distance horizon, the Juangs leave their bed. The women folk go to fetch water, husk paddy and do other domestic works, whereas the men come to the *Majang* to meet with each other, to talk and get warm by the *Majang* fire.



Important matters affecting the village life are also discussed in the *Majang* before any decision is carried out. For example, matters like the selection of days for village rituals, decision for changing the village site, selection for traditional offices of the village, giving away brides to the *Bandhus* in marriage or proposal for bringing a bride from another village etc. are first discussed in the *Majang* and all members are free to express their opinions.

3. The educative role the *Majang* plays in forming the life of the Juang youth is very significant. Each married *Juang* couple has one house to sleep and as soon as their children are grown up they are sent to the *Majang* to sleep and are thus kept away from witnessing the sexual act of their parents. After becoming members of the *Majang* and after associating with its senior members they are trained to direct their energies for successful adjustment with other people in social, economic, religious and other spheres of life. The process of socialization also progresses through the senior-junior relationship of the *Majang* members. The junior members of the *Majang* run errands and fag for the senior members and are taught how to obey their superiors.

While sleeping together the *Kangreki* learn various *changu* rhythms and new songs from each other and from the older persons (widowers). The *Sana Kangerki* practice beating *changu* by joining in the groups of the *Kangerki* when the latter beat *changu*. The folk-tales and myths of tribal origin are also learnt while sleeping in the *Majang*.

4. Life in the *Majang* provides an effective economic organization for the Juang youth. The *Kangerki* and *Selanki* cultivate one or two patches of *toila* land every year and the yield is stored for common use. The boys cut down trees, plough the field, sow seed and harvest the crops; while the *Selanki* help in hoeing, burning the dried trees and branches, debushing, weeding and cutting the harvest.
5. *Majang* serves as a court-house of the village where the quarrels and conflicts are mitigated. The villagers gather around the *Majang* fire and discuss about the quarrels and other important issues to bring out compromise. In case of major offences the culprit is fined and has to pay rice, goat and money for liquor to the village elders. Otherwise, he might be asked to give one or two rupees for liquor. The liquor is poured by the village elders to consummate the quarrels and conflicts. Both the intra and inter-village quarrels involving the Juang exclusively or both the Juang and non-Juang are also settled in the *Majang* in this manner.

6. *Majang* act as a storehouse or “Grain-golla” of the village, where paddy and other crops are kept stored by the villagers for the guests and relatives. After harvest 2 to 5 *pai* of paddy is collected from each family of the village and stored in the *Majang* for feeding the guests. The boys and girls also store their stock of paddy and other grains in the *Majang*.
7. *Majang* is a sacred institution. The drums and *changus* are hung on the *Majang* walls and the god and the goddess for *changus* and drums (known as *Bhima Badama* and *Kanchuni*, respectively) are believed to reside inside the *Majang*. For this the girls are directed to plaster the *Majang* frequently. Before going out to perform any ritual, the *Nagam* (village priest) and other rituals officers first come to the *Majang*. On the occasion of *Ama Nua* the *Kangerki* worship *changus* and drums invoking *Bhima Badama* and *Kanchuni*. Many other rituals are also performed inside the *Majang* or in front of it i.e. on the plaza. The distribution of seeds for first sowing is made in the *Majang* where the *Nagam* distributes paddy to each family for sowing.
8. The genuine artistic talents of the Juang find expression in the construction of their *Majang*. *Majang* may be called the museum of *Juang* art and decoration. Its pillars and beams are carved with drawings of birds, beasts and graphic human figures. Moreover, the *Majang* walls are decorated with painting on the *Amba Nua* ritual day.
9. *Majang* may be used as the kitchen on feasting occasions. Meals are cooked for the visitors inside the *Majang* in the day time and near the plaza at night. On every ritual day the *Kamandaki* cook their food with the offered materials inside the *Majang*.
10. The last but not the least function of the *Majang* is of recreational nature. It provides fun and pleasure to the boys and girls who are tired after the day's toil and want to enjoy the sweetness of life by beating *changu* and joining dancing. At times, they find it so enjoyable that they keep dancing and beating *changu* going on over days and nights.

### **Modern Changes in the Majang Organization**

The important function of the *Majang* institution are breaking down and are gradually vanishing out due to contact of the tribals with the non-tribal people. So it is important to notice the effects of the modern culture on the *Majang* organization and the subsequent changes brought about. Juangs of the plains villages come in contact with the caste Hindus more closely than the

Juang living on hills. As such they have developed a feeling of hatred towards the *changu* dance. In some villages, the youths have *Ramalila* parties. They are taught dance and songs by an Oriya teacher and exhibit their performances in the neighbouring villages for collecting money and grains.

Another form of hatred is developed towards their traditional dress and ornaments. Some literate Juangs feel that their ladies and girls should not wear beads and bangles of the traditional variety. They should on the other hand, wear light ornaments, use hair tonics and soaps and should wear fine and long saris which should be washed frequently with soap.

Absence of organized labour and communal economic pursuits on co-operative basis in plains village is really shocking. The members of the dormitory are hardly associating themselves with the affairs of the *Majang*. They prefer to mind their own business than taking pains for communal efforts. As such they do not cultivate patches of forest land of their own for a common harvest or go to work in a labour party to earn wages in cash or kind which could be used for meeting the expenses relating to the dormitory organization.

For such reasons it is now necessary for the anthropologists to study the youth organization of various tribes, so that steps may be taken to preserve the good points of such an institution.

# THE JUANG YOUTH DORMITORY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL OUTLINE <sup>1</sup>

T. Patnaik <sup>2</sup>  
B.B. Mohanty <sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

The Juang are a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) confined only to the State of Orissa. The tribe belongs to Proto-Australoid racial stock. They can broadly be divided into two sections i.e. the Hill Juang and the Plain Juang. The Hill Juang inhabit the hill ranges of Keonjhar and Pallahara whereas, the Plain Juang are distributed in the plains of Dhenkanal (former undivided) and Keonjhar districts. The Hill Juang still practice the primitive technology of agriculture i.e. shifting cultivation. But the plains Juang have adopted settled agriculture.

They classify themselves into two groups, such as, the Thantias (Hill Juang) and the Bhagudias (Plains Juang). The Thantias are those who live in their own habitat called Juang Pirh located in Gonasika hills and the Bhagudias who have fled away from the homeland.

Elwin (1948) opines that the word 'Juang' means simply 'Man' as per the Juang dialect. Their neighbours call them as *Pattua* meaning the wearer of leaves. This dress pattern has been abandoned since long.

The Juang have a language of their own known as Juang, which forms a part of North Mundari Group. They have no script of their own, but the language is still alive and spoken. However, as result of contact with Oriya speaking people, they have become bilingual and speak both Oriya and their own mother tongue.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXIV, No. 1& 2, 2004, pp.41-55

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The total population of Juang was 35,665 of which 17,320 were males and 18,345 were females as per 1991 census. Among the Juang 14.46 per cent of the total population were literate. The literacy percentage among males was 25.57 % and females, only 4.13 % (1991 Census).

The Juang villages are mostly homogenous, generally located at the foot of the hills or in the valleys surrounded by forests. Some settlements are also situated in the plains. Each village presents a scene of scattered houses. Frequent change of village site is a unique feature of Juang settlement pattern.

There is nothing peculiar in their dress pattern. They dress like the neighbouring castes. The women adorn their body with varieties of ornaments and multi-coloured bead necklaces. Besides, the women also practice tattooing in their foreheads and arms.

In Juang society family is mostly nuclear. Their system of clan organization seems complex. According to Elwin (1948) the Juang word for sept is *bok*. Bose (1928) writes it as *bok* and Risley (1891) as *ba*. They are divided into a number of clans, which are patrilineal and strongly totemistic. Risley (1891), who listed twenty-four clan groups have given an elaborate list of clans. Bose (1928) has given two lists of clan names, one for Pallahara area and the other for Dhenkanal area while Elwin (1948) has found four such lists.

They follow both village exogamy and clan exogamy. Formerly the Juang villages were uni-clan in nature and according to the clan names the villages were named. Due to immigration, now the compositions of villages have become multi-clan. Therefore, at present, marriage within the village is neither forbidden nor considered improper. For matrimonial purposes, the villages are divided into *Bandhu* villages and *Kutumb* villages and every Juang villages has few Bandhu villages and some Kutumb Villages.

### Study Area

The field study was conducted in the Banspal Block of Keonjhar district. For this purpose six villages namely Gonasika, Guptaganga, Baitarani, Kadalibadi, Jantri and Talabali belonging to Gonasika and Barhagada G.Ps were covered. Table I shows distribution of Juang households, population and different clan groups in the study villages.

The following table reveals that in all the six study villages the total number of Juang households is 316 with a total population of 1451. While the villages such as Baitarani and Jantri are multi-clan in composition, the other four villages are uni-clan in nature.

**Table-I**  
**Village-wise distribution of Households, Population and Clan Groups**

Sl. No	Name of the village	No of households	Population			Name of the Clan
			Male	Female	Total	
1.	Gonasika	60	146	135	281	Tambarambok
2.	Guptaganga	52	122	129	251	Barumbok
3.	Baitarani	39	74	99	173	Kalari, Gungibok, Kumbakalia.
4.	Kadalibadi	36	97	97	194	Samnabok
5.	Jantri	97	207	205	412	Barumbok, Gungibok, Saibok
6.	Talabali	32	74	66	140	Baliali
	<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>1451</b>	

## The Dormitory

### Structure and Function

The dormitory institution of the Juang represents one of the traditional aspects of their culture and is central to all their activities relating to social, economic and cultural spheres. The institution plays a very significant role in guiding the youths to maintain social solidarity and loyalty to their customs and traditions. A brief account of the structure and function of the dormitory institution is discussed below.

The dormitory of the Juang is mono sexual and is meant for the unmarried boys only. The girls do not have their separate dormitory house. Their activities are associated with bachelor's dormitory that presents an extended form dormitory system. The institution is formerly known as *Majang* and now as Darbar or Mandaghar. The unmarried boys who are the members of the dormitory and sleep there at night are known by the name of *Kangerki*. The unmarried girls are called as *Selanki*. The group of *Kangerki* and *Selanki* called themselves as *Bida* or *Manda*. In the past, there was spinsters' dormitory known as *Dhangiri basa* or *Selaninja*. Today, this has been totally disintegrated. Now, they sleep on some of the widows' house in groups.

### Origin

About the origin of the dormitory institution, the Juang have their own myths as described by Elwin (1948). It is linked with the Juang mythology that

traces their origin from *Rusi* and *Rusini*. The story tells that *Rusi* and his wife *Rusini* and their twelve sons and twelve daughters were dressed in leaves. As they grew up, *Rusi* thought it indecent to sleep with the grown up children in one house. So, he built a separate house for the children. But it is so happened that frequently the children came crying to their parents at late night. This disturbed the parents' sleep and to overcome this problem *Rusi* made a plan. He thought of making a musical instrument called *changu* and invented the dance. He taught the children this new game. The children at every night started to dance till they were exhausted and then they fell asleep quietly in their dormitory house. From that day onwards, the institution of the dormitory came into existence. The above myth implies that the dormitory house was instituted to prevent grown up children from sharing the same room with their parents and to prevent them from witnessing the physical intimacy of their parents.

According to a second view, the dormitory is originated perhaps to serve the purpose of a rest house for the visitors in the village and to form the organization of the younger generation to work as village work force. Besides, as the Juang society is based on age grades, there was need for special clubs for the younger people and the unmarried boys.

### **Location**

The dormitory house is located at the center of the village. It is the largest and the most prominent house in the village. Whenever a village is to be shifted, this house must be built first with the Guardian deity ritually installed followed by the Priest, Headman and so on. It signifies the importance of the dormitory house in the Juang social life.

### **Shape and Size**

The dormitory house is invariably bigger in size than the ordinary Houses. It is open all along one side with a high verandah. This open side extends in the form of a slightly raised verandah with a deeply over hanging thatched roof to prevent the entry of rain water. The roof is supported by carved posts. At the central point of the house, there is an intensively carved wooden pillar, representing the deity of the community house. The wooden beams of the roof are also carved with elephants, animals, hunting and dancing scenes of male and female figures. These are now in the most of the villages replaced by simple pillars and beams. Out of the six study villages, carved beams and pillars are found only in Guptaganga. In rest of the villages, the dormitory institution is constructed either by Govt. Agencies (JDA) or by Private Agencies and the traditional structure of the dormitory house is no more in existence. The walls

are mud plastered and are built on a framework of wooden posts. The interior of the house are decorated here and there with moulded and painted symbols of animals and human figures. The hunting scene symbolizes male virility and female figures indicate fertility. The wall paintings are also in the process of degeneration and only drawn on the occasion of Am Nua festival. There was a time when the dormitory was a sort of museum of their art and crafts.

In front of the dormitory house, there is an open space set aside for dancing on occasions of rituals and visits of the young people from *bandhu* villages. On one side of the open space, there is a sacred tree - *katha champa* or temple flower tree accompanied by the village Guardian deity (Gramsiri). Several long pointed stones standing upright beside the tree represent the deity.

Construction and maintenance of the Majang is a co-operative work. Each house collects constructions materials from the forest. The jobs are assigned according to age, capability and experiences on the basis of division of labour along the sex line. Young and able men bring the construction materials from the forest and do the thatching and young women prepare the mud-mixture and plaster the walls and the floor.

### **Interior Decoration**

Near the centre of the floor of the dormitory house, the sacred fire known as *Rusi Dhuni* is kept burning all the time. There is no hearth but several smoldering logs are kept burning. This sacred fire is used to burn the felled trees and dried bushes when the burning operation starts in the swiddens. At present, the fire sometimes is allowed to go out, to be rekindled when required due to shortage of wood and restriction imposed on the use of forest.

On the walls of the dormitory house at several points are fixed stags of antlers, which are male symbolism and from these *changu* drums are hanged. These are large tambourine shaped sacred drums. Other musical instruments that are kept inside the house are *Badakatha*, *Dhola* and *Madal*. The *Badakatha* is a big wooden drum, one side of which is covered with goats' hide and the other with cows' hide stretched and tied tightly to the body with leather strips. This is so big that two persons carry it on their shoulder while the third man plays it with sticks. Both *Badakatha* and *Dhola* are used when ritual dances are performed. Of the six study villages, the *Badakatha* is found only in the dormitory house of the Guptaganga village. *Changu* is the most important musical instrument of the Juang. It is a circular wooden frame, on one side covered with goats' skin. The dormitory boys play it with fingers while the girls



dance singing songs. *Changu* is regarded sacred as *Bhima* and *Kanchuni* - the husband and wife deities dwell in it.

On wooden platform across the back of the dormitory house, grain bins are stored which are of two kinds, one containing the last seasons store of seeds or millets, pulses or paddy to be shared out in the coming year for sowing and the other, a large globe shaped basket containing community fund of grains supplied by every household and the penalty grains to be spent for entertaining the village guests. The latter stocks are also used to provide loans to villagers in their time of need to be returned at the next harvest with fifty per cent interest. At present, a separate room attached to the dormitory house is constructed for storage of food grains and utensils for communal feast. In the past, the money lenders' records were kept written on the walls of the dormitory house. But now the educated youths keep the records in the form of written documents in this house.

### Composition and Membership Rules

The dormitory institution is meant for all unmarried boys and widowers. When parents send their eight-year old sons to sleep in the Mandaghar, they are admitted as formal junior members. Though, they are eligible to participate in the task required of a *Kanger*, still they remain subject to the authority of their own family heads. They are admitted to full membership of the Mandaghar only after attaining adolescence / puberty followed by an initiation ceremony. The celebration takes place in three phases, the 1<sup>st</sup> one during the first mango eating (*Am Nua*) ceremony, in which the whole village and ritual heads are involved. In the second phase ritual, elders assisted by the senior young men perform worship of the *changu* drums in the Mandaghar. The final ritual involves only the young men. A feast is arranged; the young men cook rice and a goat or chicken head and serve these to the new comers who henceforth, become the full-fledged members (*Kanger*) of Majang. A girl after attaining puberty is called *Selan*. But only after becoming a full-fledged *Selan*, she can enjoy same status with the formal *Selanki* like, she can make gift to *Bandhu* boys and get a share of the gifts which the *Bandhu Kangerki* give to the village *Selanki*. She also can accompany dance groups and visit the *Bandhu* villages. There is no specific ritual observed for a girl to become a *Selan*. When a *Selan* wants to be a full-fledged member, her friend *Selanki* offers her a share of their gifts from the *Bandhu* boys and then she becomes a member. There is a taboo for admission of a girl to the extended dormitory system where her brother is member. Similarly a boy is not allowed to be a member in case his sister is a member. However, only after one gets married and

ceases to be a member, his/her sibling can be a member. A few case studies regarding dormitory membership are given below.

### Case Studies

- 1 'G' Juang, son of K. Juang of village Kadalibadi is 18 years old. He is not admitted to the Majang as a formal member since his sister 'R' Juang, 21 years old is a full *Selan*.
- 2 'P' Juang daughter of 'S' Juang of Kadalibadi is 19 years old. She has not been a member of the dormitory as her brother 'M' Juang, 21 years old is a member.
- 3 'S' Juang, (25 yrs), son of 'B' Juang of Kadalibadi being a regular member of the dormitory, his two sisters 'R' (22) and 'H' (19) could not be admitted as members.

It is not customary to give dormitory names to *Kangerki* and *Selanki*; they are addressed by their original names. A divorcee/ widower is allowed to sleep in the dormitory. The *Kangerki* sleep in a circle on mats woven by the spinsters with feet pointing towards the fire.

### Status of Members

The *Kangerki* enjoy certain status similar in many ways to that enjoyed by the ritual heads. For example, to eat the meat from the head of the sacrificed animals is a taboo for all other males except the ritual elders. But the *Kangreki* are exceptional as they are allowed to eat it. Moreover, after death, an unmarried youth from the deceased persons' mothers' village is called to perform certain rites in purificatory ceremony, a practice normally carried out by the ritual heads. According to Nayak and Others (1993), "the identical treatments of the two groups attribute to the fact that neither of the two are engaged in the procreation of children where as rest of the males in the village are so engaged". Moreover according to them, "this means that, from the Juang view point, an inactive sexual life increases ones' ritual status where as an active one increases ones secular status" (ibid: 48). A young man who is not a dormitory member is neither allowed to beat the *changu* nor can he/ she take part in a dancing expedition. The girl who is not a member cannot accompany the group to market places. Moreover, among other facilities enjoyed by the formal members is that during the marriage occasion of a young boy who is not a dormitory member the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* refuse to provide necessary services like, providing leaf plates, fetching water, preparing food for the feast, making dances and accompanying the bride and the bridegroom. In fact, they boycott the marriage function and to overcome such problem the concerned young man has

to pay the *jury* (penalty), which includes a goat, rice, liquor and some amount of money fixed by the elders' council to the dormitory members. Then only they participate in the marriage ceremony. A case study is given below;

**Case Study:**

'S' Juang, son of 'P' Juang, 28 years old belongs to village Gonasika. He is a graduate and working as a member of the Jilla Parishad. He has never been admitted to the dormitory as formal member. So at the time of his marriage, the youths of the village did not agree to participate. The meeting of the elders' council was convened and the *jury* amount was fixed at 30 Kgs of rice, a goat, two bottles of liquor and rupees one hundred. 'S' Juang paid the above amount and then only the youths' and villagers participated in his marriage ceremony.

**Classification of Dormitory Members, their ascribed roles and privileges:**

The Juang social life is based on age grade classification. Rout (1963-64) gives a nine fold classification of age group. Each one is entrusted with special roles and responsibilities prescribed under the purview of the Majang. Both the boys and girls select one among them known as Tandakar to be their guardian, supervisor and moral guide.

Important roles and responsibilities of some of the functionaries who are directly concerned with Majang are as follows;

**I. Kangerki:**

- Construction of new Majang in case of change of village site, thatching and repairing, collecting firewood for the Majang fire.
- Installing stone emblem in the new village site, making the sacred *changu* and drums.
- Taking active part in important village rituals by collecting goats, pigs for cooking in the village feast.
- Collecting food stuffs from each and every house for entertainment of guests.
- Helping in marriage ceremonies and death rites like, bringing firewood, performing customary rituals with the bride and bridegroom.
- Beating *changu* throughout days and nights on ritual days and during visits of Bandhu girls.
- Assisting Tandakar and the village elders in providing hospitalities to visitors/ outsiders, storing common grains and providing service as communal working party.

2. **Selanki:**

- Plastering the Majang and sweeping the dancing ground on every three or four days and on ritual occasions.
- Making leaf-cups and plates for festive occasions and community feasts.
- Husking of community paddy.
- Preparing cakes on certain village rituals.
- Dancing overnight on festivals and ritual functions.
- Providing service as a communal working party.
- Obeying the Tandakar and village elders.

3. **Widows and Spinsters (sleeping with girls):**

- Watching the activities of the girls and taking care of them.
- Selecting the Bandhu villages for dance visits.
- Accompanying girls in dancing troops and while visiting weekly markets.
- Helping in making courtship between the girls and the boys of Bandhu Villages.
- Acting as representatives by carrying gifts sent by the girls to their Bandhu boys and bringing the information back.

4. **Widowers and Bachelors:**

- Keeping an eye on the activities of young boys.
- Providing leadership to youths in cooperative works.

5. **Junior Kangerki and Junior Selanki:**

- Assisting senior Kangerki and Selanki in running errands and in other activities whenever they need.

6. **Tandakar:**

- Helping the Kangerki and Selanki whenever they are in need by lending money, rice and other items.
- Keeping an eye over them that they do not violate the Juang norms or neglect their duties and punishing them for their negligence of duties.
- Taking decision on requests for rendering services by the Kangerki and Selanki on hired basis as a communal working party.
- Providing a goat for the feast when he retires from the office of the Tandakar.

In case of disobedience to perform the prescribed duties the village elders punish the offenders. The punishment includes both physical assault and fine in cash and kind. This may include expulsion from the Majang, physical punishment like rebuke and standing in humiliating posture outside the dormitory, fines in the shape of rice, goat, liquor and money and warning. For any fault, the Kangreki or Selanki shift the responsibility to the Tandakar for his faulty supervision and sometimes he is fined first with some money and then, the real offender is punished. Until the full payment of fine followed by a formal ritual is completed, all the members are neither permitted to enter the dormitory nor enjoy the privileges. During this period, old men and women of the village opt to perform the youth's duties in the dormitory. Thus, collective responsibility is one of the main features of the Juang youth organization. For negligence in duty by anyone of the members, all the members of the organization are liable to be punished. They either collect the fine from their own houses or borrow it from somebody to repay him back by working on the creditor's field. The fine collected from them is used for holding a community feast.

Moreover, the system is so well organized that along with the responsibilities and duties assigned to the respective age groups, privileges and powers are also provided to them as remuneration for proper discharge of their duties. Each responsibility is rewarded in the formal structure of the society. A brief note on such rewards is given below;

**Kangerki and Selanki:**

- In lieu of their services during the marriage ceremonies the groom's villagers feed them.
- They get a portion of the bride price for their expenses towards the cost of turmeric and oil.
- They get a special share for providing company to the bride and the groom.
- During the feast organized for death rituals, the Selanki, that supply leaf-plates get special share of rice used for preparing cakes.

**Dancing Groups:**

As mentioned earlier, traditionally the Juang villages being uniclans, they follow the rule of village exogamy. As such marriage within one's own village is forbidden on the ground that such relationship may be incestuous. For matrimonial purposes the villages are grouped into Kutumb and Bandhu villages. This kinship pattern has been developed over centuries. From the Bandhu villages partners are chosen and these rules are also applied to the dancing groups

of the dormitory boys and girls. The young people know these relationships from their very early childhood.

The youths of both sexes meet at marriage or funeral ceremonies and in market places where they talk and get acquainted with each other and exchange gifts. After such few meetings the Kangerki invite Selanki to visit their village for dance. This is known as *labab*. Sometimes, gifts like fried rice, soap, hair clips, ribbon, bead necklaces etc. tied in towels are given to the visiting Bandhu Selanki. On the other hand, the girls according to their convenience, in groups, accompanied by one or two elder widows go to the Bandhu villages. Generally, they visit the villages during the occasions of Dola Purnima and Baruni festivals or in lean agricultural season. They take cakes prepared from rice, liquor, tobacco, *bidi*, etc. as gifts for the Kangerki.

The Selanki during such visits sleep with the others Selanki of the village. During the stay the Kangerki and the village elders feed the visiting party. The villagers cooperate fully with Kangerki of their village in preparing food for the visitors. The cooking is done in the community house with grains brought from the common fund and equal contributions from each family. The visit of dancing groups cost much for the village. The expenditure involved during such a visit is described below.

**Case Study:**

A group of 30 Selanki belonging to villages Panasi, Buddhakhaman, Tala Pansanasa, Masinajodi, Khajuribani came to village Talabali during the Baruni festival held in the month of April last year. They stayed there for 4 days and the expenditure incurred during this period was as follows;

Rice	3 Khandi (60 Kg approx)
Goat	2 nos. @ about Rs. 500-600 per goat
Chicken	4 nos.
Other items.	Rs. 250

In the last year, the Kangerki had collected from different sources about six Khandi (120 Kg) of rice. They met the other expenditure from their respective common funds. A group of 15 Kangreki of same Talabali village during the last years Dola festival visited Telkoi, Budhakhaman, Panasi, Pansanasa and Khajuribani. They had spent approximately rupees fifteen hundred for purchase of gifts and other items. To arrange the amount, they have to collect Rs. 50/- per head.

Thus, the visit of dancing groups involves much cost. During such visits, *changu* dance is performed day and night continuously for three to four days. A competitive spirit develops between them and each group tries to defeat the

other. The boys beat *changu* in alternative groups and the girls also split into two groups and dance intermittently amidst much fun and joking.

They follow clan exogamy strictly. If a young woman is found to be pregnant by a young man belonging to *bandhu* clan both of them are allowed to marry. But clan incest is treated as a server social offence. Some related case studies given below.

#### **Case Study:**

'S' Juang, aged 35 years; daughter of 'J' Juang, village Kadalibadi was pregnant before marriage. The culprit was 'M' Juang 25 years old, son of 'B' Juang belonging to the same village. He is the nephew of the girl. The tribal council was convened. The council fined 'M' Juang with a goat, 30 Kgs of rice and rupees fifty. Later the girl gave birth to a male child that died soon after the delivery. Then after a long waiting 'S' Juang got married at the age of forty to a widower from the village Baitarani having two children from his first wife. It is customary in the Juang social life that a woman of such type will never get an unmarried youth for marriage. Bride price for such type of secondary marriage is also very nominal which includes one or two bottles of liquor and some money.

#### **Leaving the Dormitory (Sanga Chhada):**

The dormitory membership continues till marriage. After marriage, they automatically cease to be members of the dormitory. But widows and widowers are exception to the standard norm. The widowers always sleep in the dormitory with unmarried youths and widows sleeps with unmarried girls. Those widowers / widows having no scope for their remarriage are fully considered as Kangerki/Selanki as the case may be in a formal way. They also take active part in the group activities of the youths.

Though after marriage, a Kangerki automatically ceases to be a member of the dormitory, he still continues to work and associate himself with the dormitory activities until he affords to perform a special ceremony. As a customary practice, immediately after the marriage groom does not sleep with his wife until a new house is built for the couple. On the consummation day of the marriage, the boy gives cakes, tobacco and a mat to his dormitory members and takes farewell from them. This occasion is known as *sanga chhada*.

This again does not mean final termination of his membership. It takes place only after the Kanger pays some money i.e. approximately 20 rupees to 25, few *pai* of rice and chicken to other Kangreki on the day of Am Nua festival.

A similar procedure is followed for a Selan who after marriage and before sleeping with her husband visits the dormitory friends of her own village. She offers them cakes, tobacco and a new mat and takes farewell from them to enter into a full-fledged married life.

**Dormitory Fund:**

The dormitory youths are allotted with one or two patches of forest land by the elders' council for communal cultivation. The produces from the land are kept in the dormitory fund. Besides, they earn additional money from collection of forest produces like *sal* seeds, *char* seeds etc., from wage earning and working as hired labour. A major portion of their earning they save communally to be utilized for purchase of gifts, entertainment of dancing groups and payment of fines. At present, they choose two or more youths from among them to remain in charge of the common fund. They keep the accounts of income and expenditure and make it known to others in a meeting. The community grains are given as loan to the villagers and the interest they get adds to their common fund.

**Function:**

The community house of the Juang influences their socio cultural life in many ways. To quote Nayak and others, "The multifaceted significance of the community house in the Juang life needs to be observed, appreciated and understood, for it provides the key to all that has formed and held the Juangs together as a people down the centuries. It is similarly the means through which they continue to adapt to pressures around them with no loss of identity but rather with a wider use of their cultural gifts and an understanding of what constitutes true community life. The community house is the center of involvement for all age groups of the Juangs especially the males, in the social, economic, political, religious, educational and aesthetic areas of their life". Its functions are described below:

**Socio-Religious Functions:**

- The community house acts as a community center for the youths.
- It is a meeting place for the elders where they gather both in the morning and evening to discuss local affairs. It also serves as an informal leisure center for the males.
- It functions as the center for planning and co-ordination of each and every collective activities of the community.



- It acts as the court house of the village elders where feuds are settled and often justice administered informally.
- It also acts as a communication center for all messengers that bring news from the Juang villages.
- It's most important function is to provide sleeping accommodation to the youths, bachelors and widowers.
- It is used as a storehouse of the communal properties and a place for keeping common accounts.
- It is a museum of their art and craft with all its carved structures on the pillars, paintings on the walls and the musical instruments stored.
- It is the starting point for the ritual occasions, in each and every religious ceremony organized by the community like taking the sacred fire to kindle the first bush wood for shifting cultivation.
- It is a sacred center as the deities connected with the musical instruments particularly *changu* are supposed to reside in the community house.
- It is also used as a rest house for the guest and visitors.

#### **Educative Functions:**

- The community house acts as the educational institution for both the sexes. It acts directly in educating the boys and indirectly the girls about fulfillment of responsibilities required by them.
- The junior members are trained by the senior to direct their energy to adjust with the people in social, economic, religious and other aspects of life. Thus it is through the senior-junior relationship, the process of socialization takes place.
- Each and every member of the community house has to fulfill the requirement and obligations of their age set, failing which they are subjected to punishments. These obligations make them disciplined and responsible persons of the society in future.
- Further, by association with the senior members, the juniors also learn to become a part of the village economic and social system.

Thus, the community house trains the young generation to grow conscious of their community and its need before marriage and enable them to become responsible adults. These children though spend more time with their new age group mates than with the family; the two areas responsibilities never clash and are recognized by all.

Above all, in course of the dormitory life, they learn from elders about their traditional art and craft such as wood carving, painting, different types of

traditional dance and song and preparation of musical instrument. They are also acquainted with their cultural heritage through folk tales, riddles, stories, myths etc. by hearing from the elders. It is no doubt that the dormitory house serves the purpose of perpetuating the culture heritage from generation to generation and helps in the process of socialization.

**Other functions:**

Various Non Govt. and Govt. agencies working in the area are also found utilizing the institution for different development works. In the Mandaghar of nine villages like Saria, Kaptadiha, Barahagada etc. *chatsalis* for the Juang children run by the JDA are functioning.

Similarly under the DPEP Programme, training to the teachers working in the Juang area are given at the Mandaghar in six villages like Talabali, Budhighar etc. as their own centers are under construction.

Moreover, Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched a scheme of 'Village Grain Bank' in 13 States. Under this programme, it is proposed to open such grain bank in twenty Juang villages in Bansapal block and these are to be functioned in the Mandaghar of concerned villages.

**Persistence and Change:**

The dormitory organization is in the process of disintegration due to the impact of both internal and external forces. Change in the attitude of younger generation to follow their own traditional customs and practices, opening of the area with more and more outside contact and development intervention by Government and NGOs etc. have induced changes in their living style. The dormitory has already disappeared in Dhenkanal and is in the process of decay in Pallahara and Keonjhar. Some of such changes are highlighted below. The community houses are no more a museum of the Juang art and culture. In many villages, the traditional Majang houses with its wooden pillars and beams richly engraved with beautiful animal and human figures have been replaced by simple houses with cemented walls.

Customs like burning of the sacred fire day and night throughout the year in Mandaghar is not strictly followed. Now a days, it is extinguished to be rekindled whenever required.

Changu dances, one of the characteristic features of Juang aesthetic life are losing its importance. Changu dance competitions are rarely held in the villages. The youths have now started playing modern games like playing cards etc.

Now a days, the traditional songs associated with their cultural activities are not sung more often in leisure time by the maidens. Rather colloquial Oriya songs like Ramalila song, Raja Doli song and even Oriya film songs are getting popular among them.

Religion that forms the hard core of their culture seems to be undergoing changes. Many Hindu deities have entered the dormitory house.

Disciplined life which is hallmark of their dormitory life has been disturbed to a large extent. The youths have developed dislike to learn the techniques of their traditional art and craft, music, dance etc. from their elders.

Besides the above changes, in the Juang Tribal Council held at Telkoi in the year 2001, it was unanimously agreed to stop payment of bride price and the custom of marriage by capture. Further, it was decided to restrict the visit of dancing groups as it involves much cost, waste of time and work.

The Juang youth dormitory organization is now under the process of decay under the onslaught of modern civilization. Therefore, time has come now to give serious thought for revival and strengthening of this age old traditional institution for its effective utilization in the development process.

#### References:

1. Bose, N.K 1928 Marriage and Kinship among the Juangs, *Man in India*, Vol. VII, Ranchi.
2. Colonel, Dalton 1872 *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Bengal Secretariat Press.
3. Dougal, Mc.W 1963 The Social Structure of the Hill Juangs; A Precise, *Man in India*, Vol. 23, Ranchi.
4. Elwin, Verrier 1968 *The Kingdom of the Young*, Abridged from The Muria and their Ghotul, Oxford Univ. Press.  
1948 Notes on the Juang, *Man in India*, Vol. XXVIII, Nos.I-2
5. Hasnain, Nadeem 1990-91 *Youth Dormitory*, Tribal India Today, Harnam Pub. 4378/4B, New Delhi, pp.63-66
6. Mazumdar, D.N. 1994 *Races and Cultures of India*, Universal Pubs Ltd. Mall Road, Lucknow, U.P. pp.124-136.

Juang

7. Nayak, P.K. 1989 *Blood, Women and Territory- An analysis of clan feuds of Dongria Konds*, Reliance Publishing House, P.45.
8. Nayak, R. 1990 *The Kondhs, A Handbook for Development*, Indian Social Institute, 10 Industrial Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi, pp.38-42.
- Barbara, M. Boal & N. Soreng
9. Nayak, R and Others 1993 *The Juang's: A Hand Book for Development*, Indian Social Institute.
10. Patnaik, N and P.S. Das Patnaik 1982 *The Kondh of Orissa*, Tribal and Harijan Research-Cum-Training Institute (THRTI), Bhubaneswar. P.102.
11. Patnaik, N 1989 *The Juangs*, Popular Series on Tribes-2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
12. Pradhan, R.K 1963-64 Juang, *Adibasi* Vol.-V, No. 1-2, TRB, Bhubaneswar.
13. Ray. A.K. 1958 *Life way of Juang of Keonjhar, Orissa*, Tribal Research Institute
14. Roy, S.C. 1935 Dormitories of Bachelors, The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa, *Man in India Office*, Ranchi, pp189-192
15. Risely, H.H. 1891 *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I. Calcutta.
16. Rout, S.P. 1969-70 Handbook on the Juang, *Adbasi* Vol. XI, No,1 & 2, TRB. Bhubaneswar
17. Upali, Aparajita 1994 *Culture and Development, Dongrias of Niyamgiri*, Inter India Pub, pp. 206-208.

# ROLE OF KINSHIP IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF JUANGS OF KEONJHAR DISTRICT, ODISHA <sup>1</sup>

Jagannath Dash <sup>2</sup>

The Juangs are mainly confined to the Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts of Odisha. Whereas in Dhenkanal district the Juangs are found to be acculturated due to constant culture contact, in the district of Keonjhar they are still found with their traditional culture. The Juangs of Keonjhar district therefore, attract a special attention for the more conventional studies like kinship in the field of social anthropology. The aspects of kinship which has been delineated in this paper, is mostly collected in Gonasika and Janghira areas of Keonjhar district for the study of Juangs in the hills and plains areas respectively. The present paper is mainly based on the one-month field work which was conducted in the year 1975 for the partial fulfillment of the M.Sc. degree in Anthropology.

The institution of kinship is based on the descent and marriage. By birth one primarily becomes a kin member of the family, i.e., he acquires a fixed place among his primary kins. Thus the kin relation extends to the secondary, tertiary degrees both in the paternal side as well as the maternal side. In this way one belongs to all sorts of descent groups like clan, lineage, local descent groups etc. By descent he is attached to all his consanguine or blood relatives and by marriage, he is equally related to all his affine. Within this kinship network he is tied to all his kin members by which his social life is regulated or promoted. Through the kinship tie he is related to his kinsmen surrounding him in the society. The Juangs of Keonjhar are no exception to it. It is the kinship that

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, 1988, pp.22-28

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

plays a vital role in satisfying their basic needs. From the childhood days, up to the death, all members of the society, maintain their social relationships in economic, political, juridical and ritual fields as a corporate unit. Here in this context within the homogeneous society of the Juangs, as it is already discussed, kinship as a mechanism for social integrity plays many a role in different fields of their social life, which are as follows:

**(a) Kinship as a Mechanism for Stable Economic Co-operation:**

Ideally each Juang village consists of the members of one clan or *khili* that forms a local descent group. Thus all the members of the village or local descent group functions as a corporate unit for satisfying their basic economic needs. Each village is confined to its traditionally demarcated territory beyond which the villagers cannot possess any land for cultivation. Now-a-days, in the changing Juang villages, however, members of different *khilis* or clans are found. Still, different clan members perfectly maintain the norms and rules of their respective local descent groups and function like a corporate-units, contradicting which, the membership is annulled.

Mainly Juangs satisfy their major economic needs through shifting cultivation. They meet their sustenance, livelihood from it. Shifting cultivation in the hilly areas requires a collective or co-operative labour for clearing the bushes, grasses, burning of the trees, sowing of seeds, watching the crop and harvesting, etc.

In this manner traditionally the local descent group was a corporate land-owning group and land was given to each member by the common decision. As per the ideal pattern for each and every member, the whole descent group had to labour for clearing the jungle and preparing the land for cultivation. Then all other activities like sowing of seeds, watching the crop, harvesting, etc. were to be performed by the concerned household members. But now in the plains areas, even after owning wet-lands, they are still performing shifting cultivation as well as other agricultural works as a corporate unit as in the traditional order.

Now, after facing many changes in the socio-cultural aspects, the Juangs try to keep their economic co-operation intact with the kinship. They are given wet-land by the Government, which has changed their traditional way of shifting cultivation to some extent. Unlike for the shifting cultivation, they require oxen, ploughing implements, better seeds etc for such wet-land cultivation works.

Therefore, poor Juangs establish ritual kinship with the members of the other caste of endogamous groups, in order to get help in agricultural works. So for all these informal requirements or relationships, a formal ritual kinship is vital according to their notion. Besides the field of ritual kinship, now-a-days becoming land owning members, Juangs also try to adopt polygyny to have more hands to work for larger production. However, with all these changes, shifting cultivation is given no less importance.

Establishment of ritual kinship is not the only source of getting help in agricultural work. One's own affines and consanguines are also given priority in such co-operation based activity. When one is in need, he may get help from his affines. His father-in-laws or wife's brothers may come forward to co-operate with him. Generally during harvesting time, all such co-operation occurs. I have come across a number of such cases where affines, usually come to help their 'Bandhu' or son-in-laws.

In shifting cultivation as well as other agricultural works, kinship does not differentiate the members according to their sex. All females are equally co-operative like males. When the males cut the trees or burn them, the females with sickles clean the grasses to prepare the field for cultivation. They also take part in harvesting works. During the leisure time, females supplement their family economy by preparing sitting-mats out of date-palm leaves and collecting forest products like gums, oil-seeds, *sa*/leaves and fire-wood etc.

When the members of the local descent group face any disorder in the economic stability or they require to adopt something new into their traditional economic system, they solve or meet it by the common decision finalized through a conference, comprising the elders of the local descent group. The immigrants from other local descent groups are given residence and membership in their descent group by the common decision of the village in the presence of the village head or Ardhan. They are given ownership over a land for shifting cultivation from the village territory by the decision of all the members of the local descent group, and if they misuse it, they are deprived of the land in the similar process.

The Juangs, by the kinship network, are so co-operative for the fulfillment of economic needs that, they as a single endogamous unit observe certain rituals in this concern. They strictly observe 'Amba Nuakhia', 'Dhana Nuakhia' rituals. After the harvest of the paddy is completed, nobody is allowed to take new rice before 'Nuakhia' ceremony is over. They believe that if someone breaks this rule,

then he will be eaten by the tiger. In case somebody breaks this rule, the village elder members decide it in the 'Majang' and he is punished to pay some rice as fine. Similarly new greens and mangoes of the year are taken after a ceremony.

In other occasions like marriages when a poor person requires some economic assistance for the payment of bride price or ceremonial feast, his kin members come forward (affines or consanguines) to help him. The invited affines as well as consanguines, coming to the marriage, bring with them rice, goat or hen as presentation in order to help him. Likewise in death or birth pollutions the kin members also help the concerned person by supplying rice or other types of commodities.

**(b) Kinship ensures smooth observance of rituals and ceremonies for strengthening the interrelationship among the kins.**

Many a rituals and ceremonies are performed by the Juangs in their life cycle. In the hilly non-irrigated areas, poor Juangs have to work hard throughout the year to meet their basic needs. Amidst all these hardship and toil of the year, they enjoy their life in their own way to the fullest extent mainly through various rituals and ceremonies observed with the help of their kins. All these ceremonies, from the birth to death as well as the seasonal festivals namely Nuakhia, Ashadhi, Pus Punei, Gamha Punei etc. are observed colorfully with ecstasy.

*Birth*—Birth always brings joyousness among the kin members. But at the same time it brings in pollution to the kin members of the minimal lineage group. The pollution is followed up to the seventh day of the birth. Mother's brother and father usually visit the new born-baby and in some way help the couple with rice etc. Similarly father's sister also comes to help. Till the completion of the seventh day the concerned members do not touch other members outside their minimal lineage and are forbidden to take fish or meat etc. On the seventh day 'Mamu' (maternal uncle) comes and the members of the concerned minimal lineage replace their old earthen pots by new ones and become purified. It is called 'Uthiari'. On the same day the ancestors are offered with 'Juri' or drinks. It is also offered to 'Dharam Debta' and 'Basukimata' (the Supreme Deities).

On the twenty first day the baby is given the name which is generally given by 'Mamu' or father's sister. But now-a-days the 'Dhais' are suggesting names for the babies.



*Death* – Like birth, death also ensures pollution among the members of the lineage group. The dead body or 'Gaja' is taken to the burial ground with the help of the Bandhu or Kutumb members of the village. The matri-lateral kins and also father's sisters are informed after the funeral pyre is over. However, the kin members of one's own local descent group come forward first to help for the funeral ceremony. There are also some restrictions regarding the carrying of a corpse by the kins.

After 'Gaja' (corpse) is burnt or buried, purificatory ceremony or 'Sudha' ritual is performed. There is no fixed day for the purificatory ceremony. Generally, after the death, both the lateral kins and other affines are informed and as soon as the kins come, the 'Sudha' ritual is performed. Thus it takes place after two or three days or five days at the maximum. Till the end of the Sudha ceremony, the carriers of the 'Gaja' or corpse as well as the concerned family members do not take non-vegetarian food or oil and usually sleep in the Majang (village community center). They do not touch other members. Purification is solely performed by the maternal uncle or 'Mamu'.

The kin members comprising the collaterals and members of the minimal lineage group help the concerned persons of the dead person's family by bringing with them rice, goat, hen etc. After the purificatory ceremony is over the members of the minimal lineage wash their clothes, wash the Majang and home with cow-dung and replace the old earthen pots by new ones.

*Marriage*—Marriage is an institution that establishes a kinship between two groups, one as the bride-giving group and the other as the bride-receiving group. In this way it promotes the affinal kinship relation.

In the Juang marriage ceremony, it is the groom's party, who bears all the expenditures towards marriage for bride-price, ceremonial feast, etc. But bride's party is less concerned about such expenditures. All the bride's villagers accompany her to the groom's place and enjoy the feast there. Therefore the burden of duty and expenditure is more for the groom's father. Generally they invite kinsmen who come to the groom's marriage and donate him some amount of rice, goat or hen as presentations. Generally 'Mamu' brings more amount of gift. Besides all these the groom also gets help from his patrilineal kins within the lineage.

In the marriage ceremony the members of the local descent group such as Kangers and Bhendias help in *changu* (circular drum) beating and inspiring the ceremony. In the feast they equally help the groom's family to serve food items to the villagers of the bride, and treat them well in order to keep up their village prestige.

On the first day after the marriage ceremony 'Nagam' (Village Sacerdotal Head) offer 'Juri' or drink to fore-fathers. Then from among the members of the local descent group, only Kutumb members perform the 'Kadalata' ceremony according to their moiety divisions. Thus with the co-operation of all the kin members, the marriage ceremony is smoothly conducted strengthening their kinship bonds.

**Other Ceremonies**— Now coming to other rituals and ceremonies, Nuakhia (Greens, Paddy and Mango) is already described earlier. Pus Punei is another ritual that is performed by common contribution. On that day each adult member of the local descent group contributes one *pai* of rice to 'Nagam', the ritual head of the village. He, with mango leaves (Alearak), turmeric (Sasang), vermilion and raw rice (Aarunkup) worships the village deity. Then Nagam's contribution of paddy is kept in the Majang and in the 'Akhaya Tritiya' ritual it is distributed to all the villagers equally and they sow them in their respective fields. The rest of the paddy is then divided into three shares. First share is given to the Kamanda (Nagam and Ardhan), the second is given to the Bauntae (all the married persons) and the third is given to the Kangers and Selans (unmarried boys and girls). This paddy is invested for preparing cakes (Dalak). Lastly all the juniors of the village greet the seniors by bowing down their heads before them and they say - 'Juhar'. In the same way 'Gamha' ritual is also performed with the co-operation of the village kinsmen. Generally, the distant kins like matri-lateral kins are not invited specially in these occasions.

### (c) Kinship as a device for Social Control

To meet, the individual or group interests or goals, the society or culture always consists of more or less shared rules, norms for playing the game of ordered social life. By administration of customary rules, usages and norms, social conformity is established.

The Society is nothing but an organized aggregation of individuals. The members of society (homogeneous) are rather bound together by a force of

kinship that unites them, dissolving their inequalities, disturbances and establishes tranquility at large. Thus kinship functions as a device for social control.

In the homogeneous Juang society, each and every member of the society is always conforms to the social norms. The moral force of kinship is always there to control their behaviours, ways of life against any violation or deviance. The general rules are implicit in their behaviour, deeply ingrained in their habit and unconscious mind.

Thus in the Juang society, there are different ways of maintaining their sexual, joking, avoidance, religious, economic behaviours, etc. and at the same time, there are leaders holding laws and powers to maintain the deviance or violation of such behaviours as per the cultural code.

The Juangs observe incest taboo very strictly. They always try to maintain a moral or legal sexual life as per the sanction of the society. Within their rule of endogamy, clan is considered exclusively exogamous. Marriage within the clan is considered incestuous, because they treat their clan members as consanguines or blood-relatives who are descendants of an unknown common ancestor. Deviation to this customary rule is rare. It sets their marriage rules as well as regulates the marital life.

Pre-marital sexual relations among the young girls and boys of the same clan are similarly treated as incest. So to prevent it, the Kangers or unmarried boys after their initiation use to sleep in the 'Majang' or youth dormitory. They are no more allowed to sleep with the mother in the hut. Similarly Selans or unmarried girls sleep in a separate hut meant for them, guided by an old widow of the village. Brother-sister avoidance and father-daughter avoidance are also culturally patterned in order to prevent the incest or 'begudang'. After the marriage until the construction of the neolocal home for the newly wedded couple, the daughter-in-law sleeps with her mother-in-law in the hut for which the father-in-law and the married son have to sleep in the 'Majang'.

Both joking and avoidance rules in the field of kinship interaction, provide ways of controlling, and relieving pressures at the stress points of a social system, hence, are subtle but important forces of social control.

In the Juang society joking is most commonly confined to the members of one's own moiety, that is, among the persons of alternate generations. It is also found with certain affines like elder brother's wife, etc. Usually members who treat themselves as equals make jokings. In this way their interpersonal

behaviours are regulated smoothly, as they take no offence to tease each other. The practice of cross-cousin marriage with the mother's brother's son or daughter pertains to a sort of respectful behaviour with mother's brother. Avoidance is strictly observed between the members of the two moiety groups. Besides this, brother-sister avoidance, father-daughter avoidance, avoidance with wife's elder sister, avoidance with husband's elder brother, etc. also helps to prevent incestuous relationships. Familiarity with wife's younger sisters may give rise to sororal types of marriage and at the same time familiarity with husband's younger brother, may lead to the practice of junior levirate marriage. Thus within the web of kinship through a number of patterned behaviours and rules, Juangs control their social life smoothly.

They pronounce heavy punishments for incest. For simple illegal sexual affairs the accused may be fined or compelled to marry the girl. But in incestuous activities, though the punishment differs from one local descent group to other, yet the accused is out-casted from the society very often. Nobody likes to marry him/her. For breaking the rules of Nuakhia ceremony of mango, rice and greens, they simply fine the offender.

Like that of incest, killing a cow is also taken as a serious offence in the local descent group. All his kinsmen mainly his consanguines in the lineage group isolate him, treat him like an untouchable and in no way he is helped by them. Through begging alms with a straw-rope around the neck, he is punished to collect rice for the penance. In this way he is given twelve years of time for the penance, violation of which renders him out-casted from the Juang society. During the period of penance the affines help him in some way or other by supplying food, etc., but they do not touch him. After the rice collection though begging is completed, he has to move around the fire seven times and to shave the hair cleanly. Then he himself cooks and serves to his kin members both affines and consanguines of the local descent group, after which he gets back his previous status in his descent group.

#### **(d) Kinship as a Mechanism for Socialization**

The individual's learning of the roles of his own society or culture is commonly known as socialization. It helps a human being to fit into his social environment. The specific spheres in the training of a child include instructions to learn good manners, habits and moralities of the society, as well as training in arts and crafts and important knowledge in traditional core and rituals.

In the above perspective, it is the kinship as a mechanism, which socializes the children or youngsters of the society. A child is helpless at the time of birth. He is brought up through different stages of rearing, learning, etc. by the help of his parents. First of all, he establishes his face-to-face relationship with his family members like father, mother, brother and sister, etc. Thus from the early childhood, only his primary kins train him in different ways as per the social norms, behaviours, traditions, etc.

Within the sphere of face-to-face contact father and mother are greatly responsible for developing the social or cultural concepts of a Juang child. A son is more akin to his father who trains him as a hard working and disciplined member of the local group as well as the society. Thus father trains him as to be a Juang in true sense. With father he joins in agricultural works; practically and theoretically he comes to know the economic resources, family management etc. in his later life. In the same way, the son of medicine man - Raulia or traditional Sardar gets training about the respective hereditary professions which enable him to succeed his father's position in the society. On the other hand, when a Juang girl grows up her mother trains her in different domestic responsibilities. She learns household or domestic works like cooking, bringing water from the stream, cleaning the house with cow-dung and serving of food, etc, from her mother. After attaining maturity the mother trains her about essentials of the sex and future married life and teaches her the restrictions, taboos, etc. during her menstruation period. The brothers and sisters during childhood days interact with each other like playmates. During this time they imitate different types of group activities. In later life elder brother is expected to control the younger brothers and sisters as the family head. Grown up or adult brothers usually work co-operatively in the field and forest by which the younger ones learn many things from the elders. Similarly the younger sisters learn about the sex from the elderly married sisters or other females of the family.

Outside the family, one directly mixes with his lineage members who are equal in age, generation and sex. Thus unmarried Juang boys or 'Kangerki' form a group, perform *changu* dance and in some cases assist in rituals performances by the training of the senior lineage members. By this a sense of co-operativeness is inculcated into their minds. In this way kin members in various ways socialize their younger generations in order to make them true successors of the local descent group. In marriages and other rituals and ceremonies the Kangers help the elders by beating *changus* and dancing. When they become efficient enough for working, they collectively go to the forest and

collect firewood and other forest products. On the other hand the Selans hold their unity in a similar manner and function as a supplementary group in different recreational activities like dance, feast, etc. While in the group, they imitate each others behaviour, mode of talking, dress pattern, easy process of performing various works, nursing younger babies, etc.

The joking members of the lineage get ample scope to meet each other in several occasions, which provides for their socialization. The grandparents, while joking with their grand children tell the mythical stories about their origin, heroic deeds by which, these legends, traditional stories pass from generation to generation and the younger generations, become conscious of their glorious past. Besides all these, the lineage elders very often tell the youths about their mistakes and try to guide them in rituals, ceremonies.

Thus it is seen that a Juang by the help of his surrounding kinsmen, gets trainings about his role to be played as a member of the Juang society in different spheres of activities like social, economic, political, religious etc.

#### **(e) Kinship as a device for settling inter-group conflicts**

Conflict always occurs universally in every society due to breaking of norms or rules that uphold the interest between two individuals or groups. But it is always subsided by the kinship relation that binds the two involved groups together. Within one endogamous group, the Juangs always give priority to their kinship relation which balances their interests and dissolves conflict.

In the family level, conflict between husband and wife is common in the Juang society. Generally it happens due to misunderstandings in common household affairs, which are afterwards, dissolved by the parents-in-laws. Similarly brother-sister and parent-children conflicts are always sub sided by the senior kinsmen in the lineage.

Coming to inter-group conflict, it is generally found that conflicts often happen in different rituals, ceremonies in which obstruction of any sort of interest between two interacting groups causes conflict. Within the maximal lineage or local descent group, different lineages may be involved in some kind of conflict, over some basic issues like land, economic and other socio-religious interests. In these cases sitting in the Majang the elders along with the village headman decide and dissolve it by mutually establishing their common interests. Similarly in rituals and ceremonies like Nuakhia, Pusa or Gamha Punei, when one lineage violates the rule of the local group, a conflict naturally arises. When

one group follows these rituals and others do not join it or create any odd situation, then it hampers the common interest, but on the other side, the basic blood relationship behind them as the descendants of a common ancestor, applies a moral force which solves the situation without much difficulty.

In marriage ceremony, conflicts may also arise due to any kind of misbehavior by any affinal group to the other or inability to pay the bride-price in full. Often the conflict between husband and wife also involves the two concerned affinal kin groups in the conflict. Within one month stay in their locality, I have come across many such conflicts. The elders of both the Bandhu villages along with their headmen decide and dissolve it.

**(f) Kinship as a political unit:**

As a political unit, kinship has some significance too. Even after they are attached to the modern political units, they have still preserved their own form of political organization within the boundary of the kinship organization. Each Juang village, with its local descent group has a secular head called 'Padhan' or 'Ardhan', who is also considered as the head of the lineage as well as the clan group. The 'Padhan' is not a hereditary political head. There is a 'Sardar' for each 'Pirha' and he holds his supremacy over the 'Padhan's under his 'Pirha'. 'Sardar' is a hereditary post. In this case, priority and preference is given to his clan or lineage as the dominant kin group. In Baruda village, Kanhu Juang is a traditional Sardar as well as the head of the local descent group. Selection of 'Padhan' is generally performed on the basis of age, experience, status and capacity. He decides and resolves all inter and intra family and kin group conflicts and disputes. The aged and experienced members of the concerned kin groups take part in the decision making.

Thus, in a simple or pre-industrial society like that of the Juangs, kinship as a basic institution not only defines the structure of the society, but also serves as a mechanism for regulating the behavior of the people in all respect in the local descent group. It ensures a stable economic co-operation, smooth observances of rituals and acts as an effective mechanism for social control, a device for settling inter-group conflicts and finally an able decision making body as a political unit of the society. In a simple and homogenous society, the role of kinship can be depicted as central to all other interacting institutions.

# JUANG KINSHIP TERMS: AN ANALYSIS <sup>1</sup>

Jagannath Dash <sup>2</sup>

“Kinship term is a linguistic tag for a role, the role has biological criteria or admitted substitutes for admission to it, and it has also cultural criteria for performance. Kinship terms are role terms.” (Bohannan, 1963). In view of such basic understandings in anthropology, kinship terms may be perceived to play a very vital as well as significant role in the social life of the people in cross-cultural perspective. Generally kinship terms bind various roles together as kin members, categorize them for specific modes of interaction or behavior and finally, as a key factor bear a testimony to all sorts of culturally patterned rights and obligations in the society. Thus, the kinship terms as guiding terms or linguistic tags, play a central role in the study of kinship. The scientific analysis of kinship terms, therefore, is an inevitable need in the discipline of anthropology.

Juangs are mainly confined to Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts of Orissa. As one of the most backward tribes of the state, they are still found to depend mainly on the shifting cultivation and forest collections as well as hunting for the maintenance of their livelihood. According to the Census reports of India, the Juang population shows an increase from 1891 up to 1911 after which it experiences a decline in 1921. From 1921 to 1931 it again shows a significant increase of population. After a surprising fall of population in 1951, it shows a significant rise in 1971 census survey which accounts the total Juang population as 24,384 including 11,888 males and 12,496 females. The present paper is mainly based on the study of the Juang Kinship Organization in Gonasika and Janghira areas of Keonjhar district conducted in the year 1975 and also further verification undertaken recently.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIX, No.3&4, 1989, pp.29-28

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha



The basic theoretical concepts as regards the study of kinship terms can be highlighted in three-fold manner. Thus the views of L.H. Morgan, Radcliffe-Brown and Elman R. Service can be discussed for deriving a basic theoretical frame work. There is no doubt about the fact that the scientific study of kinship was first of all started with Morgan. With his scholastic thinking, he has affirmed that “Kinship terminologies are systems of consanguinity and affinity that they have to do with a people’s recognition of their genealogical relationships and therefore describe to us the actual organization of the kinship order” (quoted in Service, 1971:98-99). He has also “argued that kinship terminologies reflected the forms of marriage and the related make-up of the family (Ibid).” Morgan’s view in this way mostly refers to the genealogical organization of the social life. But Radcliffe-Brown’s view; on the other hand, signifies the patterns in the conduct of inter personal relations. Thus, to Radcliffe-Brown, “Kinship terms are like ‘signposts’ to interpersonal conduct or etiquette, with implications of appropriate reciprocal rights, duties, privileges, and obligations (Ibid)”. Although Morgan’s genealogical explanation of the kinship terms has been widely accepted, it does not explain or clarify all the essential aspects of kinship terminology. Following the ideas of Radcliffe-Brown, Service has discussed that to paraphrase him, kinship terms are used in address and reference as denotative of social positions relevant to interpersonal conduct. They are therefore, a form of status terminology (Ibid)”. Service has also quoted Munroe Edmonson (1958:b), who defines a status term as “a word designating a class of individuals occupying (simultaneously or serially) a single position in the social system, with specific defining patterns of rights and duties, the fulfillment of which is legitimized and guaranteed by sanctions (Ibid,P.100)”. Accepting kinship terms as status terms, Service, in his discussions on “Kinship Terminology and Evolution” has delineated four kinds of Status Terms. First of all status terms are divided into two basic subdivisions as familistic and non-familistic. According to Service, familistic type refers to family like familiar or named social positions in a group of kindred, non-familistic terms includes the names or titles related to positions like occupational specialization, political offices social classes and the like. Similarly Egocentric terms specify social positions relative to Ego and socio-centric terms refer to social positions relative to the structure of the society.

The kinship terminology among the Juangs of Keonjhar to be discussed here in the light of Service’s discussion, in typically an Egocentric familistic system. It is well convinced that Juang kinship terminology is of bifurcated collateral type. Lowie has defined four types of terminology which are- (1) Generation; (2) Lineal; (3) Bifurcate—Collateral and (4) Bifurcate—Merging.

As the Juang recognise the bifurcate--collateral type, they mostly use three terms—**one** for father, one for father's brother and one for mother's brother.

A study of kinship terms may help to elucidate the idea underlying the Juangs way of recognizing and grasping of kins. The kinship terms may be enumerated group by group according to the different lines of relationship. Thus, there may be several groups of kinsmen terminologically related through each member of the basic kin group i.e., family. In this manner, kinship terminologies are traceable within the lineage, among the avunculates and other kins, covering all types of consanguineal and affinal kinsmen.

### I. Kinship Terminology in the Family

Sl. No	Relationship	Terms of		
		Kinship	Address	Reference
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	Husband (Hu)	Gusian	No terms but 'Eh'	Gusian or by teknonymy
2	Wife (Wi)	Kubila	No terms but 'Eh'	Kubilani or by teknonymy
3	Son (So)	Kanan	E Landa or by name	Kanan
4	Daughter (Da)	Kantelani	E Landi or by name	Kanchelani
5	Father (Fa)	Ba	E ba	Ba
6	Mother (Mo)	Bui	E Bui	Buing
7	Elder Brother (elBr)	Ka	E Ka	Kakani
8	Younger Brother (yoBr)	Boko	E Boko	Bokani or by name
9	Elder Sister (elSi)	Aji	E Aji	Ajin
10	Younger Sister (yoSi)	Bakarai	E Bakarai	Bakarain or by name
<b>2. Kinship Terminology in Father's Line</b>				
1	Fa	Ba	E Ba	Ba
2	FaFa	Aja	E Aja	Ajain
3	FaFa Wi	Na	E Na	Nanain
4	FaFa Si	Aji	E Aji	Ajin
5	FaFa Br	Aja	E Aja	Ajain
6	FaFa SiHu	Bau	E Bau	Bauin
7	FaFaBrWi	Na	E Na	Nanain
8	FaFaFa	Atir	E Atir	Atirain
9	FaelBr	Atir	E Atir	Atiran
10	FaFa SiSo	Goblekon	E Goblekon	Goblekoin
11	FaMo	Na	E Na	Nanain

12	FaMo BrSo	Goblekon	E Goblekon	Goblekoin
13	FaMoelBr	Inibou	E Inibou	
14	FaMoyoBr	Sango	E Sango	
15	FayoBr	Dadi	E Dadi	
16	FayoBrWi	San Bui	E San Bui	
17	FaelBrWi	Atir	E Atir	
18	FaFaMo	Atirae	E Atirae	
19	FayoBrSo	Atirkon	E Atirkon	
20	FaMoelSi	Ajkar	E Ajkar	
21	FaFaSiHuelSi	Ajkar	E Ajkar	
22	FaMoyoSi	Salirae	E Salirae	
23	FaFaSiHuyoSi	Salirae	E Salirae	
<b>3. Mother's Line-MoBr+MoSi</b>				
1	Mo	Bui	E Bui	Buin
2	MoelBr	Mamu	E Mamu	Mamu
3	MoyoBr	Mamu	E Mamu	Mamu
4	MoelSi	Atirae	E Atirae	Atiraein
5	MoyoSi	Sanbui	E Sanbui	Sanbuiin
6	MoelSiHu	Atir	E Atir	Atirain
7	MoyoSiHu	Dadi	E Dadi	Dadi
8	MoBrWi	Sasu	E Sasu	Sasu
9	MoFa	Aja	E Aja	Ajain
10	MoMo	Na	E Na	Nanain
11	MoMoBr	Aja	E Aja	Ajain
12	MoMoSi	Aji	E Aji	Ajin
13	MoMoBrWi	Na	E Na	Nanain
14	MoMoSiHu	Bau	E Bau	Bau
15	MoMoMo	Atirae	E Atirae	Atiraein
16	MoMOMoHu	Atir	E Atir	Atrain
17	BoBrSo(EI)	Ka	E Ka	Kakain
18	MoBryoSo	Boko	E Boko	Bokoin
19	MoBrSoSo	Mamu	E Mamu	Mamu
20	MoBrelDa	Aji	E Aji	Ajin
21	MoBryoDa	Bakarae	E Bakarae	Bakarain
22	MoFaSi	Na	E Na	Nanain
<b>4. Son's Line</b>				
1	So	Kanan	E Kanan or Landa	Kananin
2	SoWi	Buirae	E Buirae	Buirain
3	SoSo	Bokolap	E Bokolap	Bokolap
4	SoSoSo	Badu	E Badu	Badu

5	SoSoDa	Atichindae	E Atichindae	Atichindain
6	SoDa	Bokosen	E Bokosen	Bokosen
7	SoSoWi	Bokorae	E Bokorae	Bokorain
8	SoSoWiyobr	Sango	E Sango	Sango
9	SoDaHu	Sango	E Sango	Sango
10	SoWiFa	Samudi	E Samudi	Samudi
11	SoSoWielsi	Ajkar	E Ajkar	Ajkarain
12	SoSoWiyosi	Salirae	E Salirae	Sairain
13	SoWiMo	Samuduni	E Samuduni	Samuduni
14	SoWiBr	Aram	E Aram	Aramain
<b>5. Daughter's Line</b>				
1	Da	Kachelani	E Kachelani or Landi	Kanchalani
2	DaHa	Aram	E Aram	Aramain
3	DaSo	Bokolap	E Bokolap	Bokolap
4	DaDa	Bokosen	E Bokosen	Bokosen
5	DaHuFa	Samudi	E Samudi	Samudi
6	DaHuMo	Samuduni (Tiurae)	E Samuduni	Samuduni
7	DaHuSi	Buirae	E Buirae	Buirain
<b>6. Brother's Line</b>				
1	elBr	Ka	E Ka	Kakain
2	yoBr	Boko	E Boko	Bokoin
3	yoBrWi	Kuli	E Kuli	Kuli
4	elBrWi	Kimindae	E Kimindae	Kimindain
5	elBrSo	Kanda	E Kanda	Kandain
6	HuBrSoSoWi (w.s)	Bokorae	E Bokorae	Bokorain
7	HuyoRrWi	Bokorae	E Bokorae	Bokorain
8	HuyoBr (w.s)	Bokoger	E Bokoger	Bokoger
9	elBrDa	Konchelandae	E Konchelandae	Konchelandain
10	YoBrDa	Atichindae	E Atichindae	Atichindain
11	HuelBr (w.s)	Baukar	E Baukar	Baukar
<b>7. Wife's Line</b>				
1	Wi	Kubila	E Kubila	Kubilain
2	WiFa	Kuinkar	E Kuinkar	Kuinkar
3	WiFaBr	Kuinkar	E Kuinkar	Kuinkar
4	WiMo	Mami	E Mami	Mami
5	WielBr	Inibou	E Inibou	Inboin
6	Wiyobr	Sango	E Sango	Sango

7	WielSi	Ajkar	E Ajkar	Ajkar
8	WielSiSo	Kanda	E Kanda	Kandain
9	Wiyosi	Salirae	E Salirae	Salirain
10	WiSiHuel/yo	Buintar	E Buintar	Buintarain
11	WiFaFaSi	Ajkar	E Ajkar	Ajkarain
12	WiFaSiHu	Kuinkar	E Kuinkar	Kuinkar
13	WiBrDaHu	Aram	E Aram	Aramin
14	WiBrSoWiBr	Aram	E Aram	Aramin
15	WiBrDaHuSi	Buirae	E Buirae	Buirain
16	WiyosiDa	Kanchelandae	E Kanchelandae	Kanchelandain
<b>8. Sister's Line</b>				
1	elSi	Aji	E Aji	Ajin
2	yoSi	Bokorae	E Bokorae	Bokorain
3	elSiHu	Bau	E Bau	Bauin
4	yoSiHu	Sango	E Sango	Sangoin
5	SiSo	Goblekon	E Goblekon	Goblekoin
6	SiHuFa	Kuinkar	E Kuinkar	Kuinkarain
7	SiDa	Goblesandae	E Goblesandae	Goblesandain
8	SiHuMo	Mami	E Mami	Mami
9	SiHuFaSiHu	Juinkar	E Juinkar	Kuinkar
10	elSiHuFaFa	Bau	E Bau	Bauin
11	elSiSoSo	Bau	E Bau	Bauin
12	SiHuyoSiHu	Boko	E Boko	Bokoin
13	SiHuelSiHu	Ka	E Ka	Kakain
<b>9. Father's Sister</b>				
1	FaSi	Sasu	E Sasu	Sasu
2	FaSiHu	Mamu	E Mamu	Mamu
3	FaSiSoSo	Mamu	E Mamu	Mamu
4	FaSiHuyoSi	Sanobui	E Sanobui	San Buin
5	FaSiSiDa	Sanobui	E Sanobui	San Buin
6	FaSielSo	Ka	E Ka	Kakain
7	FaSiyoSo	Boko	E Boko	Boloin
8	FaSiHuelSi	Atirae	E Atirae	Atiracin
9	FaSiHuyoSi	Sanbui	E Sanbui	Sanbuin

### Analytical study of Kinship Terminology

Regarding various types of applications of terminologies, a brief analysis is inevitably necessary. It may include classificatory terms, denotative terms, general rules and so on.

According to G.P. Murdock (1957:97), kinship terms are technically classified in three different ways-

As regards their mode of use, kinship terms may be employed as direct address or indirect reference. To Murdock, a term of address is one used in speaking to a relative, it is a part of the linguistic behavior characteristic of the particular interpersonal relationship and a term of reference is one used to designate a relative in speaking about him to a third person: it is thus not a part of the relationship itself, but a word denoting a person who occupies a particular kinship status (Ibid). In most of the Juang kinship terms it is found that address terms are the same as the kinship terms, except in case of 'son' and 'daughter' which in kinship terms are 'Kanan' and 'Kantelan', but they are addressed as 'Landa' and 'Landi' or by their names respectively. Similarly wife and husband never address each other by any term; they only use a vowel 'Eh'. Each address term is pronounced following a vowel 'E'. In almost all cases, the term of address and the term of reference, both are the same except for husband, wife, son, daughter and father's sister. Generally, the reference terms are suffixed by 'I' or 'in' and in case of husband, father and son, basic kinship terms are used.

Thus, terms of reference are more specific in their application than 'terms of addresses', (Ibid). They are usually more complete than terms of address. It may be customary to use only personal names in addressing certain relatives, or a taboo may prevent all conversation with them, as a result of which terms of address for such kinsmen would be completely lacking (Ibid). Among the Juangs, in case of sons or daughters, they are usually addressed by their names, as a result of which it lacks their kinship terms. But almost all the Juang's terms of address are similar with the terms of reference.

According to linguistic structure, kinship terms are distinguished as Elementary, Derivative and Descriptive (Ibid, P.98). As per the definition of Murdock, an elementary term is an irreducible word, like English 'father' or 'nephew', which cannot be analyzed into component lexical elements with kinship meanings (Ibid). Generally, Juangs use only elementary kinship terms neglecting the other two categories.

Regarding the range of application, kinship terms are differentiated as denotative and classificatory (Ibid, P.99). These two types are found in vogue in the Juang society.

### **Denotative**

According to Murdock, a denotative term is one which applies only to relatives in a single kinship category as defined by generation, sex and genealogy

(Ibid). Often for a particular speaker, it can denote only one person. To Murdock, a denotative term also applies to several persons of identical kinship connection. Though the influence of the classificatory terms on the Juang nomenclature are well marked, it is worth noting that denotative terms become rare with secondary relatives and practically disappear with tertiary kins, giving way to classificatory terminology.

1. Father - Ba
2. Mother -Bui
3. Son - Kanan
4. Daughter - Kanchelan
5. El Br Wi - Kuli

#### **Classificatory Kinship Terminology:**

As Murdock has defined, a classificatory term is one that applies to persons of two or more kinship categories, as these are defined by generation, sex and genealogical connection (Ibid). In Juang terminology, the classificatory terms are abundant, except a few denotative terms. Their terms maintain unique systematic order, thus including two or more categories of persons into classificatory terms, perpetuating generation, sex and genealogical connection. From this point of view when we analyze their classificatory terms, it is found that in one local descent group taking Ego as the referent person, all the classificatory Kutumbs in the local descent group are related to him through alternative generations. If we take Ego's generation as an even numbered generation, then all his classificatory consanguine will belong to alternate even numbered generations. In other words, all the classificatory relatives belong to Ego's moiety group. Father's moiety group is also similarly reflected. Now if we extend the classificatory terms up to the distant kinsmen those are affines, the same order of generations is always found to be maintained. Thus the generation principle holds good here. The most essential sex principle also maintains that one kinship term always denotes to same sex. Classificatory kinsmen are grouped by mixing all the classificatory consanguines and affines with reference to the Ego; the fact may be more intelligible if they will be ordered generation-wise. For a particular classificatory term, different generations can be taken into consideration in relation to the Ego in the following manner (**Fig-I**).

Now it is found that Ego's group bears even numbered generations and Ego's father's group bears odd-numbered generations. Therefore, as per the principle, one classificatory term may denote the persons of one such group or odd-number generations or even-number generations as given in the **table-I**.

Fig-I

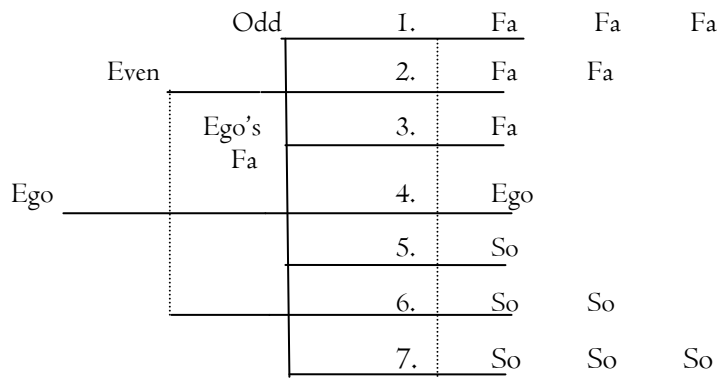


Table-I

Classifi- catory Kinship terms	FaFaFa	FaFa	Fa	Ego	So	SoSo	SoSo So
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Atir			FaelBr MoelSi Hu				
Atirkon					YoBroSo WiYoSiSo		
Dadi			FaYoBr MoYoBr				
Kanda					EiBrSo SieISiSo		
Aja		FaFa FaFaBr MoFaBr					
Bokolap					SoSo DaSo		
Ka			EiBr MoBrSo				
Boko			YoBr FaSiSo				
Bokesen						SoDa DaDa	
Aji		FaFaSi MoMoSi		EiSi WielBrWi MoBrDa			
Bokorae				YoSiWiYo BrWi FaSiDa			



Ma-Mu			MoBr FaSiHu FaMoBr So		MoBrSoSo FaSiSoSo SiSo WiBrSo		
Kuinkar			WiFa SiHuFa SiHuFaSi FaFaSiDa				
Aram					DaHu SoWiBr WiBrDaHu		
Inbou	FaMoe IBr	WielBr			WielBrSoSo SoSoWielBr		
Bou		eSiHuFaFa FaFaSiHu		eSiHu		EiSiSoSo	
Sango		FaMoyoBr yoSiHuFa Fa		Wiyobr yoSiHu		WiyobrSoSo SoSoWiyobr SoDaHu	
Buintar				WielSiHu WiyosiHu SoWiFa DaHuFa			
Sasu			FaSi MoBrWi				
Atichind- ae					YoBrDa WiyosiDa		
Ronchel- adae					eBr.Da WielSiDa		
Atirae			MoelSi FayoBr Wi FaSiHu eSi				
Goble Sendae			FaFaSi Da FaMoBr Da				
Sano Bui			MoyoSi FayoBrWi FaSiHu yoSi				
Mami			WiMo SiHuMo WiFaSi				
Na		FaMo MoMo					

		MoFaSi FaFaBrWi					
Buirae						SoWi DaHuSi WiBrSoWi WiBrDaHa Si	
Kimindae			yoBrWi		SoSoWi		
Ajkar		WiFaFaSi FaMoelSi FaFaSiHu elSi	WiSi HuelSi (w.s.)			SoSoWielSi	
Salirae		FaMoyoSi FaFaSiHu yoSi	WiyoSi SiHuyo Si			WiBiSoDa SoSoWiyo Si	
Samuduni			SoWiMo DaHuMo				

### General Rules of the Kinship Nomenclature

From the analysis of the Juang Kinship terminologies, it is quite evident that kins may be clustered into different group under distinctive kin terms. The kinship terminology of Juangs in this way is found to follow some traditional or conventional rules, which shows different categories of terms of relationship.

#### a) Sex Differentiation

Primarily some kinship nomenclatures show some sex differentiation through the use of suffixes in kin terms. In some kin terms for females 'dae' or 'rae' suffixed from which the sex of the kin can be easily known. For example, there are kinship terms like Kimindae, Salirae, Buirae, Atichindae, Kancheandae, Atirae etc. for female kins.

#### b) Generation Differentiation

In the Juangs terminology, though generation difference is not strictly present among identical kins, yet there are always classificatory persons, maybe consanguineal or both consanguineal and affinal, naturally belonging to one or alternate generations.

#### c) Age Differentiation

With respect to Ego or to that of the linked relatives, the age differentiation is quite obvious in the Juang kinship terminology. Generally it is seen that there are certain terms to mark elder or younger persons. For the younger, they use 'Sano' and for the elder it is 'Kuba'. In this way a younger child of

the family is known as 'Sano-wadi', eldest daughter as 'Kuba-Kanchelan' and youngest daughter as 'Sano-Kanchelan', similarly eldest son as 'Kuba-Kanan' and youngest son as 'Sano-Kanan'.

By age, an elder brother is always known as 'Ka; and a younger brother as 'Boko'. Elder sister is termed as 'Aji' and younger sister as 'Bakorae'. Likewise, mother is known as 'Bui', mother's younger sister as 'Sanobui' and mother's elder sister as 'Atirae'. Father's elder brother is known as 'Badu' or 'Atir' and younger brother is 'Dadi' or 'Kaka'. Similarly, mother's elder sister's husband is known as 'Atir' and younger sister's husband is 'Dadi'.

### Conclusion

Lastly it can be concluded that Juang kinship terminology basically refers to status terms which are of Ego centric-familistic type. Besides the general observations on the kinship terms with reference to terms of address and reference, the classificatory kinship terms attract a specific attention. It primarily refers to structural division of moiety groups and significantly categorizes the classificatory kinsmen as belonging to one moiety group (of even or odd numbered generations). Thus, classificatory terms as well as the general terms in the Juang society categorizes the kin members, patterns their inter-personal relations and assigns reciprocal rights, duties, privileges and obligations to them.

### Bibliography :

1. Bohannan, P. 1963 *Social Anthropology*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York
2. Lowie, R.H 1966 *Social organization*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
3. Murdock, G.P. 1957 *Social Structure*, Macmillan, New York. 3rd edn.
4. Rout, S.P. 1969-70 A Hand-Book on Juang, *Adibasi*, Vol. XI, No.1-2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
5. Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1952 *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Ed.) pp.49-89, Glencoe, III: Free Press.
6. Service, Elman, R. 1971 *Cultural Evolutionism: Theory in Practice*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

# THE JUANG NON-KINSHIP ORGANISATION <sup>1</sup>

THRTI <sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Kinship is conveniently applied to relationship by affinity as well as by consanguinity. It is universal and fundamental in nature. These kinship groups fulfill some of their social requirements. But there are certain other needs beyond the generalized needs which need to be fulfilled by the non-kinship groups in the forms of associations and sodalities. These groups are very much temporary and dismantle at the non-existence of these associations and sodalities. Though temporary, these groups contribute much in collaboration with kinship groups to bring development in their society. Both kinship and non-kinship organizations are complimentary rather than contradictory. This paper is based upon the findings of an empirical study of Jaung non-kinship organizations as compared to their traditional kinship organizations. The study has covered two Juang villages—Guptaganga (a remote village), in Gonasika G.P of Bansapal Block and Madhusudanpur, a more urbanized pocket in the Telkoi G. P. of Telkoi Block. The Juang tribe is identified as a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) in Orissa.

## Objectives of the Study

The character of the social organization is determined by the nature of its membership. When recruitment is made on the sole criterion of heredity then the organization is called a kinship organization. In pre-literate primitive communities where community oriented life style is dominant and a high degree of mutual tie and reciprocity governs, the socio-economic life, that is, based on the principle of the sink and swim together, the kinship organization undoubtedly acts as the pivot and binding force. At the same time we know that,

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXII, No.4 (Spl. Issue), 1992, pp.145-51

<sup>2</sup> Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (now SCSTRTI), Odisha

the kith and kin of a man cannot pull him through all crises of his life and meet all his needs in a simple society. So they have developed certain organizations and institutions in collaboration with the kinship organization to look after other aspects of human survival in which the recruitment or membership is not based on the kinship considerations. We can call these organizations as non-kinship organization. Paul Bohannan in his book 'Social Anthropology' (pages 146, 147) writes that; "Kinship groups are limited in their scope, for all that they are fundamental and ubiquitous and they form the core social organization of all known human societies. There are obviously, non-kinship groups to be found in most societies. Non-kinship groups have all but swamped the kinship groups. Anthropology, and indeed, sociology has not been successful in dealing with these more specialized non-kinship groups, and it is instructive to enquire into some of the reasons for lack of progress at the same time that we examine the nature of the group themselves".

In these days, when the socio-economic development of these down-trodden, backward tribal communities has become a major obsession with the post-independent welfare State, and it is well understood that no development programme can deliver the goods without people's participation, a thorough study of both the kinship and non-kinship organizations shall be instrumental in channelizing the development inputs to the target communities.

The Juangs are considered a primitive and backward tribal community. The Government is making all efforts for their overall socio-economic development through implementation of various programmes. In this context, an analysis of the role played by both traditional and non-kinship organization for the maintenance and continuance of their society would help in associating these groups in the implementation of their socio-economic development programmes.

#### **Scope of the Study :**

The study of non-kinship groups in the Juang society is important because though kinship groups fulfill the basic human needs, they are simple, universal, non-specialized and their scope is limited. Therefore, the existence of non-kinship groups is necessary for creating more specialized social forms. Non-kinship groups are associations in the tribal societies which are more or less specialized. Both the groups exist by their purposes and principles of organization. They can be distinguished by comparison of their 'charter' or purpose and the mode of recruitment of members.

Kinship organization plays an indispensable role of regulating sex and marriage for the purpose of reproduction for the continuance of the family as

well as the community. The membership of a kin group is automatically acquired by birth, marriage and adoption. On the other hand, the non-kinship associations are formed for different specific purpose for maintaining orderly social life in the village. The memberships of such associations are considered on the criteria of sex, age, social rank and other qualifications. However such associations or institutions do recur with considerable frequency in the Juang society.

The Juang, one of the preliterate tribes of Odisha are mostly settled in the districts of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal. As per 1981 census, their total number is 30,876. The Juang settlements are smaller in size having 10 to 20 households in each village. The Juangs who live in Keonjhar are called 'Thaniyas' or original settlers, but who migrated and lived in the plains of Dhenkanal are called 'Bhagudias' or 'groups fled away'. In spite of their different socio-cultural activities, they exhibit lot of cultural similarities.

Study of the non-kinship organization of the Juang community is very necessary because it enquires into the unstructured system of behavior in relationships in which different people are biologically and sociologically related to one another and are bound with each other by complex inter-locking system of the Juang to achieve the desired goal of continuing the social system. The study of the non-kinship organization may give us insight into the Juang culture which can guide us to know the nature and extent of co-operation among them in performing various socio-economic activities.

#### **Youth Organization (Majang)**

The Juang youth dormitory known as the Majang lies in a fairly big and rectangular-shaped house constructed at the centre of each Juang village to serve the purpose for the unmarried boys (Kangerki) and girls (Selanki) to sleep at night, in groups. It is almost like a club house adorned with indigenous musical instruments and alighted with smoldering logs day and night tended by the boys. Mats of date-palm-leaves and wooden pillows are found being stacked in a corner of the room used as bedstead of the boys at night. Shri Siba Prasad Rout in his "Hand- Book on Juang" (page 59) has stated that "The dormitory house of the Juang is called Majang. The Majang is usually bigger in size than the ordinary houses and is situated at the center of the village. It is constructed by the unmarried boys called, Kangerki who sleep here at night. The unmarried girls called Selanki plaster it in every two or three days.

Generally the dormitory is the organization of the unmarried youth and one ceases to be its member after his/her marriage. The term Kanger is a

general term to mean the unmarried boys of the marriageable age. But to be considered as formal member of the dormitory, that is, to be a full-fledged Kanger, a boy should undergo an initiation ceremony on the annual Amba Nua (First mango eating ceremony) festival day.

The life of a Juang is based on a nine fold age-grade classification. The discrepancy between the biological and social age groups is bridged up within the frame work of youth organization. However, this youth dormitory has multi-dimensional functions of social, economic, religious, judicial and educative importance not only for the members but also for the entire village community. It is indeed an institution that is central to the way of life of the Juang.

#### **Admission into the Dormitory (Majang):**

The recruitment of members into the dormitory is not based on kinship affiliations. As a rule, all bachelors and spinsters including widows and widowers irrespective of their clan memberships can become members of the dormitory provided they are formally admitted through appropriate rite-de-passage. In the past when a Juang village was homogenous and uni-clan, the members, that is, unmarried boys and girls were clan brothers and sisters. But now-a-days due to migration, the Juang villages have become multi-clan including both Bandhu and Kutum clans. There is no restriction for the boys and girls belonging to different clans to become the members of youth dormitory. So, as we see, any Juang boy and girl, irrespective of his or her clan affiliation can become a member of the dormitory provided he or she is an inhabitant of the village. Thus, the membership of the dormitory is determined by ones residence in the village community. The membership of a particular clan or the numerically dominant clan of the village does not stand on the way of any boy or girl of a different or minor clan getting admitted into the dormitory. In this sense, the Majang is structurally and functionally a non-kinship youth organization.

There are a lot of roles and responsibilities thrust upon the Kangerki and Selanki who are members of youth dormitory as briefed below:-

- (a) Routine repair and maintenance of the dormitory house (Majang) and its assets such as tambourines (*changu*), drums, mats etc.
- (b) Organizing and serving communal feasts on various functions & rituals.
- (c) Collection of family contributions for communal feasts and ceremonies.
- (d) Attending the guests, visiting officials staying in the village dormitory.

- (e) Entertaining Kangerki and Selanki of Bandhu villages who visit the village.
- (f) Getting hired for communal working party by the Tandakar (Man in charge of dormitory) and other village leaders.
- (g) Bringing fire wood to the groom or bride's house during marriage.
- (h) Bringing fire wood for the Majang-fire.
- (i) Cultivating commonly the patch of Toila land allotted to Kangerki and Selanki and management of the common fund derived from the produces.
- (j) Rendering free service for cultivation of Toilas, house thatching and other works for the village leaders.
- (k) Installation and worship of the village deity (Gramasiri) in absence and incapacitation of village priest (Nagam).
- (l) Supplying leaf-cups and plates, grinding of spices, preparation of cakes, husking paddy, sacrificing animals before the deities etc. for feasts and festivals and for the guests and visitors.

It is understood from the above that the members of the youth dormitory play vital roles in the conduct of communal life of the village. No communal affair can be conducted without the participation of the Kangerki and Selanki.

In organizing above activities all the members of the dormitory irrespective of their clan affiliation play an equal role to accomplish the task assigned to them. The major clan of the village may have larger members in the dormitory but they work together with minor clan members. There is no grouping monopoly or special privileges enjoyed by the members of any particular kin group in the management and operation of the activities of the dormitory. In this respect all members belonging to different clans of the same village stand on an equal footing.

**Economic Activities:**

(a) *Distribution of Toila land:* The Juangs are mainly shifting cultivators. They were originally food gatherers, when there was abundant forest. In course of time due to population pressure, the Juangs learnt the method of cultivation – shifting and settled.

The *toila chas* or shifting cultivation is done on Podu lands communally owned by the village community and distributed to individual family heads for cultivation at the beginning of a *podu* cycle. Thus cultivating



right is transferred from the village community to the individuals for a period of two, three, or four years. This is ritually distributed by the Nagam (priest) and Ardhan (secular head) to the villagers in front of the *majang* on the last day of annual Puspunei festival. The principle taken into consideration for this distribution is very much democratic, that is, land is distributed according to the need of the family and capacity to till the land. That is, each family is given as much Toila land as it can cultivate. Thus, the Toila land is distributed to all members irrespective of their clans - major or minor but no partiality is made by giving a greater chunk to members of the major clans of the village. The system of the distribution of Toila land does not function on the basis of kinship affiliation but on secular and economic consideration. All the members irrespective of clan affiliations stand on equal footing.

(b) **Hunting:** Hunting is a seasonal communal activity among the Juangs, not a regular pursuit. Now-a-days, due to large scale depletion of forest, scarcity of game animals, restrictions have been imposed by the Forest Department against hunting. So hunting is casually or ritually taken up in memory of past tradition. In the closing day of Amba-Nua festival in the month of February-March, the villagers make a hunting expedition. The male members who opt to participate in this expedition are required to deposit their bows and arrows in the Majang before the village priest.

After games are killed by the hunting party, the distribution of meat is made in a most democratic and rational manner. The hunter who had actually shot the animal is at first rewarded with his bonus share called, the hunter's share of meat from the breast portion and the hind quarters of the animal. Rest of the meat is equally divided into two shares. The first share is equally divided among all the participants of the hunting party including the hunter himself. The remaining share is equally distributed among all the families of the village including those of the hunters and participants. Thus, the hunter gets the lion share comprising, the hunter's share, the participant's share and his family share. The participants get two shares, that is, the participant's share and the family share. The remaining non-participating families get only one share each.

Thus it is evident that, participation in the hunting party is purely optional and voluntary and there is no compulsion or monopoly based on kinship grouping. Similarly the distribution of meat of the hunted animal is made rationally over-riding kinship considerations. So in this context it can be said that the organization of hunting activities is based on non-kinship principles.

(c) *Grazing of Cattle:* The animal husbandry is not extensively practiced by the Juangs, still they rear cows and buffaloes for ploughing, goats, sheep and pigs for diet on feast and festivals and may be slaughtered for ritual purposes. Chicken is also sacrificed for ritual purposes. Of all animals the cows are considered to be sacred revered and worshiped on the occasion of Gamha festival.

The animals reared are neither given any fodder nor is any special care taken for their maintenance. The only care taken is to graze the cattle. The cattle graze in the common grazing ground of the village. No persons are appointed on payment of remuneration for the purpose, but a person of each family is engaged for the purpose on rotation basis. If the village is fairly big, i.e. at least having 40 families, then all the families are divided into two halves and two persons from each group take charge of grazing cattle on rotation. While selecting persons from each group, no kinship affiliation is taken into consideration, but purely on the basis of non-kinship groupings. This shows that non-kinship groupings play vital role in the economy of the village.

(d) *Communal Labour Co-Operation:* It is customary among the Juang to engage co-villagers as labourers for various activities such as weeding, harvesting or constructing a new house on the basis of labour exchange on co-operation. Sometimes, the services of the villagers are requisitioned by another village. No individual payment is made in this type of deal, instead, the laborers are provided lunch and given a lump sum amount which is deposited in the dormitory fund and utilized in a feast of the village shared by all the families of the village.

The communal working party comprises persons from all clans but not only from major or original clan of the village. Hence, the question of any clan affiliation or kinship affiliation does not arise in this regard.

#### **Social Activities:**

(a) *Repair and maintenance of the path-ways connecting neighboring villages:* To facilitate inter-village communication, short-cut foot-paths connecting villages are repaired annually. An adult male member from each family of a village is selected to join the team to construct or repair the path-way connecting a number of villages. These persons offer their free labor till the path-way is completely constructed or repaired. When the path-way is completed, the workers make night halt in the dormitory of that village where they reach at the end of the path and there they are sumptuously entertained with non-vegetarian food and *manual* drink. In the next year, the host villagers reciprocate in the same way by giving their free labor in constructing or repairing

path-ways. In this reciprocal behavior members of all clans in the village cooperate by taking active part.

(b) **Thenga Paka** (watch and ward): The Juangs are mainly agriculturists. Different agricultural pursuits keep them engaged throughout the year especially during harvesting of various crops. These pre-occupations does not allow the villagers to watch the village or attend the visitors or officials coming to the village. But it is customary for the Juang to accomplish both the tasks so that the village may not earn bad name.

Under the circumstances, a person from each family irrespective of the clan is selected to discharge both the duties. The secular headman (Ardhan) officially announces the name of the chosen person to take up the watch and ward duty for a day and then handovers a staff (*thenga*) to him from the village dormitory. It becomes the duty of the selected person to watch the village at night and attend to the guests or visitors to the village in the day. It is binding for all the families in the village to do the duty when their turn comes without being paid. This selection is not clan specific but made from all the clans of the village.

#### **Religious Activities:**

The Juangs have their own religious beliefs and practices. The monotony of life is frequently broken by feasts and festivities and by rites and rituals of various kinds. They observe various festivals like Push Punei, Amba Nua, Tritia, Raja, Asadi etc. round the year with much rhyme and rhythm where persons, irrespective of clan and sex and of different age-grades participate.

Further, in view of averting ill-will of malevolent spirits and wrath of supernatural powers, the ritual specialists called Kamandaki of various clans in a village undertake special rites to appease the spirits and deities. The feeling of oneness prevails which unites them all to save the village from privation and deprivation.

In the past, villages dominated by members of a single clan were common in Juang *pirha*. But now most of the villages are of multi-clans in the changed situation. Though villages are of multi-clans, marriages are strictly forbidden in one's own village and in Bhaiali/Kutum villages. Marriages are performed only between Bandhu villages. All these rules also apply to the dancing organization of the boys and girls. Dancing visits are exchanged between Bandhu villages. In these visits, boys and girls of different clans participate, exchange gifts and dance for the whole night.

However the male and female members of the youth dormitory have to present gifts to their Bandhu partners. Besides, they have to provide food for their friends on the occasion of the latter's visit on dancing expeditions, such being the collective responsibility of all the members of dormitory, they all work collectively irrespective of clans to enrich their common stock of paddy and other things for meeting such expenses. This collective responsibility is based on a wider prospective of non-kinship organization instead of kinship principles.

**Political Activities:**

In Juang *pirha*, each village is a political unit having its own set of officers. These village officers or leaders are mainly three in number, two of whom are traditional leaders and one is a new office bearer created by the *panchayatraj* system called, member (ward member). Each village has one ward member to work as its representative in the Panchayat.

The Juangs are very much democratic and therefore the real authority of the village is vested not with the leaders but with the corporate group of village elders called, Bara Bhaiki. The village elders first discuss over an issue before it is finalized. In such discussion, all the elders, irrespective of any clan affiliation have full freedom to express their opinion freely. Unless the issue is unanimously agreed upon, no final decision is arrived at.

Certain matters like, dispute on land boundary between two villages, about divorce, etc. are discussed in inter-village council. Village elders from two villages have equal voice in the council.

Even while discussing matters like incest, premarital pregnancy, witchcraft of serious type etc. in the regional council of *pirha* organization, delegates invited from all villages of a *pirha* have equal voice in the council. These councils whether at the village or inter-village or *pirha* level are based on non-kinship affiliation than on kinship principle.

**Modern Organizations:**

Other than these traditional institutions, certain modern organizations like; Mahila Samiti and Kirtan party have emerged in the study villages where participations of the villagers are based purely on non-kinship principles.

Under the impact of change and modernization, traditional institutions of the Juang are gradually breaking down and some of the important features of these organizations are gradually vanishing due to the contact of the tribals with

the non-tribal people. For example, the Juangs are gradually developing a feeling of dislike towards *changu* dance; instead, they prefer to sing Oriya songs by the appointing Oriya teachers. The members of the youth dormitory have reduced their association with the affairs of the Majang. They prefer to mind their own business than taking pains for communal activities. They are now reluctant to go to work in a labour party to earn wages.

Multi-clans that have emerged in the Juang villages have become more forceful. Kinship organization plays its important role only at the family level and binds its members to the limited extent of Bandhu and Kutum villages. Though kinship groups are fundamental, they operate in their confined domain. Breaking these limitations, non-kinship groups functioning in the Juang society can take care of matters beyond the domain of kinship and can help to bring vital socio-economic changes in their society. These non-kinship organizations are potential groups or sodalities formed as per social, economic, religious and political needs of the society. By making co-operation a reality beyond the narrow confines of the blood tie of kinship, the Juangs pave the way, in principle at least, for a wider integration.

N.B. The field data was collected and the paper prepared by Shri P.S Das Patnaik, Former Deputy Director with the assistance of Shri S.C. Mohanty, former Research Assistant of SCSTR TI during 1991-92.

# ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF JUANG MARRIAGE <sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

The hill Juang of Keonjhar are one of the backward tribes of Orissa. They inhabit the highlands of Keonjhar district with an altitude of 3,000' to 3,500'. They are mainly shifting cultivators, but practice wet cultivation according to availability of wet land. The Juang have their own language. Their cultural base has not been widened to incorporate alien traits to any great extent. Marriage no doubt is an expensive proposition for the Juang. It puts great economic strain on their meager resources, never the less, they manage to pay for the bride-price and other ancillary expenses in marriage ceremony. In this background, the economic implications of Juang marriage are analysed.

## Juang Marriage in Nut-Shell

A full description of Juan marriage ceremony cannot be given here due to its long and elaborate procedures. A brief and general note is given here for throwing light on the topic of this paper.

After a bride is chosen or kept in view the groom's parents express their wish to the village elders. The *Boita* (village ritual head) tests omens in order to forecast if the future marriage would be successful. He tests four factors; the health of the groom, the health of the wife, the health and happiness of the offspring of the prospective couple, and for the future harvests of the family by placing, four piles of paddy. If the omen is found favourable the groom's parents send *Kamandirias* (marriage brokers) to the girl's village. After the proposal is accepted by the bride's parents and her villagers, a day is fixed for taking the bride. On the appointed day, the *Kamandirias* reach in the bride's village with a fixed amount of paddy called *Subhadhan* (lit, auspicious paddy) and bring the

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VIII, No. 3, 1966-67, TRB, pp.8-16

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

bride. Women and girls (and unmarried boys with *changu* also join the group in *Gatang Kania* marriage) accompany the bride and take her to the groom's village. In the next morning the bridal pair is given a sacred bath in turmeric water. Next day, the bride goes to the stream with the village women for a bath and returns home with a potful of water on her head. Her path is obstructed by the men who stand as brother, father's, father, or son's son (own or classificatory) to the groom. A fun dance is performed between these persons and the women who stand in the groom's own or alternate generation (and joking relations to the groom and the bride). On this day the groom adorns the bride with beads and bangles and the bride gives a small share of her food to the groom. The villagers and the relatives of the groom pay visit and contribute paddy, husked rice, money, cloth, or goat, etc., towards the groom's bride-wealth. The bridal pair pays a ceremonial visit to the bride's village one or two days after their marriage. The groom's villagers accompany the bride and the groom carries the articles of bride-wealth to be paid to the girl's villagers. After paying the bride-wealth the groom's villagers return to their village with the bride and the groom. The marrying partners do not start sleeping together soon after the marriage is over. The consummation of marriage takes place after three or four months and after a new house is built the bride and the groom start sleeping together.

#### Expenses in a Juang Marriage

In Juang marriages the bride's parents do not have to spend anything. They are gainers in the sense that their daughter is given away to the groom's parents for marriage in exchange of money, grains and clothes (as bride-wealth) and the marriage are performed in the groom's village.

The expense of the bride's parents is so small and insignificant that it lays no strain on them and thus needs no special discussion here. Hence the expense of the groom's family is described here.

The three major items of expense are -

- (i) Money, clothes, grains and chicken for bride-wealth (*Kania Mula*).
- (ii) Marriage articles like new clothes for the bride and the groom, beads and bangles for the bride and combs and ribbons for the ladies who are joking relations to the groom and who take part in the fun dance (*Kadanata*).
- (iii) Paddy, rice, grains, goats, pigs, liquor and chickens for feasts.

The cost of the first and the second categories remains constant in all forms of marriages starting from *Gatang Kania* (marriage by arrangement) and

*Digar Kania* (marriage by capture) to *Surum Kania* (marriage by elopement). In widow marriage no formal bride wealth is paid to the girl's parents; only her husband's villagers are entertained with liquor.

In *Daki Kania* (marriage of the divorcees) only a token amount is paid to the girl's former husband in form of money or a cow as compensation. The following **Table-I** gives a list of the standard articles of bride-wealth in a Juang, marriage and the price of each item.

**Table-I**  
*Standard Bride-Wealth in a Juang, Marriage*

Sl. No.	Name and kind of the thing	Amount	Formal recipients	Approx. Cost
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	<i>Subhadhan</i> (paddy)	2. <i>Khandi</i> 5. <i>Pai</i>	For the village	Rs.11.50
2.	<i>Dhangudi</i> <i>Bhendia Ajan</i> <i>Sasang</i> (paddy)	4. <i>Khandi</i>	For boys and girls	Rs.20
3.	<i>Dhangudi</i> <i>Bhendia</i> <i>Ajan Sasang</i> (husked rice)	3. <i>Khandi</i>	For boys and girls	Rs.30
4.	<i>Mula Kunsar</i> (husked rice)	5 <i>Pai</i>	For the village	Rs.2.50P.
5.	For <i>Gai Munda</i> (husked rice)	1 <i>Khandi</i>	In lieu of a cow	Rs.10
6.	Small bundles of husked rice	20 Bundles		Rs.0.00P.
		1 Bundle	For bride's father	
		1 Bundle	For bride's mother	
		1 Bundle	For bride's mother's brother	
		1 Bundle	In lieu of a cow	
		4 Bundles	For <i>Kamandaki</i> (ritual specialists)	
		4 Bundles	For <i>Bauntaeki</i> (old men)	
		2 Bundles	For <i>Sumpuli Sankol</i> ( <i>bandhus</i> )	



		I Bundle	For the Sage	
		I Bundle	For the Stickman	
		About four bundles for other villagers who obstruct the path of the groom's party.		
7.	Clothes	5 Pieces	I for bride's father	Rs.25
			I for bride's mother	
			I for bride's brother	
			I for bride's father's younger brother	
			I for the village ( <i>Gaon Sari</i> )	
8.	Chicken	1	For <i>Kamandirias</i>	Rs.2
9.	Liquor	2 bottles	For <i>Kamandirias</i>	Rs.2
10.	Cakes		For the villagers	Rs.1
			For bride's mother's brother	Rs.1
11.	Money		In lieu of cow	Rs.2
			For giving small changes with rice bundles.	Rs.2
			<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs.109.50P.</b>

All the people cannot pay the full amount of bride wealth due to poor economic conditions. Person who succeed in paying the full amount are greatly appreciated but relaxation is also made for the quantity of grains in case of an orphan, a widow's son, or an extremely poor person.

The cost for marriage articles does not generally exceed Rs.20 and this expense remains constant in all types of marriages. The marriage articles include clothes for the bridal couple, beads and bangles for the bride, ribbons for the village ladies and salt, dal and spices purchased from the market. The following **Table-2** gives a list of various such items and their price.

The third and the major item of expense in Juang marriage is for the feasts. The villagers of the groom and the bride look forward to marriage as a feasting and merrymaking occasion. The bride's villagers get rice from the groom towards bride-wealth which is cooked and a feast is held. Besides, the groom has to give a number of feasts to his own villagers. The exact expense for marriage feasts cannot be ascertained as it varies with economic condition of the groom.

**Table 2**  
*Marriage Articles and their Cost*

Sl. No.	Items	Quantity	For whom purchased	Approx. Cost
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Cloth	1	For the Groom	Rs.4
2.	Sari	1	For the Bride	Rs.5
3.	Beads & bangles		For the Bride	Rs.2.50P.
4.	Combs	10 to 20	For the ladies of the groom's own or alternate generation who take part in the fun dance.	Made by Juangs.
5.	Ribbons		-do-	Rs.1
6.	Salt, dal, oil, etc.		For feasts	Rs.5
			<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs.17.50 P</b>

A person standing on a strong economic footing naturally affords to spend more rice and goats on marriage, while a man living hand to mouth tries to minimize the expenses on feasts. A standard list, on the marriage feasts can however be prepared on the data collected on live Juang marriages.

**Table -3**  
*Items of Feast in Juang Marriage and the Total Cost*

Sl. No.	Item of things	Amount	The recipients	Approx. Cost
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1.	Husked rice	5 <i>Pai</i>	To <i>Kamandirias</i> for their meals during negotiation.	Rs.2.50P.
2.	Liquor	2 bottles	To <i>Kamandirias</i>	Rs.2
3.	Husked rice		To <i>Kamandirias</i> for feast, after marriage	Rs.5
4.	Chicken		To <i>Kamandirias</i> for feast, after marriage	Rs.2
5.	Husked rice		For feeding the ladies and the girls of the bride village coming on marriage party	Rs.20

6.	Dal		For feeding the ladies and the girls of the bride's village, escorting the bride	Rs.1
7.	Husked rice	2 <i>Khandi</i>	For the groom's major lineage people and all the villagers	Rs.20
8.	Goat		-do-	Rs.15
9.	Paddy	1 <i>Khandi</i>	For the ladies for fun dance.	Rs.5
10.	Pig	1	For the ladies for fun dance	Rs.10
11.	Husked rice	2 <i>Khandi</i>	For the villagers accompanying the bridal pair with bride wealth to the bride's village.	Rs.20
12.	Goat	1	-do-	Rs.10
13.	Husked rice	2 <i>Khandi</i>	For feeding the relatives who bring gifts of rice and other things for the groom.	Rs.20
14.	Goat	1	-do-	Rs.10
15.	Husked rice	1 <i>Khandi</i>	The boys and girls for supplying firewood and leaf cups in marriage	Rs.10
16.	Goat	1	-do-	Rs.10
17.	Rice	5 <i>Pai</i>	For feeding the boys and girls during the marriage for giving company to the bridal pair	Rs.2.50P.
18.	Husked rice	5 <i>Pai</i>	For distribution of small shares of cooled rice, on various occasions of marriage	Rs.2.50P.
19.	Liquor		For the old man of the village	Rs.10
			<b>Total =</b>	<b>Rs.177.50 P</b>

Summing up the three tables a short table is given below to show the overall expenses of marriage on various items.

Table 4

*Summary Table showing Main Heads of Expenses in Juang Marriage*

Sl. No.	Item of things		Amount	Approx. Cost
	(1)	(2)		(3)
1.	Paddy ( <i>Bua</i> )	7 <i>Khandi</i>	5 <i>Pai</i>	Rs.36.50 P.
2.	Rice ( <i>Runkup</i> )	15 <i>Khahdi</i>	10 <i>Pai</i>	Rs.155
3.	Clothes ( <i>Kate</i> )	5 Pieces		Rs.34
4.	Chicken ( <i>Sankoe</i> )	2		Rs.4
5.	Goats and pigs	5		Rs.55
6.	Liquor			Rs.12
7.	Misc expenses			Rs.8
			<b>Total =</b>	<b>Rs.304.50 P.</b>

All the four tables reveal the following points of interest :-

- (i) The approximate cost of a Juang marriage amount to Rs.305 approximately. Poor families minimize the expense to a certain extent by spending less money on feasts and by paying less amount of bride-wealth. The rich families, on the other hand may tend to spend more money on feasts and liquor for fame and prestige. However, the total expense fluctuates from Rs.250 to Rs.400.
- (ii) The major expense of marriage is on feasts, i.e., Rs.177.50 P. as compared to the amount (Rs.109.50P.) paid towards bride wealth and that (Rs.17.50P.) spent for buying miscellaneous marriage articles.
- (iii) Grains of paddy and rice are important items required for a Juang marriage. About half of the total expense is spent for buying paddy and rice. Out of total expenditure of Rs.304.50P. the amount spent on paddy and rice is found to be Rs.191.50P.

#### **Conclusion :**

Marriage, though not so expensive an affair for the modern people lays much economic strain on the Juang who, in most cases run into debt for getting everything arranged for marriage. It is important to know how the various expenses of marriage are met with by Juangs. In this connection it is necessary to discuss the various kinds of helps received from the relatives.

Offers of grains and money are always expected from the close kins and other relatives. From among the *Bandhus* (affinal relatives) the groom's sister's

husband pays more than his mother's brother and father's sister's husband. Helps from the groom's own village include paddy, rice and money donations from the members of the groom's extended family, his minor lineage people and from other villagers. The last group helps token amount of money which is not very outstanding and the help of the first category of people is noteworthy.

However, help from the relatives is always reciprocatory and reinforces the same nature of help from the recipient. In other words the donors always expect the same help from the recipients in future. Besides, all the persons who visit the groom's parents with gifts of rice, paddy and goat, etc., are provided with hearty meals. Goats or chickens are slaughtered for them and they are given meat meals.

As stated in Table-2 the people of important age grades of the village are formally rewarded with rice and meat for feasting. The unmarried boys and girls are given cooked food during all the days of marriage for giving constant company to the bridal pair and for supplying wood and leaves for marriage. The ladies of the groom's own or alternate generations are given combs, ribbons and a pig and paddy for participating in fun dance. Rice and goats are also given to the villagers and to the persons who go to the bride's village with bride-wealth after marriage.

The bride-wealth distribution in the girl's village on the other hand, is also interesting. In fact the girls in Juang society are treated more as the "property" of the village than the daughter of their parents, and the bride-wealth is likewise regarded as the possession of the village. Except the three pieces of clothes taken by the bride's father, mother, and younger brother all other items go outside the bride's family. One cloth given for the bride's father's younger brother is always given to her classificatory father's younger brother. Four *Khandi* of paddy and three *Khandi* of rice are formally offered in the name of the unmarried boys and girls of the bride's village towards the cost for their "turmeric and oil", but in fact the amount is used for making feast for all the villagers. Out of two *Khandi* and five *Pai* of *Subhadhan*, five *Pai* is taken by the man who measures the grains. The rest amount is distributed to all the families giving special shares to the bride's minor lineage families. Token amounts are also offered to the bride's mother's brother, to her village leaders and other important persons.

In spite of small helps received for bride wealth from various sources the groom's parents cannot depend primarily on these gifts in arranging the

marriage. The management of the marriage is done by the villagers, but the economic burden is always shouldered by the groom's parents. Getting ready for marriage requires prolonged habit of saving paddy, rice and other things. A Juang cannot afford to arrange all the things of a marriage worth Rs.300 at once, and hence prior attempts are necessary.

When a Juang boy becomes two or three years old, careful parents start investing money on buying goats, pigs and chickens in his name. These animals multiply in course fifteen to twenty years and earn a lot for the family.

This amount is hoarded or invested otherwise for the son's marriage. Likewise, when a Juang boy attains the age of ten his mother saves some husked rice from the daily meals of the family. When this amount increases it is given in loans for others and thus invested for further increase in the amount. This amount is known as *Bhendia Punji* (savings for an unmarried boy). When the boy grows up he tries to hoard money for his marriage by selling logs of wood in the market and by cultivating special patches of jungle land putting extra labour.

The overall expenses of marriage are borne by the parents. They labour hard and try to earn more from various sources working from dawn to dusk on *toilas*. They toil hard with the stones and pebbles for getting bumper yields. Living upon fruits, roots and wild tubers they cut down their daily meals and save the paddy, rice and other products of harvest for the marriage. In spite of all possible efforts they are often forced to run to the door of money-lenders for loans in case the full amount cannot be arranged.

Marriage by service as prevalent in some tribes is quite unknown to the Juang and hence, no Juang can get rid of paying the bride wealth by serving to his prospective father-in-law. The only way of being free from paying bride-wealth is to marry a widow. As marrying a widow tells upon the prestige of an unmarried young man such cases are extremely rare in Juang society. Hence, before searching for a life-companion, i.e., a marriage mate, a Juang must try to arrange the necessary requirements through extra efforts.

# SHIFTING CULTIVATION IN ORISSA WITH A CASE STUDY AMONG THE JUANG <sup>1</sup>

B. B. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

## SECTION ONE

Shifting cultivation is considered to be the most ancient system of agriculture, dating back to the lower Neolithic period. Conklin (1975 P.I) define shifting cultivation, in short, as any agricultural system in which fields are cleared by firing and are cropped discontinuously. Shifting cultivation is also known as “field-forest rotation” (Pelzer, quoted by Conklin, 1954), or “Slash and burn agriculture as always involving the impermanent agricultural use of plots produced by the cutting hack and burning off of vegetative cover” (Conklin, *ibid*).

Shifting cultivation is practiced with some variations, throughout the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. It is a stage in the evolution of agricultural technique and proceeds plough cultivation. In the opinion of Elwin shifting cultivation is a cultural stage in human progress. It can be assumed that almost all the races in some stage or other had resorted to this means of raising crops. Now, wherever topographic, climatic and socio-economic forces have not favored technological progress in agriculture, shifting cultivation is patch agriculture persists.

The primitive cultivators of different countries call it in different names. It is known as “farming” among the West African primitive folks and as “Sortage” in the French and Belgian Ardennes. It is named “Koholo” among the native of South-East Solomon Islands. The Veddas of Ceylon call it “Chena” and the Burmese hill tribes call it ‘Taungya’. In India, shifting cultivation extensively practiced by the tribals of 9 states.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, 1986, pp.17-26

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

The tribes like the 'Naga, the Sema Naga, the Lakher, the Mikir of the North-Eastern states practice shifting cultivation extensively where it popularly known as *jhum*. In Madhya Pradesh shifting cultivation is carried on over wide areas by the tribals. Among the important tribes associated with this system of cultivation are; Korkus in Betul, Melghat and the Jagira of Chhindwara and Hoshangabad, Baigas of Mandla and Balaghat, Northern Durg and Bilaspur, Kamars of South Raipur, Korwas of Bilaspur and the Maria of Chanda. Among the Baiga it is known as "Bewar". In Southern states the Reddis of Hyderabad, the Talugs of Paloncha and Yellandu in Warangal district, Kolams and Naikpods of Asifabad, Rajura and Utnur Taluks of Adilabad district practice shifting cultivation. Besides, the Koya of Gadavari valley and the Savara who chiefly inhabit the Salur, Parvatipur and Palkonda taluk of Vizagapatam district raise crops on Podu system. The Paraja who live by the side of the Bagata in the Vizagapatam hills and plains have both shifting cultivation and permanent rice field. The Dombo, a scheduled caste found in the Vizagapatam agency are mainly cultivators but they do *podu*. On the Nilgiris Plateau, the Kurichiyas and other agricultural tribes carry on shifting cultivation known as *punam* cultivation in Waypaad. Among the tribes practicing *punam* are Mulla Kurumbas, Karimpolaus, Kaders, Jen Kurumbar and Kurumbar.

### Shifting Cultivation in Orissa

The tribes of Orissa practice shifting cultivation extensively since time immemorial and there are as many as 9 tribes namely the Koya, the Paroja, the Gadaba, the Bondo, the Didayi, the Kondh, the Saora, the Juang and the Bhuiyan who eke out their subsistence chiefly through shifting cultivation. It is known as *ekan*, *guda* and *nala* among the Juang of Keonjhar hills. The Bhuiyan of Bonai subdivision of Sundargarh district and of Bhuiyan *pirh* of Keonjhar district calls it as *kaman*, *biringa* and *guda*. Among the Saora of Ganjam and Koraput districts it goes by the name *bagada* or *saroba*. The Dongria Kondh of Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada subdivision calls it as *haru* and as *rama* by the Desia Kondh of Rairakhol and Bamra subdivisions. It is known as *livang* or *kunda chas* among the Bonda and as *lankapadsenad* among the Koya of (undivided) Koraput district. The district-wise distribution of tribes who practice shifting cultivation is given below in **Table - I**.

Broadly speaking, every 14<sup>th</sup> person among the tribals in the state is a shifting cultivator. This emphasizes not only the acuteness of the problem but also the extent to which it is resorted to. In Koraput district as many as 6 tribes practice shifting cultivation and of these 6 tribes almost all the persons



belonging to the Bonda, Didayi and Koya communities depend fully on swidden cultivation. Of the rest three tribes about 70 percent each of the Kondh and the Saora still resort to shifting cultivation as against 19 percent of the Gadaba. In the district of Ganjam the Saora are the sole shifting cultivator like the Kondh of Kalahandi, Sambalpur and Pauri Bhuiyan of Sundargarh. In the district of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal the Juang and the Bhuiyan practice shifting cultivation, their percentage being 40.95 in Keonjhar and 27.76 in Dhenkanal districts.

**TABLE –I**  
*District-wise Distribution of Tribes Practicing Shifting Cultivation*

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Name of the tribe	Total population (1971 Census)	Approx Number Practising Shifting Cultivation	Percentage of Col.5 to Col.4
1.	Koraput	Bonda	5334	5000	93.73
		Didayi	2164	2000	92.42
		Koya	58 912	57 000	96.75
		Kondh	3 25 144	2 32 000	71.35
		Gadaba	46 237	9000	19.46
		Saora	28 359	20 000	70.52
2.	Ganjam	Saora	1 19 262	79 000	66.24
3.	Sundargarh	Pauri Bhuiyan	58 822	15 000	25.50
4.	Keonjhar	Pauri Bhuiyan	55 995	17 000	30.35
		Juang	12 372	11 000	88.91
5.	Phulbani	Kondh	2 23 322	1 95 000	87.31
6.	Kalahandi	Kondh	1 14 644	33 000	28.78
7.	Sambalpur	Kondh	25 612	12 002	46.86
8.	Dhenkanal	Bhuiyan & Juang	15 885	4410	27.76
	<b>Total</b>	<b>All tribes</b>	<b>10 92 064</b>	<b>6 91 412</b>	<b>63.31</b>

Variations in climate, soil and other geo-physical characteristics from region to region in the state is responsible in the slight variation in the technique of shifting cultivation adopted by the tribes inhabiting these regions. For example, the Bhuiyan and the Juang of Northern Orissa practice ploughing in

the swidden as the hill slope is very gentle and contains more earth where as the Saora and the Kondh of Southern Orissa till the soil by means of a hoe as the hill slope is very stiff and rugged and very poor in the earth content.

The technique of shifting cultivation in Orissa evolves through 7 stages of operation such as selection of sites, tree felling, and bush cleaning, firing, hoeing or ploughing, sowing and dibbling, watching and finally harvesting. A hoe culturist of Southern Orissa owns the swidden plots individually to which he has the right to sell and mortgage, whereas in Northern Orissa the land is communally owned. Here, the decision of the community as a whole directs the operations like selection of site, selection of seed, choosing the time of sowing and harvesting. After the site is selected clearing and tree felling starts during the months from January to March. The tribes of Orissa generally cut the trees high above the ground leaving stumps about 1 to 2 feet high. These stumps may also sprout at the second cutting. While cutting trees some important species are left out which supply flowers, fruits, leaves, etc. Also the Bhuiyan and the Juang of Northern Orissa do not damage some big trees which lie on the border line of the swiddens for identifying the boundary of the plot. This practice is not followed among the Saora, and the Kondh of Southern Orissa. Unlike the tribes of Southern Orissa, the Juang and the Bhuiyan of Bonai and Keonjhar keep some trees standing in the swidden but they are either girdled or severely burnt at the base, so that, they die during the course of the year resulting in a 'ghost forest' of dead trees. These trees are used to serve as bean-stalk. The women are forbidden to take part in the jungle clearing among the Juang and the Bhuiyan, whereas, there is no such restriction imposed with this work among the Saora and other tribes of Southern Orissa.

When the cut material has become sufficiently dry, generally in the middle or end of the April, the tribes set fire to it. The Juang and the Bhuiyan of Keonjhar use the sacred fire from the village dormitory to ignite the swidden unlike the Saora, the Kondh and other tribal groups of Southern Orissa who use only a match stick or lighted twig for this purpose. The tribes of Northern Orissa leave the ashes in sites but their counterparts in Southern Orissa spread these ashes evenly on the swidden.

All the tribal communities of the state prepare the soil bed by means of hoe or mattock. But the gentle hill slopes of Keonjhar facilitate ploughing and the tribe resorts to it. Wherever ploughing is not possible they use a hoe for digging the soil. Mixed crops of hill paddy, other cereals, minor millets and

pulses are grown in swiddens. Besides a few varieties of vegetables are also planted in swidden by the Juang and the Bhuiyan of Keonjhar district. The Saora of Ganjam district cultivates turmeric in the swidden. Weeding is done when the crops attain knee high and when the crops start ripening the people watch these spending nights in the field-huts, from the depredation of wild animals. The crops are then harvested in succession and generally it continues till the end of January. The harvested crops are threshed in the threshing floor already prepared in the swiddens.

A patch of land is cultivated for one to three years after which it is abandoned till the trees are sufficiently grown up to permit a second felling. This process continues until the soil is exhausted, the parent rock materials exposed and no further growth is possible except probably some thorny bushes and shrubs. The recuperative cycle is of longer duration varying from 10 to 12 years in Northern Orissa whereas it is 4 to 6 years in Southern Orissa. This shortening of recuperative cycle in Koraput and Kalahandi districts has resulted in low yield of crops, rapid denudation, severe soil degradation and erosion. Today in many parts of Koraput, specifically in the Malkangiri subdivision where the incidence of shifting cultivation is very high, completely barren hills with exposed parent rock materials are seen.

'Primitive agriculture' as described by Clark Wissler "is a co-operative effort in which the community as a whole participates". It has promoted culture not merely by providing food to the primitive but is also responsible for closely knitting and discipline humanity itself by bringing individuals together for observing rituals and ceremonies connected with agricultural operation. Among the Orissa tribes the ritualistic aspects of axe culture exists among the Juang and the Bhuiyan of Keonjhar, among the Kutia Kondh of Phulbani, among the Dongria Kondh of Niyamgiri hills and to certain extent among the Koya of Koraput district. But the shifting cultivation practiced by the Lanjia Saora of Ganjam district and the Gadaba, the Bonda and the Paroja of Koraput district has no religious or mythological significance.

#### **Area under Shifting Cultivation**

The problem of shifting cultivation is, perhaps most acute in Orissa than any other State in the country. Although at present an accurate data on the areas under shifting cultivation is not available, yet some rough estimates have been made. Before 1936 when the new state of Orissa was formed, this was not a

matter of much concern to the administration for the few localities where it was being practiced was in the Kandhamals, Ganjam and Koraput districts involving the tribes like the Kondh and the Savara. At that time the Koya, the Bonda and the Paroja were not included. The tracts inhabited by the Bhuiyan, the Juang and the Kondh in Keonjhar, Pallahara, Bonai, Bamara, Rairakhol and Kalahandi districts were included in the State in 1948. Thus the tract affected by *podu* cultivation was only 300 sq. miles in extent prior to 1936 whereas it became nearly 12,000 sq. miles in 1948. The population of tribes engaged in this type of cultivation was about 10 lakhs. In the pre-plan periods, attempts were made to make an estimate of the area under shifting cultivation in the state. Dr. H.F. Mooney who had worked as Forest Advisor to Ex-States and subsequently as Conservator of Forests, Orissa had an experience of Orissa forests for about 25 years. He estimated that about 12,770 sq. miles or about one fifth of the total land surface in the state is affected by shifting cultivation and nearly one million tribal people depend upon this method of raising crops for their living. The **Table - 2** below shows the areas affected by shifting cultivation in various districts of Orissa as estimated by Dr. H. F. Mooney.

**TABLE 2**  
*Area under Shifting Cultivation as estimated by Dr. H. F. Mooney*

Sl. No	Name of the district	Area in sq. miles	Dependant tribes
1.	Keonjhar	460	Bhuiyan, Juang
2.	Sundergarh	300	Bhuiyan, Erenga Kolha
3.	Dhenkanal	100	Bhuiyan
4.	Sambalpur	410	Bhuiyan, Kondh
5.	Kalahandi	2000	Munda, Kutia Kandha, (Paharia) Kamara, Bhunjia
6.	Ganjam	4530	Kondh, Saora, Jatapu
7.	Koraput	5000	Kondh, Saora, Jatapu, Paroja, Gadaba, Koya, others
	<b>Total</b>		<b>12770 Sq. miles / 817280 acres</b>

A comparative statement relating to areas under shifting cultivation of different states and Union territories given below shows that the incidence of shifting cultivation and the population affected is maximum in Orissa as compared with other states.

TABLE 3

*Area affected by Shifting Cultivation in different States of the Indian Union*

Name of the State/ Territories	Number of Tribes practicing Shifting Cultivation	Number of Households	Total Tribal Population	Total Land utilized for Shifting Cultivation (in acres)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Assam	9	1 94 000	9 70 000	5 12 000
Orissa	20	2 00 000	10 00 000	4 00 000
Bihar	5	23 000	1 15 000	400
Manipur	3	36 000	1 83 000	54 000
Tripura	10	19 100	95 500	1 16 900

*Source : Shifting Cultivation in India, 1958, ICAR, P.4-5*

A comparison of the figures quoted by I. C. A. R. and Dr. Mooney shows that there is discrepancy to the extent that the latter is about double of the former.

The institutes of Francis, Pondicherry, India have prepared the vegetation maps of India from which fairly accurate information regarding the extent of land under shifting cultivation can be found out. The Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training institute, Government of Orissa took up these exercises by measuring the patches shown in the map under shifting cultivation in different vegetation zones and found out that the area under shifting cultivation to be about 2579333.534 hectares or 25793.335 sq. kms. Thus, about 17 percent of the total geographical area of the state is affected by shifting cultivation. The coverage under shifting cultivation as stated here includes not only the swidden plots but also immediate adjacent areas which are seriously affected by the practice of shifting cultivation. The hectarage under shifting cultivation in different vegetation zones is given in **Table - 4**.

The land under shifting cultivation within the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) area is 22,22,705.028 hectares or 22,227.05 sq. kms. This means that about 32 percent of the Sub-Plan area of the State is covered under shifting cultivation. More than 90% of this coverage is in the Sub-Plan area of Southern Orissa and less than 10% in the corresponding area of Northern Orissa. Shifting cultivation is present in 7 out of 13 districts of Orissa. About 50% of total area under

shifting cultivation is found in Koraput district only. The district-wise distribution of land under shifting cultivation is given below in **Table - 5**.

**TABLE 4**  
*Area under Shifting Cultivation in different Vegetational Zones*

Sl. No	Vegetational Zone	Area in hectares
1.	Moist Vegetation type Shorea-Terminalia-Adina-Series	13 67 517.937
2.	Moist Vegetation type Shorea- Syzygium-Operculatum-Series	5 12 741.561
3.	Dry Vegetation type Shorea-Buchanania-Cleistanthus-Series	2 65 377.482
4.	Dry Vegetation type Terminalia-Andgeissos-Cleistanthus-Series	33 536.308
5.	Moist Vegetation type Toona-Garuga-Series	83 840.770
6.	Dry Vegetation type Tectona-Terminalia-Series	2 77 319.476
7.	<b>Total</b>	<b>25 79 333.534</b>

**TABLE 5**  
*Land under Shifting Cultivation in Sub Plan area of different districts of the State*

Sl. No.	District	Area in Sq.Kms.
1	Koraput	10973.17 (49.36)
2	Phulbani	5668.94 (25.51)
3	Kalahandi	1076.82 (4.84)
4	Ganjam	2354.00 (10.59)
5	Sambalpur	12.89 (0.06)
6	Keonjhar	1296.31 (5.83)
7	Sundargarh	844.86 (3.81)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22226.99</b>

According to the report on Erosion Assessment of Orissa (from Erts-I, Satellite Imagery, 1975) prepared by State Soil Conservation Organization, the area which is subjected to very severe erosion as a result of shifting cultivation is estimated at 32,69,120 hectares or 81,72,800 acres or 12,770 sq. miles. Since, this area includes hill slopes, pediment slopes and rock outcrops, the actual land

under shifting cultivation may be less. But lacking accurate data it is difficult to say correctly how much land is presently under active shifting cultivation.

#### Area under Shifting Cultivation in Keonjhar district

The State Soil conservation Department of Government of Orissa has assessed the area under shifting cultivation by manual interpretation of ERTS-I (Land Sat-II) B. & W. imagery in the scale of 12 50 000 of MSS 5. The area which is included for analysis consists of hills devoid of forest vegetation due to shifting cultivation. In addition artificial straight regular parceling without vegetation in hilly blocks are also included as it confirms the assumption that the destruction of vegetation has been done with biotic interference for shifting cultivation. The area under shifting cultivation thus determined comes to 35,999.50 hectares in the Keonjhar district.

## SECTION TWO

### A Case Study of Shifting Cultivation

This case study is related to the shifting cultivation as practiced by Kalandi Juang of Kadalibadi village of Bansapal Block of Keonjhar district. In the year 1981, Kalandi Juang carried on shifting cultivation on three hills, that is, Unchadiha, Telchua and Kupurchua. The distance of these hills from his village and acreage under cultivation is furnished in **Table - I**.

TABLE -I  
*Distance of the Hills and Area of Swiddens*

Sl. No	Name of the Hill	Location of the Plots	No. of plots	Year of Cultivation	Approx Acreage	Distance from the village (kms)
1	Unchadiha	Hill top to bottom	1	1 <sup>st</sup>	0.50	1
2	Telchua	-do -	1	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.00	3
3	Kupurchua	-do -	1	2 <sup>nd</sup>	0.50	2

TABLE -2

*Crops grown in Unchadiha Hill with the quantity of seeds sown and yield*

Sl.No	Name of the Crops	Quantity of Seeds shown in Kg./No	Yield in Kg. /No.
1	Rasi	6	50
2	Boitalu	20 Nos	....
3	Tumba	20 Nos.	10

TABLE 3

*Crops grown in Telchua Hill with the quantity of seeds sown and Yield*

Sl.No	Name of the Crops	Quantity of Seeds shown in Kg./No	Yield in Kg. /No.
1	Paddy	3.0	80
2	Ragi	0.5	40
3	Harada	1	5
4	Rooma (Pulse)	0.5	4
5	Kangu	0.5	10
6	Jali	0.5	20
7	Kathia	0.2	8

TABLE - 4

*Crops grown in Kupurchua Hill with the quantity of seeds sown and yield*

Sl.No	Name of the Crops	Quantity of Seeds shown in Kg./No	Yield in Kg. /No.
1	Paddy	2.5	100
2	Ragi	0.5	30
3	Harada	1	5
4	Rooma (Pulse)	0.1	5
5	Kangu	0.1	8
6	Gangei	0.5	20
7	Kakudi	20 Nos.	60 Nos.

Kalandi Juang said that in the first year they only grow Rasi in the swidden since the first year plot is not suitable for paddy cultivation. The explanation given for this is that in the first year of cultivation weeds come up in a large scale and cause harm to paddy plants. It is very difficult to check the growth of weeds in the first year. Therefore, in the second year they take up



paddy cultivation extensively along with other cereals, minor millets and pulses. In case of some swidden in the third year an indigenous variety of cereal called *jalli* is grown. Then the patch of swidden is abandoned for recuperation. He told that they select their swiddens in such a way that in every year they can grow different types of crops. This means that in every year they clear a patch for first year cultivation along with two or more plots for second year cultivation.

### Economics of Shifting Cultivation

Kalandi is of the opinion that the activities relating to swidden cultivation is very arduous in nature and as such either one has to employ casual labourers or work round the clock along with all the family members. His family members consist of his wife and two sons. His youngest son is now reading in class IV in the Ashram School of Gonasika.

Kalandi cleared a patch in Unchadiha hill for first year Rasi cultivation where he and his son worked for 30 days for cutting big trees. Then, both of them worked for about 90 days for clearing bushes and the site. Thereafter, he took about 15 days for sowing seeds and about 10 days for the preparation of threshing floor and harvesting of Rasi.

TABLE - 5  
*Money Value of the Labour Input*

Items of Work	No. of Man Days Engaged		Money Value (in Rs.)
Tree Felling and Forest Clearing	60	105	420
	30		
	15		
Ploughing, Hoeing and Sowing	180	217	868
	15		
	15		
	7		
Weeding	135	155	620
	20		
Harvesting	10	91	364
	45		
	36		
<b>Total</b>	<b>568</b>		<b>2,272</b>

In Telchua hill, after the first year harvest, the wife of Kalandi took about 30 days for de-bushing and clearing of site. Thereafter Kalandi ploughed the field twice which took about 15 days. For weeding, Kalandi, his wife and his son worked for about one and half months and for harvesting these, three persons took 15 days time.

In Kupurchua hill Kalandi's wife took about 15 days for bush clearing. Then Kalandi worked for about 7 days for ploughing and sowing seeds. In weeding operation, his wife worked for 20 Days. Finally the entire family harvested the crops within 12 days time. **Table - 5** gives the money value of the labour input put to shifting cultivation by the family members of Kalandi Juang. As per the local wage rate an adult male or female gets Rs. 4 per day and a child get Rs. 2.50 per day besides some food.

The price of different types of seeds shown by Kalandi Juang in shifting cultivation is given below in **Table - 6**.

**TABLE - 6**  
*Money Value of Seeds grown in Shifting Cultivation*

Sl.No	Type of Seed	Quantity grown in Kg./No	Money Value (in Rs.)
1	Paddy	55	35
2	Rasi	6	12
3	Mandia	1	1
4	Harada	2	4
5	Rooma	0.4	0.70
6	Kangu	0.6	1.20
7	Jali	0.5	0.50
8	Kathia	0.3	0.50
9	Gangei	0.5	0.50
10	Boitalu	20 nos .	...
11	Tunka	20 nos.	....
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Rs .55.40</b>

The expenditure on shifting cultivation thus comes to (Rs. 2,272+ Rs. 55.40) Rs. 2327.40. The money value of different crops produced in swiddens is given in **Table - 7**.

**TABLE - 7**  
*Money Value of Crops Grown in Shifting Cultivation*

Sl.No	Crops	Yield Quantity in Kg. (Rs)	Harvest Price /Kg.(Rs)	Money value (Rs)
1	Paddy	180	1	180
2	Rasi	50	2	100
3	Mandia	70	1	70
4	Harada	10	2	20
5	Rooma	9	2	18
6	Kangu	18	2	36
7	Jali	20	1	20
8	Kathia	8	2	16
9	Gangei	20	1	20
10	Boitalu	....	...	...
11	Tunka	10 nos	...	...
	<b>Total</b>			<b>480</b>

From the above table it is seen that the money value of the yield of different crops grown in shifting cultivation is only Rs.480 which is very less. To get this income Kalandi Juang invested Rs. 2327.40, thus incurring a loss of Rs. 1847.40. This proves the fact that now a days shifting cultivation is not profitable. But Kalandi Juang, who argued otherwise and said that the labour component which account for 97 percent of the total investment should not be included in the expenditure side as he did not employ any labourer from outside. However, he agreed that the turn out from shifting cultivation these days is not that good as it was in the past when the climate was quite favourable and the land, fertile.

Kalandi Juang possesses three small plots of wet land measuring about Ac. 0.25. In these plots only paddy is cultivated once in a year. He cultivated high yielding paddy in two plots and local paddy in the third plot. He took seven days for ploughing the seed bed and sowing seeds. Then, after the seedlings were raised he took up ploughing which took nearly eight days. For transplantation of seedlings four persons worked for two days. In this work he employed one paid labour to assist him. He did not take up weeding in the paddy field. After the paddy crop ripened he along with his wife and son worked

for ten days for harvesting and threshing the crop. The money value of the amount of labour which was put for growing paddy is given in the following Table -8.

**TABLE - 8**  
*Money Value of the Labour Input in Wet Cultivation*

Items of Work	Number of Man Days	Money value (in Rs)
Preparation of seed bed and raising of seedlings	7	28
Ploughing	8	32
Transplantation	10	40
Harvesting and Threshing	10	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>140</b>

The quantity and the price of seeds used for paddy cultivation are given below:

**TABLE - 9**  
*Money Value of the amount of Seeds Grown*

Variety	Quantity used in Kg.	Money Value (in Rs.)
High-yielding	5	5
Local	5	5
	10	10

The expenditure on wet cultivation thus comes to (Rs. 140+Rs. 10) Rs. 150. The yield of different varieties of paddy is given below in Table - 10:

**TABLE 10**  
*Yield of Paddy Grown in Wet Cultivation*

Variety	Quantity used in Kg	Money value (in Rs)
High yielding	200	200
Local	50	50
	250	250

In order to draw any conclusion it is necessary to compare the shifting cultivation with wet cultivation. Table - II gives the comparison on certain items.

**TABLE – II**  
*Shifting Cultivation Vrs. Wet Cultivation*

Items of comparison	Shifting cultivation	Wet cultivation
Amount of seed required per acre	30	20
Amount of labour required per acre	1136	280
Yield per acre	240	500

The above table which is self explanatory clearly reveals that in shifting cultivation the requirement of seed and labour per acre is much high in comparison to what is required for the same amount of land in wet cultivation. But the yield per acre in shifting cultivation is much less than that of the wet cultivation. Here, in shifting cultivation Kalandi has to invest labour 4 times more than what he invested in wet cultivation to get an income which is just half of the amount he got in wet cultivation.

**References :**

1. Elwin, Verrier. 1948 Notes on Juang, *Man in India*, Vol. XXVIII, Ranchi.
2. Nag, D.S. 1958 *Tribal Economy*
3. Patnaik, N. 1977 Shifting Cultivation in Orissa, THRTI., Bhubaneswar, *Adibasi*, Vol.XVI, No.4.
4. Tripathy, D. P. 1958 *Shifting Cultivation in Orissa*, Orissa Government Press, Cuttack.
5. 1940 *Report of the Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee, Orissa*, Orissa Government Press, Cuttack

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF PUS PUNI : A RITUAL OF THE HILL JUANG OF KEONJHAR <sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The Juangs are a Mundari speaking tribe of Odisha. Their population according to 1961 census is 21,890. The Juang of Dhenkanal have since long adopted settled agriculture living in plain villages along with various caste groups, but the autochthonous Juang dwelling inhabiting the hill ranges of Keonjhar constitute the backward section of the tribes of Odisha. They live primarily on shifting cultivation and food gathering and retain their traditional cultural norms to a great extent. Their socio-economic life, rites and rituals, feasts and festivities and political organization are tradition-oriented. This article aims at describing *Pus Puni* festival of the Juang and analyses significance of the rites in relation to other aspects of their culture.

## Preparations

*Pus Puni*, one of the important festivals of the Juang, is observed in the month of January (*Magh*). There is no fixed date to observe the festival in all the villages. The event is observed after the harvesting of *niger* and after the villagers pay off their old debts. Each village selects a convenient day of its own after discussion in their traditional village council (*barabhai*) and it is communicated to all by the *Dangua* (the village messenger) by shouting loudly in front of the dormitory (*Majang*) so that the house may be plastered, money and grains be arranged, new clothes be purchased, guests and relatives be invited and so on.

A day before the commencement of *Pus Puni* is called *Bara Rua* (tabooed day). On this day religious officials of the village observe certain restrictions to maintain ritual purity for the festive days. If the wife of the *Nagam* (Ritual-head) or *Ardhan* undergoes her menstrual cycle, this prohibits her husband to participate in the ritual of *Pus Puni*. Hence, the festival may be

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No. 2, 1967, pp. 28-34

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (now SCSTR TI), Bhubaneswar

postponed. If such situation occurs in case of other religious officials they are not allowed to take part in the ritual, but the festival is not deferred to. On *Bara Rua* night, the officers must maintain strict continence and should sleep in a separate bed from their wives.

### Rites and Rituals

The festival is celebrated for three days—the day for eating rice and offering rice in honour of the ancestors, the day of sacrifice of animals to propitiate the deities and eating cakes and the day of blessing the villagers. In some villages the festival is consummated in two days, the rites of the last two days being performed in one day.

The first day of the festival is called *Taana Aba* (Rice eating festival). The *Nagam* worships *Gram Siri* (Village-deity represented by stones installed near the dormitory house) and offering *arua* rice (rice husked from unboiled paddy), milk, molasses and lighted wicks and prays that the villagers would now observe *Pus Puni* and no calamity may befall on them or their cattle or agriculture. The *Nagam* and his wife and other ritual participants (*Kamandaki*) consisting of *Ardhan*, *Dangua*, *Naik*, *Adhikari*, etc., observe a fasting. *Nagam's* wife plasters her house and a portion of her courtyard with cowdung. She husks paddy after bath and winnows it in a new winnowing fan. The *Nagam* takes bath and wears new clothes. He pours five *pai* (local grain measure containing two Kgs. approximately) of paddy in the courtyard and worships it by sacrificing a fowl. While pouring the paddy, if it tilts towards his house it is believed that they may expect a bumper harvest for that year, but if it tilts otherwise, it indicates a good harvest. After this ritual the *Nagam* sits on a new mat in the courtyard and the family-heads of the village come to greet him with gifts of paddy, *mandia* (Ragi), *gangei* or any other grains. Due to economic strain some families usually leave the village in search of employment. Those families proposing to leave the village for that year are forbidden to go to *Nagam* with gifts as they are not recognized to be the *bona fide* citizens of the village. The individual family-heads pour half of the grains they bring on the courtyard, in such a manner so that the pile may tilt to their side foretelling sign of prosperity for them. After *Nagam*, the *Ardhan* pours the grains, and following *Ardhan* the *bona fide* ritual personnel do so in order of seniority. Such strict hierarchy is, however, not maintained for the commoners. The *Nagam* sacrifices two more chickens in honour of their tutelary deities and the paddy contributed by him is stored in a straw bundle and preserved to be used as ritual seed by the individual families on the occasion of first-sowing ceremony. A bundle is made of straw of the hill paddy harvested for the year and the *Nagam* is offered with tobacco to

set fire to the straw bundle and light his tobacco from this first fire. Before this ritual the straw may not be used as fire-bundle. The villagers also entertain the *Nagam* with liquor and after offering liquor to the deities the elderly people join the cocktail party with the *Nagam*. The head-meat of the chickens sacrificed and the *arua* rice offered in the ritual are cooked together by the unmarried boys (*Kangerki*) and the food is to be eaten by the ritual officers and the *Kangerki*. The grains brought by the individual family-heads are distributed equally among four groups'- the *Nagam*, his wife, the *Kangerki* and *Selanki* (unmarried girls), and the villagers – each group getting an equal share.

Prior to *Pus Puni*, *arua* rice must not be cooked. On this day *arua* rice is cooked in a new pot and with molasses, milk, and cooked-rice put in a new pot kept on a forked branch are offered to the male and female ancestors in the village outskirts. Returning back to the village, the senior male members of the village assemble in the dormitory house and liquor is shared by all. The day is highlighted by *changu* (circular wooden musical instrument covered with hide) dance. Persons of all age participate in this dance. Girls from *bandhu* (cognate) village are also invited to make the dance more colourful. It is customary for the boys and girls to keep up *changu* dance overnight.

The second day of *Pus Puni* is called *Alak Aba* (cake-eating festival). Cakes are prepared out of the grains received on the previous day and the same are eaten by the respective groups. Cakes prepared from the village share are equally distributed among all the families of the village who went with such grains to the *Nagam's* house. The cakes prepared by the *Selanki* out of the share given to the boys and girls are equally distributed among the *bona fide* members of the dormitory and among those newly married persons (*Kamathara*) who still continue to be regarded as recognized members of the boys' and girls' organization by not performing a ritual and resigning from the association of the former. If a new girl is to be admitted to the dormitory a share of such cakes is given to her and from that day she is recognized as a formal member of the girls' association and assumes the rights and responsibilities like other members.

At noon two male goats and chickens are sacrificed and offered to *Thanapati* and *Buitinipata* (The tutelary deities of the place). The ritual is performed at the outskirts of the village and all the drums of the village are taken out and beaten at the time of worship. The *Nagam* worships the deities and prays for a happy and prosperous new year. Each family contributes shares of uncooked rice (the amount depending on the member of family members). Meat of the sacrificed animals and the rice are cooked on the spot and the villagers assemble and enjoy the communal feast.



The last day of *Pus Puni* is *Gaon Bandha*, observed to guard the villagers against evils and ill-luck and to strengthen the village solidarity. This ritual is performed in front of the dormitory house. The *Nagam* brings six pairs of *sal* twigs (about three inches long and half of an inch in diameter). Half of the twigs must be dry ones. All the villagers, both young and old, and excluding those who would not remain permanently in the village at least for one year, assemble on the plaza. The *Nagam* worships *Gram Siri* (Village goddess), *Buitinipata* and *Thanapati* praying—"Oh *Gram Siri, Buitinipata, Thanapati!* Today *Gaon Bandha* ceremony will be performed. Let the *bara bhaiki* (elderly men), *ma bhouniki* (elderly women), *selanki, kangerki* (Unmarried girls and boys) *ualiki* (children) and *alei meramki* (cattle and goats) be free from ill-health and calamities. Let there be bumper harvest in the forthcoming year. Let the jungle be enriched with plenty of wild roots, fruits, greens and tubers to feed us".

After the prayer he tests omen by casting the seven pairs of lots: each pair comprising of piece of splited raw *sal* twig and a similar dried piece of twig. The first pair of twigs is cast on the ground for the health and happiness of the *Kamandaki* (ritual officers). If one split falls down concavely and the other one convexly a good fortune is indicated. Otherwise, the lots are cast again and again till the desired position is attained. Likewise, casting is done for *bara bhaiki, ma bhouniki, kangerki* (unmarried boys), *selanki* (unmarried girls) and for *ualiki*, respectively. Then the *Nagam* walks around the villagers. After encircling them seven times with a pot full of turmeric water, he sprinkles turmeric water on them and all shout '*haribol*' and watch to know the direction from which the echo is heard. It is believed that the forest lying in the direction from which the echo is heard yields good harvest and thereby a patch of such forest may be selected for the current year's shifting cultivation.

### General features and Conclusion

The above description of the *Pus Puni* ritual not only gives an account of the religious rites performed by the Juang, but it throws light on social, economic and political aspects of the tribe. This shows, as to what extent all the aspects of culture -economic, social, religious and political - are closely interrelated with each other to make it an integrated whole and a microscopic analysis of one of the aspects can tell much about the other aspects of a culture.

During *Pus Puni*, elaborate religious rites are performed to honour the ancestors by offering them cooked food of the first *arua* (unboiled paddy) rice to propitiate the patron goddess of the village as well as to a host of other gods and goddesses, ghosts and spirits dwelling in hills, forests and streams. They

equally test omen for plenty and prosperity for the villagers and blessing them against disease and death, misfortunes and calamities. In *Pus Puni*, paddy contributed by the *Nagam* is considered sacred and is stored to be used as ritual seed by all the families of the village on the first day of sowing. The belief that *arua* rice and cakes made of *arua* rice may not be eaten before these are offered to the ancestors, the extent to which the *Nagam* and other ritual officers maintain purity for *Pus Puni* and the rites and rituals involved in sacrifices made to appease the deities show the religious frame work of Juang mind. Living in woods and forests devoured by wild animals and depending on the mercy of nature to subsist themselves, the Juang are afraid of various gods and goddesses, their ancestral spirits and river and tree spirits. Negligence in proper propitiation may irritate them and open way for innumerable calamities and misfortune overtaking the life of the cattle and human beings. Hence, the Juangs take proper caution to appease these supernatural powers and forces through worships and sacrifices and secure their life ensuring health and happiness, plethora and prosperity.

The salient features of the Juang political Organization and the authority structure are clearly manifested in *Pus Puni*. According to their traditional norm, age and generation determine the authority structure in a village and senior persons, senior both in generation and in age are considered leaders. The *Nagam*, therefore, happens to be the eldest man of the senior most generation and next to him in status is the *Ardhan*- the secular head of the village. The *Nagam* is viewed to be the 'lord' of the village, all others considering them 'subjects'. On the first day of *Pus Puni*, the 'subjects' revere the 'lord' by taking gifts of rice, *ragi* and other grains as token of respect and entertaining him with tobacco and liquor. No villager may prepare ropes of *toila* (hill-slope land) straw and light it to use the fire for smoking until the *Nagam* does so on the day of *Pus Puni*. Methods involved in selection of day for *Pus Puni* by discussing in the dormitory and offering of liquor in cock-tail party according to seniority also tell much about the political organization of the Juang.

*Pus Puni* throws light on the social organization of the Juang. Besides the ritual importance, *Pus Puni* may be considered as the biggest festive occasion for the Juang. After the year's harvest the Juang pay off their outstanding debts and before welcoming a new year want to enjoy life by eating delicacies, wearing new clothes, inviting guests and by dancing and singing to forget the trials and tribulations of life. In fact *Pus Puni* breaks the monotony of their routine life and generates new energy and zeal in them to face the hardships for the New Year.

*Pus Puni* is the proper occasion to study the communal feeling and the co-operative endeavour of the Juang. The religious rites are performed

communally by the *Nagam* for the whole village and all the families must contribute funds for financing the ritual. Goats and chickens may be purchased out of the funds raised from the village. The meat of the sacrificed animals and uncooked rice contributed by individual families may be cooked on a hill-paddy plot and eaten by all. Likewise cakes prepared out of the grains distributed to the unmarried boys and girls and to the villagers are distributed among all the members of the respective group. The unmarried boys also raise contributions, purchase a goat and distribute the meat among them giving a token amount to the families having no *kanger* or *selan*.

Certain rites of *Pus Puni* also are performed to strengthen village solidarity. Following *Pus Puni* shares of cooked rice and cakes may be distributed among the families belonging to the same major and minor lineages. *Gaon Bandha* ritual further consolidates their solidarity when all the villagers assemble on the plaza and the *Nagam* encircling them seven times; bless them for health and happiness. Any outsider or the persons to leave the village elsewhere in search of employment are excluded from this group. They are not allowed to take gifts to the *Nagam's* house, to eat cakes prepared out of the grains distributed in the *Nagam's* house, to join the communal feast held on the hill-paddy plot and are not blessed by the *Nagam* on the *Gaon Bandha* ritual. Marriage, which is more a responsibility of the village than the duty of the concerned guardians may not be performed before *Pus Puni* and even negotiation for marriage may not be broken out prior to the commencement of *Pus Puni*. The organized behaviour of the unmarried boys and girls and their rights and responsibilities relating to the dormitory organization are also manifested in *Pus Puni*. As formal members of the dormitory, they are recognized as a miniature replica of the larger village unit. Like members of other age-groups, they have well defined rights and responsibilities. The boys must contribute a goat for the village feast by raising funds from among themselves, take care of the girls coming on dancing expedition to highlight *Pus Puni* and play on *changu* and dance overnight. On *Alak Aba* day of *Pus Puni* a girl desirous of becoming a formal member of the girls' association may be given a share of the cakes prepared out of the grains given to them by the *Nagam* on the first day of *Pus Puni*. Dance on an ordinary day among the boys and girls of one village becomes less colourful and stereotyped but in *Pus Puni* girls from *bandhu* (marrying) villages are invited for dance and there is ample scope for the *bandhu* boys and girls to display fun and joke during the dance.

The economic implications of *Pus Puni* are of supreme importance. Commencement of *Pus Puni* marks the beginning of a new agricultural year.

Before the festival is observed harvesting of Niger, hill-paddy and other crops cultivated on hill clearings must have been over and the outstanding loans must have been liquidated. There must be provisions ready in every house for feasting on the festive occasion. New clothes may be purchased, friends and relatives be invited and rations be purchased to enjoy the year's biggest festival. To keep the purse ready for *Pus Puni*, the poor families may exert extra labour and save their earning to meet contingent expenses of *Pus Puni*.

Most of the rites performed during *Pus Puni* and the taboos associated with it reveal the salient features of Juang economic organization as such rites are closely associated with shifting cultivation of the Juang and with their gleaned life. Some of the forest products may not be collected and a number of swidden crops cannot be eaten before *Pus Puni*. Broomsticks, wild grass for thatching house and *siari* fruits may only be collected after *Pus Puni*. Similarly before *Pus Puni* eating *arua* rice (rice husked from unboiled hill-paddy), mixing *arua* rice with *usuna* rice (rice husked from boiled paddy), eating cakes prepared from *arua* rice, grinding of *ruma* (a kind of pulse), eating hill *gangei* (a kind of cereal), and using straw of hill paddy as torch for carrying fire are tabooed to all and eating of *mandia* (*ragi*) cakes is tabooed for the religious officials. The Juang have communal ownership of the forest land and each village has its own area of exploitation, demarcated from the time of the Raja. On the *Gaon bandha* ritual, the villagers are blessed by the *Nagam*. All shout *haribol* and watch to hear the echo. It is believed that 'a patch of forest in the direction from which the echo of *haribol* is heard is considered auspicious and is selected for the year's cultivation. Soon after *Pus Puni* patches of such forest land are distributed to individual family heads. Ritual seed for the first sowing is contributed by the *Nagam* on the first day of *Pus Puni* and is stored in the dormitory to be distributed to individual family heads on the first sowing (*Tirtia*) ceremony.

The present article shows that cultural process is not a congregation of a member of isolated cultural traits. Culture, on the other hand, is an integrated whole where the different aspects - economic, political, religious, social - are closely interrelated with each other and a study of one of the aspects throws light on the other and on the culture as a whole. Thus analysis of *Pus Puni*, a religious festival of the hill-Juang reveals important traits of their social life, economic and political organization.

# FOLK SONGS OF THE JUANG <sup>1</sup>

Siba Prasad Rout <sup>2</sup>

This article is based on the data collected during sixteen months field study in the hill-Juang villages of Keonjhar with Dr. Charles W. Mc Dougal, Fellow of Social Science Research Council in the year 1960-62.

Late Dr. Verrier Elwin, who was sometimes the Honorary Anthropologist to the Government of Orissa, had widely traversed among the backward tribal groups of the State. Elwin's painstaking itineraries, his lucid descriptions, and his captive photographs have brought several backward tribes to the forefront so much so, that many administrators and high placed persons have associated the growth of anthropological studies in this country to the efforts of Elwin. However, there is a difference between the descriptions of Elwin and the scientific approach of the professional anthropologists. The latter prefer to avoid sweeping generalizations and study the tribes from various angles to reveal the imponderabilia of their culture. Thus there may be wide divergences between the accounts of Elwin and the findings of the professional anthropologists.

Notwithstanding brief notes and reference of E. A. Samuels (1856), E. T. Dalton (1872), W. W. Hunter (1877), H. H. Risley (1891) and N. K. Bose (1929), the first exhaustive account on the Juang was published in "Man in India", in 1948, as an outcome of Dr. Elwin's study of the tribe in 1942. Dr. Elwin was no doubt impressed by the "splendor of the landscape, and the palm-girt flat lands round the lovely Malyagiri Mountain", "the red cliffs of Sunduria, and the forest covered Runjapani and Jharpani hills", and "the precipitous Changagiri", in Juang area, but was utterly dissatisfied with the people. He was so discontented with the Juang that he went to an extent to attribute that "The Juang are not easy. It is almost impossible to get about. The people do not want visitors. They reveal themselves with the utmost reluctance. There is no tradition, as in Bastar, of village hospitality." And they "had the disconcerting habit of turning their backs on you just when you were feeling at your friendliest."

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.3, 1967-68, pp.13-19

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (now SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

During the sixteen months continuous stay among the hill Juang of Keonjhar and subsequent field trips to Juangs of Dhenkanal and Pallahara Elwin has collected many contradicting data which proves most of his remarks as superficial and far from truth. In many cases his description of the rites and rituals, feasts and festivities, and customs and practices of the Juang do not fit with Juang life and culture but with the caste-Hindus. A detail account of all such incongruities would be out of place here, but there is no doubt that the Juang are the most friendly, docile and innocent like many other tribes and unlike most tribes the Juang cherish hospitality as a best trait of their social life. Dormitory house (*majang*) gives shelter to visiting guests and relatives. Cognates (*bandhu*) of individual families and outsiders on their visit to a village are treated as guests of the village and are fed out of contributions raised from the individual families or from the common stock of grains stored in the dormitory to meet such necessities. In the fold of their youth organization, the unmarried boys and girls being members of the dormitory are allotted specific duties to entertain the guests, the boys chopping firewood, collecting grains, cooking food and running errands, and the girls fetching water, husking grains, grinding spices and supplying leaf cups and plates. The village women have the custom to welcome a distinguished guest by washing his feet with turmeric water and offering a new mat of date-palm leaf and some foods. Such custom still operates in Juang villages of Keonjhar as the dormitory organization which contradicts Dr. Elwin's statement on Juangs having "no tradition of village hospitality."

However, the hazards and handicaps which stood on the way of Dr. Elwin to collect a true account of the Juang life and culture may not be ignored. The first appearance of Dr. Elwin terrified the Juang of Keonjhar who suspected him to be a missionary coming to spread Christianity. So the Juang strongly resented to communicate to him. He could however, make his way to Pallahara and Dhenkanal where the Juang lived amidst plains living castes and tribes. There he could hardly "see anything that could be called Juang life". Moreover, Elwin had to depend on the version of his interpreter who being an Oriya and not having been free from his ethnocentrism might have projected his ideas as those of the Juangs. The fact that Elwin's notes on the Juang were supplemented by enquiries made by his assistants after Elwin left the Juang area further strengthens the view that Elwin had to depend on second-hand information. As a result of all the difficulties narrated above the account of Elwin on Juang suffered from gross incongruity and misrepresentation of facts.

Regarding the Juang songs and dances Dr. Elwin has described a number of ballets like deer dance, boar dance, elephant dance, root dance, bear

dance, *koel* dance, sparrow dance, peacock dance, and vulture dance, etc. and as his account states- “Every dance is accompanied by its special songs and some of these are very beautiful. Those accompanying the animal and bird ballet are superior to the Ghumra songs of Dhenkanal. Although these are old, they are sung in a bastard Oriya rather than in Juang”.

It is necessary in this context, to note that the so called animal and bird ballets described and photographed by Elwin are original dances of the Bhuinya who are a brethren tribe living close to the Juang. As Elwin has based his account mainly on the Juang of Dhenkanal he might have observed the Juang borrowing such ballets from the Bhuinya which are different from the *thaniya* Juang.

Elwin has given a number of songs sung by the Juang in those days all of which are Oriya songs of two and half decades before. While studying the Juang, Elwin could see them wearing leaf, but he failed to record any of their traditional songs composed in Juang dialect. It is true that ordinarily the Juang sing songs in bastard Oriya composed by themselves during dance and on their way to fairs and markets to attract the girl friends and on their way to see the dancers off, but during marriage and while dancing with the *bandhu* (cognate) girls they sing songs in their own language. The men only sing during dance, but on other occasions both boys and girls exchange their heart through songs.

The present article aims at describing Juang songs and analyzing their sociological importance. On the basis of the subject matter the songs of the Juang may be classified under four main categories. Some songs are sung by the mothers to console their wailing babies. Such songs are called *naale* by Juangs. Some songs are meant for story-telling. Such songs describe the sorrows and sufferings of human beings and overcoming those by the mercy of supernatural powers and forces believed to be guiding every walk of human life. Such songs are usually sung by experienced women on the occasion of Tirtia (first paddy sowing) ceremony in a gathering with the purpose to sing the glory of the unseen powers and there by praying them to shower plenty and prosperity.

Some songs are extremely vulgar and are sung only in dance during marriage. In every marriage a fun-dance is held in the groom’s village between the joking relations. Those who are related to each other as brothers, father’s father and son’s son (all own or classificatory) play on *changu* (the large circular tambourine) and the women who are related to them as their brother’s (both younger and elder) wife, father’s wife and son’s son’s wife join in the dance. A lot of fun is displayed between the men’s and the women’s parties and the men sing the vulgar songs to tease the women.

Songs of the above categories are relatively few, but most of the Juang songs are *changu* songs sung mostly by the unmarried boys while dancing with their *bandhu* girls on the latter's dancing visit to their village. Some such songs may be ballads depicting love tragedies, the daily routine of work and the scenes of village life, etc. The song "*Ku ku lo semelan*" is the most popular song telling about the intense love between the lover and the beloved going to the heart of a jungle in search of Asoka flower, put to death by the evil spirit dwelling on the tree and in the long run getting back their life by Rusi and Rusiani (defied tribal hero and his wife) for their true love. The song starts with a couple of prayers to the Bhima and Badama, the *changu* deities regulating the dormitory life of the youths. A translation of the song may reveal the poetic genius of the composer in which the lover and the beloved express their heart to each other. The girl is eager to adorn herself with the Asoka flower which blossoms in a remote part of the jungle and begs her lover to go together to bring the flower. The boy replies that before moving the girl should take permission from her twelve brothers and the sisters-in-law. The girl says that she has done it and now they should move. The boy then asks her to arrange twelve packets of food for the twelve days journey and the girl informs that it has been done. Then the girl asks the boy to move so that she may follow him by looking at his turban and the loin of his cloth, but the boy wants the girl to lead so that he would follow her by admiring the exquisite bamboo comb fixed on her bun and her dazzling anklets. They then reach their destination and the girl helps the boy to climb on the Asoka tree. The boy plucks bunches of flower and asks the girl to decorate her buns. When the boy gets down the girl requests him to lift the basketful of flower to her head so that they may return back soon, but the boy feels sick and likes to rest a while. He lies down keeping her head on the lap of his sweet heart and the latter sings a song to entertain him. He then falls into deep slumber till the golden rays of the setting sun fall on the mountain peaks of the Malyagiri. The girl notices a flock of golden vultures on the Malyagiri and tries to awake her lover. But alas! He has been dead. The girl breaks down to tears wailing that the spirit dwelling on the Asoka tree caused death to her lover and that she had no body on earth to look after her. She then contemplates not to return to the village alone lest the boy's parents and the villagers may chide her and decides to sacrifice her life in the memory of her love. She brings out the waist chain of the boy, her earrings, and keeps those aside. She throws the body of her lover to a ravine and jumps herself down and dies. A crow carries the waist-chain and the earrings and drops those down in the village which is identified to be their belongings by their parents. They mourn for their children and perform usual death rites by slaughtering goats and giving funeral feast to the villagers.



The plot then takes a new turn. In the forest where the couple passed away, lived Rusi and Rusiani. They roast the roots and tubers collected by them and divide into two shares, but every time they distribute four equal shares emerge. This surprises the couple who, by divination come to know about the tragic end of the innocent lovers. They, take pity on them and generate new lie to them. The lover and beloved then proceed to their own village. Seeing them alive the heart of their parents is filled with joy. They plaster their house, arrange new mat and grind turmeric to greet and bless their children. On their arrival in the village they marry and lead a happy life.

The above song not only fulfils the purpose of story-telling, but its composition also exhibits superb poetic skill of the composer. Another song may also be narrated which depicts vividly the important elements of the Juang social life relating to the association of the unmarried boys and girls of the dormitory. The song and its English rendering are stated as follows:-

1. *Sisiri dak da lalae lo banga sisiri dak da lalae.*  
There is fire in dew drops, fire in dew drops.
2. *Lalae jale jale atama labdeme atama labdeme.*  
As the fire burns the heart burns, the heart burns.
3. *Sitate akate rangate akate lalae aren dakasere.*  
Pinched by extreme cold, the girl is sitting near the fire.
4. *Gitointe mimunke changuinte mimunke; Lalae aren dakasere.*  
She does not appreciate my song and *changu*. So she is sitting near the fire.
5. *Bejerang mutamuin kalialak mutamuin*  
Dalung gating megay megay  
you may carry a bunch of tobacco and dried *sal* leaves for me to the path leading to the stream.
6. *Itingte midiyandra lakate mune jatimdera bumudina.*  
Don't give this tobacco and the dried leaves on my palm as my touch may defile your status.
7. *Kakamki chari bhai bakamki di bhai: Aengte sugei betangkein.*  
I am very much afraid of your four elder brothers and two younger brothers.
8. *Jati maana ja megataara bakarae ; jati kimam jo aing.*  
Do not worry if you are defiled, by my touch ; I shall purify you.
9. *Bhani rasananda chhanda lo bangari ; Aau kanaatita. Langa*  
The song is concluded (I) looked at the back side of the house.

10. *Dadira dakasere kakara dakasere ; Bejerang dindingte betang.*

As her father's younger brother and her elder brother are sitting. The girl is afraid of giving me the gift of tobacco.

Analysis of the song reveals the following:-

1. It gives a true and vivid description of a wintry night portrayed by *changu* dance. The dew drops make the weather chilly. A fire burns near the plaza around which some of the girls rest and relax, while others dance. The fire not only keeps the dancers warm, but is used for heating *changu* and for providing illumination to the audience. (Lines 1, 2, 3 of the song).
2. The song brings out the silent features of Juang youth organization and the dealings between the *bandhu* boys and girls. If the girls make delay to come forward for dance, it is customary for the boys to tease them on the pretention that the girls might not be appreciating their songs for which they avoid to dance and thereby while away the time by sitting near the fire. By making this fact public and to attract the girls for dance the singer, therefore, makes the girls conscious of this fact in stanza 4.

Likewise, presentation of tobacco and dried leaves to the boys by the *bandhu* girls in secluded places, the fun of the boys and girls attributing themselves as persons of very low caste and addressing the others to be the members of superior caste and status and the lover's dread for his beloved's family members, etc., are described vividly in subsequent stanzas.

3. The poetic genius of the composer in depicting the love of the singer through a *simili* can be well imagined from the second line of the song. The delicate winter dew drops represent the tender heart of the singer and the fire symbolizes his love for his sweet heart, and Like the fire near the plaza love and passion borne in the heart of the singer also sparks into flames.

Other songs aim at teasing the girls, expressing the love of the singers for the girls, their heartfelt gratitude for the girl's kind visit to their villages, the grief and sorrow of the parting day, and the like.

**Conclusion:**

The canvas of tribal culture is changing fast under modern circumstances. Rapid growth of industrialization, spread of Christianity, increasing culture contact with the outsiders, etc., have brought sticking *changus* in the life and culture of the tribals. Being swept away by the under currents of the modern culture, the tribals have not only acquired many new values and norms to cope

with the changing pattern of the society, but have lost many fine traits of their traditional culture. Their dormitory life and the associated youth organization have been affected most, as a result of which the dormitory organization has either been abolished or has lost its importance in the society. Today, we no more find youth dormitory among such major tribes like the Kondh, Koya, Gadaba, Saora, Santal, Oraon, Munda, Paraja, etc. The Ghotul of the Gond, Gitiora of the Munda, Dhunkuria of the Oraon and Dhangri and Dhangar Basa of the Kondh have long since been abolished. Among some such tribes like the Bonda and the Didayi, the dormitory organization exists in a rudimentary form. Though among the Bhuinyas, the Mandaghar organization still continues to have its hold in Keonjhar, it is on the decaying phase in Koira area of Sundergarh and has long since been abolished in the district of Mayurbhanj.

With the decline of the dormitory organization, the traditional songs and dances of many tribes have also suffered decay. The acculturated tribals have developed hatred and scorn for their traditional song and dance and in many societies the folk dance has lost its glamour.

Out of the 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa, the hill Juang only have retained their dormitory organization, least affected by the modern changus. The institution has been given a goodbye among the plains dwelling Juang of Dhenkanal, but it continues to flourish in Keonjhar. The Juang of Keonjhar have retained their songs and dances, but by adopting Oriya songs during dance they have already gone a step forward to be the victims of the changing circumstance of the day. The Juang songs of high poetic value are gradually slipping away from the memory of the natives, and unless these are revived a precious folk music of a primitive tribe may cease to exist after a few years. It is now necessary to create new zeal and interest in the mind of the Juang to keep up their traditional songs. The community development programme may encourage the tribals through propaganda to value their traditional songs. Instead of spending money in providing modern musical instruments for promoting the recreational habits of Juang, the Social Education Organizer of the CD Block may take interest to record Juang songs and play those on in Juang villages. This may encourage and attract the Juang to love their traditional songs and dances. Occasional rewards to the Juang composers may also encourage and generate new zeal in them to compose more songs in their own dialect.

# MYTHS OF JUANG: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS <sup>1</sup>

Ch. P.K. Mohapatra <sup>2</sup>

## I. Introduction

Religion is not removed from life of the people of a culture irrespective of the degree of sophistication it has attained at present in the process of evolution. The sum total of ideas and beliefs which we term 'cosmology' and which is manifested through the ritualistic behavior is the basis of group identity that binds its own members together and differentiates from others. Broadly, mythology which is the sum total of the myths of particular culture, is an explanatory model as to what the universe is like. Functionally, comprehension of this model tends to support the very cause of existence of the individual living in the said culture. Then he is not allowed to get lost in the bewildering array of phenomena - natural and the like, that take place around him.

Folklore is considered as the repository of such myths, along with tales, proverbs, riddles and even tongue-twister and puns and, therefore, constitutes a significant aspect of the aesthetic culture of a people. It is considered as the oral literature of a culture because it provides the vehicles for the artistic expression of the life of a people. The underlying unity of these vehicles lies in having the two common characteristics relating to their form and means of communication. These are exclusively verbal and orally transmitted from one generation to the other.

Study of myths as a part of folklore of people constitutes an important field of serious anthropological research for varied reasons. Apart from the basic necessity of rendering an insight into the form and content of the oral literature,

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 3&4, 1989, pp.21-23

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Director, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

it performs diverse functions. The spatial as well as temporal dimensions covered by the existence of a particular myth provides scope for a fruitful analysis that may cast into relief the trends of diffusion and the direction of general cultural change of a people or peoples among whom it exists. As myths are verbally transmitted from generation to generation change of character and locale in the text is likely to occur although the broad frameworks remain intact. But such change detected at a particular point of time help analyze the underlying motives and psychology of such people during that time. A study into the variation of the texts of a myth, therefore, is of as much importance as that of collection of a complete set of myths relating to the culture as a whole.

The present paper aims to describe a particular myth of a tribe that changes its text over a span of geographical area. The text has been collected by late Dr. Elwin from the different areas inhabited by Juangg of Orissa. The narrative relates to how earth and man were created in the beginning.

## 2. The Text

### Text No. I

Dharam Debta made two-and-a-half portions of earth, but he could not steady it, it shook to and fro. From the dirt in his armpit he made a tiger and tigress from whom was born the Bagho Risi. Soon the Risi had a little sister named Patara Sauruni. Both of them mated and gave birth to a son named Risi Putro. Dharam Debta thought - How shall I make the earth steady? Otherwise it will be hard for these folk to live. The gods said; let us get Bagho Risi's son. They went to his house and said, 'Brother give us a cock'. The old man tried to comply, but his wife told him not to give it. 'They really want our son'. The old man said to the gods, 'we have no cock'. They said, 'Give us your son, and we will make you young and give you two sons instead'. The old man agreed, but the mother told the boy to dress himself with iron knives and swords; she gave him an iron bow and arrow each twelve hands long. The gods sent the tiger to catch the boy, but the tiger failed because the boy was heavily armed. The gods laughed at the boy. "What a dirty stinking fellow you are? Why don't you bath sometimes?". The boy went to a lake held the bow and arrow with one hand and tried to bathe with the other. The tiger followed him and failed to attack him as he was with his arms. The gods laughed again and said to the boy, "How can you take bath with only one hand". This time the boy put his weapons down on a rock and began to bath with both hands. Seeing him without arms, the tiger leapt on him and killed him. The gods caught his body by the feet, swung him round and his blood flew out in all directions. Wherever it fell the earth became

steady. From his hands and feet came the hills and mountains and from his hair grew the jungle. But his parents, Bagho Risi and Patra Sauruni grew young again and had twelve sons and daughters. Thus the Juangg came into the world.”

Text No. 2

“The earth at the beginning was swaying ‘LUD-LUD-LUD-LUD’. Mahapuru wondered how to make it steady and a fit home for men. From his thinking, Rusi was born in an ant-hill. He came out and began to hammer on a stone for twelve years. One day as he came out of the ant-hill and started hammering on the stone, a naked Asur girl came there. She saw Rusi, and she thought to make him her husband. She came towards Rusi. Now in those days girls were not beautiful. They had beards and their vulva hung down like a bag between the legs. Rusi saw her coming and thought, “This girl will certainly eat me. He ran into his ant-hill. The Asuri searched everywhere for Rusi but could not find him. She sat down on the ant-hill. What is the use of going anywhere else? She stayed there for seven days and seven nights, but Rusi did not come out. The Asuri thought, I will hide and then he will come out. When she had hidden herself, Rusi came out, looked all around and thinking himself safe, hammered on his stone. The Asur girl came up from behind and caught him by the shoulders. Rusi was frightened and said, ‘Let me go. Don’t devour me.’ Asuri assured him, ‘No, no don’t be afraid. I want to make you my husband’. Rusi said, ‘But your brothers or sisters will devour me.’ Asuri said, ‘No I am all alone. There is nothing to fear.’

So Rusi and the Asuri lived together. They both were naked. When Mahapuru knew it, he thought, ‘What shall I do when they have children?’ He went to them and said, ‘The earth is not yet ready’. They replied, ‘What can we do to make it steady?’ Mahapuru said, ‘Find the Kapila cow and kill it, then the earth will be steady’. Rusi and his wife went to find the cow. They came to Baora Parbat and found the Kapila cow sitting there. Rusi tied a rope round its neck and pulled it along. The Asuri went behind and pushed. They took it to Gonasika and killed it there. As its blood fell on the ground the earth was made steady. Rusi and his wife ate the flesh, and ever since We the Juangg eat beef.

A somewhat similar story comes from Kajuriya in Keonjhar State.

Text No. 3

At first the earth shook DAL-DAL-DAL-DAL. But Rusi brought a black cow to Gonasika and sacrificed it there. The earth became steady and he sat down to feast on its flesh. The seven *kaniya* came hungry to the world. They

said to each other, 'What is this Rusi eating? Let us beg a little and eat it'. They sent the eldest sister to the Rusi. When she saw him she fell in love with him and she sat beside him to eat beef. It got late and the second girl went to call her. She saw the eldest sister sitting beside Rusi and called her back, but she took no notice. In this way the five sisters went to call the girl, but she took no notice. At last the youngest one came, and also saw her sister eating beef with Rusi.

Rusi buried the cow's head in the ground. There was a great noise and from the cow's nose the water spurted out. Six of the *kaniyas* ran away thinking that Rusi was going to kill them. But when Rusi saw them running, he sprinkled the cow's blood on them and they turned into mountains the youngest was Malyagiri, the next youngest was Nilgiri, then Tamkogiri, Samkagiri Subedargiri and Tupargiri. When Rusi threw the blood on them, the girls were running in all directions looking back over their shoulders towards him. So all these mountains are always looking back over their shoulders towards Malayagiri. But the eldest girl stayed with Rusi and become his wife.

#### Text No. 4

The Juanggs of Balipal described how originally there was nothing but water. On the water floated a lotus leaf. On this grew a banyan tree and in the tree lived an ant. This ant possessed a little earth. When the Gods wanted to make the earth they did not know how to approach the ant, so, they made a doll from the dirt of their bodies and when it was ready put life into it. Thus Markand Rusi took birth. He went to the banyan tree and asked the ant for its earth. It refused to give it, and tried to bite the Rusi. But he caught it and squeezed it till it excreted earth. As the earth fell on the water from which the world came into being. Then there was only Markand Rusi was on earth. Not even the Gods were there. He was very lonely and longed for someone to serve him. He made two dolls of earth and asked Dharam Debta to put life into them. Both were boys. Markand Rusi said, "There is no girl. How can these boys people the earth?". Then he made two more dolls and again asked Dharam Debta for giving them life. Now there were two girls. There was only cloth for one girl, the other wore leaves. The elder brother married the girl who wore leaves; the younger married the one who wore cloth. When they grew up Markand Rusi made an axe and said to the boys. Go and cut the jungle, sow your seed and eat. He called the elder 'Juangg' and the younger 'Bhuiya' and said 'You are both Matisar, You will always be brothers'.

Text No. 5

A Pallahara version of the same story tells how Rusi and his wife had six sons and five daughters (sometimes the figure is twelve sons and eleven daughters). The children of Mahasaro were Juangg. From Ganosaro were born Savara and Mallaro. From Ambasaro were born Bhuiya, Chasa and Gaur. From Dukanaiko were born Jora, Koriya and Kisan. From Guwariamundo *bhagiya* were born Pan, Kol, Hadi and Brahmin. Greatest of all are the Juangg. The Sahibs are our younger brothers.

**3. Analysis**

The variations in the text of the myth are illuminating as these provide clues to understanding of the following:

- i) The Juanggs at different localities have a different version of their own which have been profoundly influenced by the religion of surrounding Hindu population. The degree of variation can be observed as the central theme of sacrificing a human being for steadying the earth is substituted for sacrificing a cow for the same purpose. Human sacrifice is abhorred by the Hindus and as such, the idea has been spared in subsequent texts.
- ii) Sacrifice of cow and eating beef also despised in Hindu culture. But the Juanggs cannot afford to provide a substitute. On the other hand the close association with Hindu population needs to be sustained. Hence, a synthesis is to be attempted and justification of eating beef has to be provided. The text 2 and 3 provide the justifications.
- iii) The descriptions of the text reveal the degree of incorporation of Hindu mythological characters. The more the amount of incorporation, the more is the evidence of pronounced culture change. Text 4 and Text 5 provide illustration because these are obtained from Dhenkanal and Pallahara inhabited by Juanggs, who have achieved a greater degree of assimilation with the neighbouring Hindu population than that of Juangg who live in Juangg *pirh* and Bhuyan *pirh* area of Keonjhar.
- iv) It has been held "Folklore also gives us clues to the hidden reactions to social sanctions that on the surface seem to be complied with willingly enough". This statement of M.J. Herskovits tries to impress that the hidden desires are manifested through distorting the customary behavior in tales and myths. The sacred characters are found to commit incest which is forbidden in the social life of any community. Examples of these abound in the tribal



myths. Text. I describes how brother marries the sister which among the Juanggs is considered incestuous. The description concerning incest is absent where the Juanggs are closely surrounded by Hindu caste population. A regulation of sex in Hindu culture is more rigid than that of the tribals. Hence, there is absence of such descriptions in myths collected from Dhenkanal and Pallahara areas.

- v) In text 4 and 5 we find a glaring difference concerning the creation of the first races of man. In Text 4 the Juanggs and Bhuyan were created first. This is indicative of the locality of the myth where first contact between the two tribes was made and the degree of isolation from the non-tribal communities is more. In Text 5 the locality of the myth is Pallahara where Juanggs were created along with other tribal and non-tribal communities such as Sahibs (foreigners), Rajas (kings), Gauris (cowherds), Hadi (sweepers), Bhuyan etc. In reality, a number of communities surrounded the Juanggs of Pallahara.

As has been stated earlier, serious research into the folklore of tribal communities is apt to reveal many interesting facets of the verbal and non-verbal art forms of a society. The present paper is analyzed from a particular point of view, i.e., the spatial variations of myths, the data being collected from a secondary source. Original data collected through first hand observation is apt to facilitate analysis from structural, aesthetic, philosophical and psychological angles. The State of Orissa provides a virgin field for serious anthropological researches into the folklore of the great many tribes. It is an enriched field, the exploration of which is yet awaited.

# ASPECTS OF JUANG FOLKLORE <sup>1</sup>

K.C. Mishra <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The romance and love, the horror and mental agony that once quivered the skeleton of the Juang in the remote past, being unknown, are still murmured in their stories, songs, dances – combinedly taken as folklore and exist as an invincible culture – complex against the waves of contemporary changes, drawing its inspiration from the legendary rivers, mountains and forests.

The present work is an attempt to give a fundamental picture of the folklore of the Juangs – one of the most primitive tribes of India.

Folklore today does not merely involve either collection of vast amount of data for the sake of preservation and publication of the same or emphasizing the study of the language, origin, diffusion and transmission of folklore, but on the other hand it calls for a new technique of collection of data, its preservation through proper classification, building theory upon the classified empirical data with which the modern folklorists are concerned.

The description of the Juang folklore is presented in two major thought lines –

- (1) Presentation of folklore data through a well-planned classification; and
- (2) Study of the Juang folk life from these classified data.

## Definition of Folklore

The term 'Folklore' has been defined by many authorities in various dimensions. Etymologically speaking, folklore is the knowledge of a group of

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol.XXI, Nos. 1-4, 1982, pp 11- 38

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, Government College, Phulbani, Orissa

people more or less primitive. (Folk – any ethnic group, Lore – knowledge). One of the traditional meanings of the folklore is that it is “said to be or to be in oral tradition”. This definition includes almost all the items of a non-literate society, where everything is orally transmitted. There are certain definitions which are too narrow in nature, for example William Bascom’s “verbal art” speaks of items such as folktales, myths, legends, folk songs, ballads, epics and poems, proverbs, riddles, formula of various kinds. According to American Anthropological definition, folklore is the “art and literature orally transmitted”. Samuel P. Bayard criticizes Bascom’s non-inclusion of traditional belief and custom in the definition of folklore. According to him, “In broader sense, folklore, as defined by Encyclopedia Britannica is “Folklore means folk-learnings, it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as products of these arts. Tylor, Botkin and Herzog have gone to the extent of including language in the folklore. Botkins in the broadest sense opines “...in a purely oral culture everything is folklore”.

Taking folklore in this broadest sense no proper study of folklore is made without less difficulty. In preparing this work I have adopted the itemized definitions of Moria Leach, Francis Lee Utley and Alan Dundes, which are practical and pointed towards the exact nature of folklore. All the items (which are enlisted in definitions of above authors) are examined on a statistical basis can be described under four major items.

They are –

- Folk literature
- Folk art (including dance)
- Folk belief and custom, and
- Crafts and language

Out of these four major items, folk – literature and folk art are anonymous choices of all folklorists. Hence, our working definition of Juang folklore in the light of the above information will be like this: “Folklore is a complex whole (Tylor) which includes folk-literature, art and music of a ‘folk’ and which are capable of being transmitted from one generation to another”.

### **Relevance of the Study**

Anthropology has got a close relationship with folklore. Any ethnographic account of a tribe is incomplete if it does not include items such as

folktales, legends, myths, riddles, proverbs and all other forms of folk literature, along with kinship organization, social control and economic and social organization. In the study of folklore, this tribe is unavoidable so far as it contributes a major appliance in making of the culture of the Juangs. Its importance lies in its universality in view of the fact that there is no known culture which does not include folklore. Any people irrespective of their complexities, irrespective of their technologies must employ some forms of folklore. As folklore i.e., in its tales and proverbs known to both is a bridge between literate and non-literate people. As it bears the record of the past events, it helps the ethnographers as a 'living fossil' in understanding the living pre-history. Folklore serves to sanction and validate religious, political, social and economic institutions and play an important role as an educative device in their transmission from one generation to another.

### **Methods of Study**

As the folklore data are qualitative in nature, direct observation and participation method was employed to collect data. Most of the data were gathered in Kanjipani Grampanchayat of Keonjhar district of Odisha. Thirteen villages of Kanjipani Grampanchayat namely Kanjipani, Kuawar, Astadiha, Tala Panasana, Kirikanjipani, Upar Panasana, Talpada, Raidiha, Gonasika, Guptaganga, Baruda, Phulbari and Budhighar were covered under the study.

### **The Juangs - a Brief Introduction**

The present folklore thought centers around the Juangs, one of the most primitive tribes of India. They are a Munda-speaking tribe inhabiting the forest clad upland regions and the villages of Keonjhar district of Odisha. The complexion of their skin varies from light brown to dark brown. Many of them have wavy hairs and yellowish eyes. In general they are of medium height.

### **Village Organization**

The Juangs mainly live in the villages or in hamlets. The houses in the villages are scattered and no definite village structure is marked. A youth dormitory-the *majang* or *mandaghar* as they call it is present inside every village. Every Juang village is headed by a 'Pradhan' (headman) who in the social and political affairs represents the village. The village also has a "Dehuri", the religious head to conduct religious activities and a 'Raulia' the village witch doctor.

There are two institutions present in all the Juang villages, viz.

1. *Majang* - (youth dormitory) is the centre of the communal as well as dancing activities of the Juang unmarried youth. Most important decisions relating to the village and inter-village affairs are settled here by the village leaders and elders .
2. *Gramasiri*- is the religious institution of the village. The village deity is placed on a piece of stone either in front or on the left side of the *majang* .

### **Social Institutions**

*Family* - Mainly nuclear and joint families are rarely found.

*Marriage*- Monogamy is fairly common, but polygamy though rare is still in vogue. Three common ways of acquiring mates for marriage, viz. marriage by negotiation (Kamandaria), marriage by capture (Ghichha) and love marriage (Man mani). The latter two occur rarely.

### **Kinship**

Among Juangs kinship ties are important. The whole tribe is divided into as many as twelve exogamous clans named after totemic birds and animals. Sometimes the entire village is found to be uniclan in nature.

### **Language**

The Juangs generally talk to the outsiders in Odia language and among themselves they communicate in a Mundari language.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF FOLK LORE**

The definition on the basis of itemized list of the forms of folklore indicates the classification of folklore in order to represent its content. However, to complete the definition of folklore, all other items are to be equally defined. So far as my empirical data regarding folklore obtained from the Juang are concerned, they can be classified under three heads such as:-

- a) Folk Literature,
- b) Folk Art and
- c) Folk Dance.

At the first sight, it may appear as the condensation of all the items suggested by various authors. The term “folk literature” is synonym to the term “verbal art” as coined by William Bascom. Under this term he has included such

items as folk-tales, myths, legends, folk songs, proverbs, riddles etc. My study is no exception to this. But there are other forms of verbal art such as traditional folk-speech, including practical jokes, blessings, curse etc., which are traditional and which pass through generations. I have included all these in 'folk literature'. For the sake of better representation, all these items have been further classified.

Most of the authors have described primitive art as graphic and plastic art in a combining whole. In describing the Juang art I have not made any sharp distinction between the two. Graphic art includes painting and lineal drawing on a plane object, and plastic art includes statues, sculptures, engravings, carvings etc. So far the Juang art materials are concerned; they cannot be classified with such distinction. For example, there are many instances of lineal engravings present in house posts, wooden doors etc. Thus the Juang art is classified not on this basis. The classification of the Juang folklore is better expressed in the following diagrammatic representation.

#### **(A) Folk Literature**

The folk literature is the literary activities in the traditional life style of a community. It cannot be equated with the literature of our conception. The Juang literature is an oral one and it is not found in any written form. So far as language is concerned the Juang speak a Mundari language. Most of the materials of their folk literature are spoken in Odia, especially what Dr. V. Elwin has suggested as "bastard Oriya" language. The literary activities of the people are not altogether accepted as folk literature; it is rather an artistic expression of the tribal thought passing down from one generation to another.

A Juang man maintains flexibility in course of his harder life- in collection of food, in hunting and in shifting cultivation. The thought and emotions that arise out of these activities are revealed in a certain artistic frame work. Thus it is obvious to think that the composer of a poem, the narrator of a story, the expert of riddles and proverbs have little or no headache as to whether their productions maintain any theoretical ordering. We can only expect from their unrythmical, un-artistic (not so artistic) and prosaic verbal art, the description of folk life patched with their feeling, emotion, mental agony and frustration and happy moments of the *changu* dance, the marriage dance and merrymaking at the Karama *puja*. Materials collected so far can be classified in the following manner:-

- (i) Folk-tale

- (ii) Myth
- (iii) Legend
- (iv) Folk song
- (v) Riddle
- (vi) Proverbs
- (vii) Folk speech

Again, all these items of literature can be further put under two major heads.

- A) The primitive prose
- B) The primitive poetry.

The three major items such as folk tale, myth and legends are the components of the Juang prose order. Its contents are essentially stories. The basic interrogations of all languages that is, “who, what, when, where, whence and why” question of things are very well reflected in these stories explained in the simplest manner. They tell us what happened, where and when, and most of the narrations have taken place on this simple and anecdotal plan. These stories as a whole are usually less structured and less demanding, have very little “points” from the modern literary point of view. But the social significance of these stories is ample. In addition to stories mostly occurring in the prose order of the Juang, there are also folk wit and folk speech which can be conveniently placed under this head. Folk poetry includes three important forms such as folk song, riddles and proverbs. These folksongs are not given here as it is to be published in the Banaphul journal of Odisha by this author.

#### (i) FOLK TALES

Folk tales are often confused with myths and legends and most of the authors have not given the definition of folk-tale as distinguished from the other two. Most of the authors including Ruth Benedict have defined folk-tales as myths, legends and fairy tales. However, to include myth and legend under “folktale” is not correct and there are several criteria according to which folk-tale can be distinguished from myth and legend, though In a broader sense these three can be put under folk-tale, so far as they are regarded as stories and have the characters of a story such as plot, incident, conflict, climax, motivation and character development. Thus folk-tale, in its wider sense can include myth and legend but there is more than one reason which distinguishes it from the two.

Thus folk-tale is the story of the group of people, more or less primitive in nature and is characterized by oral transmission across generations. Folk tales have their roots in the hoary past, when man acquired the power of eloquent expression. He proudly gave out his heroic feelings in case of hunting. He used his rich imaginative faculty to express his inner feelings and emotions which took the shape of a tale. It does not entirely devote its theme in the eternal interest (as in case of myth and legend). Thus a traditional tale is likely to present the mixture of both - actuality and fantasy.

G. S. Kirk has given a preliminary definition of folk-tale. According to him, "Folk tales are the traditional tales of no firmly established form; in which supernatural elements are subsidiary, they are not primarily concerned with the serious subjects or reflections of deep problems and pre-occupations; and their first appeal lies in their narrative interests".

The Juang folk-tales can be best described in the light of this definition. It means that they can interpret the story well without knowing the title. Most Juang folk tales describe certain things. "But these things or objects are not the real titles of the story. For my own purpose I have given the title of the stories mostly based on the understanding of the Juangs or what the story is told about. Most of the primitive folk-tales are fables. Even these fables are present in almost all the cultures. But there is no fable in the Juang folk-tales. Although I have extracted one story titled as "the story of brother monkey" it cannot be regarded as a fable in the true sense of the term. Though it contains the fabulous character, it speaks of no moral (which a fable must contain) and there the monkey talks with men and not with animals which are generally dumb. In this respect it has very less possibility of becoming a fable, and besides, "one swallow does not make a summer". According to the characteristic features, the Juang folk tales can be classified into two categories, such as-

- \* The stories having no poetic elements
- \* The stories having poetic element in the form of verses or proverbs.

Under the first category the following two stories can be included.

#### **The Story of King Kanak's Daughter**

The story of "King Kanak's Daughter" basically centers round the evil character of a princess. Here the prince, her husband marks the evil aspect of her character in the guise of a beggar. In spite of this he marries her and brings out



the dark side of her character which compels her to commit suicide. The Juang people describe the story like this:

Once king was riding through forest in search of a beautiful bride for his young son. Another king named 'Kanak' was in quest of a handsome bridegroom for his daughter. Both the kings happened to meet each other on the way and decided for marriage of their children. As the bride and the bridegroom were too small to marry at that time, they postponed the wedding waiting till the right time. After sometime the would-be bridegroom's old father died. Time passed on. His son took the throne as he attained his youth. His mother told him about the betrothal between his late father and the king Kanaka. The prince wanted to go to his would be father-in-law's house in order to see his supposed wife. His mother told him the way to king Kanak's palace. The prince, in order to test the chastity of the princess went in disguise of a beggar. Underneath the ragged clothes of a beggar, he put on a shirt of iron. He reached the palace of the king and gave his recognition as a beggar.

The king, out of compassion, provided him with a room and food. In night his room was dark. He slept on a cot of rope, wrapped in a blanket from head to foot. In the dark night he became aware of two distinct voices in his room. He could guess that the two persons were the princess and the general of the king. They were playing dice and were engaged in merry-making. After sometime they marked the presence of the beggar on the cot and so immediately put off the light, so that he might not recognize them in darkness. But as soon as the prince uncovered his face from the blanket, his golden teeth illuminated the room. As a result both of them could not hide their identity from the beggar. Next day, the princess levelled a false allegation against the beggar stating that he was trying to kidnap her in that dark night. The king believed her and in his mad rage ordered his minister to kill the beggar at once and show him his blood. The Minister took him to the forest to slay. The prince cleverly bribed him and escaped. Then the Minister killed a bird and showed its blood to the king and the king was satisfied. The prince returned home. He sent a royal messenger to 'Kanak Raja' that he was eager to marry his daughter as per the wishes of his deceased father. The king immediately agreed and fixed the wedding date. The prince accompanied by his ministers and counselors arrived there in a procession. After the marriage, the bride and the groom came to the palace of the prince. At night they met. The prince told a story to the princess who listened to it with rapt attention. It was the story of the adventure of a prince who was acting as a

beggar. The princess fully understood that it was the sad tale of her own sins. She could bear it no more. She woke up abruptly from her bed and in the pretext of going outside the room to answer the call of nature she went to the bamboo bush behind the house and committed suicide by means of a rope.

### **The Story of a Sadhab's Son**

The story of Sadhab's son is another folktale of this category. It tells about a merchant's son who got back his life through the miracles of a 'Rushiputra'. The story runs as below.

A rich merchant has a single son. Once his parents curiously enquired from a foreteller about his longevity. It was found that he would survive only for two months more. The son heard this and with a vast amount of wealth he left home. He distributed all the money among his friends on his way. At last he saw a 'Rushiputra' who was sitting on an ant-hill. Seeing him the 'Rushiputra' shouted "Oh you there, you shall die soon, Hari, Hari". The merchant's son was surprised at the omniscience of the 'Rushiputra' and appealed to save him." The 'Rushiputra' said, "Here is the paper on which your life time is recorded. He showed him the paper and said" – "Let us go to the Court of Lord Yama". Then both went to Lord "Yama". "Why have you come here?" asked 'Yama'. Behold this boy, the 'Rushiputra said. Lord Yama looked at the boy and said "His life time is already over. I have sent a messenger to his home to bring his soul". Then Yama became silent and was lost in some thought. Taking advantage of his absent-mindedness, the Rushiputra enhanced the longevity of the merchant's son by 40 years by making correction in Yamraj's record lying in front and pointed out the record to Yama. Lord Yama exclaimed - Oh I have forgotten that". Thus Yama Raja begged excuse for the untimely death of the merchant's son and released him. The merchant's son and the Rushiputra returned. But on the way, when he looked back, the Rushiputra had disappeared. The merchant's son reached home and saw his parents weeping bitterly at the loss of their son. Seeing their son's arrival, their joy knew no bounds.

### **THE STORY OF SECOND CATEGORY**

The essence of this type of story is that it contains small poems, proverbs etc., in course of its narration. The important dialogues that are exchanged between the characters are often in the form of songs. The following two stories are good examples of this type.

### The Story of Shahadabati

There was a merchant (Sadhab) who had six sons and two daughters named as Marua and Ferua. All his sons except the youngest married brides of their choice. The merchant searched for a beautiful bride for his youngest son but failed. Then the son set on a journey for the same purpose carrying rice and *dal* (pulses) in a bag with him. One day, while he was cooking under a tree, he saw a beautiful lady appearing in a Shahada tree, just by the river side. The young man returned and said to his father that he wanted to marry the Shahada tree. "But what will you do by marrying a Shahada tree?" The old man asked him in utter astonishment. He replied that he had seen a beautiful lady living in that tree. The servants of the merchant cut down the tree and the marriage took place between the young merchant and the log of Shahada tree. After marriage his elder brothers decided to observe as to how a Shahada tree would cook and serve them. For having a keen observation, one of them kept himself awake to watch the activity of the log-bride. But as he was taking a short rest he fell fast asleep. Shahadabati came out of the log. She smeared the floor of the house with cow dung, cooked the rice and served food to all including the brother, who at that time was asleep. At last she took her own food and then went back into the log. In a like manner the other three brothers too failed in their endeavour to observe the activities of the log-bride. At last it was the elder brother's turn who unlike others did not sleep. Shahadabati thought - "Alas he is not at all sleeping. What shall I do?" At last she was compelled to come outside to do her duty. The eldest son saw her and remarked that she was rather more beautiful than any of their wives. Then the four brothers grew impatient to have a look at her. Once their king named Hatia arranged a *pala* and made it known to all. At night Shahadabati came out of the log to witness the *pala*. Taking this opportunity the other brothers burnt the log with kerosene and ultimately she became houseless. While she was sadly looking at her burnt Shahada house she was glanced by a servant of the king Hatia. The king soon was informed of the great beauty of Shahadabati and he planned to have her very soon. He ordered all the six sons of the Sadhaba to go abroad for trade and commerce. The youngest son went to his father and requested him to take the utmost care of his wife as the king had cast his evil eyes on her. He also warned his wife not to go to the river to bath and advised her to utilize the water of their well in the compound.

His request embodying the advice in the Juang language is composed in a stanza which depicts the pathos of a lover for his beloved, especially when he was compelled to leave and her safety was at stake. The stanza runs as under:

*Tate ki holain babalo, bale huanta*  
*Bahu chinta Tara rahila, bale huanta*  
*Badi pechhade Kualo, bale huanta*  
*Seithi snahana kariba, bale huanta*  
*Nai, sarobare najibu, bale huanta*  
*Hatia Rajar asichhi, bale huanta*  
*Haata lagai neba lo, bale hunta.*

It means:

Can I request you Oh my dear father,  
To take care of my wife in my absence?  
The well is in our backyard  
There she will take her bath  
Never should she go to a river or a lake  
The servants of the king Hatia are watching  
He can take her, by playing the taut (by playing haat)

His father having heard this song advised him to go to his mother and request her to be vigilant. She advised him to go to his two sisters, who could take better care than others. And her sisters too accepted his request. The young merchant left Shahadabati and started for abroad.

As soon as they left, the king made an all out effort to fulfill his evil desire. The servants of the king threw some mud in the well and ultimately the polluted well became useless. Shahadabati went to Marua and Ferua and told them to accompany her to the river to take bath. They reminded her of the warning that their brother had given. But they had to go to the river as the well water was muddy and polluted. In the river they saw a *dimiri* fruit (Fig fruit) and on enquiry Shahadabati was told that the contents of the fruit were only seeds. At the nick of time a hair follicle fell into water which she brought to keep inside the fruit, lest it might be taken by cows and buffaloes. But by misfortune the fruit came to the notice of the king who was also taking bath down the stream. He found a long hair follicle kept inside. Being curious about such long hair, he came to know from his servants that it belonged to Shahadabati. While they were returning king Hatia met them and demanded fare from them. They had no money at the time; she offered to give her leg-ring. But the king refused to take that as it was meant for her legs. She went on offering all other

ornaments on her body and finally she offered to give any one of the sister-in-law Maria and Ferua. But the king remained resolute. At last she said.

“Oh what shall I do?  
Take me on your elephant”.

The king took her with him. Marua and Ferua reported to their parents the circumstances under which their sister-in-law had been kidnapped. Their parents consoled them to wait till return of their brothers.

The six trading brothers returned home.. While the youngest son was about to present his wife with the ‘Intrimintri’ (a beautiful sari) and a *paniki* (kitchen knife), he learned about the tragic loss of his wife and bemoaned it. In his sorrow and desperation he tore off the beautiful sari into a Kantha (nap) and converted the kitchen knife into a knife, made a whip with the materials of a bowel and holding a Sarangi (harp) and went on signing-

“I made ‘Intrimintri sari’ into a nap,  
The bowel into a whip,  
The *paniki* into a knife,  
And I became a Yogi only for Sahadabati”.

The king came to know the eloquence of his music through his servant. While he was passing the king invited him to his place. With much reluctance he went and sang the song. When the king asked him to accept the alms of rice and *dal*, he insisted that he would be very happy if it was given by the queen. He requested him to sing once again and he sang the same song. While the queen extended her hand with a handful of rice, the young merchant in the guise of a Yogi, slew him with the knife (prepared out of *paniki*) in front of the queen who was none but his beautiful Shahadabati. Hatia, the king, ordered the funeral ceremony of the dead in the cremation ground. At this moment, Shahadabati requested the king to allow her to accompany the king to the cremation ground as she had never been at the funeral of a Yogi. The king granted her request and both went to cremation ground on an elephant. Whenever the elephant was making delay, the queen used to sing –

“*Chal chal chal re hati*  
*Yogi poda saribati*”  
(Go quickly elephant go, Let the cremation of the Yogi be over).

At last they reached the cremation ground. While the king was unmindful the queen jumped into the funeral pyre of the Yogi. Seeing this, the king also jumped into the fire out of grief. Now the other queens were against this provocative action of the king and they uttered –

“The nun died for the Yogi,  
What fault had queen Mandodari?”

Meanwhile Iswar and Parvati were passing through that way. Seeing the sorrowful situation they blessed the Yogi and Yogini (Shahadabati) with their lives.

### **The Story of Brother Monkey**

There was an old merchant. He and his wife used to dig out Bainga and Tunga (the root) in the forest and lived on them. They had one son and so it was a contented family. One day a monkey seller came by their house. The merchant and his wife were not at home. Their son bought one of the monkeys in exchange of some rice. The merchant came home and did not find his rice. He got angry with his son as he had exchanged his hard-earned grains for a mere monkey. “Let's come to the forest”-he said to his son. And in the forest he killed his son. When he reached his home, the monkey asked –

“Where is my brother?”  
“He has gone to the river side to take bath”.  
“But it is too late, what is the matter?”

The monkey doubted and the merchant replied nothing. The monkey was tied with an iron chain and having broken this he released himself and went straight to the young merchant who was lying dead in the forest. He brought him back to life. They decided not to go back home. The monkey said “Brother, we will build a house in the forest”. And they made a house. Then the monkey said, “Now we have made a house in the forest. What shall we do next? Decide now”.

“Now I am going to bring a goat”, said the monkey and then he brought a goat too. After this, he brought a cow. Again he went out of the forest to fetch some more valuable commodities. He saw some cart men coming towards him with their bullock carts loaded with bags of rice. The monkey hit upon a plan. He lay in front of the bullock carts having closed his eyes and pretended as if he were dead. Out of compassion and pity, the cart-men stared at the monkey and at this time the monkey threw a handful of dust into their eyes and they lost their vision. They left the cart there and went away. The monkey then drove the cart home

and kept the bullocks in the cow-house. Thus he and his friend lived happily. One day they decided to bring a bride (for the merchant's son). There was a tree near the steps of a bathing *ghat*. The monkey climbed up the tree and from there he observed suitable brides among those who were coming to take their bath. She was the daughter of a merchant who had twelve sons and twelve daughters-in-law. As she reached the bank, she placed her ornaments on the step leading into the river. The monkey took away her "Jhumpa, Kaudi, Pirpira, Gobiya (various ornaments) and climbed up the tree. The merchant's daughter finished her bath but forgot to think about her ornaments. "Where are your ornaments?" her mother asked. She requested her mother to go and bring back her ornaments. But she refused to go. She herself went to the river again but could not find the ornament. She saw the reflection of the monkey with the ornaments in the water. Then she begged the monkey all her ornaments in these words-

*Dinging Dinging Sama Kahe,  
Gobiyande dinging  
Dinging Dinging Sama Kahe,  
Pata Jumpa dinging  
Dinging Dinging Sama Kahe,  
Pansanatiki dinging (Kaudi)*

Then the monkey said,  
*Gangalo ganga Semilandai,  
Gobianke gangang  
Gangalo ganga Semilandai,  
Pachaupatr ganging  
Gangalo ganga Semilandai  
Basanti Ke gangang.*

She begged her ornaments by saying -Give me my Gobianke, Patchaupati, Basanti - each for one line. And then the monkey said -"Come, come and take your and ornaments one by one". The monkey then climbed down the tree and proceeded towards the merchant's daughter and the merchant's daughter also proceeded towards the monkey in order to get back the ornaments. At last the monkey caught the hands of the merchant's daughter and took her into the forest in order to get her marry with the merchant's son. They married and lived happily with the brother monkey.

These are called folk tales. Like other stories they possess characters, namely prince, princess, merchants and animals etc playing as hero, heroines; and like other stories it is developed, under a definite plot, reaches its climax and then meets the usual end. Except the first one, all other folk tales which I have mentioned have a happy ending. In case of the former, it has a tragic end, followed by the suicide of the princess.

## (ii) MYTHS OF THE JUANGS

### **Meaning**

Myths constitute an important part of the prose order of the Folklore. The term myth is derived from the Greek word "Muthos" just means a tale, a story or the plot of a play. Sometimes it is substituted for fable and legend. It is an invented story containing the plot of primitive faith on supernatural and imaginary characters or incidents.

The term "mythologia" was first used by Plato, who meant it as not more than telling stories. To describe the Juang myths, it is necessary to distinguish it from folk stories and legends which are often confused with the myth. Myths, legends and folk stories are similar in many respects as all of them have the same literary elements like plot, storyline, incidents, conflict, character development and climax. But myth is not legend as the former is not historically true and not folk stories as it mainly centers round mythological character i.e., gods and goddesses.

Myth is the interpretation of natural and cultural phenomenon in a possible limited manner. It is believed to be a fact, though it is not. It justifies the present. Myth is treated as religious phenomenon as it describes the doings and undoings of gods and goddesses; it is the product of intellectual thoughts of folk mind and therefore considered to be the primitive philosophy. Again, it describes the origin of natural and cosmic bodies.

The Juang myths can be best understood in the light of above description. Here I have classified various myths into two categories -

- (1) Functional myths
- (2) Cosmogenic myths



### Functional myths

The functional myths are mainly concerned with everyday life of the Juangs. They justify their customs, behaviour and origin of their social activities such as food habits, dress pattern, youth dormitory and dance etc. Under this category, the following myths can be enumerated.

(1) *Myth on the use of tooth twig* - The first and foremost function a Juang performs in a day is to clean his teeth with tooth twig. The myth on the use of tooth twig goes back to Mahadev, who after making two dolls representing Juang male and female gave them life through Mahaprabhu (The Vishnu). Afterwards Parvati demanded food for the two breathing dolls. Mahadev took two twigs and put them in their mouths. This did not satisfy Parvati and she requested to give them grains. On the request of Parvati, Mahaprabhu appealed to Laxmi who created grains. But they (Juangs) still use twigs everyday morning in their mouth with a belief that they can get enough food to eat well.

(2) *Myth on shifting cultivation* -The major activity of the Juangs is concerned with shifting cultivation. But I could not get any myth regarding this. In the village Panasanasa, I noted something on shifting cultivation. It is rather a belief. Basudev once said to the Juangs that the male Juangs should take up shifting cultivation and females should make *patia* (a type of mat prepared out of date palm leaves) in order to survive. From that day onwards they have been making shifting cultivation and females making *patias*.

(3) *Myth on food of the Juangs* -As per Juang tradition, they are omnivorous. The myth concerning this is a peculiar one. It is said that Apulia (Juang witch doctor) ate all the six servants who were sent by Dharma Devta (the supreme God) by the application of his witch-craft and denied when Dharma Devta made an enquiry on this. Then he asked Raulia to open his mouth and there was a hair (Jhunta) growing on his tongue, Raulia then realized his sin and sincerely requested Dharma Devta to make his tongue free of hair. Dharma Devta tried to remove the hair but it could not be removed. He gave Raulia a frog to eat but the hair remained as it was. Subsequently he was given fish, snake, crab, tiger etc to eat but the hair did not come out. Finally, he gave him a hairy caterpillar and the hair came out. Dharma Devta said-“Since you have eaten everything, you will take into your mouth anything you get”. Since then they are eating everything.

(4) *Myth on Leaf Dress* - Dharma Devta gave Rushi Putra (i.e. Juangs) a few clothes to wear. Once they were busy on plastering the floors with cow dung and therefore their clothes turned dirty. They put the clothes outside and wearing leaves round their waist started their work. Dharma Devta saw this and cursed them to wear leaves for ever.

Again from the Dehuri (the priest) of Baruda village I came to know what happened when a man put on clothes instead of leaf-dress. He said when he went to the jungle wearing clothes; he was killed by the tiger. So they had given up the use of clothes.

(5) *Myth on creation of the Juang Dance* - Rushii and Rushiani lived with their children. But as the children grew older, it was inconvenient for them to sleep at night in one room. So Rushii made another room for his children. But at night the children disturbed them. Rushii taught them the art of dance. Since then the Juangs started dancing.

### **Cosmogenic Myths**

Cosmogenic Myths of my classification explain the origin and the interpretation of the cosmic phenomenon such as the creation of the natural elements like the sun, the moon, the earth, the water, the lightning and thunder etc.

(6) *Myth on Creation of the Universe* - From the very beginning (Benusu) the earth (Mati Prithvi) was not steady. Dharma Devta made it stable by sacrificing the son of Rushi. The myth runs like this.

All the Gods went to Rushi for his son for the purpose of sacrifice and in exchange they offered him two sons. But Rushiani, the wife of Rushi was reluctant to give her son for sacrifice. Again she armed her son with an iron bow and arrow, lest he might be killed by the tiger. Once, when the boy was bathing putting off the iron bow and arrow on the bank, a tiger killed the boy. Gods came; they swung the boy round and round, blood oozed out from his body in all directions and was sprinkled everywhere to make the earth steady. From his hands and feet came the hills and from his hair grew the forest. Rushi had again twelve sons and daughters and through them, the Juangs came into the world.

(7) *Myth on Creation of Water (Lalak)* - At the very beginning there was no water in the world. The Rushi Putras once felt thirsty in the jungle on their

hunting expedition and as per the prior assurance of their mother; the youngest one uttering her name lifted a stone and found water underneath it.

(8) *Myth on Creation of Fire (Lalai)* - Primarily there was no fire. Men ate their food raw. Rushi and Rushiani went to find fire and in the jungle when they broke a tree, fire came out of it.

(9) *Myth on Creation of the Sun and the Moon (Bela & Lerang)* - Bela and Lerang (Sun and Moon respectively) were co-wives of Dharma Devta. Their relationship was not good. The Moon killed all the children of Sun and kept her own children in the platform just beneath the roof. At night she spread them over the sky as stars (Kenun Dak). The enmity between Sun and Moon made them not to meet at all and therefore Sun appears in day and Moon at night.

(10) *Myth on Creation of Thunder and Lightning (Batas)* - Indra married to the Sun's daughter. His head and belly were so big that the girl ran away from him. Every now and then she looked and laughed at him. The flashing of her teeth is the lightening. Indra gets angry and beat her. The sound of his billows is thunder.

(11) *Myth on Creation of falling Stars (Kenun Dak)* - This is another myth regarding the creation of falling star. The Juangs believe that when a man is hanged, his soul (Misani) goes to Maha Prabhu with a cord round its neck. But Mahaprabhu rebukes him and he falls down. Thus he is turned into a Ghost and can be seen as a falling star.

### (iii) LEGENDS

Myth and Legends fall in the same category. One of the chief characteristics as distinguished from myth and folk tale is that it is believed to be historically true. Legend implies an exaggerated and colourful account of an event. The historical importance is not its reality and we cannot make history relying upon these legends. Therefore it is generally disdained by historians. "Legend" according to many folklorists is a traditional oral narrative regarded as true by its teller and by many members of the society in which it circulates but contains remarkable or supernatural elements that follow a pattern. There is a very little difference between myth and legend. Many authors, including Richard M. Dorson have opined that myth leads into a world of reality and legends into a world of fantasy. However, this may not be true as almost all the myths are

fantastic in nature. Again, legends do not entirely deal with the fantastic world. It has a greater concern with persons, places and events. Because they purport to history and fact, they must be associated in the mire of the community with some known individual, geographical land mark or particular episode. Many or all of the members of a given social group will have heard of the tradition and can recall it in brief or in an elaborate form.

Richard M. Dorson divided the legends into three kinds. The personal legend may deal with nationally famous statesmen, an obscure eccentric, a celebrated outlay or a high society wit. Again it is divided into heroic legend i.e., recounting the extraordinary feats of a superman and the anecdotal legend repeating the clever sayings and odd actions of a comical man. The second kind of legend is a sort of place, legend connected with a locality, rather than with a person. The story behind a haunted house or a haunted spot is such a legend. The third type of legend is also connected with persons and places, but their interest focuses on an action or a deed that excites the community.

Juang legends so far collected falls into these three categories such as place legend, heroic legend and anecdotal legend.

***Place Legend*** - Regarding the question how the river Baitarani came into existence, there is a place legend. There were some Rushiiputras. They used to go to the forest every day. Once they felt hungry and there was nothing to eat. They could find only a cow. They ate its flesh and buried its head. The Rushi asked them about their food. They answered that they had killed and taken the flesh of a Sambar. The Rushi came to know the about the truth. Then he said that water should come out of the nostrils of the slain cow and it immediately happened. Then the mountain from where the water flowed out was named as "Gonasika" (Go-cow, Nasika-nostrils) and the stream was known as 'Baitarani'. The Gonasika hill is a sacred place for the Juangs.

There is another legend of this category concerning the place "Gupta Ganga". It is connected with the first legend. As the mountain Gonasika became impure due to the burial of the cow, the river had to step there and again appeared at a place which is named as Gupta-Ganga. The famous Brahmeswar temple is built there.

There is another place known as Rushi Tanger near Baruda village. The legend is rather incomplete and cannot be described in a story. This place stood as the play ground of the Rushii *putras* in the past.

The second type of legend has been divided into two kinds, heroic legends and anecdotal legends.

**Heroic legend** - The legend regarding the origin of king is rather a fantastic one. While they were in search of a Raja, they saw a boar with manlike hands and legs and the face of a pig. They brought it and made him their Raja. It was a custom with the Juang that a married lady should be enjoyed by the king first, before she goes to her husband. Once the Juang demanded some presents from the king and he refused the reward. This resulted in a great humiliation to them and they planned to kill him and not to supply him water from any stream. The king came to know about it soon. He was scared and thought of escaping while running away he was caught and killed by a one-eyed person. Thus they killed their king. Then they selected an ebony tree as their king. But the tree did not talk and so they broke it into pieces and searched for a king. The prince of Mayurbhanj at that time was hunting in the forest. They kidnapped him and declared him their king.

**Anecdotal Legend** -The following two are the other types of legends (Anecdotal), displaying the intelligence of a person.

(i) The five fingers were five brothers. On one occasion a person had to discharge a 'Namaskar' by folding his two hands. Then there occurred a quarrel among the five fingers as to who would be the greatest of all. The thumb claimed this position, saying that at first it touches the chin of the person. The forefinger, when folded, touches the nose of the person. Therefore he claimed that he was the great. Likewise, the middle finger being the tallest of all demanded his superiority. Similarly the other fingers quarreled for this position. Then they went to that person who had given *namaskar* to decide their quarrel.

-“Who is the greatest of us?” they asked.

-“Certainly the little finger”, the wise man replied.

-“How?” they enquired

He explained, “At the time of folding hands in *namaskar*, the little finger is seen first by the person who receives the *namaskar*.”

(ii) There is also another legend concerning the intelligence of a girl. The legend is like this.

Once there was a poor old man who had no son but a daughter who was very intelligent. The man had borrowed some money from a Mahajan (a money lender) and it remained unpaid. As the Mahajan did not receive any payment, one day he came for recovery and the old man was absent. His daughter was there.

- “Where is your father?”
- “He has gone to mix soil with soil”
- “Where is your mother?”
- “She has gone to produce two out of one”
- “What are you doing?”
- “I am cooking the son by burning the mother”.

The Mahajan said, “I do not follow your answer. Please make me understand”. She explained that a man had died in their village. Her father had gone to bury his corpse. A man is a product of the earth. It gets lost in the earth again after death. Her mother had gone to grind “Harad” (a pulse). In the grinding process one hard gram is divided into two halves and so she had gone to make two out of one. Again “Harad plant” is the mother of “Harad”. She was preparing *harad dal* (son) by using the dried stem (mother) as fuel.

The Mahajan was pleased with the answers and did not ask for money.

#### (iv) RIDDLES

The primitive intelligence; the extent of application of man's reason in exercising intellectual activities can be best marked in the riddle. A riddle is a puzzling question. It is the obscured description of something which the hearer is asked to find out. W. H. Jansen has defined it as –“A riddle is a question, direct or indirect, complete or incomplete, in traditional form, whereby the questioner challenges a listener to recognize and identify the accuracy, the unit, the truth, in a statement that usually seems implausible or self-contradictory, but that is true in its own peculiar light”.

P. D. Beachat has described riddle as the major form of folklore and has described its logical patterns. According to her, for example, one type of folkloristic structure, simply a statement is a pattern of contradiction in which

the second of a pair of elements denies a logical or natural attribute of the first. The contradictions occur because it is apparently impossible to have A without B, where B is a logical attribute of A. The Juang riddle can provide a concrete example of the riddle concerning “potter's wheel”. It is described as something which “lays eggs of 18 (eighteen) types but not a bird”. Thus the capacity of laying eggs is the logical attribute of a bird which is denied in this riddle. There are many examples of this type in the Juang society as Beachat has found in the Bantu society. But in addition to this type there is also another type which carries a chain of such propositions having a common name and justifying all. Next type of riddle, common to all culture is the obscure description of certain things. The Juang riddles are of two types as

- Riddles of structure (dichotomies found in proportions),
- Riddles of description (often obscure in nature).

**Riddles of structure** - This can again be classified in two types such as riddles containing one self-contradictory propositions and riddles containing more than one self-contradictory propositions, i.e., in a chain. The following is the example of a Riddle containing one self-contradictory proposition –

*Gute selanki*  
*menu tiniti*

*Meaning* - One lady with three breasts

*Answer* - Hearth

This is only one member of the first order of riddles. Here a woman cannot think of having three breasts. Thus the natural and logical property of a woman (in the first line) is denied by describing her with three breasts (in the second line).

The following are a few examples of Riddles containing more than one contradictory propositions –

*Aikan nai haiganati*  
*Balada nai singh dioti*  
*Daudi nai pade kabata*  
*Mahazani pua chaluchhi bata*

Juang

*Meaning* – What is that which has two horns, but is not a bullock, it has a door to be closed, but has no rope to attach, can walk majestically, but it is not the son of a merchant.

*Answer*— Pilla (Snail)

Thus it contains a chain of self-contradictory propositions,

*Ken karat ken karat*  
*Pokhari hudare karuchhi nata*  
*Nuhen Pakhi - padai dim Atharjati*

*Meaning*- It sounds “ken”. It dances along the margin of a pool- It is not a bird, but lays eggs of eighteen types. It always visits the ocean.

*Answer* - Potter’s wheel

It is the potter's wheel. The eggs are referred to different types of potteries which bear water and thus are related to pool and ocean.

***Riddles of description*** -The following are a few examples of this category.

*Ede kuti mankada*  
*Bhuinki mare chapada*

*Meaning* - It is a small monkey who slaps the ground.

*Answer* – Spade

*Chopa tana*  
*Manja kanat*

*Meaning* - Its skin is hard, but the core is tender.

*Answer* - A grain, harder than rice

*Ei parbat sei parbat*  
*Majhire maila machha*  
*Sita thakurani kahi patheichhi*  
*Kou phalati kancha*

*Meaning* - The first three lines convey no significant meaning in the understanding of the whole riddle. This riddle can be substituted for – “which fruit is always green?”

*Answer* - The tongue of a man

*Mala belaku chide besi*  
*Jianta belaku nai*



*Meaning* - It cries more after death but never cries during the life-time.

*Answer* – Goat

The Changu is made of goat skin. When the *changu* is beaten it makes a high sound, so the goat's cry is compared to the musical sound of the *changu*.

*Gachha mua mem*

*Patar saru*

*Puar nama Gunthia goru*

*Meaning* - The tree is large, its leaves are thin. The name of the son (fruit) is Gunthia goru (having large muscle-like structure).

*Answer* - Tamarind

*Gotie sapa*

*Duiti munda*

*Meaning* - One snake with two heads

*Answer* – Sika

It is a type of carrier of rope hung on both the sides of a pole. Luggage and goods are carried on shoulders with it.

*Edekuti chadhei*

*Bansa malare galipadai*

*Mahaparuku juhar*

*Meaning* - Small bird, often hides in the bamboo bush and salutes the sun by calling his name.

*Answer* - Hen

#### (v) PROVERBS

Archer Tylor says, “The definition of proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking. According to him and B. J. Whiting, the description of proverbs as – “short, plain, common, figurative, ancient and true” which is as good as any formal definition”. These authorities characterize proverb as “saying” which “summons a situation and its own inimitable way passes some sort of judgment on it or characterizes its essence”. The old definition describes proverb as the wisdom of many and wit of one which is sharp and effective.

According to R. B. Browne, “To the most credulous members of society proverbs and the proverbial expressions are the accumulated knowledge of the

Juang

ages, the voice of the history; they are tried and true, and as such are pragmatic unassailable wisdom”.

A proverb is thus the product of a very interesting incident and therefore it is spoken in Juang language as “dhengo”. A few proverbs which I have collected are given below:-

*Kathara dunduru*  
*Matir pinda,*  
*Ghaita chhuali*  
*Maipa dinda.*

*Meaning-* The tree is of wood and the verandah is of soil. The husband bears children and wife remains dinda (unmarried).

*Origin -* There was an old man who used to cut trees in the forest. Once he saw some eggs of a bird. He proposed to watch them hatch. After some days, he saw some young birds hatch out of it. The father of the young ones was present only. Another day he saw the same thing and marked that their mother was always out of the nest in search of food. He marked the absence of the mother several times. It thus appeared to him to be very interesting and from it came the proverb.

*Passing of the judgment on this -* When the old man came back he related this interesting phenomenon to others in form of a couplet.

*The occasion of use -* In Juang society when a mother, on certain occasion, leaves her duty to her husband, the proverb is recited to criticize her:

*Thangirita*  
*Thangiri bhitare burusata*  
*Burusa bhitare thangirita*  
*Thangiri bhitare burusata*

*Meaning -* Here there are three words - Thangiri for the external cover, i.e.- the hard upper covering of an egg, Burusa for the tender body portion of the hen, Bhitare - stands for ‘inside’. Thus the meaning is clear.

*Origin -* This is the wit of an unknown man of the Juang society. Once he broke a hen's egg. He was puzzled to think—whether the egg is for yolk or the yolk is for egg. Thus the idea that yolk would produce chicken and when grown up it could lay eggs which would again produce similar hens.

*Passing the judgment* - As he understood this phenomenon he composed this proverb.

*The occasion of use* - This can be used by two persons who are interdependent and when their needs are complementary.

### (vii) FOLK SPEECH

Folk speeches are often in the manner of a prose which has been used by a folk from the remote part as common language to express on certain occasions. It has no special form. It is the everyday spoken language of the people. These are speeches in common language, used on special occasions. Many of the folklorists have included five or six items such as tease, taunts, curse, blessings, chants, practical jokes, oaths, insults, etc., in their itemized definition of folklore. These can be very well put into the category of folk speech. In addition to these, greeting and leave-taking formula, nicknaming, gestures, symbols, prayers etc. can also be included under folk speech.

However, it is true to say; in each tribe the above mentioned forms of speech may not be present. The following forms of folk speech of the Juang can be mentioned –

1. Blessings
2. Curses or rebukes
3. Practical jokes
4. Traditional sayings on special occasions

*Blessings* - Blessings can be given while bride and bridegroom leave the parents of the bride. The bride offers 'olagi' to her parents at the time of leaving. They bless in the following speech:

*Air kamare do*  
*Aupa dengeng do*  
*Kam dam sekina*  
*Dung dang jena dungura*  
*Landi dae*  
*Dia masina*

*Meaning* – “As you have been born a girl, you must have to leave your parent's house and live in your mother-in-law's house. You should work hard there. Your husband as destined by God may be lame, deaf, blind or one-eyed, or whatever

Juang

also, you must not come back to us. You must not allow our prestige to go down. Go and don't look back. May your life be prosperous and happy”

This is not the only kind of blessing. Blessings vary according to various situations. But all these are not traditional, one may bless according to his own will.

### Curse (Rebukes)

The women are the best carrier of these traditional forms of rebuke. Rebukes are occasioned in several incidents. Generally they rebuke in this manner:

*Jama isade*  
*Kalakuta isade*  
*Mama ghaitesu*  
*Bagha kite jiminam*  
*Babung kimeta gamang*

Meaning -

“Let 'Yama' take you  
Let 'Kalakuta' take you  
You may die soon  
Let a tiger kill you in the forest  
Let a snake bite you.”

### Practical Jokes

There are several occasions when practical jokes are used. They are enumerated below:-

- Jokes between affinal brothers-in-law at the time of marriage
- Jokes between two dancing groups (between unmarried boys and girls in course of dance).

Jokes between affinal brothers-in-law mostly occur in their activities during the marriage. They may take wine prior to marriage and all sorts of jokes are revealed in activities. Example of such jokes is throwing *haladi* and *kajal* to each other. The bridegroom says to brother-in-law.

- I will take your sister today.
- But your attempt will be futile. I can very well take your younger sister (if present).

There can be jokes between sister-in-law and the bridegroom in order to tease him, they make the opening of the *thola* (a pot prepared out of leaves)

narrow while serving rice and dal etc. They throw *haladi* (turmeric) mixed with water on the bridegroom. They offer large *salua* sticks to the bridegroom as tooth-twig to clean the teeth in the morning.

The Juang dancers often make dancing trips to their Bandhu villages. They have certain jokes during their counter with them. The male dancers present them with dried rice cakes. They say – “Please put the skin of the goat”. (referring to *changu*). The girls take their presentation from their *changu*s. The boys ask, “How are you?” Are you well here?” They answer, “We are living in a “Sukusuka” condition, - Oh, no, you are looking strong and healthy, taking fine rice and *dal* every day, the boys say. “But we are in a poor condition, we are very thin, eating *tunga* and *bainga* only,” (two types of roots) the girls reply. “We have taken so many presentations for you. If you really like this, take it now or put it here, so that we can take these when we return”, the boys say. The girls reply, “We are really fond of these things, why don't we take?”

During their dance, the male dancers play jokes with them. They can utter many joking terms to the girls. Of course the girls cannot express their replies during the dance but they usually throw ash, cow-dung, mixed with water, often put their legs on the other party.

After their dance, the boys and girls converse in the following manner:

The boys start – Let's come to jungle

- We do not know the art of massaging. Girls reply.

- Come with us, we will teach you, boys say.

They usually go to a secluded place near the village and talk with each other in the most hospitable manner. At that time they can fondle their breasts with much fun.

The boys say –

- We have given you much trouble by living here for two days. Now we are leaving you. Please don't be angry.

The girls reply –

- The village was beautiful due to your presence. Now it looks ugly.

Before leaving them, the boys sing –

“*Bundu jhia ku bundu pua*

*Lagichhi sansar,*

*Dulo buruna mesar.*”

Juang

“The world is really related to unmarried girls and boys. Let’s take leave of one another.”

There are everyday speeches which can be put under folk speech. For example the settlement of marriage in the Juang is followed by a procedure which contains certain kinds of speeches.

“Kandra” marriage is the predominant type of marriage. This marriage undergoes a definite procedure. The Kardra comes to the house of the bride with four people. The other people in the village ask them -

*“Sadaka gotakandi  
Baanka gotang  
Itenchere ju?”*

“Whether you are going to some other place along with your straight road or you are coming here for relaxation?”

They reply -

- We are merchants; we have come here just for a journey. They are invited to sit in the *majang*, They say we have come just on a journey to a *bandhu* house. Can you show us his home? Then they go to the *bandhu’s* house and the speech goes on.
- Why have you come, friends, to my house?
- We are merchants, traveling in search of a fine cucumber which (we hear) is growing in your house.
- But merchants are rich people and we are afraid of them.  
Please go elsewhere
- We have not come to buy pot and dishes. We only seek the beautiful cucumber (meaning the girl) that is growing in your house. Then if the girls’ parents are willing, they can start their usual talks regarding marriage.

After the marriage, the parents of the bride will say to their *bandhu* about their daughter in the following manner.

*“Look bandhu”*

The daughter was with us until now. Neither was she *olei* (foolish) nor *kangali* (greedy of food) nor a *dahani* (witch) nor a *chorani* (thief). Take her, *bandhu*. Whether she is dirty, deaf, mad or hunch-back, she is yours."

And the *bandhu* takes her and says, "Whatever she may be, she is ours".

### (C) JUANG FOLK ART

Juang graphic and plastic art includes the following.

1. Carving and engraving
2. Clay modeling
3. Paintings made on paper
4. Weaving pattern in *patia* and basketry
5. Tattooing
6. Personal ornaments.

#### **Carving & Engraving**

There is a little difference between carving and engraving. These are mainly found on the wooden objects. No stone or metal working is marked in any of the villages. The Juang artists, in case of carving and engraving are more regarded as the carpenter-cum-artist.

The Juang art can be classified under the following headings:

- (i) Designs carved on pillars of the *Majang*
- (ii) Engravings on the roof posts
- (iii) Carving in the wooden doors
- (iv) Carving on the comb.

#### **Carved Designs on Pillars of *Majang***

The front side of the *majang* is supported by various decorated pillars. The pillars of the *majang*, observed in the Panasanasa and Barua villages are rich in artistic materials and worthy of mention.

The pillars are six feet high and of one foot diameter and most of the pillars are less than six inches in diameter. The various decorations of pillars show some common designs. Designs carved are mostly chevrons and zigzag lines followed by polished surface, with more than six folding. Chevrons depicted on the pillars are triangles carved one after another covering the circumference of the pillar. These are one inch long each (on its two sides) and

one inch long at its base and one inch deep or one inch higher than the surface. Again these chevrons may be present on single or double line. When chevrons are carved in one line covering the circumference, this is single and when two such lines are present close to each other, it is double.

The chevron designs can be represented graphically in the following manner:

The folding is frequently marked on almost every pillar. Sometimes these are accompanied by carving of petals of lotus flower. These are polished and smooth. These can be represented in the following way.

Again the lower part of most of the pillars is carved with 'hatching', which are oblique from the left. In some cases it may be between the single and the double 'lined chevrons'. The pattern is as drawn below:

These are the common traits with which pillars are decorated.

### **Engravings on the beams of the house**

The *majang* beams are carved and engraved with realistic pictures. The figures of man, bird, flowers are always present in the beams of the *majang*. The beams of the private houses are not decorated and most of the houses are without beams.

The front beams of the *majang* of Baruda village are decorated with various objects. From the left, it starts with carvings of lozenge shaped figures looking like an insect. According to the villagers, it is the figure of a crab having eight legs on four sides. It is followed by the carvings of flower. The flower starts with four concentric circle and the last circle bears - six to nine petals which are sometimes 'U' shaped and there are also secondary petals on all these 'U' shaped petals.

The figure of man is carved with double lines. The body is somewhat triangular in shape. The palm of the hand is represented by a small rhombus out of which the fingers are carved. The neck is made by a small triangle. The body in totality shows the posture of a dancing man.

The beams are carved as such in every Juang dormitory. In the case of the *majang* of Panasanasa, beams are carved with flowers only and a wooden sculpture is present to support the roof of the beam.



### **Engravings of wooden doors**

Engraved doors are found in almost all the villages. The common and chief characteristics of these engravings are given below. The wooden doors are carved mostly with the figures of flowers, zigzag lines forming the border line and other natural figures such as elephant, bird, leaves etc.

### **Boundary lines**

Most of the boundaries of the wooden doors are decorative. They consist of minute triangles carved in a line. Sometimes (as in case of Shahadev Juang's wooden door) there are double lines marked on every side of the door. And ultimately there are four squares on each corner of a door produced as a result of the cross section of the lines drawn from each side. These squares are again decorated (carved) in to lozenges inside it and each lozenge possesses a little square in the centre. This is represented in the following drawing:

### **Flower**

Two kinds of flowers can be distinguished. There are flowers exactly like one engraved on the beams. These are made by carving of concentric circles on which further concentric circle or semi-concentric circles (often IT shaped) are made to symbolize the petals. Another type of flowers consists of petals surrounded by a circle. The form of petals is exactly like that of a Lilly which is carved with a secondary line over it. Again, the circles surrounding these consist of small triangles on them and leaves are carved out in between each two triangles. The following is the drawing pertaining to this design.

### **Natural Figures**

Natural figures consist mainly of birds, elephants and fishes. These figures are symbolic, with an attempt to achieve reality rather than geometry.

### **Carvings on comb made of bamboo**

The combs of the Juangs sustain a style from the long past. These types of combs have been mentioned by Dr. V. Elwin. These are made by three rectangular bamboo pieces. Out of these, two are alike. Another piece (the real comb) is clamped between these two, by means of thread tied all over. One end of the single bamboo piece (the comb) is carved with figures of man by means of needle and other end has the teeth of the comb. The figures carved on these combs are often geometric.

### **Sculpture**

In Panasanasa village, I chanced to see the work of Iswar Juang on a piece of wood. This cannot be called sculpture in the real sense. But it is different from all other forms of art in respect of its tendency to achieve a three dimensional form, and marks in the eyes and in the form of the body as a whole. It is made of a wooden plate with an approximate length, breadth and depth of one foot and six inches, ten inches and three inches respectively. The face is marked by the presence of eyes, nose and mouth. The neck is made by simply narrowing the plate below the face. It has no hands; legs are widely separated and are without feet. The nose and mouth are indicated by the carving of lines and eyes show engraving.

### **Clay Modeling**

This is only one form that I found in Talapada village made by a widow. Its size is very small, about eight inches only. There is no palm or feet. One leg is posed on the other, though not by a deliberate attempt as revealed by the artist. The eyes, nose and mouth are indicated by means of a stick produced out of a coconut leaf. The hands are in the normal position. The whole body is fixed on the ending of the wall, extreme end nearer to the lower part of the door.

### **Graphic figures on paper**

Sunia Juang of Tala Panasanasa village is said to be a pioneer artist who has attempted to reveal his art in the pencil and paper. His art on the papers reveals the figures of birds, Jack-fruit tree with fruits hanging down, elephant and scenery depicting a stream flowing down the hill. The figures are childish because they fail to achieve reality. The mouth of the elephant and the pattern in which the feathers of a bird are painted show a high tendency towards reality. The figures of the comb are the most realistic and very well depict the pattern of tying the threads.

In respect of weaving pattern there is no change. It is followed by their tradition. The weaving pattern in *patia* is very general and this pattern is found everywhere. Each *patia* consists of parts (small *patias*) usually six or nine in number. The breadth of the *patia* is determined by the size of the leaves of 'khajuri' tree. The leaves are usually four to five inches long. The weaving pattern of the *patia* is given below.

Similarly basketry has no special artistic function, as distinguished from others which are everywhere. Its style is as given below. Thus in the technique of weaving of *patia*, making of basketry there is no special artistic value attached. They are regarded as art so far they have achieved perfection in this line.

### **Bodily Ornaments**

Beads are the most important of their ornaments. Formerly they used to make the beads by themselves. But now they buy these in the market. The beads are of different sizes and made of clay or plastic. The beads which are made of clay are of different colours mostly red (crimson) and yellow.

No artistic skill is marked in any of their ornaments as they obtain these from market and further they are not made by themselves. Different ornaments used to decorate their nose; ear, legs, etc are made of silver and are of mostly decorative in character.

### **Tattooing**

Tattooing is made to promote the beauty of the body. The face, including the foreheads, cheek, chin and hand (of upper extremities) are decorated with tattoo marks.

The procedure of making this involves certain amount of cruelty. Firstly minute holes are made on the skin by needle or any horn according to the size of the tattoo mark. Then a solution of black colour obtained from the black earthen vessel and castor oil are applied on the skin, where the small drops of bloods ooze out from the holes made by needle. The tattoo marks given on the forehead and two cheeks are three straight lines with a little gap in between and connected with another line from the beginning.

Tattooing is gradually disappearing as they have started realizing that it spoils the natural beauty of their faces.

### **FOLK-DANCE**

Juang dance is intimately connected with the Juang youth dormitory. Obviously the members of dormitory in each village are the dancers. There is certain specific age which is the criterion of membership. Youth dormitories are the organizations of unmarried youths who cease to be its member after their marriage. In the unmarried lists, spinsters and bachelors are included. I have seen in Tala Raidiha village, a divorced wife, and eldest of all come to Astadiha to

dance. The widows and widowers may not dance, but they are formally regarded as the members and can sleep at the '*majang*' (youth dormitory) and may watch dance. There is no specific age for dance for the dancers. A boy can be a member of the *majang* with a special rite in 'Ambanua' (at the first mango eating ceremony) and girls can be members after receiving presentation from a boy. The boy, after attaining his adulthood and a girl after attaining her maturity, and both being the members of dormitory, can participate in dance.

The old men and women including married women cannot dance. Children cannot participate in the dance. They can dance within their age-group but that is only for pleasure; they cannot have dancing trip to *bandhu* villages. There are also some conditions which must be fulfilled in order to be the members of the dormitory and thereby to achieve the privilege of dancing. An unmarried youth becomes a member of dormitory accompanied by rites-de-passage. He must go through initiation ceremony; he must be able to contribute something for the dormitory on this occasion. Therefore a poor, uninitiated fellow cannot enjoy the privilege of dancing without being its member. I have also found other causes for which a young unmarried youth cannot participate in communal dance. In Panasanasa village Nata Sardar's sons - Purandar, his elder brother; and his daughter Saudamini did not dance with others in the village, not that they were unable to pay the initiation fees or were not initiated, nor that they could dance and sing, but that Nata Sardar did not allow them to dance, because he had an enmity with the villagers. Arjuna Juang, the son of Jayant Juang of Baruda village also did not dance as he was a student reading in class seven.

In Juang society, dance is not a one-man activity. In every Juang village, it is neither shared by only girls nor by only boys, nor by taking one from each sex. On the other hand the groups are chosen from each sex to dance. There is no fixed one-one ratio between the boys and girls to dance. I have found for several times in villages like Astadiha, Gonasika, Baruda, Panasanasa, the dance being participated between six to eight boys with two or three girls and *vice versa*. In the village level, there may be dance consisting of the boys and girls of the same village, but they cannot marry among themselves. Generally supplementary activities such as joking, communal massaging etc do not take place when the dance is limited to the same village. The Juang have several clans and each village is a uniclans and the form of marriage specially developed by dance (made by *bandhu* dancers) is strictly prohibited among them, as they belong to same *kutumb* (clan).

The youths of one village can have dancing trip to their *bandhu* village to dance with the girls there. The boys take presentation for the girls and are welcomed to dance with them. They may remain in the village even for two nights, working in Tailas, cutting woods in the day time and dancing in the night. Girls can also make dancing trip to their *bandhu* village in the similar manner.

Among the Juang, there is no hard and fast rule regarding the time and place for dance. But night is considered favourable to enjoy privacy and they do not like to dance in the day time. Their dances are performed in the day time with full interest, when *bandhu* dancers (females) come to dance and when they take wine prior to the dance in some festivals i.e. *karama puja* etc. They usually dance between seven to eight P.M. after taking their evening meal. They gather in front of the *mandaghar* or *majang*. The dance is performed without special light arrangement. The only light available at that time is from the fire in the *mandaghar* which is always kept burning. And this never-extinguishing fire is used for *pika* to warm the leathery face of the *changu*.

There is no special or traditional dress for dancers during their dancing. Girls generally wear different types of heads and necklaces around their neck and breasts. Now-a-days there is a tendency marked in the young ladies to wear red sarees. I have found, out of seven dancers, four ladies put on red sarees. On the occasion of their dancing in *bandhu* village, the *bandhu* girls take special care of their beauty by wearing ornaments, ribbons, etc. At the time of dance, the girls tighten their sarees to perform the dance well. The Juang male dancers wear clothes (often while in colour), banyan and turban on their head.

The chief musical instrument used for dance is *changu*. Although there are other types of musical instruments, yet none has the universal usage in every dance like *changu*. Dance is begun by the males. At first the males gather in front of the *majang*. They may be small in number. The *changu* is beaten first in order to call the girls. About the *changu* they have a saying "by slapping the dead she-goat, you can assemble the girls." (Here the dead she-goat refers to its skin of which the *changu* is made.). A *changu* is beaten for about half an hour which declares the dance. All other males gather with their *changu*. The girls come and gather together beside the *Majang* in order to appear at the proper time. When the first term of drumming the *changu* is over they start singing.

*Nare Nare Nare Nare*  
*Nare Nare*  
*Are, nare nare nare*  
*nare nare*

This continues at least for three or four minutes. Then they sing the following song-

*Dakiana kulabhai nilagiriki*  
*Darsan kariba jai lo Gajapatiki*

They repeat it several times and continue. It is described in “folk song” in detail. Thus it must be sung at the beginning of every dance (i.e., in every song). After its recitation, they beat the *changu* and girls suddenly appear in front of them, being arranged in a line and immediately they initiate the dance. Then dances of different types start.

Dalton has described various types of Juang dances. Especially he has shown a variety of sportive dances which are “dramatic in effect”. Dr. Elwin has described various dances such as deer dance, boar dance, elephant dance, bear dance, *koel* dance with appropriate songs. But during my investigation of one month I have never come across such dances nor have I received any information regarding this. Among fourteen villages of the Juang there is universal presence of only one type of dance which does not conform to any dance that Dalton and Elwin have mentioned. There is only one genuine reason to account for this difference. Elwin visited the Juang (of Keonjhar) forty years ago and Dalton did it even before him. During these forty years, their dance pattern might have declined. According to Bidhu Juang of Astadiha village (who is about sixty years old) who had seen the vulture dance in his boy hood, such dances are performed rarely. Purander Juang of Tala Panasana village informed me about two other types of dances. In the first type of dance the males dance raising their right legs and females by bending their bodies. In the second type, the males dance while sitting in a semi-circle. But evidence to support this information is rare. He described that they dance after taking wine (which they do sometimes). Such dances are performed out of emotion. Besides, I have marked in their dance after Karama Puja, which the artists performed, being intoxicated. They danced in almost every style, being independent of each other and in the most unorganized manner. Such dances, which originate out of excitement due to liquor, and which they do not accept in their normal mood, cannot be accepted as ‘types of dances’.

Again their roles in dancing must be clarified, before describing the most predominant type of dance. In the dance only males have the right to sing and to use joking terms. They also beat the *changu*. Females only dance, they cannot answer any joke during dance; they are capable of making musical sounds befitting

the rhythm of dance by means of their '*chudi*' (which is natural). They can reply in song alternatively after their dance or at the time of returning from market, etc.

In the most common type of dance the girls stand in front of the boys who beat the *changus*. They usually stand in a straight line, but during the dance it becomes semi-circular. They hold each other, hand in hand chained to each other as expressed in the following graphic representation.

In course of their dance the girls of the extreme ends may release their left or right hand. Boys do not stand in such an interconnected manner. What they do is that they maintain a straight line, which is often a curve during their dance. As soon as the boys sing the song, both parties start dancing by bending their body from the waist and advance backward and forward generally with two steps. Each line of the song is repeated. In the repetition both boys and girls erect their bodies and thus come back to their normal condition. In this state their dance goes advancing backward and forward with the two steps. After one line of the song is over the boys shift their line into a new direction, generally to the right and females in their dancing state shift the line to face them. Before changing the direction, boys for a little time stand and beat the *changu*. Usually one song takes half an hour. After one song- the girls may relax breaking the line. The next song begins with their usual *nare, nare*, etc. which directs the tune of the next song. There are also proverbs and other relaxing songs that are sung at intervals. One such song comes to my notice. It is a pure Oriya song; its meaning is given below -

“I have got four villages  
 Out of which three are bad;  
 One is good.  
 The villagers of the good village  
 Made three earthen pots.  
 Out of the three earthen pots  
 Two were bad and one was good.  
 They cooked three 'pai' (1/4th of any unit) of rice  
 In the good earthen pot.  
 Out of three 'Pais'  
 Two 'Pais' of rice were cooked badly  
 And one 'Pai' was good.  
 To eat one 'pai' of good cooked rice  
 Three guests came  
 Out of the three

Two quarreled with each other  
One of the guests-was found to be well.  
He gave three bamboos  
Out of three, two were bad.  
One was good.  
Out of one bamboo  
Three bows were made  
Out of the three, two were bad.  
By the one good bow  
They decided to  
Kill three Sambaras.  
Out of three Sambaras  
Two ran sway  
And one was killed.”

The song is recited occasionally. Its aim is to give charm during dance. The next song starts and thus the dance goes on. Elders of the village retire from the Majang. A strong competitive spirit develops between them and each party tries to defeat the other. In case of ‘*bandhu*’ girls, the boys try to beat the *changu* over night and keep the girls dancing. In order to do it, they may be divided into two groups to dance alternatively. If a girl's party tries to flee away from the dancing ground, the boys drag them and force them to dance. Likewise the girls do not let the boys fall asleep and try to keep them alert by pouring water on them. During their dance, joking activities are marked. I have found from the dance in Astadiha where ladies came from Tal Raidiha village. Among them there was an elderly lady, (a divorced wife); she was the laughing stock of the boys (dancers) of the Astadiha village. They made fun of her by telling funny words to her. They often put their *changu* on her head. On the other side she advanced in her dancing so quickly that her head knocked against the *changu* of the boys. The girls do not give reply to the jokes of the boys during dance. What they can do is to kick and step on the foot of the boys. They can throw ashes, mud water, at the boys. They can also pull *changu* in order to reply their *changu* beating. They can also be divided into two groups to dance with the boys alternatively. The dance may continue the whole of the night. Generally they end it at the dead of the night when all the villagers fall asleep. The boys take the girls to the nearest secluded place for massaging.



## CONCLUSION

### Study of Juang folk life through folklore

Folklore is the product of individuals which owes much of its excellence to society in which a folk lives. It is therefore obvious to think that folklore bears the inner view of the society along with the producer's own motives, thoughts and feelings. The great arts of today bear the evidence of social life and there are innumerable instances present to justify it. The ancient mythologies such as the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, the Illiad, the Odessey, and the Panchatantra etc are full of social significance; it may not be equal to the modern twentieth century literature to search for record of social life. But the social life sketched in the ancient literatures is full of supernatural imagination where as the modern literature and art reflect the society most realistically.

The study of the folklore without folk life becomes partial. Folklore is the voice of the folk and imprint or the natural surroundings. Social life of the individuals of the Juang is greatly reflected in their folklore (in their folk literature, dance and art). But all folklore may not bear such social significance. For Instance in the styles of dance, in the decorative designs of pillars of the *majang* etc it may entirely lack. In spite of these, the Juang folklore is a great repository of social life. To start with the Juang literature, the folk stories are replete with social significance.

In the story Shahadabati, the matrimonial affairs regarding the condition of the marriage are well reflected. It is in their story that sons of the merchant marry by means of '*ghicha*' (marriage by capture). Instances of such marriages are abundant in the Juang society. For the youngest son (in the story) there was no bride to be captured-the father had to go in search of a bride. The behaviour and service, which a daughter-in-law ought to maintain in a Juang society is very well depicted in the character of Shahadabati. In her character we see a Juang house wife doing her daily chores starting with smearing the floor of the house with cow dung, then cooking food, serving the food to every member of the family and lastly taking it herself. In other literary forms, the character of the women did not get an opportunity to reveal themselves.

In other stories the ladies are characterized not from the positive point of view. The ladies as painted in stories are often disloyal, cunning and submissive to injustice, this type of characterization is not due to the personal prejudice of story tellers against women, but according to the character, behaviour and manner of the women found among the Juang. In the Shahadabati, story the youngest daughter-in-law remains silent at the time of

her remarriage with king Hatia. Again she cannot recognize her husband from his voice and appearance as he is in disguise as a yogi. She has only committed suicide after knowing this which was the only alternative for her. But she does not make any attempt to protest against the injustice done to her. In the story of King Kanak's daughter, the lady is cunning and villain every inch. She loved the general of the State, though she had been predetermined to marry the prince of another State. She was playing dice in a secluded room where the prince was sleeping in disguise as a beggar. Her evil character was revealed there. Very cunningly she overcame that and very skillfully pronounced a death sentence to the prince through her father. As a result, at the end of the story, she had to commit suicide, the only reward for a devil's life. This is neither the story teller's imagination to paint their heroines like this, nor is it my intellectual charm to deduce such a proposition from their stories. But it is the actual life of the Juang which is characterized.

I found the history of the wife of Mali Juang of Baruda village, where the girl has no fidelity to her lover as reflected in the story of King Kanak's daughter. In this case the girl (Mali Juang's wife) had developed a special love for a boy of Upar Raidiha village before her marriage. It took the form of an arranged marriage by the mutual consent of their parents. When such was the situation the girl came to dance in Baruda village and there she was captured by Mali Juang and they married (by means of *ghicha*). This is not irony of her fate, as she married him without any protest and she is quite happy with her husband, forgetting her lover. There are some other examples to justify this character as painted in their stones. A proper insight in to their way of life provides much more material to correlate the characters of the stories with those of the real life.

Again, in the Juang Society a new bride is better accompanied by her sisters-in-law than her parents-in-law, this is well reflected in the story of Shahadabati. Here both the parents-in-law refused to take care of the bride (Sahadabatti) in the absence of her husband and directed him to ask his sisters who could take better care of her.

The Juang heroes, as depicted in the stories are characterized in a positive manner—perhaps for the sake of the story. But there are certain examples in their stories which reveal the Juang character. A Juang prince is kind hearted, strong, beautiful no doubt. But he bribed the Minister to escape a death punishment. Rushi, the hero of another story resorted to forgery in order to spare the life of the merchant's son. In the story of 'Brother Monkey', the monkey went on kidnapping the goat, the cow, the bullock-cart and finally the merchant's daughter. Thus the fraudulent character has found expression in this

story. But for this there are positive means which could be adopted to achieve these ends. But due to lack of positive imagination and influence of the society upon the story tellers, the characters are painted so weakly.

Local colour is printed everywhere irrespective of the time, place and person. The Juang have the idea of king, but they are not conscious of what kinship means, so far as the royal position and majestic character of a king is concerned. In most of their stories whether king or rich merchant they go on digging out *tunga* and *bainga* (two roots used as means of their livelihood), the king eats rice and *dal* as the royal dish; a king can sleep on a cot made up of rope, which is found frequently in the day-to-day life of the Juang. The names of kings are always local. The king is often named as 'Kanak' 'Hatia' etc. The prince may use golden teeth to replace the tooth which might decay on account of smoking *pika*. The dress pattern of the king is very simple, not different from that of a common Juang man. He can use turban and an iron shirt. The king's ride on an elephant only shows his distinction as a king. This has been reflected in the story Shahadabati and in the story of King Kanak's daughter. Shahadabati receives the prestige of a queen by being taken on an elephant; the king and queen go to see the cremation of the yogi on an elephant; the prince in his marriage procession rides an elephant. In their various songs the importance of elephant is marked. These are not the mere descriptions of stories, but the descriptions of the Juang social life.

Myth and legend in their main aspects give recognition to the social action of the people. They contain only frame work of the main stories to justify the situation, rather than the descriptions to contain enough social instances. But even in their small stature, possessing less description, they speak a good deal of the Juang. Now-a-days the Juang do not eat beef. But they were taking that and there is a myth present to justify their beef-eating habit. Again, there is another legend where this phenomenon is again reflected. Here the Rushiiputra had taken beef and told a lie. The Rushi cursed them on that account. The Juang social character is disclosed when these two phenomena are analyzed. Here in one myth the Juang have been sanctioned to take beef. But in another they have been cursed for doing so. This justifies the fact that, though they were beef eaters yet it was not culturally sanctioned. That is why the Rushiiputras immediately denied their having taken beef and were cursed. This shows that the Juang are conscious of the fact that beef eating is a sign of low status and the persons like Rushiiputras should not take beef. This inner view of the Juang is continued by receiving poor inspiration from the myth regarding beef eating. And its truth is again justified when they abruptly stop beef eating by a single knock of Cultural Revolution made by Rabi Mishra on the preexisting Juang

culture. Coming to the more practical life its truth is again clarified. For example there have been so many reforms made by many authorities to abolish such customs as leaf dress, dance, drinking wine etc. But the Juang have been showing their reluctance to be reformed (as evidenced from their present existing customs). Even, there have been sharp reactions pointed against the items such as wearing of clothes instead of leaf dress, as expressed in their myth and songs. But nothing is made against the abolition of beef eating. They have accepted it with their own realization regarding social prestige.

Juang brothers and sisters do not live in their house during night; they engage themselves in dance (through not with each other). Here the myth regarding their youth dormitory justifies the social action. The apprehension that brothers and sisters by sleeping with their parents in the same house may exhibit their inner urge in the form of sexual intercourse is originated from the thought of Rushi in their myth.

There is a good reason as to the question why the Juang are not in favour of keeping co-wives though polygamy exists (rarely) in their society. Generally they take a second wife when the first wife is proved to be barren and if the second wife bears children, then an enmity between the co-wives develop. Even if two wives have children, there is always quarrel among them due to the fact that each mother develops paying special attention towards her own children. This family quarrel and mental agony existing in the polygamous household is well reflected in their myth concerning the creation of day, night and stars, where enmity between the sun and the moon (co-wives) leads to the death of their children and the separation of one from another. They are allowed to meet at the same time neither in the day nor in the night.

The folk songs of the Juang are patched with a great deal of social significance. In many songs, the Juang house has been mentioned in relation to the natural objects. Their house is always described with Mahua tree, Jack fruit tree, cow dung hill, clouds and the moon, in many of the songs the description of the house with the night's darkness is depicted vividly. A special mention can be made regarding the personification of natural places in the songs. The river Mahanadi, Baitarani; hills like Gonasika, Malyagiri; places like Gonasikabari, Keonjhar, Banai are always personified in their songs. From the agricultural songs, we find the agricultural activities of the people. From the songs of 'love and beauty', innumerable social situations can be visualized. In these songs there is description of beautiful girls. There is the mental image of a girl whose teeth are clear, who walks gently in river Baitarani, whose ornaments are new, who stands in front of the cow dung hills looking herself, whether she looks beautiful

or not. Thus the general psychology of the Juang girls has been noted. She looks beautiful in relation to the rising moon. In another song the poet has seen her in the Jungle where a Sahib hunts an elephant. He has seen her when she carries leaf cups on her head. Sometimes the beautiful girl is named as 'Nigunamali'- the esteemed lady of the dancers. They have been searching for her for about fifteen days. Her walks are charming. She has no small-pox marks on her face; she is as tender as a bean creeper. The boy, in order to present her, collects crabs from the streams, from the Suakati market, he brings *dukta* for *pika* and ornaments for her. Again the girls from Cuttack are always beautiful.

All these descriptions are original. These are the descriptions relating to the beauty of girls of their imagination which borrow most of the evidences from their real life. "In the hunting songs there is description of preparing curry with the flesh of an animal, how it is prepared and with what spices. The songs containing historical evidence are full of social exemplifications. One song expresses the disasters that befell due to the introduction of cloth and it records a clear picture of the contemporary Juang society, that is, the Juang of today do not obey their parents, the cows and buffaloes are carried away by small-pox disease, the annual crops are damaged, the chastity of ladies is at stake.

The expeditions of the Shahibs (the British officials) are always described in the social context. The Shahibs come, pitch their tents fixing the ropes with Asan logs; make their supper with the help of the Pana and the Patras (local people); go to the jungle for hunting. Not only hunting of elephants but also cutting down of the big trees like Sal etc are always painful to the Juang. In the folk song the mental agony and sorrow are reflected. From one song it is clear that the hunting of an elephant does not cause less sorrow than the shooting of the Sial. The Shahibs return by their bus. By their orders large pieces of logs are carried to the river from where it is transported to Calcutta.

The religious recitations speak of the social attitude of the people. The tie of friendship among the Juang is very strong. When a boy leaves the *majang* after his marriage he has to go through many rituals and has to beg excuse for his departure from *changu* dance and other communal activities. Co-operation and friendship among the bachelors on occasions of dancing, shifting cultivation, making dancing trip etc is very strong and lovable. There is a song regarding Lord Shri Krishna's return to Mathura. Here Krishna is not seen-off by the ladies of the Gopapura; but by his fellow friends, whom he loves the most. The fellow friends are extremely unhappy to remain without Krishna.

The Juang social action can be exhibited in this light. In many societies or in our famous 'Bhagabat', there is the description of the parting of Sri Krishna with his foster parents, 'Radha' and other ladies of Gopapura. But Srikrishna's leave taking from his friends is not so thoroughly depicted. The Juang uniqueness can be realized in this respect. Here Krishna is regarded more as an unmarried Juang youth who co-operates with them on every occasion, rather than as a lover of the sixteen hundred ladies of Gopapura and no Radha laments at his departure but his friends. This is nothing but strong social relationship that causes such a deviation.

There are many riddles which I have omitted due to their naked sexual implications. Further they are also of less importance. The riddles such as how vagina swallows the turmeric grinding stone; position of the couple at the time of their sexual intercourse who look like a big monster, having two heads etc are the outcome of such social actions. The Juang riddles are greatly related to their social surrounding. The description of the earthen vessels, *changu*, *mahula* tree, Potter's wheel, the shell and all other objects around which the Juang material culture centers have been intellectually versed in the riddles.

Proverbs have originated from the interesting events that occur in the society. The practical jokes played on occasions of dancing trips and other joking relationships have great social significance. The Juang boys go to another *bandhu* village to dance. Their speech bears their social behaviour. The girls always call themselves as untouchables and boys look thin and beautiful as they are supplied with fine rice and *dal*. The marriage of brothers and sisters are universally tabooed. This is interpreted jokingly. If the girls do not come to their *bandhu* village, the boys humorously tell them that they should remain in their village and marry their own brothers. In the marriage the bridegroom always cuts joke with his young brother-in-law saying that he would marry his own sister.

In the Juang dance, especially in its style the social phenomena are less reflected. Dance has a greater significance than its functional point of view, but bears no greater social reflection. Regarding the dress of dancers, social significance is greatly marked. They have no special dress to be worn during their dance. They usually wear ordinary clothes at that time also.

The satisfaction of an artist lies not in the creation of something new but in the expression of reality. The 'schools' or 'isms' of art are simply meaningless for a Juang artist as in this respect a Juang artist's free imagination does not cross the boundaries of the society in which he lives. The Juang art does not involve any complete, definite theme, but only fragments of social

phenomena. The leaves carved on the wooden doo-s show the artist's awareness of the social surrounding. The carving of the man on the wooden beam, though not realistic, shows a dancing pose. The Juang combs that I have found are pretty old; the figures carved on them are men in dancing pose. But it has no resemblance to the Juang dance, or to any activity of the Juang. One informant gave his opinion, that he had carved the figure of a man in his natural condition. The information obtained from another man is quite interesting. He said that the group of people that he carved on the comb is the dancers, and the irregularity marked in their limbs, is due to the fact that they are intoxicated. If this interpretation is regarded as true and correct, then it should be realized that the artist has observed the society keenly which he has depicted on the comb.

### FUNCTIONS OF FOLKLORE

According to Alan Dundes "The aspect of function is of least concern to literary folklorists but perhaps of greater concern to anthropological folklorists". Folklore in the Juang in its various forms performs the functions in the following manner. One of the major functions that folklore performs in the Juang society, irrespective of literature, art and dance is that it provides entertainment to the minds of the people. The Juang economy is of low status and so is their way of living. Pleasure is generally scarce in this society where people have to face hard reality of life and where the struggle for existence is acute. Folklore has its function here. Listening to the intricate complexities and adventures embodied in their folk stories, myth and legends, the humour, the gestures and practical jokes in their dance accompanied by the *changu* music, *daru* and communal massaging in the night, representing their thought and artistic excellence in their walls, pillars and wooden doors provides an enjoyable escape from the hard reality of their life.

Folklore helps promoting education, not academic education. Folklore is synonym to tribal culture and their way of life. The function in this regard is performed by educating the people according to their own culture. For example, in their society the males are trained well to carry on shifting cultivation and females are made accustomed to weave *patias*. This fact of their myth prevailing among them after innumerable generations provides a strong support to their culture in this respect. There are a good number of instances to know how the manner and style of folk dance, the decorative art, etc are made by folklore. On the other hand the Juang, though in a limited number listen to the stories, myths and legends songs etc and know the meaning which educate them in providing these thoughtful materials. One of the functions which folk literature seeks to perform is to provide a media to satisfy the epistemological urge of the Juang

people. Their intellectual thirst is quenched by providing a readymade interpretation to the natural and cultural phenomena that surround them.

The role of folk literature, in promoting education is more remarkable than any other forms. This happens in two ways. Firstly, it educates them to enrich knowledge and help them in learning their culture. Secondly this educational process is sustained by transmission from one generation to another. Myth and legend have special place in performing this function. They contain certain essential educational information which is believed to be true. For example one may say that to tell lie is a sin, but myth and legend show clearly how by telling lies the Rushiiputras were cursed and how river Baitarani emerged from the nostrils of the cow.

Riddles are the other media through which intellect of the Juang has been displayed. It teaches as to how animals, plants and other things of nature can be intellectually interpreted. This opens up other characters, which can be metaphorically used and thus increases their sense of beauty in forming a sentence. For example in their society *changu* is conceived as a musical instrument. Through riddle it is interpreted in another way, that is 'beating of a dead goat can gather the girls'. This again helps reforming their way of talking. For example they may say "hang the goat skin on the wall", instead of saying "hang the *changu* on the wall".

There are certain forms of legend which also have educative value. The anecdotal legend relating to the quarrel among the five fingers is a very good evidence of the wisdom and intellect of their master who explained that the little finger was superior to all other fingers in spite of its small size. In another, an intelligent girl frees her father of a debt by means of her sharp intellect in interpreting the various words in her speech. Further, all these educational materials are transmitted and they function as a permanent school of learning.

In the Juang society, folk literature helps maintain conformity to cultural values and accepted patterns of behaviour. It is widely used to express their approval and disapproval through the application of social pressure and social control imposed on them. The myths forwarded by the Juang justify reason behind almost every phenomenon. There are folk tales displaying ideal patterns. In all these items the appreciation of the people concerning every social action is exhibited. Disapproval is also marked in some of them. In this State whenever there is a question of social control there is a reaction immediately by means of all these existing beliefs and explanations.



The song regarding the use of cloth relates a truth in this regard. The British officials compelled them not to wear leaf dress which they accepted sadly and reluctantly. It is true that they did not revolt against this openly. But their sharp reaction was expressed in the song “Sunagundi Matigundi”.

Not only the songs, but also various myths suggest how by using clothes a woman was killed by tiger in the forest. Folk songs are also used to criticize and rebuke. For instances British officials came and killed the elephants and cut down the big trees and this was reacted by the Juang in the words ‘Gachha kata kampaniki nahela marana’ (in the song ‘*Gajaku akat kale chaudiga .....*’)

In order to criticize and condemn one’s action going against the ideal of the society, proverbs contribute much in this respect. For instance the part of the proverb-“Ghaita chhuali, maipa einda” (in the proverb “Kathara dunduru.....”) is usually expressed to criticize a woman who leaves her work to be done by her husband. Thus it acts as a strong stimulant factor to keep the duty of man and woman without interchange or any alternation.

Another function is that folklore acts as a kind of social authority. Malinowski has shown how myth provides a warrant and charter for magic, ceremony, ritual and social structure. Myths of the Juang are cited as an authority on the question of religious beliefs, ritual procedures and justify social action.

There are some important functions behind their dance. The Juang dance, as I have seen, is not a complicated one, that is, anybody and everybody in their society can dance according to this style. This is mainly due to the fact that dance is a necessary activity and not a leisurely activity like other forms of folklore. The fact that dance is “artistic performance of some” is replaced here by the fact that it is an “inartistic performance of all”. This inartistic dance performed by all is due to the fact that it has got some necessary value in the Juang Society. The functions of dance are manifold. Firstly, dance establishes marriage relationship. The reason is apparent. The dancers make dancing trips to their *bandhu* villages and their relations being developed through love result in marriage settlement. There are certain rules in the dance which help maintenance of stability in their society. For example, boys and girls of one village, being brothers and sisters cannot marry; therefore there cannot be communal massaging between them and thus free talk is restricted there. Again this fact leads to the prohibition of dance between two *kutumb* villages. Thus by this rule social taboo is well maintained. Further by despatching dancing trips friendship between two *bandhu* villages is continued and the friendship of the dancers’ boys

and girls develops the most cordial relationship. Thus sluggish people must dance in order to have such function.

Art has no great function except to promote artistic capability. The influence of arts, embodied in the *majang* makes others practice art. For example in the Baruda village, the *majang* was rebuilt by the Sardar, Padhan and Achhab Juang of the village. Along with these they have made certain new pillars which are more artistic than the former ones.

Thus in brief, folklore performs important functions such as promoting education, providing an enjoyable escape from the hard reality, acting as an authority to answer the disturbances arising from the existing state of pattern. Further it helps in maintaining social solidarity and is the media of reaction to maintain cultural continuity and stability.

### **Selected Bibliography**

*Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*

M.J. Herskovits - *Primitive Culture*

Alan Dundes (Ed) - *Study of Folklore*

Francis Lee Utley - *Folk literature: an operation definition*

----- *A definition of folklore*

M.Leach. - *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, Legend*

Encyclopedia Americana – *The meaning and history of folklore.*

Tristram Coffin (ed). - *American Folklore*

Murro. S. Edmonson - *Folk 'Lore'*

Bose, N.K. - Juang Association – *Man in India*, Vol. IX, 1929

Elwin, Verrier - Notes on the Juangs, *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII, 1948

## KUTIA KANDHA : A SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE <sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

The Kutia Kandha constitutes a primitive section of the most numerically preponderant Kandha tribe in Orissa. They inhabit a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area of Baliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district, Chandragiri area of Gunpur sub-division in Rayagada district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. In Baliguda sub-division they are found in Belghar, Guma, Lankagada and Jhiripani Gram Panchayats of Tumudibandha block and in Subarnagiri area of Kotagarh block.

Their habitat is a wild, rugged, hill and forest-clad highland country situated at about 2500 feet above the sea level. The total geographical area is about 900 sq. miles. The main concentration of the Kutia Kandha lies in the Belghar area, which is located at a distance of 150 Kms. from Phulbani – the district headquarters of Kandhamal, 68 Kms. from Balliguda sub-divisional headquarters and 28 Kms. from Tumudibandha, block headquarters. Belghar is accessible from Tumudibandha through a steep and circuitous metalled *ghat* road connecting Belghar to the Phulbani-Koraput main road at Tumudibandha. There is another road from Ambadola in Rayagada district linking Belghar with Muniguda. The distance is 32 kms. Both the roads are jeepable.

The Kutia country experiences more or less a tropical climate. Because of its elevation and dense forest cover the climate is unhealthy but cooler even during summer months. May is the hottest month. A network of hill streams runs in various directions. These streams serve as the main water sources for cultivation and domestic consumption for the inhabitants. But the climate is highly malarial. The typical tropical forest species abundantly found in this area

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Tribal Customs and Traditions, Vol.I, SCSTRTI, 2009, pp.90-102

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

are *sal*, teak, *bija*, *pia-sal*, *kusum*, *kendu*, *gambhari*, mango, jackfruit, and bamboo etc. The wild animals, like tiger, leopard, elephant, bear, jackal, deer, *sambar*, wild goat, wild pig and peacock roam freely in this forest area.

There are sixty-eight Kutia Kandha villages in Belghar area comprising Belghar and Guma Panchayats, which are now covered under the Micro Project, the Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA) headquartered at Belghar. In these villages, at the time of study, there were 991 Kutia Kandha households with a total population of 3961 individuals including 1908 males and 2053 females. This shows that females outnumbered the males. The level of education was very low i.e. 11 per cent at the time of study. It is lower than the level of literacy for the whole tribal population of Orissa, which was 13.9 per cent in 1981 census.

According to a socio-economic survey conducted by SCSTRTI and KKDA, Belghar in 2007 for preparation of Conservation-cum- Development Plan for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) for The 11th Five Year Plan, the number of households, population and level of education of the Kutia Kandha in the 68 villages of Belghar area have increased to 1325, 5524 (2658 males and 2866 females) and 25.83 percent respectively in the mean time. The trend of sex ratio has been the same (1078 females for 1000 males) indicating the fact that the females outnumber the males. Their male literacy has increased to 37.96 percent and female literacy, to 14.58 percent.

The gallant British Army Officer, Major General John Campbell had given a vivid account of the Kandhas and their country during 19<sup>th</sup> century in his famous book *A Personal Narrative of Thirteen Years Service amongst the Wild Tribes of Khondistan* (London, 1864). He wrote, "Much of the Khond territory is little better than a wilderness, although it comprises some thousand square miles, where valleys and stretches of level ravines occasionally intersect the forest of thick brush wood... The highest elevation is not more than three thousand feet... the Kandhas bear no resemblance whatever to the inhabitants of the plains. They are of a much darker complexion, strongly bronzed and their language differs from that of all the other tribes, and is not in the least comprehended by their low land neighbours. I should imagine that they had been driven from the plains, centuries ago by successive conquerors and had sought refuge in the distant hills, for though their language is a distinct dialect, there are words having both Telingah, Canaries and Oryah origin ... These wild tribes are the descendants of the aborigines of the whole country. In their religion we find traces of primitive elemental worship of the Vedas... sacrifice is

the foundation of their religion... as a rule, they are generally active, wiry and agile, while but imperfectly acquainted with the value of cleanliness... They are exclusively devoted to liquor and tobacco... they are passionately fond of hunting and pursue the sport with eagerness and ardour found only amongst the people of the forest... (and) are exceedingly expert at tracking game and running down wild animals”.

About their clothing Campbell observed, “..their clothes consist merely of a few yards of cotton cloth bound around the loins, ornamented with a separate piece stripped with red and dangling behind like a tail. Their thick black hair wound round and round their heads, is fastened in front by a knot, over which is tied a strip of red or other clothes ... Khond women are scantily clad as men. They partake of prevailing weakness of their sex- an intense love of ornaments and finery. Coloured beads are highly prized and generally used as well as rude and heavy description of brass bracelet worn on their arms and ankles”

Rowney (1882) had described Kandhas as “a wilder race even than the Gonds and Bhills....The men are well framed, of a good height, good looking and remarkably active but women are short in stature and very plain. In color, they are all much fairer than Gonds but varying in hue from that of copper to yellowish olive. In the upper elevations, both sexes for the most part go naked and when pinched by cold, alleviate its excess by making fires... The only covering worn by the men in the lower elevations is a coarse cloth wound round the loins in such a manner as to make the end hang-down round behind as low as flaps of a coat, while head dress is formed by hair being rolled up like a horn...The ornaments in use are brass rings worn on the ear by both sexes and also on the nostrils by women, the latter likewise wearing necklaces, armbands and anklets either of brass or colored beads”.

Thurston had cited the following observations of W. Francis in the *Gazetteer of the Vizagapatam District, Vol.-I (1907)* about the Kutia Kandha. “The only really primitive Khonds in Vizagapatam are the Dongria (Jungle) Khonds of the north of Bissamkatak *taluk*, the Desya Khonds who just live south-west of them, in and around the Niamgiris, the Kuttiya (hill) Khonds of the hills in the north-east of Gunupur *taluk*. The Kuttiya Khond men wear ample necklets of white beads and prominent brass earrings, but otherwise they dress like any other hill-people. Their women however have a distinctive grab, putting on a kind of turban on state occasions, wearing nothing above the waist except masses of white bead necklaces, which almost cover their breasts, and carrying a series of heavy brass bracelets halfway up their forearms. The

Dhangadibasa system (separate hut for unmarried girls to sleep in) prevails among them in its simplest form, and girls have opportunities for the most intimate acquaintance before they need inform their parents they wish to marry. Special ceremonies are practised to prevent the spirit of the dead (especially of those killed by tigers) from returning to molest the living. Except totemistic sects they have apparently no sub-divisions". (1909: 357- 415)

He had also quoted the descriptions of the Kutia Kandha from *'Madras Mail'* (1986). "Distinguished amongst even that wild herds for savagery were the Khonds from the Kuttia country, who live on tops of hills... They are remarkable for their enormous quantities of frizzly hair tied in huge chignons over the right brow, and decorated with feathers of every hue the jay, the parrot, the peacock and the white quills of the paddy bird predominating".

N.A. Wattes in his famous book *The Half Clad Tribals of Eastern India* (1970) wrote, "Much of the (Kuttia) area is virgin forest in which herds of elephant roam freely and bears and tigers around... the Kuttia Kandhas are believed by their neighbours to be expert practitioners of black arts and adepts at transmogrification. All this considered with their evil reputation of human (Meriah) sacrifice and infanticide represented them as wild and dreadful as the country in which they live".

As regards their dress and ornaments he had observed, "A child is adorned with bead necklaces and aluminum bracelets shortly after it is born. Apart from these trimmings, it roams about, innocent of clothing until the age of six. Thereafter it wears loincloth ... A boy ties his hair with a brass chain so as to make a pony tail or a knot. At one end of the brass chain is attached a tiny wooden comb and at the other is a slender three cornered hairpin, both of which are stuck into the hair. He combs the front of his hair forward into a neat fringe. He generally wears one or two small brass earrings, one in the lobe and the other in the upper part of the ear. A necklace of beads or a single brass chain is worn around the neck. Aluminum bracelets on his wrist and a single bangle on each upper-arm may also be worn. His loincloth is white and hangs down the front to form a flap. Tucked in at his waist is a tube in which is kept tobacco for chewing. This tobacco- tube is made from the single node of a bamboo and is carefully decorated by horizontal hatching, rows of lozenges, or teeth, which are engraved all down its length... A girl parts her hair in the middle and with the help of a ball of string or false hair, arranges the back of her hair into a bun. A brass chain is passed around the top of her head and tied below the bun to keep her coiffure secure. Supplementing the function of this brass chain is a hair- pin,

comb and chain that are the same as that used by a boy. Bunches of brass rings are passed through a hole in the fold of the helix. The lobe of the ear may be decorated by a single brass ring or large brass button. Projecting from the wing of each nostril is a brass pin, and a single brass ring is passed through the septum of her nose. Bead necklaces, often patterned in floral designs, are worn around the neck. More than half her forearms are lavishly covered with a series of brass or aluminum bracelets. Sometimes a few ornamental brass bangles are also worn on the upper-arm. Aluminum anklets may be worn. Rings are worn. Not usually on the fingers, but on the toes. An apron is suspended from her neck by a length of cord (once she has had her first child this appendage is usually discarded), around her waist she wears a girdle of white cord made of bark fiber. The cord is of great length and wound several times around the waist to constrict it and also to serve as a bustle. A single cord passed around the waist is used to tuck in the apron. The skirt is knee length and is usually white or patterned with dark red vertical stripes". (ibid)

The Kutia like other subsections of the Kandha tribe are a Dravidian people bearing racial affinity with Proto-Australoid stock. Their skin colour varies from light brown to dark brown. They have medium stature, broad head, broad nose, broad face and curly hair. Their life in the natural environment has endowed them with a sound physique and cheerful disposition. Kutia men grow long hairs tied in a knot. Some Kutia men shave their heads. They are quite fond of using a variety of ornaments as narrated above. Men wear bead necklaces and silver or aluminum bracelets. "The dress of a male while working is a loin cloth of one and half cubits and less than a foot broad when the upper part of the body is kept completely bare... Kutia use a simple wrapper when they feel cold. The upper garment of a female is a handloom cloth, thrown over in front and held at the neck by means of a knot. It hangs down right up to her knee keeping the back completely bare. The lower garments consist of two pieces. The first is a loin cloth, which passes between the thighs to the back where it is tugged with a waist string. The second piece is a skirt wound round the waist and then extends up to the knee... On special occasions the headgear is used. Coloured turban is used by the groom during marriage... the ornaments are either made of silver, gold or glass. The ladies fix hairpins in their bun. The ears as well as nose are similarly pierced at an early age for this purpose. Wooden comb is fixed in their hair knot. Some of them are using nose and earrings made of gold on both the nostrils. They use glass bangles and necklaces of coloured beads... The rings, which are brass made have a pointed design over them, which are known as 'Kutti' and used irrespective of sex... Women always keep their hairs neatly

combed and decorated. They use 'kusum' oil which they themselves extract locally from 'Kusum' seeds. Tatoo marks are also seen on the face and hand of the women. These are usually made of various designs on face, chest and on the hands. It is believed that tattoo marks only go with the persons after death" (Patnaik, 1989: 14-16).

The Kandha are a Dravidian tribe and they speak Dravidian dialects. The Kutia being a section of the Kandha speak a Dravidian dialect called "Kui". It has considerable resemblance with Telugu, Tamil and Kanarese in grammar but not to Oriya. However, due to prolonged contact with the neighbouring Oriya people, some Oriya words have entered into their dialect. But it has little impact on Kui grammatical forms and idioms. Thurston (1989, 357) wrote "...the name which they use themselves is 'Ku' and their language should accordingly be denominated by 'Kui'", and therefore "the tribe call themselves 'Kuiloka' or 'Kuienju' which may possibly be derived from 'Ko' or 'Ku', a Telugu word for a mountain" (Russell & Hiralal, 1916: 461-465). Thus the Kutias as 'Kuiloc' not only speak Kui but they also live, in the mountains.

The origin and past history of the Kutia are still obscure. Russell (1916, 465) believed that "...their own traditions as to their origin are of little historical value, but they were almost certainly at one time the rulers of the country in which they now resided". "They believed themselves to have existed in Orissa from the beginning. Their fore bearers were probably driven from their homes on the richer coastal plains of eastern India during the Aryan advance. Preferring hardship to the less of independence, it is thought that they were forced up into the wild hill tracts of the Eastern Ghats many centuries ago" (Boal, 1982: 1).

"Their superstitions, beliefs and practices have made them well known to the world outside. But the thrones and thickets of the wilderness and the unhealthy climate which as notorious for malaria and backwater were deterrent to any free access to the Kandha country and to have firsthand knowledge about the tribe. However, as the time passed by and road communication was developed, entry into the Kandha area and contact with the tribe became possible. Scholars like Dalton, Risley, Thurston, Russell and Hiralal have left behind a few pages about the Kandha in their published works. But much of these writings have been reproduced over and over again. Thereafter there have come out articles and notes on some aspects or the other of the tribe in the census reports and scholarly journals," (Bhujabal, 1982: 1). Recently some books such as 'The



Kandha' by Barbara, M. Boal and the Kandha by N. Patnaik have been published which contains some ethnographic account of the tribe.

The British officers namely Campbell and Mc Pherson came in contact with this community as early as the middle of nineteenth century when they were deputed to suppress the practice of human sacrifice in the Kandha society. Their reports serve as valuable source of information regarding the community. Russell was the first person who through his report brought the barbarous practice of human sacrifice and female infanticide of the Kandha to the notice of the Madras Government in 1986. Elwin was the first anthropologist in this country who wrote about the tribe in 1943. In 1964 Niggemeyer, a German Anthropologist had published a detailed ethnographic account of the Kutia Kandha in German language.

Russell holds the view that "the Kutia Kandhas are hill men and retain their tribal customs... The Kutia or hill Kandhas are said to be so called because they break the skulls of animals when they kill them for food; the word Kutia meaning one who breaks or smashes". In the Kandha dialect the term "Kuti" means hole. There is a legendary tradition among the Kutia explaining that they had been originated from a hole on the earth. According to the legend their supreme God, *Sapangada*, the Creator, appeared in a place near Guma village (a Kutia settlement) and created the earth, forest, animals and human beings as well as some other Gods and Goddesses to look after the worldly beings. The human beings who came out from the holes later became tribals (Kandhas), Harijans (Panos) and Oriyas according to their deeds, habits and occupations. Since they had originated from the holes or *kuti* they are called 'Kutias'. Now the holy place of appearance of *sapangada* is covered under forest. A hereditary Kutia priest called *Buduka* worships the God annually in a big communal festival named *sapangada jatra* held during January-February.

Kutias live in low roofed houses. The floor inside is dugout to make up for the low roof so that the floor level is lower than the ground level and one has no difficulty for standing erect and moving freely inside the house. Because of the peculiarity of house structure, their houses look like holes or *kuti* as they call it, which is another reason to name them as "Kutia".

There are other explanations about the term 'Kutia'. Kutias are hill-dwelling folks. In Oriya language 'hill' is called *kutta*. Therefore, the people inhabiting the hill settlements are called Kutia by their neighbours. Moreover, Kutia men and women wear a kind of brass ring with a pointed design, which they call '*Kuti*'. Because they wear *kuti* they are called Kutia. Some people say

that Kutias are fond of tattooing their bodies. Tattooing in Oriya language is called *chitta kuta* and hence, comes the term 'Kutia', the people with tattoo marks or *chitta kuta*.

Often the Kutia call themselves and are also called by their neighbours as 'Malliah' Kandhas, which has two meanings in Oriya language, such as hill men ('Mala' meaning hill and forest territories) or people wearing beads (*mali*).

The Kutia settlements are found in densely wooded remote hill tracts. The size of their settlements is smaller comprising 8-10 households. There are also few large villages with 60-70 households. For their dependence on shifting cultivation, they were semi nomadic people in the past. They were shifting from site to site with cyclic rotation of swidden cultivation. A Kutia village has well-defined boundaries (*sandhi*) marked by rocks, trees, streams etc. The neighbouring villagers respect the common boundaries and any kind of trespassing is severely dealt with by customary laws as it often leads to bloody violence.

In a Kutia settlement, houses are arranged in two linear rows facing each other. Animal sheds are built either as an extension of the living quarters or separately at the back of the house. Each house has its own kitchen garden at the rear. Girls' dormitory (*Dhangri basa*) and boys' dormitory (*Dhangar basa*) are either situated at the rear or among the rows of living houses. Bamboo or wooden fencing with a narrow entrance to ensure protection from wild animals encloses the settlement site. In the center of the space left in between two rows or houses lie the seat of *Dharani Penu* (Earth Goddess) and other important deities represented by stones and forked pillars for animal sacrifice called *Dharni Munda*. The remaining space is utilized for holding fairs, festivals, dances and village meetings.

The Kutia live in low-roofed houses with a rectangular ground plan. It consists of spacious front and rear verandahs, a living room and a small kitchen. The front verandah is used for multiple purposes such as performing domestic chores, sleeping and entertaining guests. The back verandah is also put to a variety of uses such as a pigsty; a place where women are segregated during menstruation and also it is the stage on which the great human drama of birth is enacted.

The walls are made of wood and bamboo frame plastered with mud and cow dung. The gabled roof structure is thatched with a kind of jungle grass called *Piri*. Under the roof long wooden planks are placed across the mud walls of the living room to prepare garret (*attu*). Household articles and grains etc. are pushed for storage inside the garret through a small opening. Another wooden

platform – three/ four feet high under the ceiling is raised to store grains. The average size of the living room is 10 feet by 15 feet. Besides the sleeping place, it contains the hearth, the storage racks, and the elevated basket for brooding hens, the mortar holes for pounding grains, the milling stones, limited household utensils agricultural and hunting implements, musical instruments, etc. The room has one entrance door in front and an exit door at the back but no windows. The roofs of the houses slope to about one and half meters from the ground. The entire floor area of the house is sunk to about half a meter below the level of ground so that the house appears like a dugout hole.

The livelihood of the Kutia Kandha is mainly derived from shifting cultivation supplemented by forest collections and hunting. Lowland plough cultivation is a recent phenomenon found in a limited scale in these days. Each village has a well-defined hill and forest territory for exploitation by the ways of shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produces and hunting. For shifting cultivation each family in the village is allotted with plots in the hills by the traditional village council prior to commencement of agricultural season. The size of plot varies according to the size and working capacity of the individual family. A swidden is cultivated for a maximum of 2 to 3 years and then left fallow for at least four years to recuperate. They practise mixed cropping of grains like *kandula*, *kalka*, *kangu* (millet), *koiri* (millet), niger, maize, green gram, mustard, turmeric, castor, beans, *katting* etc. in their swiddens. Paddy is cultivated in the low lands.

The harvest is barely enough to feed them for the whole year. To meet their other necessities, a part of the harvest is sold or bartered in the local markets. The main saleable commodities such as firewood, *siali* leaves, resin, *sal* seeds and leaves etc. gathered from the forest are also sold in the local markets. The Panos act as middlemen between the Kutia and outsiders in all transactions and exploit the simple tribals. As per Kutia tradition Panos or Doms who live in separate quarters near the Kutia settlements, are their servants. They are in charge of herding the cattle and livestock of the Kutias. There is a Kutia custom that no Kutia should sell or purchase livestock without involving his Pano servant. The Panos also advance loans to Kutias at the time of need and try to keep them indebted always so that, they can exploit them in all possible manners.

The Kutia are fond of rearing animals like bullocks, cows, buffaloes, goats, pigs, and fowls. Cows and she-buffaloes are not milked but used as draught animals. Goats, pigs, and fowls are sold for cash in the local markets or killed for

food and entertaining guests. All kinds of animals are sacrificed during the rituals to appease the deities and spirits.

In the Kutia territory, there is little scope for wage earning and pursuing other occupations. Hence, forest collections and occasional hunting and fishing supplement their subsistence. During summer they get plenty of mango and jackfruit from the forests. At that time, they live exclusively on mango and jackfruit diet. They even preserve mango kernel and jackfruit seeds in large heaps to consume as food items during the difficult rainy season.

The food habit of the Kutia varies with the seasonal variation in availability of various kinds of crops, fruits roots and tubers. Rice is not their staple food because of short supply as very small quantity of paddy is produced in few paddy lands. Small quantity of millets and other kinds of cereals produced by shifting cultivation hardly lasts for four-five months. For the remaining part of the year they depend on wild fruits, roots, tubers collected from the jungle. Depending upon the availability, the minor millets constitute their staple food. They eat non-vegetarian items prepared out of pork, beef, mutton and buffalo meat, chicken and fish on festive occasions. They are also fond of salted dry fish, which they buy from the local markets.

Vegetable oil is rarely used as a cooking medium. Very small quantity of oil is used to prepare vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes during festive occasions. Chilly, salt and turmeric powder are the condiments mostly used for cooking. Salt is consumed in lesser quantity. Women prepare food. Males cook food only during the illness and pollution of women at the time of their menstrual period and childbirth. On ritual and festive occasions, men exclusively do the domestic and communal food preparations in honour of the deities. Kutia women are tabooed against participating in such ritual activities. They are not even allowed to take the meat of the animal scarified during communal rituals.

Generally, they eat three times daily i.e., during morning, mid-day and evening. They do not accept cooked food from the Pano or Dombs whom they consider inferior. They are addicted to liquors of various kinds, which are locally available. *irpikalu* and *salap* (the juice extracted from sago-palm) are raised in their swiddens. Smoking and chewing tobacco is quite common. Even children are found smoking handmade cigars.

The social organization of the Kutia Kandha is simple and self-sufficient. Family forms the elementary social unit of their social organization. It is patrilineal and patriarchal in nature. Father or senior most male member is the

head of the family. Property and social status are transmitted through male line. Women cannot inherit property but they are entitled to the residuary rights of maintenance from their father or husband's property depending upon their nature of residence and marital status.

Kutia women are not entitled to exercise customary rights in respect of inheritance, authority and ritual activities. They play a very influential role in management of the family, for their major economic contribution to the family and their active participation in various domestic and economic activities. They control the family purse. They are considered as assets for their father's and husband's families and therefore bride price is paid by their husbands to their fathers to acquire them. Girls enjoy ample liberty for selecting their mates.

Nuclear type of family comprising husband wife and their children is commonly found in Kutia society. Extended families in which old parents live with their married sons and polygynous families are rare. However, Kutia society permits polygyny. A Kutia boy after his marriage separates himself from his parent's family and sets up his separate household with his wife and children as soon as he is able to support himself. His parents and brothers help him in making his separate establishment. But according to the Kutia custom the youngest son always lives with and supports his old parents even after his marriage and inherits the paternal house.

In the Kutia kinship organization the agnatic lineage called *klambu*— a local descent group formed by families descended from a common ancestor constitute an exogamous unit. The lineage members live in a village or group of villages called *Mutha* and enjoy exclusive property rights, which they have inherited from their ancestors. The headman of a *Mutha* is called *Muthadar* or *Mustajar*. During British Raj the *Mustadar* were kept in charge of revenue collection and were also vested with quasi-magisterial functions to decide cases of small disputes and crimes. Now this system has become obsolete.

Strong supernaturalism pervades all spheres of Kutia life. "Religion and present way of life of the Kutias have their roots in the mythological traditions of the tribe. Functions of priest (*Jani*), medicine man (*Kutaka*) and headman (*Majhi*), rites practised at ceremonies and festivals, farming and hunting methods, the orientation of the villages, the way to care for pests; the rules for communal living have been defined by ancient laws and their validity accepted without question. ... The origins of this tradition dates as far back as the day on which the first human beings came in to the world" (Wattes, 1970).

The Kutia Kandha have an elaborate pantheon to worship. *Penu* is their supreme deity. She is held in the highest esteem and worshipped in all agricultural rituals. Her seat lies in the center of every Kutia village represented by four stones embedded in the ground called *Dharni Vali*. In front of *Dharni vali* stand forked pillars (*Dharni munda*) for tying sacrificial animals during *Meriah* or *Kedu* festival. This is the most important festival observed in every Kutia village once in every three or five years to worship *Dharni Penu* by sacrificing buffaloes. This animal sacrifice is the relic of the barbarous practice of *Meriah* (human) sacrifice in the past, which had been suppressed by the British administration during the last century.

There are a number of Gods and Spirits such as the Sun god, *Birna Penu* (the deity of thunder) *Sita Penu* (the Goddess of wealth and prosperity), *Diya Penu* (the deity of streams), *Suru Penu* (the hill Goddess), *Sapangada* (the Creator and Supreme Being), *Linga Penu* (the deity in charge of departed souls), *Dharma Penu* (the Goddess of small-pox), Ancestral spirits etc. worshipped by the Kutia on various occasions. They observe a number of seasonal rituals and festivals throughout the year to appease their deities. Some of their important annual rituals and festivals are *Anka Puja*, *Taku Jatra*, *Chaitra Jatra*, *Sapangada Jatra*, *Pani Kalu* and *Bichha vali*.

“Every religious ceremony is prefaced by the priest reciting an extract from the tribes’ mythological traditions which is relevant to the ceremony and the history that led to its establishment as a cult. He is flanked by acolytes who solemnly repeat his words. In this way traditions are perpetuated from generation to generation” (Wattes, 1970).

The practice of magic and witchcraft is widespread. Misfortunes are always attributed to black magic. In this connection *Shaman* or the witch doctor is the most important person to take remedial actions against the evil effects of black magic. There are male (*Beju*) and female (*Bejuni*) shamans who are specialists in this field. They are respected in Kutia society.

Kutia Kandhas consider birth, marriage and death as important events of human life. They believe that a child is born if ancestral spirits are pleased. A child is always welcomed. Therefore barrenness in married women is treated as a curse. A pregnant woman is subjected to a number of taboos and restrictions about her food and movements to ensure safe delivery and well being of the mother and child.

Childbirth takes place in the rear verandah with the help of a local mid-wife. Birth pollution and confinement of the mother and child is observed for six days after which mother's brother shaves the child's head leaving a patch on the top of the child's head. Then, both mother and child take a ritual bath and resume their daily activities. Nose and ear piercing ceremonies are held on the eighth day. Name-giving ceremony is held shortly afterwards. The name is chosen from those of the dead ancestors whose soul the child supposedly inherits. A pig is sacrificed to appease the deities and ancestors.

Boys and girls during their adolescence enter into dormitory life. Boys and girls have separate dormitories in every Kutia village where they sleep at night. They get necessary training and orientation in adulthood and community life from their elders in their dormitories. Now-a-days, these traditional youth organizations are losing their importance.

Marriage is a very significant event in the life of a Kutia. Girls and boys are considered fit for marriage after attaining puberty. Marriage by negotiation is quite common. However, marriages by elopement, marriage by capture, marriage by exchange of sisters, marriage by service are also practised in a limited scale. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees; junior levirate, sororate and polygynous types of marriage are also permitted in Kutia society. Bride price is claimed in full by bride's parents or reduced depending upon the type of marriage. The consent of the boy and the girl is taken before finalizing the matrimony. Marriage inside the same village and lineage is strictly prohibited as it amounts to incest.

Negotiation of marriage is quite an expensive affair which involves payment of bride price in cash and kind in successive installments amounting to Rs.500/- in cash and some heads of cattle, some measures of rice and millet and huge quantity of *mohua* or *katul* liquor to entertain the girl's relatives who visit the boy's house from time to time to finalize the marriage.

On the scheduled wedding day, the kinsmen of the groom go to the bride's house to bring her to their home where marriage ritual is performed. A week after the marriage the bride returns to her parents. Her parents keep her with them for more than one year and do not allow her to return to her husband until the boy's side fulfills all their claims. Many disputes arise between the bride's family and the groom's family for this practice. Consummation of marriage takes place after return of the bride to her husband.

Death is a sorrowful event in the Kutia life. The dead bodies are generally cremated. In case of unnatural deaths the corpses of pregnant women, infants, and persons died by drowning, snakebite, attack of wild animals are buried. Death pollution continues for three days. The purificatory rituals are held on the third day. The village priest (*Jani*) and shaman (Beju or Bejuni) conduct the ritual. Food, liquor and the blood of a goat sacrificed on this occasion are offered to appease the departed soul. Thereafter he/she becomes an ancestor (*Duma*).

Their village organization has survived the test of time. The Kutia Kandha village still continues to be a basic socio-political unit having its own set of traditional secular and sacerdotal leaders. The titular head of the village is *Jani* who acts as the village priest. *Majhi* is the secular head ranking next to *Jani*. *Ganda* is the village messenger who belongs to Pano community. All these posts are hereditary and their succession is based on the custom of primogeniture.

The traditional village Panchayat comprising all the household heads under the leadership of *Jani* and *Majhi* is still quite effective. Its meetings are held as and when necessary to take decisions about village affairs such as organizing the *Kedu* festival, distribution of shifting cultivation plots, intra-village and inter-familial disputes etc. All the decisions are taken unanimously. Jurisdiction of the Panchayat is limited to hear social offences relating to witchcraft, incest, adultery, rape, divorce, non-payment of bride price, marriage by capture, marriage by elopement, marriage in lower castes, non sending of a married daughter to her husband's place, and the like. Such cases are decided according to the provisions of their prevailing customs. In most cases the punishment is imposed on the offender in the form of fine in cash and/or kinds. The amount of fine varies according to the gravity of offence. The amount is spent on food and liquor for entertaining the council members and sometimes a part of it is given to the aggrieved party as compensation.

After independence, the Panchayatiraj institutions have come to stay and the Kutia have accepted it in their own style. They are now electing their ward members unanimously. In many villages the traditional leaders such as *Jani* or *Majhi* are being chosen as ward members because they are still enjoying the confidence of their fellowmen. This new political system has not affected their traditional set up very much. The ward member holds an influential position in a Kutia village, his field of activities is limited to contact the development agencies and initiate welfare measures in his village while the traditional leaders reign



supreme in their respective fields. There is no conflict but they work in coordination for the betterment of their village.

Living inside remote hill tracts, the Kutia eke out a miserable existence due to exploitation, illiteracy and ignorance. They remain primitive and backward socio-economically. Government has started a Micro Project named Kutia Kandha Development Agency at Belghar from 1978 to expedite their socio-economic upliftment. This Agency has been implementing various welfare schemes for their betterment. A beginning has been made. The Kutia have slowly responded to the changes brought out by the development programmes. Irrespective of whatever material development that has taken place in these days, it can be said that awareness has been created among the Kutias.

### Bibliography & References

- |                          |         |                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ali, Almas               | 1978-79 | Health and Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru Village. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVIII, Nos.1-4, pp.56-62. |
| Anonymous                | 1846    | The Kondhs of Hill Tribes, <i>Calcutta Rev</i> , Vol. V, pp. 22-85                                                |
| Bailey, F.G.             | 1985    | <i>Caste and Economic Frontier</i> . London, Oxford University Press.                                             |
|                          | 1960    | <i>Tribe, Caste and Nation</i> , London, Oxford University Press.                                                 |
|                          | 1958    | Political Change in Kondmals. <i>Eastern Anthropologist</i> , Vol.II, No. 2, pp. 88-106                           |
| Banerjee, S.             | 1969    | <i>Ethnographic Study of the Kuvi Kondh</i> . Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India,                          |
| Behura, N.K. & B.N. Sahu | 1970-71 | Mutha, the Traditional Political Organisation of the Kondh, <i>Adibasi</i> Vol. XVII, Nos.1-4, pp.13-21.          |
| Behura, N.K.             | 1962    | Transformation of Human Sacrifice among the Kondhs of Orissa. <i>Vanyajati</i> , Vol. X, pp. 93-99.               |
| Boal, B. M.              | 1982    | <i>The Kondhs (Human sacrifice and Religious Change)</i> , Bhubaneswar, M.B.D.                                    |

- Bogardus, E. S. 1987 The Supp.ression of Human Sacrifices among the Kondhs, *Calcutta Review*. Vol.XV, No.229, pp. 61-66.
- Campbell, J. 1864 *Among the Wild Tribes of Khondistan*. London, Host and Black Vol. IX, P. 320.
- Dalton, E.T. 1872 *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, Supdt. of Govt. Printing
- Das B.N. 1956 Supp.ression of Human Sacrifice among the Hill Tribes of Orissa. *Man in India*, Vol. XXXVI, No.1, P. 21.
- Das, J.K. 1961 *Tribes of Orissa*, Census of India
- Das, N. 1950 Sikuli Puja in a Khond Village, *Vanyajati*, Vol.VI, pp.27-30
- Das, M.N. 1960 Female Infanticide Among the Kondhs of Orissa. *Man in India*, Vol. XI, pp.30-35.
- Das, Rajakishore *Decline of the Kondh Population*, News Mag. H & T.W. Deptt. Govt. of Orissa, Vol.1, No.4, pp.13-14
- Debi, K. Kondh, *Adibasi*, Vol-V, No.3, pp.63-64.
- Elwin, Verrier. 1944 Notes on a Kondh Town. *Man in India*, Vol. .XXIV, No.1, pp.40-58
- Francis, W. 1907 Gazetteer of Vizagapatam District, Vol. I
- Friend-Periera, J.A 1902 Customs of Kondhs, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol. 71, pp.1-28.
- 1899 Totemism among the Khonds, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol. XVIII, pp.1-13.
- Frowde, H. 1908 *Kondh*, the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Oxford, Vol. XVI, pp.-280-288.
- Frye, J.P. 1980 On the Oriya and Kondh Population of Orissa, *Journal of Royal Anthropological Society*, Vol. XVII.
- Hota, N.R. 1959-60 *Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa*. *Orissa Historical Research Jr.*,Vol.VIII, No.3-4, pp.158-163.
- Jena, K.C. 1962-63 The Kondhs of Koraput, *Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. XXIII, pp..57-61.
- Mazumdar, B.C. 1932 The Kui or the Kondh People, *Man in India*, Vol. XII, pp. 245-252.

- Mishra, B. 1963 The Agricultural System, Diet, and Dietary Habits of the Kondhs- a Tribe of Orissa. *Vanyajati*, Vol. XI, pp. 135-142.
- Mohanty, S.C. 1993 Social Position and Property Rights of Kutia Kondh Women. *Adivasi*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, pp. 16-21.
- Mukherjee, P. 1959-60 Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa, a note, *Orissa Hist. Res. Journal*, Vol.VIII, No.3-4, PP. 164-167.
- Nayak, G. 1976 A Study of Kutia Kondh's Foot, *Adibasi*, Vol. XVI, No.1, P. 1
- Niggemeyer, H 1957 Kutia Kondha Pilara Ekoisia (Oriya), *Adibasi*, Vol.1, No.2 & 3, pp.5-7.
- Panda, S 1969-70 Demography of a Kondh Village. *Adibasi*, Vol. XI, No.3, pp. 27-35.
- Pathy, Jagannath 1976 Political Economy of Kondh and *Man in India*, Vol.56, No.1, pp.1-36.
- Patnaik, N. & P.S. Daspatnaik 1982 *The Kondh of Orissa*, Bhubaneswar, T.H.R.T.I.
- Patnaik, N.R. 1990 Oath and Ordeal in Kondh Society of Nineteenth Century, Orissa, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXX, No.1, pp.20-24.
- Patnaik, U. N. 1964-65 Reminiscences of an Administrative Officer in the Kondh hills. *Adibasi*, Vol. VI, No.2, pp.29-37.
- 1969-70 Religious Ceremonies, Ordeals and a Legend about Oriya Infiltration in Kondh hill. *Adibasi*. Vol. XI, No.4, pp. 76-84.
- Patnaik, Uma Charan 1945 The Kondhas of the Hills, One Century of British Rule (1836 to 1946). *Mod. Rev.* Vol. IXXVIII, P. 214-218.
- Pattanaik, Prananatha 1962 Phulbani Jilara Kandha, *Adibasi*, (Oriya), Vol, VII, No.1, pp.25-32.
- Raman, L. V. 1957-58 The Kondh of Phulbani. *Adibasi*, Vol.11, pp.35-40
- Rao,L.M. 1940 The Kondh, a Tribal People of South Orissa, *Mod. Rev.*, Vol. XVII, pp. 199-200.
- Ray, G.S. 1949 A Study of the Physical Character of the Kondh. *Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. II, pp.199-200.
- 1949-50 Characteristic Features of Kondh Kinship Terminology. *Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. II, pp.151-157.

- Ray, S.C. 1922 Ethnography in Old Official Recorder, Kondh Human Sacrifice, *Man in India*, Vol. II, pp.67-81.
- Rout, S.P. 1964-65 Dom Exploitation in the Kondh Villages of Koraput Dist. *Adibasi*, No.1, pp.21-28.
- Russell, R.V. 1916 *Tribes Castes of Central Provinces of India*, Vol.III, & Hiralal Part-III, pp.464-481.
- Sharama, K. 1981 *The Kondha of Orissa*, Delhi, Concept Publication.
- Swain, J. 1968-69 The Kondh Pantheon and their Social Significance, *Adibasi*, Vol.X, No.3 & 4, pp.33-39.
- Thurston, E. 1909 *Castes & Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. III, pp. 357-415.
- Watts, N. A. 1970 *The Half-Clad Tribals of Eastern India*, Orient Longmans, Bombay.

# HABIT, HABITAT & GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECT OF KUTIA KANDHA <sup>1</sup>

Dina Krishna Joshi  
Sasmita Mund  
Mihir Prasad Mishra

Tribal people living in the remote areas of the territory form an indispensable part of the Indian population. More than 250 different tribal groups inhabit in India, of which 62 tribal groups live in Orissa, each varying in culture, language, economic life and level of literacy. The thirteen tribal groups, namely Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Dongria-Kondh, Juang, Hill Kharia, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi Bhuinya, Soura and Chuktia Bhunjia having pre-agricultural level of technology and extremely low level of literacy have been recognized as 'Primitive Tribes' of Orissa. These tribal groups remain confined to their own small world and a probe into their history clearly shows that after a few generations the past turns into mythology. It was realized only after the Independence that to have a well-developed and prosperous nation, the needs and problems of the tribes are to be addressed and their welfare needs to be taken care of.

## **The Kandha of Orissa:**

The Kandha tribe is variously known. They are called the Khond, Kondh, Kandha or Kond, according to the usage of the term in vogue in different places in which they live. But whatever the terminology used, it refers to the same tribe. But they identify themselves as Kui loku or Kuinga. The language they speak is Kui/Kuvi, which has no script. The Kandhas are identified from their names. Some writers have attempted to trace out the Telegu derivation from the word 'Konda' meaning 'hills'. The people living on the hill tops are named as Kandha. It is a fact that the Kandha like to live in hill tops and

---

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished article of ADIVASI, Vol.47, Nos.1&2, 2007, SCSTR TI

their servants, the Panos live beneath their settlement. The common surnames of Kandhas are Pradhan, Mallick, Konhar, Majhi. Those who worship deities have surnames like Dehury, Jhankar, and Jani etc. Numerically, the Kandhas form the largest group among the 62 tribes of Orissa. Customarily they were once famous for their brutal acts of human sacrifice (Maria sacrifice) to get bumper crops and killing of infants for better yield of turmeric. There are various sections among the Kandhas. Each section is endogamous though originally they hail from the same Kandha community. Racially the Kandhas belong to the Proto-Australoid racial stock with considerable mongoloid admixture. They are divided into two linguistic groups, *kui* and *kuvi*. The Kandhas had their loyalty to their erstwhile feudatory chiefs in Orissa and elsewhere. They were valiant warriors and discharged their services very faithfully to their rulers. They offered their valuable services at the time of freedom struggle. To name a few among them are Chakara Bisoyi and Dora Bisoyi.

#### **KUTIA KANDHA - THE PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUP:**

The Kutia Kandha constitute a primitive section of the great Kandha tribe of Orissa. They are found in a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area of Balliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. They lead an isolated life of poverty and indigence.

#### **Kutia Kandha Micro Projects in Orissa:**

Name of district	Name of project	Blocks covered	No. of villages	No of household	Population	Literacy
Kandhmal	KKDA, Belghar	Tumudibandh	67	1148	5241	17.13%
Kalahandi	KKDA, Lanjigarh	Lanjigarh	17	557	2442	30.55%

*(Source: Baseline Survey of SCSTR TI)*

#### **Nomenclature of the Tribe:**

Different views have been given by different authorities about the nomenclature of Kutia Kandha. The origin myth suggests that the first generation of Kutia Kandha emerged out of a hole (Sapangada). The local term 'Kuti' means a big hole on the earth; hence, the tribe that emerged out of a hole is known as Kutia Kandha.

### **Dress & Ornaments:**

The dress of the Kutia Kandhas is very simple.

The traditional dress of Kutia Kandha men is a loin cloth (Batada). In the recent past, they used to grow long hairs which they fastened in front by knot and in which they invariably stuck cigars, comb, metal pins etc. Now-a-days, a few older males and a very few young men of the remote hilly region are wearing their traditional dress. But the majority of males are wearing *dhoti* and shirt or full pant or shirt and cutting their hair like the plains people.

The traditional dress of Kutia Kandha women are Retang and Uromi. They wear two clothes, one covers the lower portion of the waist to the upper portion of the knee known as 'Retang' and another for upper portion of the body called 'Uromi' which hangs from the neck upto the abdomen. Under the Retang they wear a loin cloth known as 'Topa'. The girls from 5 to 9 years of age wear only Topa. Now-a-days, the young girls and women are using *saree*, *saya* and blouse. They have intense love for ornaments and wear gold and silver necklaces, ear-rings, nose-rings and hair ornaments. Coloured beads are generally used as necklaces. They adorn the entire rim of the ear with silver rings. The Kutia Kandha women tattoo their faces and hands. They make tattoo (Tikanga) marks on their body ; they do it only for beautification.

### **Livelihood:**

Agriculture is main occupation. 70% of the land is unproductive. People are still practising primitive method of cultivation i.e. shifting cultivation. Turmeric, Ginger, Arrowroot and other spices are main produce of the land. Collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is also done by the women.

The Kutia's derive their livelihood primarily from shifting cultivation. A particular patch of forest or hill slope is used for shifting cultivation for three years consecutively and then it is left fallow for more than five years to recuperate. After selection of site and allotment of plots, each family takes care of its respective plot in giving boundary mark and cleaning the area. Forest clearing takes place in the month of March-April. They do not cut the trees from ground level and also the fruit bearing trees. After the felled trees dry up they set fire on it in the month of April-May. Then they work the soil with digging sticks to mix the ashes in the soil. After first shower a mixture of seeds such as *kandul*, *jhudang*, black gram, *kating* are sown by dibbling. When the soil gets sufficiently wet they sow a mixture of seeds of *ragi*, *kosla*, *gonga* and *kangu* by broadcast. Both men and women take part in the operation. Then weeding is done in the month of June-July and the weeds are left in the site to be

decomposed. The crops are then guarded round the clock to protect these from destruction by wild animals. The crops are harvested in succession one after another. Kosla and *ragi* are harvested in the month of October-November and Kandula in the month of February-March. Threshing is done in the Podu fields and grains are stored in bamboo baskets and earthen pots.

#### **Food Habits:**

Generally three principal meals are taken daily by the Kutia Kandha, one in the morning at about 7 AM, then at about mid day between 12 noon to 1 PM and lastly in the evening at about 7 to 7.30 PM. The items for the morning meals are prepared from the previous evening and kept near the hearth for morning use. The rice prepared in the previous night and taken without water is called, Basi bidi, but with water is called Basi simba. Basi Simba or Basi bidi is taken with the previous night's curry or fry or *dal* or only with chilly and salt. The mid-day meal consists of rice with gruel and with salt and chilly. The evening meal is 'Kueri rice' without gruel or paddy rice without gruel or *ragi* not in liquid form taken with vegetable curry or some pulses or green leaves. In the evening meal, sometimes meat or fish or dry fish is taken if available.

#### **Drinks:**

They are very fond of drinking *salap* (sago palm) juice and *tadi* (date palm) juice. Local herbs and roots are added to the juice to increase its alcoholic contents. Liquor is prepared from Mahua flowers to meet the requirements on special occasions. Liquor is considered as food and at the same time a ritualistic food to satisfy deities and spirits. It is considered as a social necessity by the Kandhas and therefore consumed by them irrespective of sex and age.

Liquor is the most important and essential item for a number of socio-religious functions and ceremonies. The Kutia Kandha take four types of liquor i.e. Madanga (juice of sago palm tree), Ankinga (prepared from Mahua flower), Katuli (procured from liquor vendor) and Pranga Ankinga (Rice Beer). But they generally take Salap and Mahuli.

#### **Houses:**

Their houses are made of wooden walls (planks) and bamboo splits with a thatch of forest grass and leaves. Generally the houses with rectangular ground plan are neat and tidy but lack ventilation. Domestic animals and residents are all huddled in two or three rooms. Doors are made of bamboo splits designed artistically. The low roof never exceeding 8 feet to 9 feet in height ensures resistance to the violent storms and ice-cold wind during monsoon and winter.



### **Dormitory:**

In the Kutia Kandha society the bachelor's dormitory, both for boys and girls are called 'Kude'. Generally the marriageable son of the family builds a separate house of his own before he gets married but stays with his parents till his marriage. During this gap period his house is used as boy's 'Kude'. In the boys dormitory the unmarried boys spend nights with an elderly person or widower of the village. The girls spend nights in their Kude under the guardianship of an elderly woman or widow. The married people except widows, widowers and divorcees are not allowed into the Kude.

### **Clans of Kutia Kandha:**

Kutia Kandha are divided into a number of social groups (clans) known as 'Gochhi' or 'Bansa'. The 8 important clans are Nundruka, Saraka, Timaka, Sukbicha, Adanga, Rodamaka, Urlaka and Kadraka. Each clan is given a distinct name which further emphasizes their distinct identity. Gochhi distinction serves as an important factor for selection of mate in their society.

### **Marriage (Sedi Tatam) System:**

Monogamy is the predominant form of marriage among the Kutia Kandha but in some cases polygyny is also noticed. The marriageable age in case of males is between 20 to 24 years and in case of girls it is 17 to 20 years. The clan exogamy is strictly followed in all types of marriages. There are generally four types of marriages in Kutia Kandha society, such as :

1. Arranged marriage (Sadi Bengana)
2. Marriage by capture (Reja Nona)
3. Marriage by elopement (Guisat Sedi)
4. Marriage by service (Ghar-join Sachenja)

### **Child Birth:**

The pollution in connection with child birth ends on the fifth day. On that day father of the child sacrifices a fowl and offers cooked meat, rice and liquor to the ancestors so that no misfortune may befall the child. Some households perform this ceremony on the 7th day. After one month hair on the head of child shaved off and a feast is given to the neighbours.

### **Death:**

The dead bodies are burnt except those of the pregnant women whose dead bodies are buried. On the following day, the priest purifies all the people

who attended the funeral by sprinkling oil over their heads with a small broom made up of twigs or blade of grass. After a few days they replace all the earthen vessels and perform an animal sacrifice and give a feast to neighbours and relatives. They believe that the soul after death turns into a spirit (Duma) and goes away from the earth.

### **Religion & Festivals:**

*Punikalu Dakina:* This festival is observed once in a year on Sunday which falls just after Pus Punei (Dec.-Jan.). On this occasion the Dharani Penu is worshipped.

*Korubiha Dakina :* It is also called as Meriah Puja, the biggest festival observed at the community level. The festival falls in every five years on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday which comes after Phagun Punei (Feb.-Merch). In the past the Kutia Kandha were sacrificing human beings now substituted by buffalo.

*Burangkalu Dakina:* This festival is observed once in 5-10 years on a Sunday before or after Chait Punei (March-April).

*Bangosina Dakina:* This festival is observed on a selected patch of a hill slope on the occasion of clearing a patch in the hill slope for the first time for the purpose of shifting cultivation. It is observed on a Sunday before or after Phagun Punei (Feb.-March).

*Bicha Dakina:* It is observed for ceremonial sowing of seeds in the newly ploughed area of the shifting cultivation site. This festival observed on a Sunday before or after Jyesth Purnima (May-June).

*Takukalu Dakina:* This festival is observed to avoid diseases in the standing crops. The mango kernel is offered to Dharani Penu. It is observed on a Sunday before or after the Shravan Punei (July –August).

*Badabiha Dakina:* It is observed to cure a serious disease of a person. It is observed on a Monday in the month of Chait (March-April).

### **Status of Women in the Kutia Kandha Society:**

Although the Kutia Kandha society is patriarchal, the women folk have their distinct status. Women are tabooed from certain religious and traditional secular functions but their economic status is very high. They are not permitted to participate in the village council meetings unless personally accused. In religious practices the women are not the direct participants in rituals, except in dance. After marriage the chief duties of the women are to take care of the

household, prepare the meal and participate in household chores. Besides these, they pursue outdoor works to supplement the family income by collecting minor forest product and wage earning. In agricultural activities they perform works like cleaning, burning, sowing, weeding and harvesting. All the produce earned by them remain in their hands and they control and make proper use of the products. Marketing for the household produce is preferably done by the women folk. There are mainly two things which Kutia Kandha women must not do. These are; she should not plough the land and climb to the roof of the house for thatching. During her menses she is not allowed to enter into the cowshed and the main living room of the house, to do any sort of household activities except nourishing the infants, to visit the relatives and market place. The cow's milk is generally tabooed for women to drink. The women and grown up girls are forbidden to eat egg and pork.

### Bibliography:

- |                  |      |                                                                                                            |
|------------------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bailey ,F.G.     | 1960 | <i>Tribe Caste and Nation</i> , Oxford University Press, London                                            |
| Das, M.N.        | 1960 | Suppression of Human sacrifice among the Hill Tribes of Orissa, Vol.40, No.I, p.30, Ranchi                 |
| Das, S.Chandra   | 1960 | Ama Kutia Bhai (Oriya), <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. IV, No.I, pp.64-68, TRB, Bhubaneswar                         |
| Elwin, V.        | 1957 | <i>Tribal Myths of Orissa</i> , Oxford University ,London                                                  |
| Hardenberg, R.   | 2002 | “Dongria Kond: Youth between Aggression and Friendship”, paper presented at Inter-Congress of IUAES, Tokyo |
| Majumdar, B.C.   | 1932 | The Kui of the Kandha People, Vol.12, No.4, pp.245-52, Ranchi                                              |
| Nayak, Gitanjali | 1976 | A Study of Kutia Khond Foot, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVI, No.I, pp.41-49, THRTI, Bhubaneswar                 |
| SCSTRTI          | 2006 | <i>The Kandha of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar                                                                  |

# ETHNIC ASPECTS OF INDIAN SAGO PALM (*CARYOTA URENS- L*) : AN ETHNO-BOTANICAL STUDY AMONG KUTIA KANDHA <sup>1</sup>

Mihir Kumar Jena <sup>2</sup>  
Klaus Seeland  
Kamala Kumari Patnaik

## ABSTRACT

The traditional uses of Indian Sago Palm (*Caryota urens-L*) by Kutia Kandha of Phulbani district of southern Orissa are usually not known by many. The present paper, therefore, deals in these plant species which are intimately interwoven in the social, cultural, ceremonial and many other aspects of the traditional life style of Kutia Kandha. Along with the precise description of the plant, the indigenous way of fermentation and extraction process of Toddy (liquor) from the plant parts are given. Toddy is considered as the sole source of food and energy for Kutia Kandha living in southern parts of Orissa. The data were collected during the Ethno-Botanical Tour of the Kutia Kandha habitat made by the authors.

## Introduction

Many authors have collected certain information on the studies on ethno-botany in different tribal areas of Orissa State (Rai et. al, 1970; Saxenna and Dutta, 1975; Mishra and Dubey, 1991-92; Pal, 1980; Bannerji, 1971; Sahoo, 1986; Choudhury et. al, 1975 etc.). None of them has reported on a particular plant species, which has a significant role on the social, cultural and ritual life style of the Kutia Kandha. Hence, in the present investigation attempts have been made to study in detail about the traditional relationship between Indian Sago Palm (*Caryota Urens-L*) and Kutia Kandha of Phulbani district.

Kutia Kandha is one of the many different sub tribes of the Kandha Tribe, the study on which is of great fascination among research scholars so far as their organization, cultural pattern and ethnicity of life style are concerned. Most of the people belonging to this tribe are living in hill tracts, i.e. in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 3&4, 1993, pp.29-33.

<sup>2</sup> All the authors are from Parija P.G. Department of Botany, Revenshaw College, Cuttack, Odisha

dense forest surrounded by hills and mountains. The Kutia Kandha are not fully pastoral or agricultural community. Mostly they live upon the forest products like tubers, fruits and wild herbs, leafy vegetables, etc.

Hunting is also another important source of their livelihood. They procure and consume animal flesh whenever available. Scanty agricultural output from land and non-availability of food during lean periods has made them to go for liquors produced in any form. They collect toddy from certain plant species. Distilled/ fermented liquor is prepared by their indigenous method. This habit is not socially prohibited irrespective of sex and age. Consumption of liquor is approved by the society both in ceremonial and religious functions. The environmental condition viz. the high terrain topography and climatic factor have made them somehow perpetual addicts.

Country toddy is usually collected from date palms (*Phoenix Sylvestris*), the tree being extensively available in the tribal localities. However, the sago palm (*Caryota Urens-L*) is an important species in southern Orissa. In the present investigation the style of access of Indian Sago Palm tree to the life of Kutia Kandha residing in Belghar of Phulbani district of Orissa is studied. Besides attempts have been made to study the association of this plant with their ethnicity in various aspects of their socio-cultural life. Association of Kutia Kandha with this tree (*Caryota-Urens-L*) is known from time immemorial. This is also known in English as Kittul Palm / The Fish tail Sago Palm. According to Kutia Kandha it is popularly known as *Mada Mara* (*Mada* means liquor, *Mara* means tree). In Oriya it is known as *Salap*.

#### Abbreviations

- KK - Kutia Kandha
- E - English
- O - Oriya

#### Description of *Caryota Urens* (Sago Palm)

Sago palm tree are commonly found in some parts of Agency Areas of Orissa (Haines, 1921-25). The seed keeps up its dormancy for a prolonged period that is overcome after two to three years and starts germinating in suitable environmental conditions. The tree attains a height up to 15 to 20 feet with leaflets (look like those of maiden hair fern), leaves 10 to 12 feet broad and petioles very stout. Inflorescences of the tree usually come out during October-November and remain fresh till March to April. The stem is erect, unbranched, round and smooth. Sometimes saplings are planted in a kitchen garden and at the side of the avenues. According to Kutia Kandha the tree grows better on hill slopes

and foot hills than in any other place. A tree can produce Toddy up to three years before it withers. The tree attains its maturity at about 15 to 20 years.

#### **Preparation of Musical Drum from Root Base (KK -Daki, E -Root base, O -Muli)**

Different parts of Sago Palm trees have contributed a lot to the material culture of Kutia Kandha. A musical drum [KK - *Tapka*], mostly used in occasions like Meriah festival [KK — *Baikatina*, E - Animal Sacrifice Ceremony], New Year festival [KK- *Punikalu*] is made out of the root base of this palm. The dome shaped root base, which is hollow at the top and blunt at the bottom, is cut from the palm of various ages after they die. The external lateral roots are cleaned by sharp edged knives. Each of such cut pieces look like a bowl. A tanned skin (preferably of a cow) is then cut into size to tie over the open end of the bowl shaped root base. A young, tender and flexible bamboo stem [KK - *Manisira*] is used as a rope to tie the skin over the open space in order to make it more tight and perfect. Gum [extracted from an herb called *Jrikeni* (KK)] is pasted around the flexible bamboo. That makes the perfect musical drum.

A matured tree trunk is cut into two equal halves in a longitudinal section with the help of an axe. The two hollow pieces obtained from it are used as drain to irrigate crop fields.

#### **Process of Collecting Sago**

The stem of young palm is more important because its pith generally contains a good quality of Sago. The pith (KK - *Jendi*, E - Pith, O - *Manja*) is collected at the premature death of a Sago Palm. Sago is collected and sundried. They use the Sago in different ways, viz. simply boil it to make their food, prepare chapatti out of the flour and prepare various types of cakes on different occasions. Dried Sago is also stored for use in the lean periods.

#### **Yielding Strong Fiber from Leaf Sheath**

Fibres collected from leaf sheaths are very strong. They use these fibers for tying up the clump of the cleaning broom [*Thysanolaena maxima*]. T, maxima is known to them as “*Satranga*” and its inflorescence is known as “*Seperaka*”. The culm of the plant is finely cut and sharpened. They are tied together with fiber (extracted from the Sago Palm leaf sheath) to make combs. Besides, they use the plant fibers for preparing strings of musical instruments, net to trap birds, jungle fowl and snares, to catch small wild animals for food.

#### **Yielding “Toddy” from Inflorescence (KK - *Kama*) and Pith (KK - *Jendi*)**

The inflorescence is considered as the best part of the plant for collecting Toddy. They simply make fresh transverse cut [about half an inch]

from the hanging terminal end of the inflorescence. Then they tie the earthen pot at the neck of fresh cut end. This process is done successively thrice in a day [morning, mid-day and evening] during summer and twice in winter.

Each time a fresh cut is made in order to avoid blockage of Today flow, which may occur due to drying up of the terminal end or for any sort of infections, etc. However, they also prepare Today out of pith. However, the Today is used to cook meat in the forest when water is not available. However, the today helps in maintaining a thermodynamic balance between the body and the surroundings in different seasons.

### **Indigenous Fermentation Process (KK - *Madang Manipaa*)**

The Toddy is sweet because of its high sugar content. Very sweet Toddy sometimes causes loose motion. Among the tribe, different age-groups of male and female consume Toddy. They are aware of the fact of the low and high power of the fermented Toddy and they are also conscious of allowing particular drink of specific power to particular age group. Hence, according to the needs of the age-groups, they ferment the juice at the time of collection. However, they adopt the indigenous method of their own to specify the power of fermentation for different age groups of a male and female folk. They select bark of *Holarrhena antidysenterica* (KK - *Kudu mara*, O - *Kuduchi*), root bark of *Cassia fistula* (KK - *Pundeni mara*, O - Sunari, E - Indian Laburnam/Purging Cassia), root of *Cissampelos Pareira* (KK - *Dindidipa tulla*, O - *Akanbindi*, E - False Pareira Brava), bark of *Mangifera Indica* (KK - *Maskamara*, O - *Amba*, E - Mango) and fruit of *Bahunia Vahlia* (KK - *Paeritulla*, O - *Siali*) as the major fermenting agents. Huskless grains of *Oryza sativac* (KK - *Kulinga*, O - *Dhana*, E - Paddy) and *Panicum miliare* (KK - *Kueri*, O - *Suan*, E - Little millet), are common fomenters. These are generally kept inside the pitcher to collect the juice, before the pitcher is tied to the cut end of inflorescences. The knowledge about fermentation of Toddy is inherited from generation to generation. The process is very simple. As per the required power/ strength of the Toddy, the selected part is kept inside an empty earthen pot meant for collection of Toddy. It appears these plant parts help Toddy to ferment quickly within 8 to 12 hours without any difficulty.

### **Property Ownership**

The tree is a valuable property of Kuttia Kandha, because of this nutritious Toddy. In fact, Toddy plays an important role in making a tribal society mentally, physically and socially fit to carry out their work efficiently. The tree are owned either individually or family wise. But the person who plants

it gets its ownership. Sometimes the family owned trees are divided among the family members. However, women ownership is rare among the tribe.

The owner reserves the right to tap inflorescence of the tree for the Toddy. In the event of the owner's inability or old age, he chooses a man who would collect the juice from his tree. After owner dies the tree is transferred to his family members, mostly to sons. In most cases, it is the will of the owner that decides the future owner of the tree. He may transfer his ownership to his legacy holders or to his relatives or any other person belonging to his village.

Some tribal people have divulged that in ancient days liquor was prepared from the tree like *Mangifera Indica*, *Madhuka longifolia* (KK - *Puju mara*, O - *Mahula*, E - Mowra butter tree), *Attocarpus heterophyllus* (KK - *Pansi mara*, O - *Panas*, E - Jackfruit), *Musa saprentum* (KK - *Tade mara*, O - *Kadali*, E - Plantain) and molasses. But Toddy from Sago Palm tree is considered as the best among such liquors. Toddy is sometimes sold at the rate of one *dumuni* (a unit) for one rupee. Good yielding trees are sometimes sold at a rate of maximum one thousand rupees per tree. However, producing the most valuable Toddy from Indian Sago Palm is the "inherited tradition" among Kutia Kandha from time immemorial.

#### **Sago Palm Trees- A Place for Social Intercourse**

The place where the people sit and drink the Toddy is called *madangbasa*. This place is specially chosen by the people for exchanging their thoughts, ideas, isms, feelings, decisions, etc. In a forest where there is more than one Toddy plant tree, people choose to sit under the youngest tree or at a place where Toddy can be brought conveniently from the collecting spot. Many decisions pertaining to village conflicts and misunderstanding for attending court for common purpose, choosing new forest patches for shifting cultivation and many other type of decisions are often taken at *Madangbasa* by mutual discussion. Discussions, affecting other's sentiments and thoughts, or hampering social welfare, are however not entertained at *Madangbasa*. They use a big spoon called *Dumuni* made out of gourd of *Lagenaria piceraria* (KK - *Anka*, O-*Lau*, E - Bottle gourd) to distribute Toddy equally among people participating in the discussion.

Guests are specially treated with an extra *Dumuni* of Toddy. It is also customary to offer a *Dumuni* full of Toddy to a friend for mutual interaction. Female folks, who occasionally visit the *Madangbasa*, are served Toddy separately. On no occasion this method of distribution is changed. In other words, every individual is entertained with Toddy at *Madangbasa*.



In almost all the rituals Toddy is offered to their gods and goddesses and mainly to their ancestral spirits (KK - *Dukeli*). In case of the death of an owner of the tree, his successor has to perform witch *puja* during his first Toddy collection. On this occasion, astrologers (KK - *Kutaka*), priest (KK - *Jani*) and headman (KK - *Majhi*) of the village are invited to the spot. The astrologer invokes the owner's spirit and chants "we are cutting your trees for Toddy. May your goodwill be with us. May your tree secrete sweet, tasty and plenty of Toddy for our children (KK - *Miladali*)". Then the Toddy is distributed among themselves according the status and age.

When the owner of an immature tree dies, his soul has to pass through a critical test in a queer manner. If the Toddy collected from the tree (when the tree attains maturity) is plenty and sweet on taste, then it is believed that the departed soul had good and healthy feelings for the village folk. Or else, he is blamed as a wicked person.

If due to any unknown reason, a palm tree yields less Toddy, they perform a ritual. The village astrologer performs a *puja* by offering rice, leaves of *Bauhinia vahlii* and *Themda arundinacea* (KK - *Bika*, O - *Chhona*, E- Thatch grass) to the tree to detect the evil spirit and to satisfy it. Fruits of *Semecarpus anacardium* (KK - *Ganju*, O - *Bhalia*, E - Marking nut tree) are kept in a packet secretly inside the tree to avoid the evil eyes of the spirit.

In many cases they get a positive result and thus they become contented. However, the relationship of such rituals with the secretion of Toddy is ambiguous to others.

### **Aesthetic Scenario**

In certain folk songs the aesthetic sense associated to the tree is often sung. In one folksong about the tree, their affinity for the Toddy is reflected. It goes like this.

"There was a Sago Palm tree.  
Its Toddy developed my appetite.  
I drank it to my full satisfaction.  
It developed my addition and hunger also, which demanded meat.  
I want it and could have it. Then I slept a sound sleep."

A conversation of love between lovers is represented in a Koraputian Kandha folk song which reads as "*Mada mara sinanga dokaritaka rinanga, piopata baisangade.....*"

Further, Toddy relieves pains and agony, sorrows and sufferings.

### Conservation Policy

The tree is cared by the Kutia Kandha for its contribution to their social life, cultural patterns, aesthetic life etc. The people deeply love this tree as it provides them with food and drink. It is also provided for a lot to their art, craft and material culture. The Toddy plays its role in relaxing the pain from hard labour of the day and is indispensable for rituals and festivals. Its contribution has motivated them to preserve and conserve the species in their locality. Planting a Sago Palm tree and dedicating it to the interest of the local people is the noblest deed which one can do to be ever remembered by Kutia folks. The tree stands as a mother, providing its Toddy - the elixir vital by having which people of all ages survive and enjoy. Kutia Kandha, thus, feels ill at its ill, well at its well.

### Bibliography

1. Chaudhuri, H.N. Ray, Pal, D.C. & Tarafdar, C.R. (1975)  
“Less known uses of some plants from the tribal areas of Orissa” *Bull. Bot. Survey. India*, Vol. 17, Nos. 1-4, PP. 132-36.
2. Haines, H.H. (1921-1925)  
“Botany of Bihar & Orissa” Vol. 1-3, Abelson & Co, London.
3. Mishra, S.C & Dubey, A.K. (1991-1992)  
“Medicinal use of some commonly occurring plants by tribals of Mayurbhanj”, Department of Botany, Bhanja Bharati, Orissa.
4. Mudugal, V. & Pal D.C. (1980)  
“Medicinal plants used by tribals of Mayurbhanj (Orissa)”- *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 22, Nos. 1-4, PP. 59-62.
5. Pal, D.C. (1980)  
“Observation of Folklore about plants used in veterinary medicine in Bengal, Orissa & Bihar”. *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 22, Nos .1-4 pp. 96-99.
6. Pal, D.C. & Banarjee, D.K. (1971)  
“Some less known plant foods among the tribals of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa State”. *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 13, Nos. 3 & 4, PP. 221-23.
7. Sahoo, A.K. (1986)  
“Plant resources of Phulbani district (Orissa) - Some suggestions to develop cottage industries in tribal localities”- *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3. PP. 5-10.
8. Saxena, H.O. & Dutta, P.K. (1975)  
“Studies on Ethno Botany of Orissa”, *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 17, Nos. 1-4, PP.124-31.

# SOCIAL POSITION AND PROPERTY RIGHTS OF KUTIA KONDH WOMEN <sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

In these days, there is a growing demand to grant equal rights to women in the male dominated patriarchal societies all over the world. The former president of India, Mr. Fakiruddin Ali Ahmed in his message for the International Women's Year in 1975 has emphasized the need to improve the conditions of vast majority of women of weaker sections living in urban slums, rural and tribal areas. Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitutions has provided for equality of women before law. This has given rise to a host of protective legislations for safeguarding women against various forms of oppression, exploitation and dowry harassments, provisions of equal wages, grant of equal property rights, etc. A number of women's voluntary organizations in various parts of the country have been fighting for the cause of women.

Feministic movements for liberation and equality of women against age-old sexual discrimination have started and gathered momentum in this country following the international trends and an awakening has been made. But this movement has remained more or less parochial and confined among the educated and conscious women of middle class and upper class while the vast majority of disadvantaged women living in the rural and tribal's areas have been least benefited by this.

All these Constitutional provisions, protective laws, voluntary agencies, concessions, reservations, trends and movements have not yet reached these disadvantaged women, especially those living in the tribal societies who struggle hard to eke out a precarious existence. However, despite their socio-economic disadvantages and deprivations, these poor, half-clad and impoverished tribal

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIII, No.2, 1993, pp.16-21

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar

women enjoy a relatively better position in their society than their sisters living in the modern and advanced societies.

The tribal societies in India though, by and large, patriarchal in nature, covertly and overtly recognise and honour the multidimensional, invaluable and indispensable role of their industrious women in all aspects of their life and culture, and therefore, regard them with dignity and equality. So, rarely we find the unfortunate and barbarous cases of bride-burning, female foeticide and infanticide or any other kind of atrocities on women in our tribal societies.

This article is about the position of women and their property rights in the Kutia Kondh Society based upon an empirical study of "Tribal Customs and Traditions" sponsored by Government of India and undertaken by the Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute of Orissa, Bhubaneswar during 1990-92. This research project has covered 07 culturally significant tribes of Orissa among whom 04 including the Kutia Kondh are identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) of Orissa by Government of India.

The Kutia Kondh are a primitive section of the great Kondh tribe of Orissa. They inhabit a remote, wild, rugged and mountainous highland country lying in the common border of Phulbani (Belghar area), Kalahandi (Lanjigarh area) and Rayagada (Chandragiri area) districts of Southern Orissa. They speak a Dravidian dialect called "Kui". Most of them are illiterate and their level of literacy barely exceeds ten percent. Their traditional subsistence is derived primarily from hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation.

In the male dominated Kutia Kondh Society, the women on one hand, are not permitted to inherit property but on the other hand, are treated as living assets, say, feathers in the crowns of their parents; brothers and husbands for their significant contribution for the sustenance of their families and society at a large. The social prestige and value of Kutia women are derived from the fact that they are hardworking, industrious, men's life partners, homemakers, child bearers and rearers. They also bring pride and prestige to their parents, kinsmen and villagers when their prospective husbands' parents and kinsman come to beg for their hands before their parents, offering gifts of liquor and food and negotiate the bride-price, to finalise the marriage. The boy's side always tries to please and entertain the girl's side to obtain their consent. In this one sided bargain, the balance heavily tilts towards the girl's side which holds an upper hand to dictate terms to the opposite party. The girl's side tries to extract as much as possible from the boy's side as a compensation for parting with a valuable asset of their family and village.

More women in the Kutia family means more swidden plots under cultivating possession of the family, higher agricultural production and forest production, higher earnings from various sources and better economic prosperity. Therefore, the Kutia society cannot afford to treat women as second class citizens. They are taken as equal partners of men and enjoy greater freedom in matters of selecting their mates and of their work and mobility. The consent of the Kutia woman is a necessary precondition for finalizing her matrimony.

The boy's family is required to pay the bride-price (Jula) to the girl's guardians to acquire her as their bride as well as a working hand. This price is very high as compared to the Kutia economic standards. Hence, the boy and his family members cannot afford to ill treat or displease the bride, lest, she may desert her husband and return to her parents or relatives or she may elope with someone whom she likes and that will not only cause disgrace to her husband's family but also a great economic loss.

The institution of levirate (younger brother's marriage with his deceased elder brother's widow) and sororate (marriage with wife's younger sister) prevalent in their society speaks in favour of the social and economic value of Kutia women. The marriage of a man with his deceased elder brother's widow saves him from the heavy economic burden of bride-price that he has to pay for acquiring a fresh bride. Further no bride-price is paid for marrying the widow of his family as the woman had already been acquired by his deceased brother after payment of the bride-price. Thus a woman once acquired as a bride, becomes the asset of her husband's family until her death, divorce or remarriage. Moreover by marrying the widow the younger brother also inherits the properties of his deceased brother.

Sororate is permitted under similar considerations. A man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister if the girl is willing. In this case the bride-price is reasonably relaxed as the widower's in-laws have already been paid at the time of his first marriage in their family. The Kutias say that the claim of a widower to marry his wife's younger sister and the relaxation of bride price is quite justified in view of the economic loss suffered by him for his wife's death. The widower's in-laws usually do not object to provide him their girl because he has already paid the bride-price once and it is their obligation to provide him a substitute.

Kutia women cannot inherit immovable properties. But they have subsidiary property rights which entitle them to take over the management of their deceased father's or husband's family and property establishments as long as they continue to live with the respective families. It depends upon their

marital status and place of residence. As daughters, sisters whether unmarried, widow, divorced or handicapped, they have the right to be maintained in their family of orientation. As wives, daughters-in-laws and mother, they are liable to be maintained in their family of procreation, even if, they are widows, barren, old, sick and invalid. Their right to claim maintenance from the concerned family becomes void when they leave their father's family or husband's family by marriage, remarriage, elopement with a lover, divorce, as the case may be.

When a widow remarries outside her deceased husband's family and lineage and a married woman remarries an outsider by deserting her husband or by eloping with her lover, her husband's kinsmen demand a penalty from her new husband. This penalty is claimed as compensation towards the loss of the woman who is a valuable working hand and an earning member whom they have acquired after paying the bride-price to her parents and kinsmen. They sometimes resort to violence to collect the penalty from the man if he does not entertain their claim. Often the elopement or remarriage takes place or the woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery while staying with her parents or guardians. In those cases her parents or guardians are held responsible by her husband's kinsmen against the loss or damage of their asset i.e., the woman for whom they have paid the bride price and the former become liable to pay the compensation to the latter. There are several incidents in which the husband's kinsmen have attacked the house and properties of the wife's parents to take revenge and recover their losses. In case of illegal pregnancy, the husband's kinsmen hold the option either to accept or refuse to accept the woman. If they refuse to accept her, they demand a hefty penalty that is more than two times of the bride-price they had paid to acquire her and also a penalty feast called "Mahat". "Mahat" means social prestige and in actual practice, it is demanded for restoration of the social prestige of the aggrieved kin group and the villagers of the man.

Theoretically, a Kutia woman may not inherit her paternal properties or her husband's properties, but, by virtue of her right to claim maintenance from her husband's properties or paternal properties depending upon her place of residence and marital status, she enjoys some residuary possessory rights over the properties and family establishments. A widow officiates as the head of the household, assumes the guardianship of her minor children and manages the family establishment and the properties of her deceased husband till her eldest son becomes major to take over the charge from her. A girl who is the only child of her parents can claim a share from her parent's properties even after her marriage if, she and her husband continue to stay with her parents.

There is some scope for Kutia women to possess their husband's property individually in polygynous households. The Kutia society permits polygyny. Though, monogamy is the common practice, polygyny is not rare. A Kutia man can marry more than one woman if he has adequate means to support them. In polygynous families the co-wives because of their feminine jealousy and quarrels with each other, sometimes stay in separate huts. Usually the eldest wife called, "Badli" stays with the husband and the younger wife called "Sanli" lives in a different hut. It is customary for the Sanli to obey and respect the Badli. They may share common kitchen or have separate kitchens as they may like. In their separate establishments, they are allotted with separate swidden plots, fruit bearing trees, livestock from which they derive their livelihood to maintain themselves along with their children. If there are not enough swidden plots of their husband to be shared among them, they work jointly in the field and share the produces. Besides that, the wage they earn, the minor forest produces they collect by their personal endeavour and their earnings from all other external sources becomes their personal property. These personal properties are managed by them till the time of their death, divorce and remarriage and subsequently inherited by their children. They automatically lose these possessory rights in the event of their divorce, remarriage and elopement with lover.

The income a Kutia woman derives from her productive assets are her own. She may contribute a part of her income to her husband at the time of need. The paternal house, wet and dry lands and the kitchen garden of the husband are not divided among the co-wives. These are jointly managed and the income constitute the common fund of the family that is managed by the husband himself to meet all the common expenses for livelihood including those for rituals ceremonies, food, health care, education, repayment of debts, etc.

Though Kutia men are legitimate owners of property, it is their women who hold the purse strings of their respective families and in fact, administer the productive assets from behind the curtain. Their active participation in all kinds of economic activities and their significant contribution to the family income give them a leverage to play a decisive role in managing the family affairs. The Kutia economic system has a mode of production in which their women play an important role that tends to be found in tandem with a system of granting females access to the major means production. It is their culture that determines their sexual roles and positions.

The following facts about the extent work participation of the tribal women of Orissa corroborate the importance of Kutia women. In Orissa, the

tribal women “work 16.5 hours of days. After finishing the household activities they rush to the forest or to the field for 6-8 hours on a back breaking job. In tribal households where the (land) holding is more than 5 acres, the women work in the field and participate up to 65 percent and where the holding is 1 to 5 acres the participation of women is 88 percent. The daughter (in the age group of 15-25) and the house wife who is the owner of the house, work up to 77percent and 88 percent respectively, in joint family the daughter-in-law goes to field (75percent) to work but their mother-in-laws go to field to work (62percent). Others generally look after the children or go to forest to collect *kendu* leaves or *siali* leaves and other minor forest produce” (Acharya; 1992).

In addition to holding the strings of the family purse, Kutia women build up their personal funds out of the produce of the land, tree, livestock, kitchen garden, forest collection, wage earning and the gifts and compliments they receive from their friends and relatives which they spend mostly for purchasing clothes, fancy objects, cosmetics, ornaments for themselves and their children and also for taking care of their children. Sometimes the male members of their families, i.e., their fathers, brothers and husbands take loan from them at the time of need.

Kutia women can inherit certain kinds of immovable properties. Daughters and daughter-in-laws inherit the clothing, ornaments, utensils and other household assets from their mothers, grandmothers and mother-in-laws. Of course such inheritance cannot be claimed as a matter of right but it is a traditional practice. The Kutia girl at the time of her marriage gets some gifts from her parents and relatives such as; gold and silver ornaments, cosmetics, clothing's and utensils, etc. These gift items become her property which she can use or dispose off in any manner or share it with any one as she may like.

Despite all these, Kutia women suffer from certain social disabilities, discriminations and deprivations. Though a Kutia woman is free to choose her own mate, she must choose a man belonging to her own tribe but not belonging to her own clan. In other words, she must observe the existing customs and traditions in this regard. If she marries a man of lower caste, say, a man of 'Dom' community she is socially ostracized by her family, kinsmen and community which renders her disqualified to exercise her right to claim any maintenance from her father's or husband's properties in future. She is never readmitted into her community.

Then there are certain taboos and restrictions to limit the freedom of Kutia women. They must not do the works like ploughing, climbing the roof of



the house, climbing trees, carrying a corpse, conducting rituals and animal sacrifices, sitting on a cot before her superiors, jumping over the logs lying in front of house, taking part in hunting, etc. However, this disability does not affect the relative status and importance of Kutia women significantly.

Kutia women are economically self-dependent. They are not dependent on the male folk for their sustenance. Rather the opposite is true. They can live without the help of man but man cannot think of life without them. They depend on their male kins only when they become old, sick and invalid. They have achieved this status not by their beauty and charm but by their economic independence and their indispensable roles in all spheres of social, economic and religious life.

This situation supports the views of Eastern Boserup (1970) that, women's economic independence on man implies an inferior status as it is seen in caste- Hindu society and Muslim society. This kind of economic determinism assumes a univariable status structure with economic relationships being the determining factor. Undoubtedly, the Kutia women's access to and even more important, control of resources is one of the major variables favouring their prestige ranking. Boserup further said that under conditions of shifting cultivation in areas with sparse cultivation, women perform most of the work. With greater density of population and settled agriculture men do more work than women. Where land is irrigated and intensively cultivated both the sexes share the hard work. Women belonging to the first and the last categories of economy enjoy a higher status than those of the second category. Kutia women certainly come under the first category.

The central issue here is the right of Kutia women to the important means production such as, land and forest. It is seen that they have greater access to these resources in their subsistence economy. It is a necessary pre-condition not only to social and ecological stability but also to their social mobility. In their society full-fledged patriarchy i.e., control of women both within and outside the home, has not yet been consolidated. It is primarily because of the forest based subsistence and women's control over income from this activity. Among this primitive community, a gender based division of labour, particular within the household does not denote patriarchy. Women enjoy considerable autonomy; violence against them is rare. While control of land and its produce is heavily biased in favour of the male, there are residual rights for women and the transition process that favours the greater exclusion of women gives rise to patriarchy in other societies.

In conclusion it is worth mentioning here that, it is a difficult task to evaluate objectively women's position in any particular primitive society or primitive societies in general. In studies made so far, the status of women in the primitive societies have been misunderstood, misinterpreted and underestimated. According to Lowie (1921), "the conditions involved in the relations of men and women are many sided and it is dangerous to overweight one particular phase of them." For example the payment of bride-price being interpreted as a sale of bride is not a correct interpretation of social facts.

"The most authoritative accounts of primitive peoples of most recent years have tended to emphasize the influence of women, their ability to hold their own, the esteem in which they are held and their important roles in the social life." (Evans-Pritchard, 1965). In this respect, Kutia women are not chattels. They suffer from lesser number of feminine disabilities than the neighbouring Hindu women. Altogether their position is far from being unfavourable. They enjoy good deal of freedom.

Evans-Pritchard (1965) also held, "The primitive woman has no choice and given the duties that go with marriage; is therefore seldom able to take much part in public life. But if she can be regarded as being at a disadvantage in this respect from our point of view, she does not regard herself as being at a disadvantage, and she does not envy her men folk what we describe as their privileges. She does not desire in this respect, things to be other than they are and it would greatly puzzle her if she knew that in our society many women are unmarried and childless". This is also true for Kutia women who do not consider themselves underprivileged as compared to their men and they do not fight for social equality and they do not want to be like men. This situation corroborates the observations of Lowie (1991) that; "Neither superstitious sentiments nor man's physical superiority have produced a greater debarment of primitive women, that she is generally well treated and able to influence masculine decisions regardless of all theory as to her inferiority or impurity, that is precisely among some of the rudest people that she enjoy practical equality with her male."

**References:**

- |                                |              |                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ali, Almas                     | 1978-79      | Health & Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru Village. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVIII, Nos.1-4, pp. 56-62.                          |
| Anonymous                      | 1846         | The Kondhs of Hill Tribes, <i>Calcutta Rev</i> , Vol. V, pp. 22-85                                                                        |
| Bailey, F.G.                   | 1985<br>1960 | <i>Caste and Economic Frontier</i> . London, Oxford University Press.<br><br><i>Tribe, Caste and Nation</i> , London, Oxford Univ. Press. |
| Banerjee, S.                   | 1969         | <i>Ethnographic Study of the Kuvi Kondh</i> . Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India,                                                  |
| Behura, N.K. & B.N. Sahu       | 1970-71      | Mutha, the Traditional Political Organisation of the Kondh, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVII, Nos.1-4, pp.13-21.                                |
| Das, J.K.                      | 1961         | <i>Tribes of Orissa</i> , Census of India                                                                                                 |
| Friend-Pereira, J.A            | 1902         | <i>Customs of Kondhs</i> , <i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> . Vol.71, pp.1-28.                                                 |
| Mazumdar, B.C.                 | 1932         | The Kui or the Kondh People, <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.XII, pp. 245-252.                                                                  |
| Patnaik, N. & P.S. Das Patnaik | 1982         | <i>The Kondh of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar, T.H.R.T.I.                                                                                      |
| Patnaik, U. N.                 | 1964-65      | Reminiscences of an Administrative Officer in the Kondh Hills. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. VI, No.2, pp. 29-37.                                 |
| Patnaik, Uma Charan            | 1945         | The Kondhas of the Hills, One Century of British Rule (1836 to 1946). <i>Mod. Rev</i> . Vol. IXXVIII, pp. 214-218.                        |
| Raman, Leela V.                | 1957-58      | The Kondh of Phulbani, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.II, pp.35-40                                                                                  |
| Rao, L.M.                      | 1940         | The Kondh, a Tribal people of South Orissa, <i>Mod. Rev.</i> , Vol.-XVII, pp. 199-200.                                                    |
| Russell, R.V. & Hiralal        | 1916         | <i>Tribes and Caste's of Central Provinces of India</i> , Vol.III, Part-III, pp.-464-481.                                                 |
| Sharama, Krishna               | 1981         | <i>The Kondha of Orissa</i> , Delhi, Concept Publication.                                                                                 |
| Thurston, E.                   | 1909         | <i>Castes &amp; Tribes of Southern India</i> , Vol.III, pp. 357-415.                                                                      |
| Watts, Neville A.              | 1970         | <i>The Half-Clad Tribals of Eastern India</i> , Orient Longmans, Bombay.                                                                  |

## KEDU: A BIG FESTIVAL OF THE KUTIA KONDH <sup>1</sup>

K. Mohapatra <sup>2</sup>

The amazing conglomeration of traditions, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the religion of the tribes have descended from antiquity and have been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every facet of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure. Among the tribe spiritual needs -the unquestionable belief of the tribals in supernatural which regulate human existence in the world is the basis of observation of many festivals and rituals.

The festivals are celebrated in three levels - family, village and region. Most of the celebrations are fixed in time and place and are observed for definite purpose, such as, good farming, sound health, safe living and so on. Besides Gods and Goddesses, the forefathers are worshiped with equal awe and respect. Every festival has two sides – sacred and secular. Along with performance of the rituals, they participate in eating, drinking, dancing, singing and socializing. Thus religious and socio-cultural aspects are always twined together in the tribal life. One such festival is 'Kedu' observed by the Kutia Kondh -a primitive section of the tribe Kondh.

KEDU in Kui, the language of the Kondh tribe, means in broader sense a large celebration, a festival. This festival is in vogue since the suppression of Meriah sacrifice and substitution of a buffalo in place of human being during the British regime. The other local names of this festival are *Biha*, *Jhagadi*, *Korubiha Dakina* and *Meriah Puja*. But the rites and mode of sacrifices differ

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVIII, No2, 2008, pp.1-3

<sup>2</sup> Former Director, Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, Bhubaneswar

from region to region. However, it is celebrated everywhere with great solemnity and lavish festivity. The main objective of celebration is to please the Earth Goddess (*Darni Penu*) by propitiating her with prayer and sacrifices, which used to be human beings in the past and are buffaloes at present.

It is observed at community level in any one of the villages of the Mutha organization. The festival is observed at intervals of 5 to 10 years at a place for a group of villages and the duration varies from 3 to 5 days. It is held on the 1st Sunday or on the subsequent Sunday, which comes after *Phagun Punei* (full moon day between February and March). But the festival starts from Saturday and ends on Monday.

A suitable date is fixed in a meeting of the villagers and their traditional leaders, contributions are raised from the households, preparations begin in advance and guests and relatives are invited. The houses get cleaned and painted, people put on their best clothing and body decorations, kinsmen and relative flock with presents and drinking of the millet- beer 'Katul' goes on and on to make them forget all the worries, anxieties and hardship of the routine life. Except the cruel superstition of pleasing the Earth Goddess by blood for better harvest, all other paraphernalia of the festival have much socio-cultural significance.

It is a practice with the Kondhs to tease and torment the buffalo tied to the sacred post near the seat of the Mother (Earth) Goddess by twisting its tail, molesting the genitals, ringing bells at the ears etc. The following utterance in their singing reveals the underlying purpose of their cruelty, in spite of sympathy for the victim:

We are sacrificing you like a human being  
Like a beloved wife and mother,  
You are like a silver and golden mother.....  
Your master sold you  
Let the sins from your anger lie on your master and not on us.....  
At present through fear of the Sahib, sons, the Pathan sons  
From thy shoulder, thy cheek we take the flesh  
In the country of former times  
We used to bury a human being.....  
Do not cry out to me, O beautiful buffalo  
Do not cry out to me, O curved horn buffalo  
As the tears stream from thine eyes

So may it drizzle at intervals  
As the blood gushes forth  
So may the vegetation sprout  
As thy gore falls in drops  
So may the grains of rice form!

*(The Kondhs –Barbara M. Boal, 1982)*

It is clear from the above utterances that the cruelty is based on such superstition that if the victim suffers more the Earth Goddess will be pleased more. Hence, though they heartily feel for the sufferings of the victim, they act in a cruel manner to make it cry and bleed more and more.

Since this particular aspect of the festival hurts our feeling for the poor animals on one side and the superstitious Kondhs on the other, attempts may be made for some, reformation in the rites. But in a secular and democratic country as ours it is a delicate issue to impose any restriction on the religious practices of any community, particularly of a tribal community. Even the British Government had to take very cautious steps to abolish human sacrifice after it was first discovered in 1835 by Lt. C. Macpherson and G.E. Russell.

Centuries ago i.e., in August 1836 this tribe for the first time featured very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice in the report of Mr. Russell to the Madras Government. Then the British Government was quite concerned to stamp out the barbarous practices. The suppression of human sacrifice was quite a difficult task because the rites had become a national institution of the Kondhs. The primary policy pertaining to the suppression as suggested by Russell was to accomplish it by slow and gradual process and not by rash action. Time and contact of civilization were over the superstitious beliefs of the tribe. Another officer A.J.M. Mills had suggested to the Government the adoption of a persuasive and conciliatory policy. Finally, in July 19, 1845 a Meriah Agency was formed and the preamble of the Act began with the intention of the government to pursue practical measures to repress the crimes arising out of mere superstitions. Such measures were promotion of education and medical aid, construction of roads, establishment of fairs etc. An officer Captain Frye learnt Kondh language and wrote books for their education in Oriya script. As a result, gradually the Kondhs came to terms and agreed to relinquish the rites of human sacrifice on two conditions that (I) they should be at liberty to sacrifice buffaloes, monkeys and goats to their deities. With all the solemnities which were observed in

human sacrifice and (2) they should be at liberty to denounce before their deities, the Government and some of its officers in particular, as the cause of their having at length relinquished the great rite. In the process, at last the practice of human sacrifice was abandoned and the Agency was abolished in 1861. But the rites have continued till today with the substitution of buffalos for sacrifice.

After the human sacrifice stopped and the human being was replaced by a buffalo, with it the name of the festival changed from *Meria* to *Kedu*. But other items of the rite such as the duration of the festivities, the solemnity with which the rite was being observed and the joyous congregation of people remained as before.

Keeping these facts in view, careful steps and persuasive measures need to be taken by the present Government and Voluntary Social Organizations to impress upon the Kondhs to reform their superstitious and cruel practices. First of all, the belief that Goddess Earth gets pleased with the sacrifice has to be proved false. Secondly, they may be allowed to have substitutes with less costly and less useful animals such as goats, pigs, chicken, etc. Thirdly, the festivals have to be made a great socio-cultural event with Government assistance in order to divert the focus on sacrifice alone and to minimize the religious overtones.

# LODHA<sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty<sup>2</sup>

The Lodha are an ex-criminal Scheduled Tribe of Orissa. They are famous for their aggressiveness and criminal activities for which their neighbours have always held them in contempt. The jungle-clad hilly terrains of the Chotanagpur plateau running across the Bengal-Orissa-Bihar border including Mayurbhanj District in Orissa, Singhbhum District in Bihar, and Midnapur District in West Bengal form the homeland of the Lodha. Midnapur and Singhbhum have large concentrations of the tribe. In Orissa the Lodha population is small and mostly confined to two blocks, i.e. Morada and Suliapada in the Sadar sub-division of Mayurbhanj District. The Lodha population in Orissa was 5100 at the 1981 census, increasing to 7458 with a decennial growth rate of 46.24 per cent by the 1991 census. Their level of literacy, 8.40 per cent in 1981, went up to 17.22 per cent by 1991. This reflects the backwardness of this vulnerable community.

The origin and historical background of the tribe are obscure. According to Bhowmik, who is an authority on this tribe, 'the term Lodha is derived from "Lubdhaka" meaning a trapper or flower. There is a land-holding caste in Madhya Pradesh named Lodha or Lodhi who are immigrants from the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and who originally lived in Ludhiana District in the Punjab. But the present ethnographic data do not indicate any relationship between the Lodha of Bengal, Bihar or Orissa and the Lodha of Madhya Pradesh and Utter Pradesh.'

Like many other forest-dwelling communities, the Lodha trace their descent from the famous Savaras described in the Hindu *puranas* and great epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Their legendary origin tells us that they are the descendants of the mythical Savara king of Nilanchal and the legendary hero Vishwvasu. He was the first worshipper of the idol of Lord Nilamadhav,

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Tribes of Orissa, Revised Edn. SCSTRTI, 2004, pp. 217-23

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



which was later stolen by Vidyapati, the Brahman Minister of King Indradyumna of Puri and installed in Puri as Lord Jagannath. As such the Lodha identify themselves with the Vishwvasu group of Savaras and regard the Vyadh, Kirta and Jara groups of Savara as their kins. Hence, the Lodha call themselves the Lodha Savara.

Their legendary origin places them within the tribe-caste continuum. Eminent anthropologists like Dr. N.K. Bose believe that the Lodha were exclusively a jungle tribe thriving on hunting and food-gathering like the Savaras as described in the Hindu *puranas* and epics. They seem to have belonged to the Mundari group. In course of time their prolonged interaction with Hindu castes has accelerated their Hinduization. Now they live with tribal and non-tribal communities like the Santal, Oraon, Bathudi, Munda, Mahali, Bhumij, Kora, Bagdi, Sadgop, Mahato, Karan, Brahman, Khandait, Raju, Teli, Mahishya, Vaishya, Gudia, Kamar, Kayastha, Vaidya, Namasudra, Napita, Bauri, Dom, Puran, Tanti, Gola, Kaivarta, etc. But the Lodha claim a social status superior to those of the neighbouring Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities.

The Lodha were originally a Mundari-speaking tribe. Now they speak a dialect composed of distorted Bengali, Oriya and Mundari. This indicates their assimilation to the regional Oriya and Bengali cultures. As regards their physical affinities, they belong to the Vedid racial group. In this respect they are very close to the Hill Kharia, Malers of Rajmahal and Chenchu of the Krishna basin. These communities share a common pre-agricultural, forest-dwelling, hunting and food-gathering economic background.

The Lodha live in small and large villages belonging exclusively to them and sometimes together with other communities. As with other tribal settlements the settlement pattern is irregular, with houses scattered here and there. They have small straw-thatched huts with a rectangular ground plan and mud walls. The majority of huts have all-purpose single rooms with a raised platform near the hearth called *isan* or the seat of ancestral spirits. This is a trait borrowed from the caste Hindus. Goats and cattle are kept on the side verandah. Well-to-do cultivators have larger multi-roomed houses with spacious courtyards and kitchen gardens fenced with vertical bamboo poles. Their household belongings are scanty.

The Lodha are economically backward. Most of them are at the pre-agricultural stage of the economy. Their occupational pattern varies according to the local environment. The Lodha who live in the forest areas stick to their age-old pursuits like hunting, food-gathering, the collection of minor forest

produces, tussar cultivation, etc. These days, they also work for the forest department and forest contractors in plantation programmes and timber operations. Apart from the collection of edible fruits, roots and tubers for their own consumption, they collect *kendu* leaves to roll *bidi*, *sal* and *siali* leaves to make leaf cups and plates, *sabai* grass to make ropes and also tussar cocoons, honey, *lac*, resin, *sal* seeds, *mohua*, firewood, etc., all of which they sell in the neighbourhood to earn their livelihood. They hunt with the traditional bow and arrow and use different kinds of traps and snares to catch animals. With the arrival of rapid deforestation and the prohibitory forest laws they have been deprived of their forest-based subsistence. Some Lodha have therefore resorted to unfair means and clandestine activities to keep body and soul together.

The Lodha living in the plains mainly thrive on wage-earning as agricultural labourers and construction workers. Very few own cultivable lands, the produce of which is insufficient to meet their household consumption needs. Most of the Lodhas are landless or marginal farmers. Some Lodha have taken up share-cropping.

Unlike their Hindu caste neighbours, the Lodha do not attach any social stigma to any kind of occupation. They never hesitate to take up any kind of vocation available to them irrespective of their socio-economic status. Hence they earn and supplement their livelihood from a variety of occupations like petty trades, rearing of livestock, carpentry, weaving, mat-making, rope-making, and the like. Fishing and the catching of reptiles such as snakes, lizards, tortoise and alligators from ponds and streams, are their favourite pastime as well as a subsidiary occupation. Fish and tortoises are eaten. They also earn money by selling the skins of reptiles, which are in great demand for making musical instruments, shoes and fashionable articles.

The Lodha are endowed with a strong physique and are capable of doing hard work. But they are bit lazy. They prefer to idle away their time indulging in gossip and catching fish rather than doing any strenuous work. The Lodha women are comparatively more active and industrious than the men. As well as their major traditional role of housekeeping and child-rearing, they take part in all economic pursuits with the men except ploughing, thatching, and catching snakes and reptiles, which are forbidden to them. Children lend a helping hand to their superiors in these activities.

Rice is the staple food of the Lodha and is supplemented by pulses, seasonal fruits, roots and tubers and non-vegetarian items like meat, chicken, eggs,

fish, etc. depending upon the family budget and their availability. They usually eat boiled rice soaked with water and its gruel. Vegetable items are either boiled or roasted. They normally eat food twice daily, i.e. in the morning and evening. If food is available they go for a third meal at noon or in the afternoon. At the time of scarcity of food they manage with one meal or starve for days together. The Lodha are addicted to alcoholic drinks and narcotics like country liquor and tobacco. They are particularly fond of *handia* (rice beer), *biri* (country-made cigarettes,) and *gudakhu* (tobacco paste), which they use regularly.

The Lodha wear cheap and coarse type of clothes. Men use *dhotis*, *chaders*, napkins, *banyans* and shirts. Women wear saris and blouses. Small children up to five years of age usually go naked. Grown-up boys wear a thin piece of loin cloth fastened to string around the waist. Girls wear frocks and skirts. Due to their poverty, they manage with just a few items of clothing and cannot afford to keep it clean. Women adorn themselves with necklaces and bangles made of aluminium, silver, brass and glass. They also tattoo their upper arms and chest with floral designs.

The Lodha have few household articles. For cooking and serving food they have husking levers, earthenware pots, iron pans, aluminium vessels and plates. Well-to-do families keep brass utensils, which are mortgaged for loan or sold in times of need. These implements for hunting, fishing, agriculture and food-gathering consist of bows, arrows, crowbars, axes, billhooks, scythes, ploughs, knives, spades, mattocks, etc. These are generally purchased from the local blacksmith or weekly market.

The Lodha do not have a very cordial relationship with neighbouring communities as the latter hold them in contempt for their criminal activities. They are always suspected of involvement in all the crimes committed in the neighbourhood, for which they are harassed by their neighbours, government officials and the local police. Thus they have to struggle hard to earn their living, as their neighbours hesitate to employ them. The social stigma and social isolation, hostile inter-community relationships, poverty, starvation and psycho-emotional stress originating from these attitudes sometimes become unbearable for the Lodha. Often they react violently against their unjust neighbours and become even more notorious. As a result violence and aggression occur between Lodha and their neighbours.

The Lodha social system is characterised by its clan organization. They have nine clan groups which they refer as *gotras*. These clans are exogamous and

patrilineal in nature. Each individual by his or her birth belongs to a particular clan. While clan identity remains unchanged throughout life for men, it changes for women after marriage. Each clan has a totemic origin and the totemic objects are considered to be very sacred. Certain taboos are observed by clan members in order to pay respect to their respective totemic objects. A list of clan names together with their totemic objects is given below.

Clan Names

Totemic Objects

1. Bugta, Bhukta, Bhakta	Chirka Alu (a kind of yarn available in the forest)
2. Mallik	Makar (a kind of mythical sea monster or shark or <i>sal</i> fish)
3. Kotal	Moon or Grasshopper
4. Laik, Layak, Nayak	<i>Sal</i> fish
5. Digar	Tortoise
6. Parmanik	A bird called <i>manik</i>
7. Dandapat or Bag	Bagh (Tiger)
8. Ari, Ahari	<i>Chanda</i> fish
9. Bhuiya, Bhunia	<i>Sal</i> fish.

The family is the smallest basic social unit in the Lodha society. Most Lodha families are elementary or nuclear in type and consist of the married couple and their unmarried children. Some examples of joint and extended families, which include old and dependent parents, unmarried married and / or divorced brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, are also found. Through conjugal infidelity, there are instances of divorce and remarriage of either of the spouses. In such cases children born in previous marriages may stay with their stepfather or stepmother. Polygyny, or a man having more than one wife, is permitted. The Lodha family is patrilineal and patriarchal in nature. Social status and family property are inherited in the male line. The father or senior male is regarded as the family head. In their hard struggle for survival, the family members act as a close-knit group helping each other and contributing their share of their day-to-day life for the well-being of the family. Children are well cared for and are brought up with love and fondness. The best food items are served to the children first. Growing children assist their parents in domestic and outdoor activities.

Junior family members always respect their superiors. Like the Hindu kinship system, joking and avoidance relationships are found among certain categories of kin. A joking relationship exists between grandparents and

grandchildren, younger brother and elder brother's wife, husband and wife's sister. Therefore instances of the levirate, i.e. the younger brother marrying the widow of his deceased elder brother, and the sororate, i.e. a widower marrying the younger sister of his deceased wife, are also found. Strict avoidance is observed between an elder brother and his younger brother's wife. There is a taboo on married couples addressing each other by name, so they call each other as 'father of so and so' or 'mother of so and so'. Sometimes, the Lodha extend the sphere of relationship to friends and associates of their own community and other communities by forging ritual kinship bonds. These are based on a socio-economic relationship of give and take.

From birth to death, the life of a Lodha passes through a series of rituals at different phases of life. Ceasing of menstruation is regarded as an indication of pregnancy. A pregnant woman observes a number of taboos regarding her food, sex life and movements. Goat and fowl are sacrificed and fruits offered to the local deities to bring about a smooth delivery and the well-being of mother and child. The help of a local *dhai* or midwife is sought for facilitating the child birth. Birth pollution is observed for 21 days, during which the mother and baby remain in confinement and certain precautionary taboos and practices are observed. On the 21<sup>st</sup> day, a purificatory ritual called *ekusia* is performed. The baby is breast-fed by the mother till he or she is six months old or more. After six months the hair-cutting and rice-feeding ceremonies are held on a Tuesday, which the Lodha consider an auspicious day.

Marriage is the most significant social event in a Lodha's life. Adult marriage and marriage by negotiation are commonly practised. Marriage negotiations between the boy's side and girl's side are carried on with the help of a go-between and settled with the payment of a bride price in cash and kind. However, the consent of the boy and girl is required before finalizing the marriage proposal.

Besides arranged marriages, instances of other types of marriages, such as child marriage, love marriage, marriage by service, marriage by exchange of sisters, *ghar jamain* type of marriage, levirate, sororate, and the remarriage of widows and divorcees are also found. In case of child marriage a second marriage ceremony is performed when the girl attains puberty and then she is allowed to sleep with her husband. Levirate, sororate and widow remarriages are called *sanga* and involve no payment of bride price. However, such marriages are finalized after payment of a royalty in cash called *gram manya* to the groom's village *panchayat*, and then formal permission from the village headman is

obtained. The bride in a *sanga* marriage is called *sangali bou* and her social status is inferior to that of a bride acquired in a regular arranged marriage. Lodha society allows a man to divorce his wife for reasons of infidelity, indolence and incompatibility. A woman cannot divorce her husband formally, but she can compel him to divorce her by deserting him and going to stay with her parents or lover. No ritual formalities are observed when people divorce.

The Lodha observe elaborate death rituals following Hindu traditions. The dead body is either buried or cremated. Mourning and death pollution are observed for ten days. On the tenth and eleventh days purificatory rituals are performed. The relatives and co-villagers are entertained with a feast. The annual Sradha ceremony is performed every year on the last day of the month of Chaitra to appease the ancestral spirits.

The Lodha have their own traditional village *panchayat* called *desh*. All adult male persons are members of the *panchayat*, which decides offences relating to the violation of tribal customs, norms and taboos. It can impose fines on and ostracize the offender and grant permission for *sanga* marriages. The village headman, called *mukhia* or *sardar*, presides over its meetings and gives his verdict in consultation with senior members. Everyone has to obey his verdict. The *mukhia* or *sardar* is assisted by the village messenger, the *dakua* or *athgharia*, who always comes from the Kotal clan. There are many magico-religious functionaries viz. *deheri* - the village priest, *talia* or *chharidar* - the assistant to the *deheri*, *hantakar* - the ritual sacrificer, *gunni* - the medicine man and *byakra* - the shaman in Lodha villages. The *deheri* conducts the worship of the village gods and deities and conducts all the communal rituals in the village. His post is hereditary.

The Lodha strongly believe in the unseen supernatural world. The benevolent beings are Bhagwan - the Supreme Being, Dharm Devta - the God of Righteousness, Basumata - the mother earth, Sitala - the village deity and Goddess of Epidemics and Baram or Garam - the Jungle Deity. The Tutelary Deity of the Lodha - Chandi and Yogini are worshipped as the dreaded deities. There are also various types of ghosts and evil spirits called Kundra, Chirguni, Pretasini, Daini, Kal Purus, Baghia, Gomuha, Janka, Kath, etc.

The Lodha observe a number of magico-religious rituals and festivals throughout the year to propitiate the supernatural beings to prevent misfortune. Important festivals like Sitala Puja and Chandi Puja in the month of Baisakh, Mansa Puja in Jaistha, Jathel in Sraban, Asthani Puja in Aswin, Bandana in

Kartik, Laxmi Puja in Agrahayan, Natun Hanri i.e. the annual Sradha ceremony and ancestor worship in Chaitra are observed by the Lodha.

The intensity of criminality among the Lodha has been a matter of grave concern to the custodians of law and order. However, Lodha criminality is not hereditary. Their social system is very strong and has endured the test of time. There is nothing in the system to teach them criminality. During British rule an unfortunate turn took place in the history of their struggles: some changes were made under the environment of colonial administration that took some of them towards criminal activities in order to vent their frustrations and also to earn an easy livelihood. The evident cause is poverty, social neglect and maladjustment. This was the outcome of the disintegration of their social and economic moorings and prolonged exploitation, following the restriction of their traditional means of livelihood derived from land and forest.

Instances of organized highway robbery, murder, theft and burglary, committed by Lodha gangs mostly in the West Bengal-Orissa border areas, have made them infamous. The problem of Lodha criminality is of a psycho-emotional nature. After independence, the welfare government showed some concern to bring the Lodha into the mainstream of the population. Attempts have been made to rehabilitate them socio-economically in rehabilitation colonies. They have been provided with land, houses, agricultural inputs and alternative or subsidiary vocations to improve their lot. A micro-project called the Lodha Development Agency (LDA), which comes under the ST & SC development Department, founded in 1986, and has implemented various welfare schemes for the socio-economic development of the Lodha in Mayurbhanj District. Lodha rehabilitation colonies have been set up at Morada and Suliapada Blocks in the district. All these efforts to draw the Lodha away from their criminal activities have yet to produce satisfactory results.

# THE LODHA : THEIR LIFE AND PROBLEM <sup>1</sup>

P. K. Bhowmick <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The Lodhas are considered as one of the denotified tribes of West Bengal since the revocation of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952. Prior to that, they were treated as a Criminal Tribe as they indulged in frequent crimes and as such, were clamped by a set of rigid penal rules and regulations for maintenance of law and order by the Colonial Administration. Even now, in the areas inhabited by them, all sorts of antisocial activities are generally attributed to them and in fact, some of them are still involved in crime and predatory conduct. This stigma of criminality has made them 'social isolates' which has prevented them all along to merge with the societies around. Even they are not classed in the same category with other tribal or non-tribal depressed communities of the area though they share with them the same pattern of life of below-subsistence economy. All their neighbours, including the other tribal groups hate, avoid and harass them in various ways. Thus the Lodhas constitute a distinct neglected unit of population having hydra-headed problems of life including a great deal of psycho-emotional stress originating from these.

These together have resulted into occasional inter-ethnic tensions and clashes in the past and broke down law and order altogether in this area causing much anxiety and problem to the administration. The feeling of antipathy and distrust prevailing against them among the other neighboring castes have created irreconcilable class hatred and antagonism. As a result, they were withdrawing themselves into a narrower shell and drifting away from the larger society around.

Though they have many traits of tribal life, these are in the process of transition now. As a matter of fact, being a problem and affected population they would naturally attract special interest of the academicians and anthropologists and provide them an interesting field of study.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIII, No.1, 1983, pp.29-41

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Anthropology, University of Calcutta



In 1957, however, the Lodhas were declared as 'Scheduled Tribe' on the basis of recommendation made by the Backward Classes Commission. So in any scheme that may be drawn up for the welfare of these backward people by the State, special attention has to be given to their special and typical problems and the plans need to be made according to their needs and implemented with their participation and co-operation to obtain optimum results.

### Habitat

The Western part of West Bengal is a contiguous part of Chotanagpur plateau. It spreads out along the Western border of Midnapur where the majority of the Lodhas live. Mayurbhanj district of Orissa and Singhbhum district of Bihar run along the western border of the State of West Bengal. Here in the blissful environment of nature, in the midst of groves of mango, *Mahua* (*Madhuka latifolia*), the dwarf *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*), *Asan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*) trees on the wide expanse of red brittle soil of undulating rolling ridges, girdled by a chain of streams and rivulets which remain dry in summer and overflow their banks during the rains, live the Lodha a tribal group who are the subject matter of this discussion.

The jungle-covered rugged terrain of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa border is now the homeland of the Lodhas. In spite of deforestation by felling of trees over the years which has affected their tribal economy, most of the Lodhas still cling to this ecology and environment. Over population, interethnic tensions, better opportunity of employment elsewhere with an assured livelihood however have tempted some of the Lodhas to migrate into more eastward parts of the district where the landholding communities generally face acute shortage of seasonal agricultural labour and need them. Such migration, in course of time, has divided the tribe into two distinct segments, Jungle-Lodha and more or less acculturated Lodha on the basis of techno-eco system.

In the jungle area, the major ethnic group is the Santal. Along with them there are Munda, Bhumij, Kora and the Kudumi-Mahato - an aboriginal derivative and a few Orissan castes like, Karan (scribe), Khandait (warrior), Raju (cultivator), Teli (oil man) etc. In course of time, when they settled more or less permanently in the eastern region where they migrated as seasonal labourer, we find them living together with the Santal, Munda, Kora, Mahali and Bagel (aboriginal derivative), Bagdi, Sadgop (land holder) and the Mahishya (landholding agriculturist) and Brahman (priest) castes. A sort of feeble temporary articulation through economic symbiosis is quite discernable in the regional socio-economic structure in the places where they have settled.

### Historical Background

The term 'Lodha' is derived from 'Lubdhaka'— meaning a 'trapper' or 'fowler'. There is a landholding caste in Madhya Pradesh (Russel & Hiralal : 1916) named 'Lodha' or 'Ludhi'—immigrants from the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and originally belonged to Ludhiana district of the Punjab. But the present ethnographic data do not support any relationship of the Lodhas of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa region and the Lodhas of Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. They speak a corrupt Bengali, i.e., an Indo-Aryan language (Dasgupta : 1978) so far as the phonological and morphological structures of Lodha dialect are concerned. This clearly indicates that the group has been completely assimilated into the regional Bengali culture so far as their language is concerned.

Physical affinities of the Lodhas reveal that they belong to Veddid racial group (Bhowmick : 1956) having more affinity with the wild Kharia of Dhalbhum (Roy & Roy : 1937), the Malers of Rajmahal and the Chinch of Krishna (Starker, 1954). Though this indicates some sort of common jungle-living, pre-agricultural economic background of all these communities, yet it is very difficult to assess in the present context how far it was possible for this ethnic group to migrate eastward during the proto-historical period.

Lodhas assert themselves as "Savara" a generic forest dwelling community mentioned in the Puranas and epic literature like the Ramayana. A good number of forest dwelling communities in India also feel pride in asserting them as 'Savaras'. According to the tradition of origin, the Lodhas say that they are the descendants of King Vishwabasu who once reigned over the jungle tract of the Savara country of Nilachal in Orissa. This tribal king originally possessed the idol of Lord Jagannath now installed in the famous temple at Puri. Once the king of Puri - Indradyumna was ordained in his dream by Lord Jagannath that He wanted to come from his Jungle abode and stay at Puri. Then the king sent his trusted minister—Vidyapati who was a Brahman by caste, to the jungle to bring the image of the Lord. That astute Brahman very tactfully entered into Nilachal - the Savara Country, developed love affairs with Lalita - the endearing and beautiful daughter of the Savara King - Viswabasu and with her help came to know the location of abode of the Lord. Later on, he successfully implemented the plan of stealthily taking away this image of the Lord to Puri. This is a story of the process of Brahmanization in the remote past. It is said that the Lodhas since then do not pay respect to the Brahman - but in fact they still do it. This legend has helped the Lodhas to place them in between the tribe-caste continuum. Again, the Savaras (including the Lodhas) of this area are

divided socially into four distinct groups like-

- (i) Lodha - Viswabasu group,
- (ii) Chirmar – Vyadha – Kirata - Kalaketu group,
- (iii) Sapuria - Snake charmer Savara - Jara Savara group; and
- (iv) Paniabhanga -comb manufacturer Savara group in the model of Varnashram.

But no marital relation prevails among them.

From legendary sources and other evidences it becomes very clear that this tribal group has come in contact with the dominating Hindu castes from an early period. This prolonged interaction has circumstantially made them to accept many regional Hindu traits - accelerating their process of Hinduization.

### **Population**

The Lodhas are distributed mainly in Midnapur and Hoogly districts of West Bengal, Mayurbhanj of Orissa and Singhbhum of Bihar. The 1951 census records their total population as 8,346 in West Bengal of whom 6,040 live in Midnapur and 2,066 in Hoogly. But in subsequent census reports separate enumeration of the tribe has been omitted. The authorities for the purpose of enumeration mixed up the Lodhas with the Kharia / Kheria since 1961. As a result, we get a total population of 45,096 in 1971 census. But according to the estimate of the present writer it can be said that total population of the Lodhas in the district of Midnapur alone will be around 20,000. Police Station wise the distribution of the Lodhas have been estimated by the writer in Table I. In Hoogly district of West Bengal it is about 4,000 and in Orissa their population is around 2,000 and in Bihar it is below 1,000. It is important to note here that Lodhas living in the district of Hoogly have no relationship with the Lodhas living in the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa belt. Possibly the Lodhas of Hooghly had migrated to Hoogly along with other ethnic groups as migratory agricultural labourers and subsequently settled down there permanently. On enquiry it was found that some of them went to these places to catch snakes and lizards to earn a living.

Recording of lesser population of the Lodhas during 1951 census is due to the fact that some of them identified themselves as Savaras.

There are a few Lodha concentrated villages in the district. Most of them live along with other tribes and castes in the periphery of the villages. The total Lodha families studied by the author long ago (1963) revealed that in 408 families, there are altogether 1,040 males and 967 females.

**TABLE I**  
*Approximate Lodha Population in Midnapur (Police Station wise)*

Subdivision	Police-Station	Population	Total
1. Jhargram (Jungle areas)	Jhargram	5,500	<b>10,500</b>
	Jamboni	700	
	Binpur	800	
	Sankrail	800	
	Gopiballavpur	500	
	Nayagram	2,200	
	Kesiari	3,000	
	Narayangarh	3,200	
	2. Midnapur (Sadar)	Dantan	
Sabang		800	
Kharagpur		1,000	
Kotowali		1,000	
Keshpur			
Pingla			
			<b>20,000</b>

### Education

Lodhas are neither interested nor in a position to avail of the present educational facilities. As per report of the State Government, 3.3 per cent of Lodhas are literates (Das and Mukherjee: 1977). There is only one graduate and 4 persons have passed Madhyamik (Secondary) standard of whom one is reading in a college.

**TABLE 2**  
*Items of expenditure in Ashram Hostel Unit (20 Heads) per year*

1. Meal charges	Per head p/m.	70/-	16,800/-
2. Misc. (Hair cutting, Kerosene, Soap etc)	Per head p/m	0.84/-	200/-
3. Sports and Games			100/-
4. Clothing	Per head (yearly)	40/-	800/-
5. Medicine			100/-
6. Agricultural training			200/-
7. Cook (one)	Per month	50/-	600/-
8. Helper	Per month	30/-	360/-
9. Hostel Superintendent	Per month	100/-	1200/-

Since 1964 several Ashram Hostels meant for the education of the Lodha children attached to Basic Schools have been established of which Bidisa hostels are considered as promising. From Bidisa two boys passed Madhyamik Examination last year. In each unit of the Ashram Hostel there is provision for 20 seats, but at Bidisa in one unit there are 30 seats. In Ashram the Lodha children get various facilities at the following rates.

The Lodha children are basically reluctant to attend the schools. This is due to the less encouragement being given to them by their parents. The Lodha children roam in the jungles in search of wild fruits, small games, fishes and mollusca which they consume. Some time, a grown up boy is employed as cowboy by a caste people to look after their cattle at a nominal wage. Naturally the Lodha children are reluctant to go to schools without any encouragement from outside. The Tribal Welfare Department provided some Ashram hostels as stated above but there is no provision for purchase of papers, books and other things meant for the students reading in these schools. Even the Left Front Ministry of the State of West Bengal of which the Minister-in-Charge of Tribal Welfare is a tribe by origin, has overlooked many problems of the hostels. The Lodha children being extremely backward mainly required sympathetic encouragement and supervision of different nature along with non-formal or life-centered type of education. These are ignored by the Department of Tribal Welfare who is entrusted to do this type of work among them and as such, in most of the Ashram Hostels the authorities face tremendous difficulties to run the hostels. So results are not satisfactory. Grants are released very irregularly and always in delay. The Department never sanctioned any amount for repairing or white-washing of the Ashram hostel building to create a good environment. Even they do not provide money for periodical expenditure incurred in connection with boarding, utensils and equipment necessary for the hostel. In such a situation the organisers have to bear the expenses according to their means. So the work of education is done half-heartedly.

Samaj Sevak Sangha (Bidisa) - 2 for boys and 1 for girls

Badalpur Basic School (Sabong) -2 for boys

Bharat Sevashram Sangha (Jhargram) -1 for boys

Lodha Sevak Samaj Sangha (Chaksahapur) -1 for boys & 1 for girls (proposed)

A sum of Rs. 1,21,000 has been sanctioned for the proposed girls' hostel at Chaksahapur. But it has not yet been started. For other Ashram Hostels a sum of Rs. 20,000 per hostel for building construction has been granted.

The Lodha children have many problems. A thorough psycho-emotional adjustment is necessary to make them adjust with the changed environment and special attention should be given to their uplift and socialisation. They sometimes flee from the hostels and it is very difficult to bring them back again. They need to be made more disciplined. But any disciplinary measure taken by the Ashram authority is strongly resented by the local guardians. It is suggested that Ashram Hostel has to accommodate and maintain the children as 75 per cent of them come from distant villages. It has been found that the Lodha children are generally in the habit of taking away of hostel properties including the rugs, utensils, shirts, clothing, etc.

At Bidisa two Balwadi Schools meant for the children belonging to age group 2-6 have been established by the West Bengal Council of Child Welfare. It has been noticed at these Balwadis, which are almost of pre-basic standard, the children are being gradually associated with the social norms and values. It is expected that these children will be able to overcome difficulties in future so far as their higher education is concerned.

### Occupational Pattern

Occupation of the Lodhas varies from place to place. It has been stated earlier that the Lodhas are even now in a pre-agricultural stage of economy. In the Jungle areas they are engaged in collection of Jungle products like.

- (i) *Sal* leaves for preparing dining plates stitching these by thorns.
- (ii) *Kendu* leaves for preparing *bidi* or country cigar
- (iii) Edible roots and tubers for household consumption
- (iv) Catching of snake, lizard (Bengal monitor or *Godhi*). The Hyde is sold for cash. Snake catching is a very favourite pastime of the Lodhas.
- (v) Catching tortoise and fish from the paddy fields and silted tanks. Most of these are sold in the locality and only a little is consumed by them.
- (vi) Some of them are engaged by the Forest Department for constructing nursery beds for plants, etc.
- (vii) Earlier most of the jungle Lodhas were engaged in *tusser* cocoon rearing, but now-a-days they cannot do it due to Prohibitory Forest Laws.
- (viii) Other Lodhas collect firewood for fuel and sell these in the market.

In non-forest areas Lodhas are found to be engaged in road construction and agricultural activities on wage. But very few of them have become successful cultivators even after continuous encouragement and help from the Government or the voluntary organizations working for this tribe. Even the land given to

them have not been fully cultivated. These are either sold out or given to others to cultivate and the Lodhas get 1/3rd of the output as per the share-cropping system prevailing in the locality. Through growth-centers a good number of Lodhas are found to change their occupation accepting new profession like weaving, tailoring, carpentry and mat-making (Bhowmick : 1968).

Most of the Lodhas are involved in anti-social activities like theft, burglary, dacoity, robbery, etc. In this respect they act in collusion with non-Lodha people. There are a good number of stolen property receivers who encourage them to undertake such activities. Crime records in the Police Department also corroborate the involvement of the Lodhas in such anti-social activities. It has been observed that out of a total number of 1,600 active criminals of this district, the Lodhas constitute 1/3rd. This indicates the preponderance of the Lodha criminals among the offenders.

### **Land Use and Ownership Pattern**

It has been stated that a good number of Lodhas are landless. Only a few have cultivable land. Those who have land are also not in a position to produce other crops or vegetables except paddy. This is due to the fact that they have no bullock or agricultural implements. It has been also observed that they are not serious cultivators. They are so poor that during the agricultural operations in their own field they cannot maintain themselves on their own resources. Naturally, the alternative for them is to work as day labourer in the field of others on wage.

Very recently a few rehabilitation centers have been started for the Lodhas in which provisions have been made for purchase of land, supply of bullocks and good seeds as well as necessary agricultural implements. But these projects are not getting adequate response. In all the cases it has been observed that a typical callous mentality is prevailing among the Lodhas - they expect everything readymade. They are basically lazy and dishonest and reluctant to do any hard work. The bullocks given to them were sold out, even in many places the house-building materials, especially wooden planks and tiles, corrugated iron-sheets, etc. had been sold to outsiders for cash or kind.

For a few years especially during and after the Emergency, a good number of *Khas* (Government vested) lands have been distributed to the Lodhas including other landless people. The Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of West Bengal in some places is supplying pump sets, sanctioning money for reclamation of land and purchase of other agricultural implements for

the economic rehabilitation of these people in a more cautious way to ameliorate their economic problems. But the result is not satisfactory.

### Social Organisation

Family is the smallest social unit among the Lodhas. A survey conducted among them revealed that out of 408 families, 278 (68.14 per cent) is of simple or elementary type in which parents and unmarried children live together. Parents with old father or divorced daughter without children numbered only 9 families i.e., 2.2 per cent. Among the Lodhas conjugal infidelity is observed. Parents with the children of previous marriage are found and there are 18 such families i.e., 4.41 per cent. There are altogether 17 polygynous families in which two wives with their respective children live in a common house. Joint or extended type of families are 86 i.e., 21.08 per cent. Here the old father with some of his married sons along with their children lives in a common house.

So far as family size is concerned the 408 families surveyed are classified as follows:

**TABLE 3**  
*Family Size*

Sl No	Category of Family by Size	Number	Percentage
1.	Small sized families having 3 members or less	101	24.75
2.	Medium sized families having 4-6 members	228	55.88
3.	Large sized families having 7-9 members	63	5.44
4.	Very large families having 10 or more members	16	3.92
	<b>Total</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>100</b>

The Lodhas society is patriarchal. Due to prolonged interaction with the local Hindus, they have been greatly influenced by the regional Hindu customs. Sometimes the Lodhas proclaim their own identity by calling the local castes as *Bengali Babus i.e.*, Bengali gentlemen whereas, the other tribals are considered by them as *Adibasi* or aboriginals. Naturally they perceive their social position is in between the castes and the tribes. The Lodhas have a clan organisation which is known as *Gotra*. This is a patrilineal unit. A man born in a particular *Gotra* will remain its member till he dies. Girls after marriage change their clans and they are known by the clans of their husbands. After divorce a woman again reverts to her father's clan till she remarries. Table 4 gives the details of clan characteristics



as well as distribution of families by clans. Marriage in the same clan is strictly prohibited. There are a few taboos and restrictions in respect of food habit and other conventional observation in respect of some clans.

TABLE 4

*Distribution of Clans (Head of the family has been considered)*

Clan name	Totemic objects	No. of families	Percentage
1. Bhugta, Bhakta	Chirka Alu, a kind of yam available in the jungle.	120	29.41
2. Mallik	Maker, a kind of mythological shark or sea-monster or <i>sal</i> fish.	78	19.11
3. Kotal	Moon or grass-hopper	68	16.66
4. Layek, Laik, Nayek	Sal fish ( <i>Ophicaphalus marulius</i> )	67	16.41
5. Digar	Porpoise	21	5.14
6. Paramanik	A kind of bird named Manik	20	4.95
7. Dandapat or Bag	Bagh or tiger	10	2.45
8. Ari or Ahari	Chanda - Fish ( <i>Ambasisis range</i> )	19	4.65
9. Bhuiya or Bhunia	Sal fish ( <i>Ophicaphalus marulius</i> )	3	4.00

The totemic objects are respected and never consumed by the clan members in Lodha society even if it constitutes an unavoidable food item. But a detailed analysis of Lodha clan names tells different story. Most of the Lodhas especially in acculturated zones use their clan names as surnames, whereas the Lodhas in the jungle areas use "Savar" or "Sabar" to express their personal identity without mentioning their clan names as surnames. A few clan names have special significance identifying them with the greater regional setting. These are Kotal, Digar, Dandapat, Nayek or Layek etc. associating the group with a specific type of work or assignment.

Marriage by payment of bride-price is the general rule among the Lodhas. The bridegroom has to pay a sum of Rs. 7 (seven) only at the time of marriage to the parents of the bride along with some clothes for the bride and her parents. When a girl is married in her 'teen age' a second marriage ceremony is performed in such cases. The chief conductor of marriage is termed as Sambar.

No Brahmin priest participates in Lodha marriage ceremony. Mother Earth (Basumati), the God of Righteousness (Dharam Devata) are also worshipped at the time of wedding. A wedding feast is given on the day of marriage to which all the traditional village officials including the relatives are invited. Remarriage of widows and divorced women is in vogue and this is known as *Sanga*. In such marriage no bride-price is paid. Only a sum of Rs.1.25 paise is given to the guardian of the widow or the divorced woman by the prospective groom.

Though they are Hinduised to a large extent, they still worship some of their traditional deities like the Baram (village tutelary deity), Chandi and Sitala. Animals like goat, sheep, and cock are sacrificed to appease them by the village priest (Deheri) or his assistant (Talia). No Brahmin priest participates in their religious ceremonies.

### **Political Organization**

The Lodhas have their traditional tribal council which is known as Panchayat or Desh. The head of the council is called *Mukhia* who in all the tribal customary affairs gives his verdict which everybody has to obey without demur. There is a village messenger called *Atghoria* or *Dakua*. His main duty is to intimate the villagers about the decisions and directives of the village Panchayat. In this traditional council, personal disputes of the village and the general problems of the village administrations including the annual worships and celebrations are discussed. The religious head of the community is known as *Deheri* and the Assistant priest is known as *Talia* who sacrifices the animal. There are also other important persons in the village who are members of the tribal councils.

After the introduction of the Panchayat Raj a good number of the Lodhas are being gradually associated with village administration. A few of them have affiliated themselves with some political parties of the locality and contested the last election in which the CPI and CPI (M) candidates won. Naturally, this gave them the opportunity of mixing with other sections of the people, thus bridging up the hiatus prevailing so long among these communities. Such political involvements have created more tension and factions in a few villages on the basis of party ideologies. Thus in many cases the village or tribal solidarity or communal integrity has been threatened.

### **Social Problems**

The problems of the Lodhas are strikingly different from those of other tribes and castes. They are commonly stigmatised with the commission of

dacoity, burglary, pilferage and theft. Active Lodha criminals constitute one-third of the active criminals in the Midnapur district. This clearly indicates the nature of criminal propensity of the Lodhas. There was no scientific attempt on the part of the administration to ascertain why the Lodhas became criminal-minded and what are the socio-economic factors that dragged them to the path of criminality. Even after the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952 and some welfare attempts made by the Government to improve their living condition, the Lodhas have not responded adequately. Naturally, we have to probe into the causes and explain the realistic situations more critically and scientifically that have generated such aversion.

To do this, we have to go back 200 years when the Lodhas used to live in the jungle with their jungle based food gathering, self content economy. They were not threatened by population explosion nor did the other communities encroach into their homeland with a different economy - the economy of agriculture, causing more crises by denuding the forest. At the same time, the ownership of the forest was changed. The East India Company took over the administration of Midnapur as well as the *Jungle-Muhal*, the habitat of the Lodhas. With this they faced an intriguing situation.

Of course, all over the world, different groups of aboriginals are facing some sort of crisis or other because of changes in the broader ecological and socio-cultural systems. The question of integrating these groups with the wider community life now confronts the more advanced and privileged groups of people and administration in every country. However, at that time nobody thought of the problems of the Lodhas sympathetically and scientifically. When permanent land settlement was introduced in Bengal, the Zamindars or Kings became the Lord of the jungle—the home of the Lodhas where they used to get their food, shelter and other things. They were prevented to enter into the forest or to use it indiscriminately for their livelihood. On the other hand, the agricultural communities like the Santals, the Mundas, the Bhumijias, and the Mahatos, gradually encroached into the forests and brought the lands under cultivation although any sort of entrance into such forests was declared punishable offence by the Colonial Administration.

By a trick of law they were dispossessed of their forest abodes and deprived of their hold and dependency on the forest. Thus, the economically displaced Lodhas could not adapt themselves to the changing situations immediately and some of them began to migrate to different parts of the district in search of jobs and employments for survival. The growing needs of the expanding families could not be met with a hewer's income. Faced with this

compelling situation, the Lodhas had to accept the challenge of survival and resorted to anti-social activities as a convenient means of livelihood.

"The economic and territorial displacement under a new setting with the impact of scheming communities all around, affected very seriously their traditional patterns of economic life and ultimately upset the equilibrium of the whole society. Probably under such circumstances, pilfering, petty theft, lifting of articles from the houses of the neighbours and clandestine sale of jungle produce were first resorted to individually which, in course of time, developed into group activities. Amidst poverty, unsympathetic attitude of the neighbours and stoic apathy of the then Government, criminality cut a deep gorge into their society in which the people had to roll down helplessly". (Bhowmick, 1963).

Mr. Stephen, the then Member of Law and Order of British India introduced the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871. His remarks in this connection are very significant. He recorded; "The special feature of India is the caste system. As trade goes by caste, a family of carpenters will be carpenters, a century or five centuries hence, if they last so long. Keeping this in mind the meaning of professional criminal is clear. It means that a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from times immemorial, who are themselves destined by the usages of caste to commit crimes and whose descendants will be offenders against law until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for the manner of the Thugs. When a man tells you that he is an offender against law, he has been so from the beginning and will be so to the end, reform is impossible for it is his trade, his caste. I may almost say, his religion is to commit crime".

This view was also shared by many Indians. Ultimately, the Criminal Tribes Act was passed for suppression of such crimes and applied all over British India. As a result, more than 300 communities were declared as Criminal Tribes.

Gradually the Lodhas faced many other social and economic problems with the march of time. They were affected very seriously. Their problems were of the following nature :—

- (i) Economic and territorial displacements i.e. loss of livelihood which caused loss of self-confidence.
- (ii) Being not specialized in any profession, they could not fit themselves into the existing greater economic structure.
- (iii) Stigma of criminality lowered their social status and prestige in society.
- (iv) Subsequent Police oppression, punishment and torture completely loosened their group cohesion and solidarity.
- (v) Arrest and confinement in jail, completely shattered familial bondage and

- relations, generating atomized or individualistic mentality.
- (vi) Poverty exposed them to exploitation by others and made them surrender to many undesirable situations.
  - (vii) Being compelled to sell the stolen properties to others at a nominal price and thus being cheated, they came to think that the non-Lodha people are dishonest and tyrannical. This made them suspicious and revengeful.
  - (viii) Infants reared without care and less affection from the parents became hostile to others when they attained maturity. This generated certain peculiar bendings and angularities in their mind, retarded socialisation and made them indisciplined,
  - (ix) Chronic poverty and low aspiration level in the zeal and enthusiasm of these people and developed constraints in their culture, making them lazy and lethargic. This also made them unresponsive to any sort of change or innovation.
  - (x) Constant police torture and exploitation by the neighbours made them migratory, their homes being less attractive to them. Thus they began to lose the sense of belongingness.

These made them isolated and recoil into the shell of their old traditions. Also these developed in them coyness, timidity and imbued their mind with fear and distrust. Thus circumstanced, the Lodhas having no rudimentary education, no skill in crafts or arts, no land in their possession and no fixed employment were compelled to live below the poverty line and indulged in spurts of anti-social activities whenever hunger provoked them to go against the society and the law of the land.

It is observed from the patterns of human living that every group or community has its own intrinsic problems. The problems vary from place to place and time to time on the basis of the nature of their exposure to the external situations and interactions. Naturally, to pin-point these problems we have to consider the ecology of the area, as well as their ethnic identity and culture. The problems of a community having pre-agricultural stage of economy, rather very rudimentary agrarian economy, pose different problems to the administrations and the social scientists who are interested and engaged in the schemes of development and welfare of the down trodden communities. So an omnibus blueprint for welfare for all the tribal communities cannot be made and cannot be applicable in all cases.

Though attempts were made by the Government along with a few voluntary organisations for the welfare of these communities for sometimes past,

yet from experience it can be said that these have either totally failed or have not produced satisfactory results. The basic problems of the Lodhas, according to close observation by the author are the following and have to be solved for their proper uplift: -

1. ***Problem People***—Besides having the common acute problems of living, they have a bunch of psycho-emotional problems. Chronic social neglect by the greater society has dwarfed their mind and abilities. Laziness, reluctance to do any hard labour and restlessness have made them a typical parasitic stock. Through rehabilitation, they demand and dream of immediate solution of all their problems like the 'shock therapy'. As these are beyond reality, being a long-term process they have become restive and frustrated and go on campaigning against the organisations or the Government attempting their rehabilitation. So due to this psychological freak, these problematic people should have to be treated very carefully. Otherwise they will become antagonistic and non-co-operative and the work of their rehabilitation will become more difficult.

2. ***Problem Neighbour***—Their neighbours are also very problematic. A good number of the people of the locality have forged clandestine economic deals with them and buy from them the stolen articles at very cheap rates, and also employ them for agricultural work on minimum wages. Thus exploiting them in various ways, they derive a good deal of benefit. But strangely enough the Lodhas, on the other hand, consider this relationship as friendly and desirable. The former group does not want rehabilitation of the Lodhas as it will deprive them from making huge profits by sale of the stolen goods which they buy at very nominal costs, as also in that case, they will not get cheap labour by the usual tactics of threatening them of divulging their crime and getting them arrested by the police. Naturally, the neighbours who get cheap labour from them are not at all interested in their proper rehabilitation. They tell the Lodhas that the real motive of these Welfare Schemes is an attempt to break their tradition and economy and make them subservient to the Government, so they become suspicious of the welfare agencies and the Government which implements such schemes, Besides, as only a few people are getting the benefit of these schemes, the rest feel naturally deprived and discontented and keep apart. To get their full co-operation, therefore, this false notion has to be dispelled and the rehabilitation schemes should have larger coverage.

3. ***Problem Administration***—The administration sometimes creates more problems either by failing to understand the situation in reality or to implement the schemes meaningfully to cater to their needs. Even in many cases the basic

problems are not properly understood by the officials. Most of the Welfare Projects undertaken so far have failed due to such misunderstanding. For example, the State Government spent a sum of Rs. 1, 23,840.00 for assisting the Lodhas of Narayangarh and Nayagram by giving them plough cattle and mud-built residential huts during 1970-71 and 1971-72. This has failed due to lack of proper planning and supervision. The bullocks and the house building materials were sold out by them. Similarly, though a huge sum has been spent for the Lodha project, it has also turned into a failure for the same reasons. So the administrative machinery implementing the Tribal Welfare Schemes should be very careful, cautious and active in future. It has been found that the local authorities regularly send 'Utilisation Certificates' for proper use of the money sanctioned for such schemes to the government. But the benefits that accrued to the people were quite nominal and disproportionate. It indicates that there had been a good deal of misspending and bad planning. These lapses have to be guarded against, in future.

### **Major Economic Potentials of the Region**

The physio-geography of the region especially where the Lodhas live is significant. Two regions can be well demarcated in this expansive tract. One is forest or jungle covered rugged terrain with less communication facilities and another more or less acculturated region where the Lodhas live in a comparatively dispersed as well as isolated condition. Mainly the ecological conditions and their allied contributions are responsible for the unexpected backwardness of the tribal people and the region. The local techno-eco system is interlaced with the life style of these people.

It has been stated earlier that the land of the Lodhas are a continuity of the Chotanagpur plateau. The climate here is hot with long severe summer and draught is the main feature of this area. The average annual rainfall is within 65 inches. The soil is mostly sandy-loam and reddish brown with occasional lateritic outcrops here and there. Due to undulations, a patch of land between two table lands generally happens to be fertile, but such lands are not under the possession of any tribal group. The table-land known as *Dahi* or high-land is completely unfit for agricultural operations. Besides, in the jungle area, these are covered with trees of various types like *Sal*, *Mahua*, *Asan* etc. Strikingly the Lodhas in deforested areas have the advantage of better topography and irrigational facilities. But the Lodhas, in almost all the regions are landless. Very little land is found to be under their possession. A few Lodhas had however their own lands earlier. But in course of time these lands have been alienated to others. Though through rehabilitation projects and by distributing *Khas* land to the

landless tribals during these days, some of them have been provided a piece of lands, but it cannot be utilised by them properly as they do not know the good techniques of cultivation. Besides, the other causes are :—

(i) Bad location of the land which lacks irrigation facilities.

(ii) They have no aptitude for agriculture. Agriculture requires a constant watch and hard labour from start to finish and agricultural cycle requires sufficient time to yield the crops. These people cannot wait so long without earning otherwise due to their extremely impoverished condition. So they leave their lands uncultivated and prefer to work as day labourers by which they can earn every day. So agricultural incentive given to them is not found fruitful at all.

(iii) Lack of plough, cattle and other implements - This being the case, man-power seems to be the only resources which has to be properly utilized for uplift and gainful employment of the Lodhas. This can be done in the following manner:

In the jungle areas a few plans specially forest based projects should be introduced by the Government for collection of *tussar* cocoon, poultry farming, goat-rearing, road construction etc., in which they will be self-employed and earn their living. The primary investment, in all cases will have to be made by the Government.

### **Problems of Development**

During the Second Plan Period, a few model colonies have been set up by the Government in the Lodha and tribal inhabited areas. These include:

(1) Auligeria-Jharam run under the supervision of Harijan Sevak Sangha. The Gandhian leader late Prof. P. R. Seri took charge of this scheme along with some social workers. Though this project is maintained by the Education Department by sanctioning annual grant to the schools there (Pre-Basic to Senior Basic i.e., Class VII), but no hostel has been provided for the tribal students. The economic development of the project is almost a failure.

(2) Dholkat-Pukuria (Jhargram) Rehabilitation Colony under the supervision of Bharat Sevashram Sangha—a religious institution is however, doing very sincere work. They are also running school up to Class VIII standard and have constructed one Ashram Hostel for the Lodha boys. The project is not progressing well mainly for lack of funds though very sincere attempts are being made by the organisers. Up till now no student has attained the Madhyamik



Standard, but a few Lodha young men of this centre are getting training through Block Office in carpentry and fitting.

(3) The Harijan Seva Kendra at Kukai (Kesiari P.S.) under the supervision of a Sarvodaya worker has however flourished. A grain *gola* has been established there for serving the Lodhas as well as other tribals. This is giving good service. The then Director of Tribal Welfare Department suggested personal allocation of land under individual title from the purchased land of the Government. By this they received some land. But the Lodhas are not in a position to cultivate their own land both for lack of money and training. Though they have not sold out these lands but some have been left uncultivated and some made over to others for cultivation for an agreed share of crops or a little money. Thus the scheme is not functioning well now. There is a primary school near the village. But up till now not a single boy of this village has passed the Madhyamik standard. With the departure of the social worker on other assignment, local politics and factions among the villagers have spoiled the whole project.

(4) Dhansole (Lalgarh) Rehabilitation Project - It is a jungle-based village. Sufficient quantity of agricultural land has been purchased and distributed to the Lodhas and these are now cultivated by them. A model colony has also been set up there. But due to flood and cyclone it is now in a ramshackle condition. But the Lodhas here are getting employment from the Forest Department and regularly cultivating their lands. But no school has been set up here to educate the Lodhas.

(5) Daharpur Lodha Rehabilitation Project or Bidisa Project: (Narayangarh) P. S.—For this scheme initially Rs. 1,500/- per family was spent for the rehabilitation of 39 families. More emphasis was given on land purchase, and not on construction of houses. Every beneficiary family got about an acre of good cultivable land. The plough and cattle were given to the Lodhas. Even the co-operative which was started for them is now defunct. The incorrigible criminal Lodhas are in league with the local interested persons and are attempting to flounder this development project. To counter their heinous plan, the organizer has started immediately Ashram Hostels where the Lodha children have been brought to a different surrounding to isolate them from the criminals—where they now stay in a quite different and healthy environment along with many other tribal and caste children. The children are given vocational training in agriculture, bee-keeping, pisciculture, dairy, carpentry, weaving and tailoring. Thus an arrangement has been made to transplant a middleclass norm which may attract others. Even dropouts are employed in a Press and Printing Project (Training-cum-Production) set up here and thus they are gradually being

acculturated with the general social norms and greater economic spectrum.

(6) The Debra-Chaksahapur Lodha Rehabilitation Project under the initiative of a Lodha young man encouraged by some anthropologists and Government officials was started with enthusiasm. But local politics and lack of experience have stunted its growth and it is almost in a decaying condition now. A case has already been instituted by the Government against the organiser directing him to handover the charge as well as the assets. He has done so in the meantime. There is one Ashram Hostel for the boys here. Funds have been sanctioned for construction of another Ashram Hostel for the girls here. But it has yet to be established.

(7) Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology started one economic rehabilitation centre at Chhotojhaur under the police station of Gopiballavpur. No Government Grant has been sanctioned for the same.

For a few successive years tension between the Lodha and non-Lodha communities in this area is continuing. In 1959 there was a riot at Dhansol between the Mahatos *and* the Lodhas. Again in 1960 Santals, Mahatos and others declared '*gira*'—traditional attack on the Lodhas when a few of them were killed and a good number of Lodha villages were set on fire. Again in September 1969 the Santals declared '*gira*'—traditional attack by tying a knot on the bark of a branch of a Sal tree giving intimation of the date and time of attack to the Lodhas. The other caste groups also declared *gira* against them by beating of drum - making attack on a large-scale. As a result more than twenty persons were killed in broad day light. Thus a tension was created and it is yet to be resolved. The Government immediately sanctioned more than Rs. 6 lakhs for their relief and resettlement but no work has yet been started except the relief.

### Conclusion

By way of conclusion it can be said that the attempts made for rehabilitation of the Lodhas during these years by the Government either directly by the Government machinery or through the voluntary organisations are not at all satisfactory and the schemes have flopped due to bad planning. Naturally, a thorough probe into this matter is necessary and the opinion of the experts should be taken. The hostility created so long between the Lodha and the non-Lodha communities has widened so much that the administration has to take serious steps in this matter to maintain law and order in the area. Periodical breakout of these riots could not be checked simply by sanctioning money for the projects meant for the Lodhas or by providing them relief after the riots without removing the causes of tension. The way how these groups are interlaced

with the particular ethno-ecological system should be examined more carefully to find out their basic problems and remedies thereof. We would then perhaps find out the clue to the riddle why these groups fail to respond quickly and favourably to the facilities of integrating themselves with the wider social life, which may appear to us to be 'obviously advantageous' for them.

"We should try to examine the impact of the efforts at changing their ways of life as made through the rehabilitation schemes and welfare activities for these groups. We shall then and then only be able to locate where the shoe pinches. Here in lies the role of the applied anthropologists and action anthropologists. Being free from prejudice which affects the laymen and sometimes the administrators, we should view the case from a scientific angle which should be at the same time humane". (Bhowmick: 1976).

We must note the nature of relationship among three segments of the society: the neglected communities or ethnic groups, the advanced ethnic groups and the government administration for the sake of proper estimate and planning.

It has been observed that no follow-up scheme in any case is pursued by the Government which is very essential for achieving the desired results. Once money has been spent the authorities in most cases try to wind up the project without proper assessment of the whole situation. By experience everybody can learn. Even the Government does not pay attention to the thinking and suggestions of the experts. All the time, political views are reflected through Welfare Projects which, in most of the cases, are not rational or scientific at all. It is the duty of the Government therefore to make an endeavour to bridge up the mutual gap between one ethnic group and another. "But the task of promotion of inter-ethnic harmony can never be accomplished by the Government alone. The wider society must be aware of the necessity of such harmony. The advanced ethnic groups must free themselves from the prejudices and angularities they have developed towards the backward communities. For this reason a scientific outlook must be developed which would emerge from more intensive work of the applied anthropologists and action anthropologists for the tribal-folk in future. This however necessitates greater co-ordination between the planners and the action anthropologists and the follow-up measures to assess the working programmes." (Bhowmick: 1976).

## REFERENCES

- Bhowmick, P.K. (1963) *The Lodhas of West Bengal: A Socio-Economic study*, Calcutta.
- (1968) Development Schemes as Factors of Social and Economic Changes: *Journal of Social Research*, Ranchi.
- (1970) *Welfare Programmes and Administration: Tribe*, Udaipur.
- (1970) Ex-Criminal Tribes of India. *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Calcutta.
- (1975) An Essential Primary Considerations for Rehabilitation Schemes, *Vanyajati*, Delhi.
- (1976) Problems of Denotified Tribals, *Man and Life*, Calcutta.
- (1977) Developmental Approach to the Problems of Adivasis, *Journal of Social Research*, Ranchi.
- Bose, P. C. (1932-33) *Racial Affinities of the Mundas*. Bose Research Institute, Calcutta.
- Dasgupta, Dipankar (1978) *Linguistic Studies*, Calcutta
- Gupta, R. K. (1954) A work among the Lodhas, *Calcutta Police Journal*, Calcutta.
- Gupta, R. K. (1959) Lodhas Revisited. *Man in India*, Ranchi.
- Risely, H. H. (1892) *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I & II
- Roy, S. C. & Roy, R. C. (1937) *The Kharias*, Vol. I & II
- Sarkar, S. S. (1954) *The Aboriginal Races of India*, Calcutta

# PAUDI BHUYAN<sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty<sup>2</sup>

**Paudi Bhuyan** belongs to the primitive section of the Bhuyan tribe. *Bhuyan* is derived from a Sanskrit word *Bhumi* meaning land or earth. The tribe is variously found mentioned as Bhuiya, Bhuiyan and Bhuyan. The tribe belongs to the Munda group of tribes.

They have no tribal language of their own and speak Oriya. The Bhuyan are widely distributed in many parts of Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Chhotnagpur. Desh Bhuyan or Mala Bhuyan is a section of the Bhuyan represented mainly by Pauri Bhuyan. The Pauri Bhuyan distinguishes themselves from other sections of Bhuyan by adopting *banghy*, a wooden carrying lever as their tribal emblem. The Pauri Bhuyan inhabit the Bhuyan Pirth of Keonjhar district, Bonai Hills of Sundargarh district and Nagira Hills of Dhenkanal district. The population of the Paudi Bhuyan inhabiting the Micro Project areas (as the tribe is not enumerated separately) is 13, 744 as per 2012 (Action Plan for PTGs for 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan) survey data.

They live in scattered settlements. The new village site is inaugurated by ceremoniously affixing a carved wooden post, *khunta*, representing *Gaisiri*, the village deity in the centre to ensure protection and blessings of ancestors. The Pauri houses are without windows having only one door. The tutelary family deity is placed in one corner near the hearth. They make regular offerings there. The Pauri Bhuyan have dormitories (Darbar) for the unmarried boys that serve as a guest house, elders' meeting place and granary of the village.

The Pauri males and females dress just like the caste neighbours. Pauri women adorn themselves with a number of bangles, nose rings, ear rings, toe

---

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished article of 2001

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

rings, anklets made of brass alloy and cover their neck and chest with multi coloured bead necklaces.

The Pauris believe in many gods and goddesses. *Dharam Devta* (Sun God) and *Basukimata* (Earth Goddess) are regarded as their supreme deities. They also worship the spirits of hills, rivers of their territory called *pat* and the common worship of these *pats* reflects their tribal solidarity. *Dihuri* is their priest. The Pauri Bhuyan dances have a social and religious significance. Women dance while the men play *change* (circular drum), drums and sing songs. The Pauri Bhuyans observe a series of festivals which mark the turning points in the annual round of their economic life such as distribution of forest land for cultivation, felling trees, eating new crops, etc. Some of their festivals are: *Magh Podoi*, *Ama Nua*, *Katha Jatra*, *Boram Devata*, etc.

Their lineal kins as *kutumbs* at a bigger level form a corporate group called *khilli*. They follow *khilli* exogamy. Marriage by negotiation and capture (*ghicha*), are the most common types and other types include marriage by elopement (*dhripala*) and love marriage (*phulkhusi*). Bride price is prevalent and it varies depending on the status of the family. Besides, their essential events of life like birth, marriage and death are observed ceremoniously.

The village council includes all the adult members of the community headed by *Naik* or *Pradhan*. At inter village level, a group of Pauri villages of a territory form a confederacy called *bar* or *pirh* headed by a *Sardar*.

After being identified as a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of Orissa, three Micro Projects are functioning in Anugul, Deogarh and Sundergarh districts to bring about their all round development.

# PAURI BHUINYA MARRIAGE <sup>1</sup>

S. P. Rout <sup>2</sup>

## The Village

Marriage customs of the tribals have been a topic of study for many anthropologists and sociologists. Marriage ceremony with all its elaborate rites and rituals not only provide ethnographic details of customs and practices of a people, but as an important life cycle ritual throws light on the socio-cultural frame work of the society as a whole. Thus, it not only describes the marriage customs and procedures but aims at analyzing their social, economic and religious significances. Marriage though an individual's concern is a communal affair among most of the tribes. In fact the unmarried boys and girls of the village in a broader sense are viewed to be the children of the village, and thus it becomes the responsibility of all the villagers to arrange for their marriage. Though the parents have to finance the marriage of their children, other important matters regarding marriage, like selection of mates, negotiation and finalization of marriage proposal, fixation of marriage date, co-operation and participation in making marriage-ceremony a success, are always the responsibility of the villagers. In this connection it is equally important to discuss the duties and rights of different age groups, the economic and other responsibilities laid on various kins, and changing attitude towards marriage customs etc.

## Introduction

The article is based on the data collected from Jaldih, a Pauri Bhuinya village in Kuira Block of Sundargarh district. Jaldih is a hill village situated about 8 miles from Koira amidst thick forest. Save one Gour family Jaldih is a homogeneous Bhuinya village with 27 Pauri Bhuinya families. The total population is 144 out of whom only four persons are Gours. The traditional feature of village exogamy of the Bhuinya no longer exists in Jaldih as the Bhuinya of the village belong to seven different local decent groups. The village was originally inhabited

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XI, No.3, 1969-70, pp.49-60.

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, TRB, Bhubaneswar.

by members of Sarkondi Khilli (local descent group) exclusively, thereby, maintaining the village exogamy, but with the immigration and emigration of *bandhu* (non-agnatic) families of seven different Khillis, inter-marriage in Jaldih has become possible now. The *khilli*-wise structure of the village with total number of Bhuinya families and population is given in the following table.

TABLE I  
Different Khillis, Total Number of Families and Population in Village Jaldih

Sl.No	Name of the Khilli	Total No. of families	Total Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1	Sarkondi	14	38	40	78
2	Kadakadi	5	11	14	25
3	Batgain	3	8	8	16
4	Kasidi	2	4	6	10
5	Kemsidi	1	2	4	16
6	Derial	1	2	1	3
7	Chaadi	1	1	1	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>140</b>

The village is said to be originally inhabited by the persons of Sarkondi Khilli who feel proud of being the first settlers of the village and constitute the majority in the village, while other are *bandhu* (non-agnatic) *khillis* who came there later. Out of the total 27 families 14 families, i.e. 51.8 percent belongs to Sarkondi *khilli* while 13 families belonging to six other *khillis*. Case studies of the family-heads revealed that out of these 13 *bandhu* families 7 are living in their mother's brother's village, 3 in father's mother's village, 1 in sister's husband's village and/or wife's village and 1 in father's sister's husband's village, while 1 family has no such relation in this village.

Jaldih is a medium village with a total population of 144. Deducting 4 Gours of one family, the Bhuinya population comes to 140, out of which 66 (47.1%) are males and 76 (52.9%), females. The high ratio of female to male population has resulted in greater number of spinsters. Due to high bride-price many Bhuinya boys fail to marry a virgin. They thus manage to marry young widows or divorced ladies, and thereby the opportunity of the marriage of spinsters is limited. Average family size is calculated at 5.2 persons.

The villagers mostly depend on slash and burn type of cultivation, though some possess a few patches of permanent paddy plots constructed on valleys or terraces. Their economy is no doubt supplemented by food collection from jungle, hunting, occasional fishing, wage earning and basketry.



There are no schools or any other Government institution in the village. The dormitory organization of the unmarried youths functioning in interior hill villages and has been abolished in plains Pauri Bhuinya villages is on the process of decay in Jaldih.

### Marriage

The Bhuinya is an endogamous tribe, but exogamous at the village level. Originally Bhuinya village were uni-*khilli* (clan) villages; all the villagers believing in a common ancestry. As they treat each other as brothers and sisters, marriage among them is considered incestuous and thereby tabooed. The villages being inhabited by the persons of a single *khilli*, the *khilli* name is synonymous with the village name. For example, the members of village Patuli belong to Patilia *khilli*; those of village Kasira, to Kasiri *khilli*, and likewise those of village Losi, Sarkonda, Raisuan, Batgaon, Sareikala, Chaada, Kadakala and Raikala to Losial, Sarkondi, Raisuin, Batgain, Sareikali, Chaadi, Kadakali and Raikuli *khillis* respectively. Not only each *khilli* is exogamous, but each has a group of *kutumb* and *bandhu khillis*. Matrimonial relations can only be established with the *bandhu khillis*, while with the *kutumb* ones marriage is strictly prohibited.

Migration of families of different *khillis* to a particular village has broken the traditional village exogamy. The Bhuinya villages are now inhabited by members of many *khillis*, thus facilitating marriage inside the village. Marriage outside the tribe, though quite un-common, is never totally ruled out. Cases of Bhuinya girls marrying Gours though extremely rare and are considered highly irregular, could be found during the my field investigation.

Child marriages are quite un-common, and the Bhuinya marry when both the partners are full adults. The boys usually marry after twenty years of age and the girls after the age of eighteen.

Marriage is monogamous, and after the death of the first wife one may marry again. In case the first wife proves to be barren, one has the liberty to have a second wife. Cases of persons marrying for the second time during the life time of their first wife are also occasionally encountered. In Jaldih, a villager fell in love with his wife's younger sister and married her when the first wife was alive, but soon after the marriage the young wife died. It is, therefore, not considered proper for a Bhuinya to have two wives at a time.

Cross-cousin marriages are not common and no preference is indicated for sorrorate marriages like-wise, exchange marriages are very rarely met with.

The following forms of marriages are prevalent among the Bhuinyas.

1. Dharipala – Love marriage with elopement.
2. Ghicha – Marriage by Capture.
3. Phulkhusi – Love marriage by Arrangement.
4. Amlesare -- Love marriage with Arrangement.
5. Kad lesare -- Love marriage with Arrangement.
6. Mangi Bibha – Marriage by Negotiation.
7. Randi Bibha – Widow Remarriage.

Of all forms Dharipala and Ghicha marriage are the most common forms. Love marriages with arrangement (Phulkhusi) are just in the memory of the Bhuinya, but marriage sample does not show a single case of such marriage. Mangi Bibha is the most recent form of marriage which has been adopted from the caste Hindus. Very recently, in certain cases of Mangi form of marriage a Vaishnab or Brahmin is invited to act as priest. This is also called Mukut Baha since the bridal pair wear crowns (Mukut) made of flowers like the caste people during the wedding ceremony. Mukut Baha is still unfamiliar in hill villages, but on plains some Bhinyas have adopted it to elevate their social status. Only few rich families in the plains villages can afford to conduct Mukut Baha for higher expenses. During the field work one case of Mukut Baha (a girl of this village marrying in Dengual) was encountered. Marriage other than Mukut Baha is termed as Mankad Baha (lit, marriage of the monkeys).

Each form of marriage is slightly a variant of the Mangi form of marriage but all these may be described very briefly.

1. **Dharipala** - If a boy likes a girl of certain village, he goes to her village and consults with her about their marriage. Both escape and come to the boy's village. The girl is left in the outskirts of the village and the boy goes and informs his elder brother's wife and father's father's wife (own on classificatory) to bring her. The ladies bring her home, and kiss the chin and fore-head of the boy and the girl with turmeric powder. Other rites are performed as in the Mangi form of marriage, to be dealt in detail subsequently.
2. **Ghicha** - In this form of marriage the girl's parents and villagers are consulted beforehand. After they express their willingness the girl is captured by the boy and his friends either from the forest when the girl goes to pluck leaves, from the stream while taking a bath or fetching water, from market or fairs, on her visit to the boy's village or some other village on a dancing trip.

In case the girl has to be captured from her village, on a certain day the boy and her friends come and hide themselves in the forest. The girl's parents are informed secretly, so that they send the girl without her knowledge to that part of forest with her friends to pluck leaves. There the girl is captured and taken to the boy's village. Her friends start a mock fight to save the girl, but in vain. Coming home they inform the villagers and the girl's parents that the girl was lifted by a huge tiger. The villagers go to the forest and pretend to examine stones and bushes where the girl was captured and say, "Here is the pug mark of the tiger! Here is some blood! Here is the torn cloth of the girl, and here is her ornament!" They then proceed to the boy's village and that day the marriage is performed. Next day, the women and the girls of the bride's villages pay a visit to the boy's village and they are entertained in a feast. In this form of marriage bride-wealth is paid after two or three years of marriage. If a certain girl is captured on her visit to some village or from the market or fairs, two *Khandrias* (middle-men) from the groom's village go to the girl's village with a stick. Reaching there they approach the Naek's (village headman) and say "one cow of this village has been eaten by a tiger (or swallowed by a snake), but we don't know to whose shed the cow belongs". The Naek replies- "Has the cow been completely eaten or any part is left". The *Khandarias* reply- "It is almost eaten only the head or the legs are left". The Naek consults villagers and later on informs the *Khandrias* that the cow belonged to such and such person's shed. The *Khandria's* go to the girl's house and are duly welcomed. Their feet are washed in turmeric water by a lady of the family and a mat and tobacco are given to them. After a short discussion with the girl's father, all of them come to the *Darbar* (community center of the village) and the same type of dialogues are exchanged between the *Khandarias* and the villagers, as the former had with the Naek. Then the villagers (300 Ghar) say- "Any way the *bandhu* took his property (a girl is thought to be the property of the *bandhus* kept in the custody of her parents). There is nothing wrong in it". When the *Khandarias* depart, the villagers tell them- "*Age jauntu Panda hal, pachhe jauntu Gayal. Bandhu, sambhalitha*". lit., let the pair of buffalos meaning the two *Khandrias* go first, later on the mighty bisons meaning a party from the girl will follow. Let the *Bandhu* be prepared to receive all.

Next day, the girl's villagers go to the groom's village and marriage take place. The party is entertained with meat and rice.

In this type of marriage, the girl does not get a chance to offer cakes and mat to the boys and girls of her village (*sang chada*) to formally dissociate herself from the dormitory; neither can she be given the farewell feast.

3. **Phulkhusi** - The boys of certain village go to their *bandhu* village for *changu* dance. There the boy puts some flower on the bun of his desired girl and drags her while dancing. The girl escapes. In Ghicha the boy with his friends captures the girl in a group, and the girl's parents are consulted prior to the capture. In Phulkhusi, on the other hand, the girl's parents are not consulted beforehand and the girl is dragged not by the boy's friends as a group, but by the boy alone. After the girl escapes, the boy comes back to his village and informs his parents and the villagers. After a few days, the women and girls of the girl's village bring her to the boy's village for marriage.
4. **Am Lesare** - A boy and a girl may like each other. One day the boy splashes mango-juice at the girl in the forest and manages to get one of her ornaments. The girl escapes and goes back home. Her mothers says - "*You were with such and such boy, and you have lost your ornament. Why did you not go with him?*". Then the Mahataris (village women) and other girls of her village bring her to the boy's village for marriage.
5. **Kad Lesare** -The same type as Am Lesare, but in this form the boy splashes mud at the girl.
6. **Mangi Bibha** - In Mangi Bibha or marriage by negotiation, two *Khandrias* from the groom's side go to the girl's parents. They assemble in the *Darbar* and say - "*We have come to take a small chicken or a nice fruit from your village*". The villagers ask, "*To whom the chicken belongs?*" The *Khandrias* say the name of the girl's father. The villagers say "*We shall ask him and tell you*". Then the *Khandrias* go back. In this way they come for five or six times to the girl's village till the proposal is finalized. In Pauri society they bring rice and liquor with them, and these are supplied to them by the groom's family. But here and in this area, the *Khandrias* are fed by the girl's family on every visit.

The following is a brief description of the various steps of Mangi Marriage;-

- (i) **Phul Handi**- after the day for taking the bride is fixed; the *Khandrias* go and inform the groom's party. Two or three days prior to the taking of the bride the groom's party sends *Phul Handi*, painted with rice paste and containing paddy and rice, *gur* (molasses), flattened rice and comb, mirror and flower for the bride. A ring is also sent for her by the groom which the girl's of the bride's village put on her finger. The groom's relatives come halfway to the girl's village while sending the *Phul Handi*. 2 ½ *Khandi* of rice is also sent this day by the

*Khandrias* for cooking *Bila Jau* in the bride's village. When the *Khandrias* arrive in the bride's village the *Mahataris* (women) go with the bride to receive them. The girls sing songs and the *Khandrias* are escorted to the bride's house.

- (ii) Tel Haladi – That night seven women anoint oil on the girl's head. The girl holds seven straws fixed to her forehead and the *Mahataris* pour oil seven times on the straws with *hul huli* sound.
- (iii) Dia Mangula – The *Mahataris* go to the four directions at the village outskirts next day with the bride and offer homage to Pats – Dharam Devta, Basumata, Gram Siri, etc. for a successful marriage.
- (iv) That day again Tel Haladi ritual is repeated by seven women.
- (v) Cooking *Bila Jau* - Rice brought from groom's village is distributed and given to all families for cooking. They cook and bring the cooked rice back to the *Darbar*. Here, the cooked rice distributed among all members of the village.
- (vi) Taking the Bride - One *Khandria* from the groom's party and one from the bride's village leave earlier to arrange food for the girl's villagers. Two others remain to take the bride. After the party reaches the groom's village, they are given food and water. Each party ceremonially greets each other asking about their health and happiness. The girls of the bride's village sing marriage song. The groom's mother or his father's brother's wife carries the bride on her back to the *Darbar*.
- (vii) Ghurur Pani - The bride and the groom are given ceremonial baths by the women of the respective villages on the *dobati* of the village (where two paths bifurcate).
- (viii) Juali Pani - The bride and the groom are given a ceremonial bath. They are made to sit on yokes. The women of the groom's village bath the bride, while those belonging to the bride's village bath the groom. That night the groom confines himself inside the house till the bride is brought to the village for marriage.
- (ix) Selling Medicine (*Asa Bika*) - The women and girls of the bride's village dress themselves as monks. They start from *Darbar* to the *Khandasal* (Kitchen house) to sell "medicines". Vulgar talks and jokes relating to sex are exchanged between the women and boys. The boys

give two *pai* of rice to them. They again go to the groom's house and get another two *pai* of rice. Cakes are prepared out of these four *pai* of rice and distributed among them afterwards.

- (x) Sala Bidha - In a formal ceremony, the women of the groom's village and his relatives make gifts of money to the bridal pair and to the *Garhialis* (partners for the groom and for the bride). The bride's younger brother pats on the back of the groom and is given a piece of cloth by the groom. He carries the groom on his back and the groom's younger brother carries the bride on his back. Both dance for a few minutes.
- (xi) Kadalata - When the women relatives present gifts to the bridal pair on the marriage altar, the joking relations throw mud, cow dung water, ashes, and black-dyes at them. A lot of fun and joke is thus exchanged between the joking relations.
- (xii) Ceremonial Bath and Breaking the Bow- The women and the girls of the bride's village take the bride and groom to the stream for a bath. There the bride hides the jar under water and the groom finds it out. The groom also hides it and the bride finds it out. This is called "*Dub Duba*". The bride carries a pot full of water on her head on the way back home. The boys of the bride's village make a strong bow with *sal* branch and *ponasi* string. The groom shoots at the water pitcher carried by the bride. On the half way he breaks the bow and throws it away. He should break it in one stretch, otherwise he is not considered strong.
- (xiii) Handi Sira - The bride and women of her and the groom's villages husk about three to four *pai* paddy after the bride returns from the stream. She cooks *Jau* out of this rice and offers it to the family ancestors of the groom in the inner chamber of the house. The persons of both sides partake a little of this *jau*.
- (xiv) Kanya Samarpan (Handing over the bride to the Bandhus) - At the parting time the girl's villagers and some of her close relatives hand over the bride to the groom's villagers and say- "*Oh! Respected Bandhus, now you get your daughter-in-law. When she was young she was of her parents, but after her puberty she belonged to the village (300 ghar). Now we 300 ghar are giving her to you. She may be ugly or beautiful, blind or one-eyed, deaf or dumb, lame; she might be a witch or sorceress (Daini or Pangani); she may not know how to*

*cook, how to talk, and how to respect you. Anyway, she becomes your Bahu (Daughter-in-law) now. If she does anything harm to you, or she is not liked by you, don't let her wander from shed to shed (begging food) but bring her back to the same tree (to her parents) where from you have taken her”.*

The groom villagers reply- *“Oh! Bandhus, she may have anything which goes against her, but she is our Bahu now. She is not only your daughter, ours too. Unless she does serious offence why should we bring her to you?”*

- (xv) Gundi Chaul & Mand Chheli - When the bride's villagers leave after marriage the groom's party gives them about five *pai* of rice called *Gundi Chaul* and one goat (*Mand Chheli*). The villagers may eat it on their way or bring to the village and then hold a feast.
- (xvi) Consummation of Marriage - Before the bridal pair starts sleeping together (after three or four days of marriage) the bride cooks a little *jau* in a new earthen pot and offers to the ancestors in the *Bhitar*. At night the woman who stand as elder brother's wife or father's father's wife (own or classificatory) come to the house and say - *“From today you get your home (wife). Start building your shed (lit, have sons and daughters) and let your family prosper.”*
- (xvii) First visit of the married couple to the Girl's parents - On their first visit to the bride's parents, they are given hearty meals. On the parting day a chicken is slaughtered for them and they may be given new clothes. Cakes and cooked rice are given to them to carry to their village.

### **Economy in Pauri Bhuinya Marriage**

Marriage lays great economic strain on Pauri Bhuinyas. Contribution from the relatives and the close kins is so negligible that the parents start hoarding crops and cash for five years or more till they are able to amass considerable amount for financing a marriage. In spite of their efforts they run in to indebtedness and incur heavy loans to meet the marriage expenses. A considerable amount is spent in feasts. Other heads of expenditure include bride-wealth (*mula*) paid to the bride's relatives, clothes for the bride, groom, and other relatives, and other miscellaneous expenses.

The items and amount of bride-wealth are same for all types of marriages, which are paid within a year or two after the marriage except Dhariपाला (marriage by elopement) in which it may be paid after five to ten years

when the marrying partners accumulate enough amount for the purpose. Extremely poor persons are sometimes exempted from paying full amount for bride-wealth. The following gives item wise detail list of the standard bride-wealth paid in Bhuinya marriage:-

1. One bullock for the bride's father.
2. One bullock for her father's younger brother.
3. One bullock for her mother's brother.
4. Three rupees and about 12 *pai* of rice for the *Khandrias* (middlemen).
5. About 7 ½ *Khandi* of rice for *Bilajau*.
6. One rupee and a *sari* for the bride's mother.
7. About a 5 *pai* of rice (*Gundi chaul*) and a goat (*Mand chheli*) for the bride's villagers when they leave after marriage.

A piece of cloth, or one to two rupees in lieu of cloth is paid to the brides younger brother (*sala bidha*), but this does not constitute an item of the regular bride-wealth.

The feast drains away major savings in marriages. In a marriage feast the groom party is expected to feed the villagers of both sides sumptuously till they eat sufficiently and leaves some food on their plates. The groom has to spend on feasts on the following occasion:-

1. The day the bride is brought for marriage the boys and the girls of the groom's village are fed properly to receive the marriage party.
2. As soon as the bride and her escorts arrive in the village outskirts they are given cooked rice and *dal*.
3. That night after the girl's party reach the groom's village they are fed by the groom.
4. Next day goats are slaughtered and the villagers of both the sides are given a feast.
5. After the marriage, on some day, the groom is obliged to feed his villagers once more for their co-operation and help in the marriage.

Besides the above occasions, quite a heavy stock of rice is also required to feed the guests and the relatives. To all these expenses may be added other miscellaneous expenses like purchases of new cloths for the marrying partners and the relatives, ornaments for the bride, rice given to the different age and sex groups for playing their specific roles in marriages.



Keeping in view all the expenditures, the total amount spent in a Bhuinya marriage (marriage by arrangement) is estimated to be Rs. 1000 or more. In other forms of marriages, less amount is spent on feasting, thereby reducing the total expenditure by about Rs. 200. In case of second marriage, the bride-wealth is more than the usual bride-wealth.

### Conclusion

Without going into the detail of rites and rituals of the institution of marriage, it is significant to analyze the role which the institution of marriage plays among the tribe. Its implications on the interplay of social relationship, group ties and other social and economic ramifications are also noteworthy.

Marriage is always viewed to be an affair of the village than the concerned family. The unmarried girls biologically belong to their parents, but sociologically all the unmarried girls are viewed to be the "property" of the *bandhus* (inter-marrying spouses). They are kept in custody of their parents and taken care of till marriage, but as soon as the *bandhus* want to take possession of their "property" the parents are obliged to part with them. In a broader sense all the unmarried boys and girls are viewed to be members of the village and the village youth dormitory (*darbar*) who associate more closely with the socio-religious life concerning the dormitory organization. Marriage is always an affair of the village. In case of giving away the girls in marriage, the opinion of all the village elders is never overlooked. Likewise, marriage of the village boys is the responsibility of all the families of the village. The parents finance for the marriage, but the villagers lend their help and co-operation to make the marriage ceremony a success. While ceremonially handing over the bride, the girl's villagers in their prayer to the groom's villagers firmly hold that day offer the girl not only to the groom, but to his villagers at large for the proper upkeep of the girl. In case of divorce, therefore, the groom's villagers formally handover the girl to her village elders while performing the formal divorce ritual.

Marriage provides the proper situation to study the roles played by different age and sex groups. The elderly men (*Mahatar*) and women (*Mahatari*) and the unmarried boys (*Bhendia*) and girls (*Dhangdi*) play specific roles in marriage. The *Mahatars* work as marriage brokers (*Khandria*), fix up marriage proposals, formally handover and take over the bride in marriage, engage themselves in communal cooking and shoulder other responsibilities. The ceremonial rites are mostly performed by the *Mahataris*. Ceremonial bathing of the bridal pair, greeting the marriage party, blessing the marrying couple and other important rites are performed by the women. Marriage is the only occasion where women have greater

roles to play than the men. Likewise, the unmarried boys and the girls closely associate in marriage ceremony. The boys play *changu* (circular musical drum) in marriage dance, prepare marriage bow for the groom and supply firewood, fetch water and help in cooking of the marriage feast, while the girls sing marriage songs and do other tasks like grinding spices, supplying leaf cups and plates and accompanying the bride while performing marriage rites, etc. For performing their duties, each group is reasonably rewarded by feast and other gifts.

An analysis of some of the marriage rites of the Bhuinya throws light on their social values and belief system. As the Bhuinya claim to have descended from royal chiefs, the tradition of riding on horseback is still retained by them. It is still customary for them to carry the bride and the groom on their backs, which symbolizes horse riding and after marriage rice and *dal* is given to the persons carrying the bride and the groom. It is called *Ghoda dana*, lit, fodder for the horse. Likewise, breaking of bow by the groom and shooting arrows are claimed to be the observance of the epic custom of Lord Rama breaking the *shiva dhanu* for marrying Goddess Sita. Bathing the bride and the groom by making them to sit on a yoke symbolizes that from that day they are to share and shoulder the responsibilities of the marital life. The Bhuinya, like many others tribes have great attachment to their native soil, and this sentiment has been reflected in their marriage in which the women of the bride's village worship the Dharati (Earth Goddess) and tie some earth in the *sari* of the bride.

Marriage marks the termination of one phase of life and entry into a new sphere of life. The marrying partners cease to be acting members of their youth association and attain the status of the married persons (*Mahataras* and *Mahataris*). Before assuming the new roles and responsibilities, the bride and the groom present gifts to their dormitory friends and formally take farewell from their association. They are also entertained with feasts by their friends before their final withdrawal from the dormitory organization.

In case of the bride, she not only steps on to a new social position from *Dhangdi* to *Mahatari*, but it is more significant for her to enter into the clan of her husband. To mark this transition the bride cooks *jau* (porridge) on the marriage day and offers it to the family ancestors of the groom in the sacred *bhitar* (inner portion of the house where the ancestors are believed to reside). Likewise, to mark the consummation of marriage, before the couple starts sleeping together, the wife again offers *jau* to the husband's ancestors.

Marriage sample collected from Jaldih reveals that of all the types of marriages i.e., marriage by capture, elopement, etc., are more frequently resorted

to. Then comes the regular and more expensive form of marriage by arrangement. Out of 141 marriage cases 36.2 percent were found to be marriage by arrangement while 63.8 percent were other types of marriages. The following table gives a quantitative assessment of different types of marriages of the Pauri Bhuinya.

**TABLE**  
**Frequency and Percentage of Types of Marriages among the Pauri Bhuinya**

Sl. No.	Types of marriage (local names)	English equivalent	Frequency	Percentage
1	Mangi	Marriage by arrangement	51	36.2
2	Ghicha	Marriage by capture	36	25.5
3	Dharipala	Marriage by elopement	51	36.2
4	Randi Bibha	Widow re marriage	3	2.1
<b>Total</b>			<b>141</b>	<b>100%</b>

As has been described in this paper, marriage is a costly proposition for the Bhuinya and they being mostly poor fighting to sustain their living can hardly afford to finance a marriage. Failing to arrange the marriage expenses, many Bhuinya youths are forced to lead the life of bachelors and spinsters. The heavy expenditure was minimized to some extent in old days when the Bhuinya preferred to procure marriage mates by capture or elopement but now days as marriages other than marriage by arrangement are looked down upon, the poor persons are forced to remain as lifelong bachelors. In village, Tantara, it was found in 1969 that 19 girls between the age-group of 20-56 years and 9 boys above 22 years of age could not marry through they crossed the marriageable age. They did not take recourse to obtain their marrying partners by capture or elopement lest they might be looked down upon by their fellow neighbours. This has serious social consequences and unless the bride-price of the Bhuinya are curtailed and other steps are taken to ameliorate the terms and conditions of marriage, the Bhuinya youths may not enable themselves to enjoy the status of full-fledged members of the society by virtue of their marital status.

## HUNTING AMONG THE PAURI BHUINYAS OF KUIRA, SUNDERGARH DISTRICT<sup>1</sup>

S.P. Rout <sup>2</sup>

### The Bhuinyas

The Bhuinyas are one of the few tribes whose different branches represent various stages of cultural evolution from the more or less primitive culture of Hill Bhuinyas to the Hinduised plains Bhuinyas. Some of the Zamindars in plains Bhuinya families claim Rajput or Kshyatriya descent. The Bhuinyas have an extensive distribution of varying numerical strength over a number of States like Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Chhotnagpur and Orissa, etc.

In Orissa they are found chiefly in two different stages of cultural development i.e. the most primitive Hill or Pauri Bhuinyas of Keonjhar, Bonai and Pallahara, on one hand and more advanced plains Bhuinyas of Bamra and Gangapur on the other.

The name "Bhuinya" seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit term "Bhumi" meaning "land". Hence the Bhuinya designate themselves either as the autochthons of the land or as the owners of the land. They have a legend to support their association with the land which depicts how the Bhuinyas took one of the jars presented to them by Dharam Devta at time of the creation of Earth and opening the jar they found that it was full of earth. So they treated Earth to be their wealth and called themselves Bhuinyas. They thus developed such strong ties with the land that it was considered to be most sacred and was revered more than the mother. The severe oath taken in serious trials by the Bhuinyas is started by touching the earth only. It is believed that if one takes false oath by holding soil in his hand he soon dies and becomes a part of the soil.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, 1964-65, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1964, pp.57-62

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Judging from their racial and cultural activities, the Bhuinyas are included in the 'Kol' group by Mr. Stirling, Russel, Hutton and Grierson. In Orissa, the Bhuinyas are 1,56,878 in number with their different sections and various names. In Sundergarh, the Pauri Bhuinyas are of seven such sections of the Bhuinya Tribe. In order of their social hierarchy such sections are known as Rajkuli Bhuinya, Saunti Bhuinya, Rautali Bhuinya, Kanti Bhuinya, Mal Bhuinya, Pauri Bhuinya and Bathduli Bhuinya. It is very difficult to estimate the distinguishing features between such sections. But only non-acceptance of cooked food and the prohibition of martial relations between the sections are the two important features to distinguish the various sections of the tribe. The last section, namely Bathuduli Bhuinya is considered to be a separate tribe and the rest of the population may be broadly categorized under plains Bhuinyas and Pauri Bhuinyas. Socially, economically and culturally the latter lead a backward life, least affected by the Hindu culture as the plains people and their name indicates that they dwell on the hills (Pahar).

### Population and Distribution

The population figure of Bhuinyas is 1,56,878 according to 1961 Census, those are distributed over the various districts as follows:-

**Table showing the distribution of Bhuinya Population in Orissa**

Sl No	Name of the District	Male	Female	Total
1.	Keonjhar	26,478	26208	52686
2.	Sundargarh	22664	22504	45168
3.	Mayurbhanj	14966	14650	29616
4.	Sambalpur	10339	10256	20595
5.	Dhenkanal	1065	1680	3465
6.	Kalahandi	1063	1045	2108
7.	Balasore	551	615	1166
8.	Cuttack	536	450	986
9.	Koraput	187	177	364
10.	Puri	176	171	347
II.	Bolangir	110	49	159
12.	Phulbani	20	18	38
13.	<b>Total</b>	<b>79055</b>	<b>77823</b>	<b>56878</b>

The Bhuinyas have lost their own language and now speak a form of Oriya, which has a peculiar pronunciation.

## The Article

The present article describes the methods of hunting among the Pauri Bhuinyas of Kuira in Sundargarh district. The article aims at analyzing the importance of hunting in the socio-economic life of the Bhuinyas and in bringing forth the change of traditional traits associated with hunting. The article is based on the data collected by interviewing the Pauri Bhuinyas of Kuira and by witnessing a hunting ceremony in Jaldih.

## Hunting

Bows and arrows constitute the only hunting implements of the Bhuinyas. Whenever a Pauri goes out, he takes a bow and a bunch of arrows with him just to protect himself in the jungle. On his way amidst thick forest, he may meet some prey and may kill it, but this may not be strictly viewed as hunting. Besides, on an off day, if a Bhuinya occasionally goes in search of a hunt all by him, this phenomenon of individual hunting will be regarded with least attention in Bhuinya society.

The communal hunting expeditions reveal interesting features of social, economic and religious life of Bhuinya. *Akhani Paridhi*, the annual hunting festival marks the first day of hunting for the Bhuinyas. It is held on the third day of the moon (*Akshya Tirtia*) in the month of *Chait* (March-April).

The preceding evening, the *Naek* (the village head man) meets the villagers in the *Darbar* (dormitory house) and informs about the commencement of *Akhani Paridhi* on the following day. The men who wish to join in hunting observe continence and sleep away from their wives on the fore night. Early in the morning, all assemble in the *Darbar* armed with their bows and arrows and with drums and sticks to drive out the games. The hunters bring seven bows, seven arrows, two chickens and offering materials like *Akata* (husked paddy) and turmeric powder and give them to the *Naek*. The *Naek* worships the *Dharam Devta* (Sun God), *Basuki* (Earth Goddess), *Gaisiri* (Village deity) and *Boram* at the outskirts of the village and slaughters two chickens in their honour. He sprinkles the blood on the bows and arrows and prays "Today we are celebrating the *Akhani Paridhi*, let the hunters meet all sorts of games on their way and let them be able to shoot down all". He also burns some incense and tobacco to please the forest and hill spirits (*Baghias* and *Bauiti*) to ensure success in hunting. The offered chickens are burnt and the persons joining the hunting party are given little of such meat to eat before they start on hunting.

The only method adopted by the Bhuinyas in communal hunting is beating at the bushes and driving the animals. After reaching in the jungle the party splits off into two groups. The daring and fearless persons having hunting reputation in the past are selected as *Ghatias*. They sit on key places through which the animals are expected to pass and hide themselves behind the trees. The rest of the party beat at the bushes, shout at the peak of their voice, throw stones and make peculiar noises to drive the animal towards the *Ghatias*. As soon as the game runs near by the *Ghatias*, they shoot it down by their bows and arrows. When the game is bagged, the *Dihuri* (the village priest) or any elderly man (in the absence of the *Dihuri*) takes some of the blood of the hunted animal and offers it to the *Dharam Devata, Basuki, Gaisiri, Boram, Bautis* and *Baghias* and prays - "There we offering the first blood of the slain animal. May we attain success in hunting in future." The man whose arrow kills the animal also takes some blood from the game and offers to his family ancestors praying for the success in future hunting.

After the animal is slain all go to the *Naek's* house with the game. They are greeted by the ladies who wash the feet of the hunters with turmeric water, anoint their forehead and chin with turmeric powder and kiss them.

The meat is cut down into pieces except the head of the animal, one loin, and hind quarter. One of the boys comes down secretly from a corner and imitates the gait of the slain animal. He is beaten by the leg of the animal on his back and is given the leg portion to fry and eat. Before the meat is distributed, some meat, the brain and hearts of the animal are fried on ember and offered to the deities on Jambu leaves. Such offering is made thrice, i.e. on behalf of the persons who participated in the hunt, on behalf of the hunter whose arrow killed the animal and on behalf of the *Barabhai* (villagers).

The two hind quarters of the game are presented to the *Naek* as *Akhani Bheti* (presentation of the hunt) and one of the loins is offered to the hunter. The rest of the meat is equally divided in two shares. One share is equally distributed between all the members who joined in the hunting party and the other share is equally distributed between all the families of the village.

The *Naek*, in return, rewards the hunter with a cloth of ten cubits if a *Sambar*, or pig or a deer is shot, and a *gamcha* (napkin) for a *Kutra* (barking deer). In lieu of the cloth, he may give twelve *annas* (coins) for the long cloth and four *annas* for the napkin. Besides, he offers a basketful of rice cakes to the members of the party both in successful and unsuccessful hunting.

The ceremonial hunting is observed for three consecutive days, i.e. the first day being the *Naek's* day, the second day for the *Dihuri* and the last day for the *Barabhai* (villagers). The similar procedures are followed on all the days except that the *Naek* presents the party with a basketful of rice cakes on the first day to carry with them to the forest and the village ladies offer *mandia* (millets) cakes and rice cakes on the third day, i.e., the last day.

### Conclusion

A study of the hunting practices of the Pauri Bhuinya and the associated rites and rituals throws much light on the various aspects of their life and culture. It tends to unfold the beliefs and systems of the people on the one hand and throws a light on varying obligations between the members of different units of their social organization. The specific points of interest can briefly be stated in the following:-

- 1) Hunting is more a religious observance than a quest of food for the Bhuinyas. The Bhuinyas lead a lonely life on the hills surrounded by countless forest and hill spirits. To be safeguarded by these spirits, it is essential to please them at least once a year by the sacrifices and offerings. Hence, the Bhuinyas observe the ceremonial hunting of *Akhani Paridhi* to avert the ill-will of the spirits and to please them by hunting some animals and offering their blood.

For a successful hunting ritual, the Bhuinyas observe a series of taboos to maintain purity and sanctity. The persons whose wives are continuing with their menstruation cycle are neither allowed to join the hunting party, nor do they come to watch the ritual performed at the outskirts of the village to ensure success in hunting. On the previous night of the *Akhani Paridhi* day, the persons desirous of joining in the hunting party observe strict continence and sleep in a separate bed away their wives. Just before starting for hunting, the persons should not see the face of the menstruating ladies, which may spoil the chance of success in hunting.

The *Naek* also observes continence on the previous night so as to enable himself to perform the ritual for the success in the hunting in the next morning. He offers chickens, husked rice and turmeric powder to the deities and bribes the spirits by burning incense and tobacco for a successful hunt.

- 2) The various rites and rituals associated with hunting reflect the beliefs and systems of the Pauri Bhuinyas. Segregation of women from the hunting



rituals is based on the idea that the presence of menstruating ladies will avert the sprits and the deities and may result in unsuccessful hunting. Hence, every precaution is taken to avoid the ladies during the hunting expedition. Women, being the weaker sex, cannot very well practically go for hunting, but more particularly the fact that they suffer from periodical pollution which debars their privilege to be associated with hunting.

The Bhuinyas believe in the casual relation between successful hunting and bumper harvest. According to them successful hunting during *Akhani Paridhi* indicates a rich harvest in the current year, and this belief keeps them alert to safeguard all the evils obstructing success in hunting.

- 3) To ensure successful hunting, the Pauri believes in performing sympathetic rites. The two chickens sacrificed by the *Naek* just before the party starts on hunting is believed to contain the spiritual power of the gods and godlings to whom these are offered and if the members of the party eat a bit of such meat they soon possess such power and may thus be able to slay any game they meet.

The blood of the chickens, after sacrifice, is also believed to carry such power and hence, the *Naek* sprinkles it on seven bows and arrows just to help in successful hunting.

The arrow which kills the animal is brought out from the body of the prey and is never washed in water. The bloodstained arrow-head is left to dry out. By doing so it is believed that the arrow would always kill more games in future and would remain bloodstained forever.

After the game is killed and before the meat is distributed, one of the members of the hunting party acts like the slain animal and imitates its gait. Crawling down he comes from a corner and passes by before the hunters. One of the members of the hunting party takes a leg of the game and hits the imitator's back with it. This signifies that in future hunting, no game can escape the notice of the hunter and the hunters will be able to kill all the animals they meet.

Before the distribution of meat, the brain, hearts and some meat is roasted on ember and shares are offered to the sprits and the deities for whose favour they had a success in hunting. The meat thus offered is considered sacred and is believed to carry the "power". The husbands of the menstruating ladies are not allowed to eat such meat. If any outsider eats such meat the real hunting power is believed to be transmitted to his body

and the villagers may not have the good luck to have more success in hunting.

- 4) Hunting is a perfect occasion where one can notice the interplay of various relations. Hunting is purely a communal affair, which involves co-operation of all the villagers. Each village has to hunt within its boundary demarcated from the time of the Raja. Since, successful hunting indicates rich harvest; it becomes the duty of all the villagers to try heart and soul to make the hunting expedition a success. Generally, each family deposes one or more of its male members to participate in the hunting and it is the responsibility of the village ladies to collect *mandia* and paddy from all the houses and prepare cakes for the party on the third day of the *Akhani Paridhi*.

Distribution of meat is made keeping in view the social and political life of the village. The hunter must get an extra share for his ability to kill the prey, but *Naek*, the head of the village, gets two hind quarters by dint of his status and authority in the village. The *Dihuri* (the village priest) is not given any special portion of meat, but is always given an extra amount for holding an office in the village. All the families get shares of meat whether any of its male members participated in the hunting or not.

Getting extra meat, on part of the *Naek* is more of prestige value because the cost he has to bear for returning the gift of cloth and cakes to the hunters is much more than the actual cost of the meat he gets. It may also be noted that *Naek* does not eat all the meat he gets as a special share. This meat is divided into three shares. He distributes one share between the families of his closer lineage group and gives the final share to rest of the families of the village. The hunter also distributes some meat from his special share between the families of his closer lineage group.

### **Recent Changes in Hunting Practices**

In course of time the Bhuinyas are getting more modern in their outlook and are dropping out their customs and traditions associated with hunting. Some of the Bhuinyas have managed to acquire guns and are hunting games on their own sweet will. Hunting is gradually becoming more individualistic in nature. The man having a gun may give little meat to his villagers but he sells the major portion of the game and gets money for it.

Another marked change is noticed in the attitude of the Pauris for hunting. In the old days, jungle was thick and the games were plenty all around.

Hence, the chances of success in hunting was far greater than in the present days when most of the jungle around the Bhuinya country are getting depleted for shifting cultivation and the wild animals are rapidly decreasing. These difficulties, however, have least affected the age old beliefs of the people and they still observe the hunting ceremony with all its detail. Posts of new leaders have been created in the village, but the new leaders are not given special shares of meat in hunting. The *Naek* continues to enjoy his traditional status in the village and gets the hind quarters of the slain animal as usual. The amount of reward the *Naek* used to give to the hunter has, however, been increased. Since, the price of the cloth which was costing twelve *annas* in the good old days has now been increased to two to three rupees, the *Naek* now offers two rupees in lieu of the cloth instead of the twelve *annas* he used to pay in the past.

The hunting customs and practices of the Pauri Bhuinyas, as described in this article, however, does not apply to the life of the plains Bhuinyas and is different from the Pauri Bhuinyas of Bhuinyapirh of Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Mayurbhanj districts, but the general trend may be almost identical.

# ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF PAURI BHUIYA<sup>1</sup>

Bhagirathi Choudhury<sup>2</sup>

The Pauri Bhuiya or Hill Bhuiya, a primitive and most backward section of the Bhuiya tribe is mainly concentrated in the adjoining hilly tracts of Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Sundargarh districts. The population of Bhuiya tribe in Orissa is 1,56,878 among whom 45,168 are found in Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts respectively. Pauri Bhuiyas are not separately enumerated.

The present report - on the economic activities of the Pauri Bhuiya is based on investigation carried in two Pauri Bhuiya villages, Karangadihi in Banspal Block of Keonjhar district and Jaldihi in Koira Block in Sundargarh district.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Economic activities of the Pauri Bhuiya are considerably influenced by the ecological character of the area. As the area consists of ranges of rugged hills covered with forest, the quantity of land available for wet cultivation is meager. Besides wet cultivation they also PRACTISE CULTIVATION on up-land, *badi*-land and *biringa* (land brought under shifting cultivation). Their other economic activities centre round the agricultural activities. Besides cultivation, they also undertake collection of forest products; engage themselves in indigenous craft, wage-earning, fishing in the adjacent streams and hunting in the forest.

## CULTIVATION

The Pauri Bhuiya are traditionally shifting cultivators. Wet cultivation is done in a limited scale but at present it is gaining ground among them as a profitable source of livelihood and is resorted to whenever suitable land is available.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.3, 1967-68, pp.36-43

<sup>2</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Land is classified by the Pauri Bhuiya into four categories, viz.

- a) Bila or Wet-land
- b) Guda or Up-land
- c) Biringa or land for shifting cultivation
- d) Badi or homestead garden (also known as Basti-land)

The extent of wet land possessed by individual families could not be ascertained in the absence of survey and settlement in this area of Keonjhar district. In Koiria area of Bonai subdivision, the extent of wet-land can be collected from the record of rights. As there is no individual ownership of land under shifting cultivation (*biringa*) and as they do not cultivate the same plot every time, quantification on the basis of seed used or yield will not give a correct picture. Eleven out of twenty two families in Jaldihi do not possess wet-land, while most of the wet-land-owning families have got less than two acres each. In the village Karangadihi fourteen out of forty-two families do not have wet-land. When the amount of wet-land is calculated on the basis of seed capacity, six out of twenty-eight land-owning families have got four acres or more. The maximum amount of wet-land owned by any family will be eight acres. Rest twenty-two families have owned less than four acres of land. The amount of land under shifting cultivation, up-land and *badi*-land which are generally possessed by each and every family of both villages is not included.

As bullock driven ploughs are used in the cultivation of all types of land, most of the families have got bullocks and only some have buffaloes. Keeping of cows for breeding and goats and sheep for sale is a common practice among them.

## TECHNIQUE OF CULTIVATION

Different techniques of cultivation are followed in different types of land, short description of which is given here.

### (a) Wet Land

In the available wet land only paddy is sown. They rarely sow red-gram (*sula*) as a second crop of the year wherever there is water in winter and summer seasons. The paddy grown in this type of land is called *bad dhan*. They follow methods like broadcasting (*buna*) and transplanting (*rua*).

In *buna* method of cultivation, broadcasting of seeds is done after ploughing twice. Soon after the first shower after the harvest, they plough the land for the first time.

Towards the latter part of Baisakh (April-May) or in Jestha (May-June) the land is ploughed for the second time (*diuda*). Cow dung manure is spread across the field. If cold breaking is necessary both men and women do it and the land is made ready for sowing. After the ceremony of Tirtia Muthi (ceremonial sowing of seeds) the seeds are broadcast on the land and a final ploughing is done to cover the seeds. When the rice plants grow to a height of a foot or so and sufficient water stands in the field another ploughing (called *bihuda*) is done. After ten to fifteen days, the leveler (*mae*) is driven through the field. This is followed by weeding (*jud bacha*) in the month of Bhadrav (August-September) as the last phase of agricultural operation before harvesting in the month of Kartik (October-November) or Margasira (November-December). If the wet-lands are situated in the midst of dense forest and if there is the danger of destruction by wild animals, they watch the fields in the night.

In transplanting, a plot is selected as the nursery which will provide seedlings to plant on three or four times of its own size. The nursery is ploughed twice earlier and manured. Before sowing the seeds in the month of Jestha (May-June) another ploughing is done and clods are broken. Then the seeds are scattered in the usual method. This is followed by leveling the ground with the help of *mae*. In the meantime the field selected for transplanting is ploughed. Soon after the monsoon showers intensify, it is re-ploughed.

When the seedling grows nearly one foot in height, the field for transplanting is leveled. The seedlings are mostly transplanted by women. After a month or so, weeding is done. The standing crops are guarded by young boys as well as by men. Reaping is done both by men and women. Women carry sheaves on their head and men on their shoulder balancing on carrying pole (*bihida*). Threshing with the help of bullock or by feet is done on platform specially prepared for the purpose either in one of the fields or in a barn. Winnowing is the work of women. Paddy is dried and stored in straw containers (*pudug*).

There are also inferior wet-lands located at a comparatively higher ground. This type of land is cultivated only by broadcasting method. Here they follow the technique as followed in case of low-lands but another variety of paddy known as *khetudi dhan* is grown in these lands. Sowing is done in Asarha (July) but harvested in Aswina or Kartik (October-November), nearly one month earlier than the *bad dhan* grown in low-land.

Only a few Bhuiya cultivators grow *sula* (Red gram) in the low-land. After the harvest the land is ploughed. The seeds are then sown in the month of

Margasir (December-January) after which another ploughing is done they harvest the crop in the month of Phagun or Chait (March-April).

(b) **Guda (up-land)**

Most part of cultivated area in Pauri Bhuiya country is *guda*-land. This type of land is not fertile and does not stand repeated cultivation. So they generally cultivate this type of land for two continuous years with the usual rotation of *rasi* (niger) in the first year and paddy mixed with *arhar* or *birhi* (pulses) in the second year. If there is good yield in the second year, the land is used for growing paddy, *birhi* or *kolath* (pulses) in the third year also. After this, the area is left fallow for four to five years.

Soon after the first shower, the land is given one or two ploughing and made ready for sowing. Paddy and *arhar* or *birhi* (pulses) are sown in the month of Asarh (June-July) when the land is still wet. The variety of paddy grown is called *guda-dhan*. *Rasi* (niger) in the month of Bhadrav (August-September) or *ramtila* or *jhatangi* (another variety of *niger*) in the month of Sravan (July-August) are also sown. Weeding, if necessary is generally done by women. Paddy grown in this land is harvested in the month of Aswina (September-October).

(c) **Badi-Land**

Most of the *badi*-land at the backyard is utilized for growing mustard and maize. Almost all families grow vegetables in the rainy season and a few families grow tobacco, ginger turmeric and arrowroot.

At the beginning of rains, the *badi*-land is ploughed twice and is kept ready for sowing and manured with cow dung for growing mustard. In the month of Jestha (May-June) some families plant ginger, turmeric, arrowroot and *saru* (a tuber) in a portion of the *badi*-land. In the month of Asarha (June-July) maize and vegetables are sown by almost all families of the village. Mustard seeds are sown in the month of Bhadrav (August-September) and tobacco is planted in the same month. Weeding in the maize field and mustard field takes place in the months of Sravan (July-August) and Aswina (September-October). Maize and vegetables are consumed in the month of Aswina (September-October) when there is acute shortage of food. In the month of Magh (January-February) they harvest mustard. Harvesting of tobacco and *Saru* takes place in Pausa (December-January) or Magh (January-February). Ginger and turmeric are harvested in the month of Jestha or Asarha (May-June).

#### (d) **Biringa or Land under Shifting Cultivation**

Shifting cultivation of the Pauri Bhuiya is known as Biringa, Jhumi or Toila (a term also used by the Juang). There are two methods of shifting cultivation, *dahi* and *koman*. The *dahi* process consists of selection of a hill slope more or less leveled for cultivation. Trees and bushes are cut down and piled in rows. If there adequate number of trees in the clearing, felled trees in other patches are brought and piled. When sufficiently dried up fire is set to those piles. The ashes are spread as manure. In the *koman* the bushes and scrubs on the clearing are cut and piled at the foot of big trees found on the spot. After a month or so when these dry up, are burnt and the clearing is made ready for cultivation.

The *dahi* process is more painstaking but yield better results than the *koman* type of cultivation and hence, preferred. A short description of the *koman* type of cultivation is given below. Selection of a patch for shifting cultivation is controlled through the traditional village leadership within the limit of village boundary not touching reserved forest boundary. The direction from which the echo of 'Haribol' has come at the time of Magh Podi ceremony, which marks the termination of agricultural year is taken into account. In a meeting of village elders in the village Darbar ground, presided over by the village Naika (secular headman), the area for shifting cultivation is selected in consultation with the village Dehuri (Priest). On another day the village elders accompanied by the Naika and Dehuri go to the selected patch to allot plots for each family according to the need and capacity of the family members. The size of the family and the number of working adults are considered while allotments are made. Plots are demarcated along the slope from top to bottom. As there is the danger of damage to crops by wild animals, a contiguous area is cleared so that all can guard the crops effectively. No patches of forest in between the various plots are left uncleared. The allotment procedure removes grievances and disputes and provides for collective acknowledgement of rights of various families.

During the months of Phagun (February-March) and Chaita (March-April) felling of trees (Jhumikat or Kathkata) takes place. First of all, bushes, smaller trees and plants are cut. This is done by both men and women with the help of Budia (axe) and Da (Sickle). Children also take part in the operation. The bigger trees are sometimes left out, cutting only the branches if there are too many. All the felled trees, plants, bushes, and grass are piled and allowed to dry. In the month of Baiakh (April-May) those are burnt.

In the month of Jestha (May-June) seeds of several varieties of beans such as Dunk, Suttur, Tipira, Ruma and Sima and vegetables are sown in the clearings. Their creepers climb up the tree stumps. In Asarha once again the



bushes and scrubs are cleared and allowed to decompose for the purpose of manuring. In the same month *birhi* (pulse) is sown and the surface is ploughed. While sowing in the hill clearings the seeds are broadcast from the bottom to the top of the slopes. Weeding (*Lata-bachha*) of wild grasses and other roots take place in the month of Bhadrav (August-September). It is done by both men and women assisted by children. These weeds are left in the Biringa field itself to decompose in course of time to provide manure to the soil. If necessary, another weeding is also done. From the month of Kartika (October-November) the fields are carefully guarded to protect those from the wild animals and birds. Cultivators divide into groups and guard the fields in turn. For this purpose they construct temporary huts at a higher ground. A fire is kept burning throughout the night to scare wild animals away from the Biringa fields. At the time of harvest, a temporary threshing floor in the clearing is made jointly by several families. The *birhi* plants are uprooted and piled in the threshing floor to dry up. After a week or so, threshing is done by striking the dried plants with the help of sticks. Beans are given similar treatment.

When the same plot is cultivated for second year in the month of Baisakh, bushes and *birhi*-stumps, if any, left out from the previous year are cleared. In the month of Jestha (May-June) after a few showers, *Mandia* with *harad* (a variety of pulses) are sown and the land is ploughed with bullock driven ploughs. This is followed by bunding (*hida*) and made into several plots.

These bunds are about two to three cubits in width. Bunds along both sides of the slopes are used for growing *Gangei* (a variety of millet) while on other bunds across the patch they grow *Katada*, *Kangu*, *Tisidia* and *Tipira* (all are food crops). In the month of Bhadrav (August-September) weeding takes place. By the month of Kartika (October-November) almost all the crops grown are harvested and threshed in the Biringa-land.

For the third year the same piece of Biringa-land is cleared for growing *Gudlu* or *Jali* (both are food crops). Just before sowing the seeds in the month of Asarh, (June-July) the weeds and bushes if any are cleared and are allowed to decompose. After the seeds are sown the field is ploughed and weeding is not done. Harvesting of these crops takes place in the month of Kartika (October-November) or *Margasir* (November-December). Then the patch is left fallow for ten to twelve years. Due to pressure of population the clearings are now a days brought under cultivation after five to six years. In that case, those could be cultivated only for a year or two not three years as would be possible in clearings left for ten years.

### **Agricultural Implements**

The principal agricultural implement of Bhuiyas is *langal* (plough) with an iron share (*luhafal*) and a long shaft (*isa*). At the time of ploughing, the shaft is tied with the yoke (*juali*). The *garduni* (hoe) is made of iron with a wooden handle at an end. The digging stick (*khanta*) consists of a long and flat iron blade fitted to one end of the wooden handle. They have also *kudi* (hoe), *mae* (leveler), *kudal* (mud leveler), *da* (sickle), *budia* (axe) for use in agricultural operations. For carrying the sheaves men use a *bihida* (carrying-pole) and for grain a *bhar* (another kind of carrying pole) and *sika* (sling).

### **WAGE SYSTEM**

The day labourer who works with contractor gets Rs. 1.25 for male and Rs. 1.00 for female. A farm labourer is given nearly two kilograms of paddy and a meal for a day's work. The labourer who works with his own plough gets a meal and two kilograms of paddy. Contract-labourer gets an advance free of interest. For his daily labour he gets at the usual rate of wage. He binds himself to his creditor till the full repayment of debt. Scope of wage earning is limited to a few construction works, forest operations, mining queries and cultivation assistance to some land owners.

### **LOCAL SALE AND PURCHASE**

The Bhuiyas depend on outside markets to fulfill their basic requirements like cloth, ornaments, earthen or metal utensils, iron implements, weapons, salt and tobacco. On the other hand they sell or barter some of their products such as oil seeds, pulses and several other forest products. In course of time due to contact with outsiders, their wants have increased. With the increase of money income, their buying and selling activities have increased in recent times. A short account of their sale and purchase is given here.

#### **Sale**

They sell or exchange a number of commodities either in the local weekly markets or at their villages to the petty traders who visit them. These commodities can be grouped into the following categories.

#### **(a) Agricultural and Horticultural Products**

They sell for cash or exchange mustard, niger, *biri*, *kolath* and *harad* etc. It is a practice with them to exchange mustard, *biri*, *kolath* and *harad* with rice, and niger with paddy. Sometimes, local traders belonging to oilman caste visit

their villages to sell tobacco, onion, *gurakhu*, (tobacco paste), dry fish etc., in exchange with oil seeds and pulses. During the lean months some Bhuiya families also bring advances in cash and kind from the Sahukars of the plains. Those are paid back in the shape of oil seeds or pulses. Government of Orissa have recently started a scheme in Keonjhar district to purchase oil seeds from the tribals at a reasonable rate. It is equally proposed to open fair price shops to supply their daily necessities. This is aimed at checking exploitation by traders and to improve the bargaining power of the tribals.

The other minor products under this category are *sula* (red gram), *maka* (maize), castor seeds, sweet potato, beans, *gangei*, *gudlu*, chilly, turmeric, arrowroot, ginger and vegetables. Very rarely they sell principal food crops like paddy, *kangu*, *suan*, *mandia* which they grow.

**(c) Forest Product**

They collect a number of forest products such as, timber, firewood, mango, jackfruit, gums, *lac*, honey, *tasar*, *mohua* flower and fruit, tamarind, tooth sticks, a number of edible wild fruits, roots and leaves, fibers and grass for rope. They generally carry these things to the market for sale.

**(d) Handicrafts**

Mats and broomsticks made of date palm leaves, other broomsticks made from wild grasses, bamboo baskets of various size and shape (only in Koira area) are manufactured and sold by them for cash and kind.

**(e) Domestic Animal**

They breed goat and sheep. These animals and occasionally the bullock, cow, fowl and eggs are sold in the markets by them.

**Purchase**

They purchase a number of articles for various purposes either in cash or in kind from the weekly markets or from the traders who visit their villages.

**(a) For Food and Drink**

As mentioned earlier, they usually exchange various produce for paddy and rice. Besides, they also purchase food grains paying cash which they earn for wage or by selling other commodities. They purchase salt, tobacco, chilly, onion, spices, dry fish, *mohua* liquor, vegetables, *gurakhu* (tobacco paste), molasses, etc. Whenever they visit the markets they purchase various kinds local confectionaries some of which are eaten and the rest carried for children such as

*gulgula, kunda pitha, bara, enduri, ladu*, etc. brought by the Gudia caste for sale. Parched rice, flat rice, *ukhuda*, etc. are also purchased by them from the Keuta sellers. They also by fried groundnut, boiled sugar potato, boiled or fried red gram, cooked *mahua* flower.

**(b) Occupational Requirements**

All the agricultural implements and weapons are purchased from the village blacksmiths or from the local markets. Seeds and cattle for cultivation are purchased from the neighbours or from the markets.

**(c) Dress, Ornaments and other Articles for bodily Adornment**

All varieties of dress and ornaments which are used by them are purchased mostly from the market. Cosmetics are becoming popular. Cheap looking-glasses, combs, ribbons, hair oil, soap, ready-made garments are also purchased.

**(d) Household Articles**

Varieties of domestic utensils are purchased from the market. The earthenware vessels used in cooking and storing water are also purchased from the potters. For carrying and storing grains they require baskets of various sizes and shapes. The Bhuiyas of Keonjhar who do not make those purchase from the Dom. Other domestic articles such as trunk, bamboo-box, Kerosene lamp, Lantern and umbrella etc., are bought from the local markets or from annual fairs.

## CONCLUSION

Foregoing description of their economic activities will give an insight into the economic condition of the Pauri Bhuiyas. They still cling to the age-old practice of shifting cultivation while they have also developed liking for settled cultivation which requires less labour and care. But yields from cultivation are not adequate to sustain them throughout the whole year. Thus they have to supplement their dietary requirements by consuming locally available fruits, roots, shoots and wild vegetables. Wage earning whenever there is scope and selling of some items of forest products are also alternative sources of income.

It is thus now high time on the part of the personnel engaged in the upliftment of the tribals to make them settled agriculturalists in the true sense of the term, by providing land and capital at the first instance.

# SWIDDEN CULTIVATION: THE PAURI BHUYAN WAY <sup>1</sup>

B. Chowdhury <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction:

Orissa is a unique State in the country for having rich natural resources and cultural heritage represented in architectural and sculptural styles in temples, spectacular handicrafts like filigree works, appliqués and stone carvings, typical textiles and handlooms and distinctive performing arts like Odissi and Chhou dances. Besides it is also a fascinating State for having 62 varieties of colourful and typical tribal communities not found elsewhere in the country. The tribal communities with a population of 84.3 million constitute 8.20 per cent of country's total tribal population and 22.13 per cent of the total population of the State in 2001. Their concentration is mainly in southern and northern districts of the state. They show wide variation in their economic pursuits which are greatly influenced by ecological characteristics of their habitat and own traditions. Basing on their traditional economy the tribes of Orissa may be grouped under (a) hunters and food gatherers, (b) cattle herders, (c) artisans, (d) shifting cultivators, (e) settled agriculturists and (f) mining and industrial workers. Tribal economy still revolves round agriculture in some form or other and as the mainstay of the people as about 90 per cent of them has returned as cultivators and agricultural labourers in the Census reports.

Tribal economy vis-à-vis tribal agriculture has been under the influence of several internal and external forces during last 50 years or so as a result it has changed to a large extent. Based on this, the bulk of tribal farmers can be grouped as (a) fully dependant on swidden or shifting cultivation (b) partly dependant on shifting cultivation and partly on settled cultivation, (c) fully

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, No.1&2, 2007, pp.48-58

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Director (retd.), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

dependant on settled cultivation by totally abandoning shifting cultivation and (d) progressive cultivators who have opted modern and scientific techniques. However, tribal cultivators still retained some agricultural features like terraced cultivation, horticulture, mixed cropping, rotation of crops, production of typical crops etc. for which they are famous since long. The salient features of the present day tribal agriculture are briefly presented here.

Traditional agriculture among the tribes in general is characterised by simple technology, simple division of labour, small units of production with very little capital investment and primarily meeting consumption needs of the small social units, like family, lineage group etc. Crops were exposed to the risk of frost, draught, insects, pest and wild animals. Working knowledge was common to adult members learnt by experience. Agriculture was totally dependant upon the family labour. It is a cooperative group based on sexual division of labour.

Shifting cultivation, an archaic mode of agriculture, commonly known as 'Podu' in Orissa and 'Jhum' in North-Eastern India is traditionally practised by many tribes namely, the Bonda, Koya, Paroja, Gadaba, Dongria Kandha, Kutia Kandha and the Saora in southern Orissa, the Juang and Pauri Bhuyan in the northern Orissa. As estimated by a Government source in 1948, the area affected by shifting cultivation was 12,000 sq. miles and population involved was about 10 lakhs. Shifting cultivation is named differently by different tribal groups viz, *Koman*, *Biringa* or *Toila* among the Pauri Bhuyan and the Juang, *Bagad* or *Barun* among the Saora, *Livang* or *Kunda chas* among the Bonda, *Haru* among the Dongria Kandha and *Podu* among the Gadaba, Paroja and Kandha tribe. It is undertaken in forest areas, hill tops and slopes covered with forest.

The salient features of shifting cultivation in brief are (a) selection of patches, (b) making clearings by cutting non-fruit trees, trimming fruit trees, clearing shrubs and vines, (c) burning the felled vegetative materials after dried up, (d) spreading of ashes all over the patch (e) tilling the soil with hoe or mattock or ploughing with bullock driven plough as among the Pauri Bhuiya before or after, (f) broadcasting, (g) arduous work of de-bushing and weeding, (h) risky job of guarding the standing crops, (i) harvesting, (j) threshing and finally (k) bringing home the crops. The process starts in May and ends in January. A specific patch is generally cultivated for 2 to 3 years or till good production of crops is seen and left fallow for a period of 7 to 8 years to recoup.

Shifting cultivation is subsistence oriented and hence a number of seeds mixed together sown to meet their consumption needs. Common crops grown

consist of rice (only in northern Orissa), minor millets, pulses, oil seeds, creeper vegetables, spices, like ginger, turmeric and chilly. These crops which ripen one after another are harvested in small quantity to meet their daily consumption requirement till these are finally harvested, threshed and brought home.

In the past, when tribal areas had not been covered by land survey and settlement operations, the land and forests belonged to the tribals. At that time, there were two traditional systems of land tenure in the tribal areas. In northern Orissa, the Juang and the Pauri Bhuyan had community ownership and land for shifting cultivation was distributed among families by the village leaders in a corporate manner. In southern Orissa, area under shifting cultivation was individually owned by the families and inherited by the younger generation.

The practice of shifting cultivation has mythical foundation. There are myths current among some tribes that the creator of the tribe had advised them to adopt the practice for their survival. There are also rituals associated with the practice of shifting cultivation and are performed with the help of tribal priest. The village secular leaders play a dominant role in ensuring smooth distribution of patches and completing the operation with mutual cooperation and help among all families. Use of simple implements and short duration traditional crops grown under rain fed condition require low investment. Labour is provided by the family members and engagement of outside labour is done not by payment of wages but by providing food and drink. Even in drought situation the short duration crops give a stable yield.

Realising the adverse effects of the practice of shifting /swidden cultivation and specially the low yield rate and knowing about the advantages of terraced cultivation, tribals in certain areas have become conscious. By their own efforts and without taking any external help, they have started land terracing in hill slopes, especially in south Orissa. Terracing is, no doubt, labour intensive, painstaking and requires hard work, but after it is done it becomes rewarding because the yield rate is comparatively high.

While undertaking different phases of shifting cultivation, they avail the opportunity to carry on hunting and collection of different varieties of edibles, fuel wood and materials used in house construction with ease. Though yield is low, they are satisfied with the production of several cereals which are available when there is food scarcity during the period from September to December.

It is observed in tribal areas that farmers are becoming conscious of the adverse effects of chemical fertilisers and pesticides which are costly, destroyer of

bio-diversity and killer of micro organisms in the soil rendering it infertile after continuous use. In lieu thereof, they are pleading for bio-farming or organic farming, use of bio-fertilisers and indigenous pesticides etc in order to develop sustainable farming. It is really a boon for the tribal area.

The tribals who have stopped practising shifting cultivation fully or partly, have adopted settled cultivation in whatever land is available with them. During the last 50 years or so the Government have been allotting land with inputs to take up settled cultivation. But the new practice lacks in many respects to get adequate return. The size of operational holding is generally small and poor in quality. These people lack modern agricultural outlook, continue to follow the past practices in the use of implements and other methods learnt by experience.

### **Orissa Situation:**

Shifting cultivation has become a problem of great concern for a wide section of people that include administrators, planners, academicians and the public at large. This practice is viewed as one of the major factors responsible for progressive loss of forest coverage and degradation of land causing ecological imbalances. Earlier efforts to control it did not succeed to the extent desired. The practice is still continued in several countries including India, causing anxiety to the Government and the public. In some parts of our country, where this system has been stopped due to either non-availability of swiddens or Government restrictions, the swiddeners are passing through a crucial period. The Government at the State and the National levels and the international body like UNESCO also called upon to carry on research on shifting cultivation for evolving a suitable strategy to tackle the problem. Studies on swiddeners of various regions have called upon to view shifting cultivation from the twin perspective of culture and environment, to recognise it as a 'way of life' and not a 'necessary evil'. Strategy to control it by eliminating its harmful effects is also worked out. Some researchers have observed that the problem of shifting cultivation in all areas / communities may not be the same but have their peculiarities. Thus, whenever efforts are made to tackle it in any specific area/ community, proper study on various aspects needs be conducted.

Orissa is one of the major States in India where shifting cultivation is still undertaken extensively as an age-old practice by many tribes/sub-tribes, like the Juang, the Pauri Bhuyan, the Lanjia Saora, the Kutia Kandha, the Dongria Kandha, the Didayi, the Paroja, the Gadaba and the Koya spread over nine out of 13 old districts. According to some estimates an area around 30 lakh hectares or so in Orissa is subjected to shifting cultivation and roughly around 5 to 6



lakhs population are involved in it. However, not much systematic study on this system has been conducted to examine the detail, the rhythm and pattern of shifting cultivation and its influence on various aspects of the life of the people. In the present micro-study, we have made a humble attempt to find out its historical and socio-cultural ramifications among the Pauri Bhuyan of Keonjhar district. In specific terms, we have attempted to seek answers to questions: whether shifting cultivation among the Pauri Bhuyan is (a) an organic response to the geophysical conditions of the area, (b) a practice resulting out of historical reasons, (c) a mechanism for integrating different aspects of the economy and society, (d) conducive for the people having simple technology and (e) pivotal to other economic activities. It thus, seeks to outline the extent of interdependence between the shifting cultivation and different aspects of the habitat, economy and society of which it is a part.

### **The Pauri Bhuyan:**

The Pauri Bhuyan constitute the primitive section of the Bhuyan enlisted as one of the Scheduled Tribes in Orissa State alone. The name Bhuyan and its other variants, such as, Bhuiyan, Bhuinya, Bhuiyar, Bhuihar, etc. are mostly derived from the Sanskrit word "*Bhumi*" meaning "*Land*" and therefore the Bhuyan hold the view that they were born out of the 'Mother Earth' and became '*Bhumiputra*' (sons of the soil). Several mythical stories current among them and in the neighbouring Juang tribe indicate that they are the original inhabitants of the present habitat, and highlight how they along with the Juang and some other communities were children of a common ancestor. The total population of the Bhuyan in Orissa was 2,77,420 in 2001. They are found in almost all undivided districts with larger concentration in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Sambalpur and Mahyurbhanj. The percentage of literacy of the population stood at 50.88 in 2001 with males and females registering 66.18 per cent and 35.68 per cent respectively.

The tribe has now several distinctive endogamous sections. These are Pauri Bhuyan, Rajkuli Bhuyan, Rautali Bhuyan and Khandait Bhuyan etc. Among them the Pauri Bhuyan, also known as Desi Bhuyan, Paburi Bhuyan and Hill Bhuyan are still regarded as the true representative of the Bhuyan tribe. The Pauri Bhuyan speak Oriya with local accent as their mother-tongue showing racial and cultural affinities with the Kolarian stock.

Adjoining Banspal and Telkoi development blocks of Keonjhar district, Koida and Lahunipada blocks of Sundargarh district, Barkot block of old Sambalpur district and Pal Lahara block of old Dhenkanal district constitute the

habitat of the Pauri Bhuyan. The area is full of wild lofty hill ranges and dense forests forming part of the watershed of the river Baitarani and the Brahmani. There are extensive table lands on the mountain summits containing loose stones fit for pasturage and tillage. In between the hill ranges there are valleys with a number of hill streams. The area receives medium rainfall and has medium temperature which is suitable for vegetative growth. Thus, topography, soil type and climatic conditions of the habitat are favourable to shifting cultivation, practised by the Pauri Bhuyan from time immemorial.

The Pauri Bhuyan of Keonjhar in particular are well known for their association with the local royal family. They are also equally known for their rebellion against the rulers on two occasions, first in 1868 because of installation of one Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanj as king, and in 1891 against the *bethi* system (labour without wage) in the construction of an earthen-dam for water supply to Keonjhar town. The Pauri Bhuyan is an endogamous group and their social organization is characterised by extended lineages, minor lineages, nuclear family and territorial units and absence of totemistic clans, phartries and moieties. The extended lineage is termed as *khilli* in imitation of their Mundri neighbours. All members of a *khilli* consider themselves as brothers and sisters and there by marriage among them are not allowed. Matrimonial alliance is also not allowed with some other *khillis* which are regarded as *kutumba khillis*. Those with which marriage is allowed are called *bandhu khillis*. Previously when villages were uni-*khilli*, principles of village exogamy were being followed. The villages with which matrimonial alliance can be established are known as *bandhu* villages and those with which it is not allowed are called *kutumba* villages. The *khilli* is further sub-divided into a number of minor lineage called *kutumba*.

Nuclear type of family consisting of the husband, the wife with their unmarried children is very common. Soon after marriage, a son has to live separately in a house constructed by himself and his wife. Ancestral properties, after the death of the father, are equally distributed among all sons with the eldest son getting a little more.

Most Pauri Bhuyan villages are still unilineal in composition. Collective outlook, co-operative attitude and cohesiveness of the villagers are exhibited on many occasions like observances of community rites, rituals, economic pursuits like shifting cultivation, forest collection, hunting, fishing, intra-village activities, marriage and death rites of an individual etc. The village is a quasi-political unit. The traditional secular headman called Pradhan (also Naek), the village priest called Dehuri and the Gram Panchayat ward member shoulder the responsibilities

of maintaining harmony and peace in the village. They also lead the traditional council of village elders in handling all socio-economic matters of the village.

### **The Pauri Bhuyan as Swiddeners:**

The Pauri Bhuyan have adopted shifting Cultivation as their principal mode of livelihood since time immemorial, but there has been changes in their economic activities in some localities where shifting cultivation as replaced by some new economic activity consequent to dwindling supply of swiddens, governmental restrictions and developmental efforts. In some other pockets shifting cultivation still continues to be the dominant source of livelihood for the majority. In such cases it is usually supplemented by collection of forest produce, hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, settled cultivation, wage-earning and household industries. These economic pursuits revolve round the principal activity - the cycle of shifting cultivation.

The present study is based primarily on data collected from two villages selected for the purpose. Of these, Sankarai is predominantly a Pauri Bhuyan village where all the 98 Pauri Bhuyan households carry on shifting cultivation. The other village, Bayakumutia, has a mixed population. Only 5 out of the 62 Pauri Bhuyan households in the latter carry on shifting cultivation. In the former, located in a less accessible area, all other economic pursuits revolve round shifting cultivation for which swidden patches are still available. In the latter which is a roadside village, loss of forest coverage, infiltration of outsiders and restrictions imposed by Government by declaring some areas as reserved forests and some covered with Government sponsored plantation. Majority of the households here have some plain or wet land and have taken resort to other economic pursuits and have stopped shifting cultivation. In addition to these two villages, under the jurisdiction of Banspal development Block, data from the neighbouring villages and from official and non-official organizations were also collected.

Shifting Cultivation has been occupying a distinctive place in the socio-economic life of the Pauri Bhuyan since time immemorial. They use the term 'Toila Chas' for shifting cultivation. It is also commonly referred to as Kamani meaning 'productive work'. The community claim to be autochthons and as the "owners of the soil". The belief is reflected in their folk tales and legends and even in the official documents of the pre-independent era. A village as a whole was the owner of the area demarcated for its use. The right was recognized by the neighbouring Pauri Bhuyan villages. Although homestead land, plain and wet land are now privately owned in those villages where land survey and settlement operations are conducted, the land under shifting cultivation in particular are

still communally owned by the village community, and any trespass by outsiders is not tolerated. Ownership of swidden is still vested with the village community and individual /household has only usufructuary rights. Change of the village site within the traditionally defined boundary, a frequent phenomenon under shifting cultivation, no more takes place except in some exceptional cases.

Swiddens are cultivated normally for a period of two to four consecutive years depending upon productivity. Thus, a Pauri household normally cultivates each year three patches allotted to it for three consecutive years. Each patch is known differentially according to the year of cultivation. Clearings under the first, second and third year are known as 'Biringa', 'Koman' and 'Nala' respectively. A patch after cultivation is left fallow for a period of 5 to 8 years for recuperation.

Selection of swidden is based on group deliberation and discussion under the leadership of the village head and other functionaries. Distribution of plots is done in the presence of members representing all willing households. Quarrel or conflict normally does not occur at the time of distribution of patches. The village functionaries, like the *Pradhan*, the *Dehuri* and the Panchayat ward member enjoy preference and the destitute, like a widow or widower are favoured with special considerations in the allotment of the patches. The size of the patches largely depends on the need and manpower of the household, and occasionally on the availability of the forest patches. The village council and the unmarried youths of both sexes are also separately allotted with patches to raise crops for a public fund. The celebration of the *Magh Podoi Parab* in the month of *Magh* (January-February) makes the beginning of the new agricultural session and the distribution of patches. A swiddening household normally cultivates three patches in a year. The total area of such patches taken together per household on an average was 2 areas in the village Sankarai and one acre in Bayakumutia in the year 1990-91.

The work cycle in different patches show slight variation. The heavy and arduous jobs like tree felling and bush cutting mark the beginning of the work cycle in a fresh patch. This is followed by piling of felled material and then firing. In the second year swidden, cutting of foliage and weeding followed by firing are mostly done by women. A third year patch does not have enough growth of weeds and foliage for cutting. Thereafter sowing, ploughing, hoeing and foliage cutting are undertaken in the same manner in all patches. Weeding, watching and harvesting crops are done simultaneously in all patches.

Shifting cultivation among the Pauri Bhyan is motivated by orthogenetic myths and divine sanction. It is believed that the creator Himself directed the

first progenitors of the community to eke out a living by undertaking shifting cultivation. It is also linked with cultural values and religious beliefs and practices. The Pauri Bhuyan consider land as mother Goddess (*Basuki*). Paddy, regarded as a sacred object, is used in all rituals. It also constitutes the staple food. The community believes in a number of Supernatural Powers presiding over the land and forest. In consonance with such a belief system, a series of rituals and observances of taboos form an essential component of the process of shifting cultivation. Before a major operation is initiated, a ritual for seeking blessings and protection of the Supernatural Powers is performed by the traditional village priest. After the *Magh Podoi Parab*, in the month of January-February, fresh patches are distributed among all households for making clearings and firing of felled materials with the new fire rekindled on this occasion by the village priest. Ceremonial hunting, in the month of April- May, gives an indication of good or bad harvest in the coming season. The *Tirtia Muti*, is observed in April-May by individual households to perform ceremonial sowing of paddy seeds, the Asarhi ritual in the month of June- July for good rain and the *Nua Khia* or first eating of new rice in the month of September-October are observed.

Shifting Cultivation is primarily a labour intensive pursuit with very little specialization and all able-bodied members irrespective of age and gender are free to participate. However, some traditional norms regulate the distribution of different items of work. Adult male members can also participate in the deliberation of the village elders in the selection and distribution of swidden, cutting of big trees, sowing and ploughing and climbing of trees (to collect fruits). These are tabooed to female workers of all age groups. Some items of work like firing the felled material, watching the standing crops in the swidden in the night, fashioning and repairing of wooden implements, making straw bundles for storing food grains are exclusively done by male members, although there is no bar for a female member to undertake these jobs. Adult females undertake such items of work which require endurance. These consist of bush cutting, gathering of felled materials and firing, foliage cutting, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, threshing and winnowing. There is no restriction for males, however, to undertake these items of work. Children and adolescents assist their parents in such items of work specified on the basis of gender. Shifting cultivation, thus, requires participation of both males and females. A household having no male or female working hand finds it difficult to undertake shifting cultivation without help beyond the household. Selling of labour in the swidden of another household is considered a disgrace. Thus extraneous labour for a genuinely needy household comes spontaneously from the cooperating kinsmen in and outside

the village as a social obligation or on a reciprocal basis. Collective labour by the villagers or the village youths is also available with nominal or without payment of wage. According to the calculation made at the time of the study it is seen that 109 man days are devoted for cultivation of one acre of fresh clearing. In case of the second and the third year patches, the number of man days required goes down to 67 and 26 respectively.

The Pauri Bhuyan follow a definite cropping pattern which is the same as adopted by their forefathers in the swidden cultivation. They follow rotation of crops in the swidden under first, second and third year of cultivation. Diverse crops are grown from the patches under first and second year of cultivation using different portions for sowing different crops excluding the leguminous crops which are grown here and there under the leafless dried trees. Crops, like *jowar* or *arhar* are sown on the boarder which helps to protect the main crop of black gram in the first year patch and similarly *niger* is sown on the border to protect the main crop of rice in the second year patch.

The crops grown in the swidden include at least eight varieties of cereals including rice (their staple food), and Ragi, Kangu, Kathia, Jowar, Jali, Maize and Suan, three varieties of pulses (*arhar*, *kulthi* and black gram), Niger (a kind of oil seed), about eight varieties of vegetables consisting mostly of creeper variety occasionally, chilly, turmeric and several varieties of edible green leaves. The main motive behind this diversity of crops grown in the swidden, as in the case of subsistence cultivators, is to meet the basic requirement of food at the first instance at different times of the agricultural session. Different varieties of cereals, vegetables and edible green leaves become ready for harvest starting from the month of *Bhudh* (August-September) to the month of *Magasira* (December-January).

Shifting Cultivation is economically more viable to the Pauri Bhuyan, because of low capital investment for seeds, manures, implements and techniques employed in production. Apart from land and labour which are cheap, they use traditional seeds preserved at the time of harvest or obtain it from their neighbours on exchange. These fields are not manured excepting spreading of ashes obtained from firing of felled vegetative materials. Implements used are very simple. The most distinctive practice found among them is the use of draught animals like cows and bullocks for ploughing the swidden. Techniques of cultivation are acquired through active participation since early age.

A rough estimate of average yield of different crops from an acre of swidden under each year of cultivation was attempted during the study. It revealed that the average yield of all important crops came to 102 kilograms

which is currently (1990-91) priced at Rs.368.00. From the second year patch the total yield was 154 kilograms, the market value of which was Rs. 339.00. In addition to these important crops, they had obtained different varieties of vegetables in the first and second year patch. The average yield of the lone crop of *jali* (minor millet) grown in the third year patch was only 42 kilograms worth Rs.84.00 only. Swidden cultivation not only provides the crops overtly grown but also brought in a number of other items of essential use without involving extra labour. Collection of items such as, fuel wood, faggot, timber, fodder, thatching grass, fibre and edible green leaves, fruits, shoots, tubers etc. went on simultaneously with shifting cultivation. Further, a variety of food crops ripen one after another within a period of 5 to 6 months helped them to meet the instant food requirements to a large extent. Thus considering from the utilitarian point of view, shifting cultivation is not uneconomical to these people.

Shifting cultivation is not a lone and exclusive economic pursuit but is the nucleus of an occupational complex around which such other economic activities, as the plain land cultivation, forestry, hunting, fishing, livestock rearing and wage-earning revolve.

Shifting cultivation not only provide employment to all able-bodied persons irrespective of age and gender but also continues to be the main source of livelihood for those who do not have permanent land. It does not run the risk of total crop failure either due to excessive rain or drought as crops ripen one after another at different period spread over about 5 to 6 months.

Family is the most effective production unit as far as shifting cultivation is concerned. All members in a family participate ungrudgingly and to acquire the skill. Shifting cultivation is a collective, more or less, a sort of cooperative production system in which members of various social units starting from family, mini-lineage group, kin group to village have to participate individually and collectively and cooperate with each other at various operational stages.

In shifting cultivation, the entire village acts as a single production unit. All decisions relating to this pursuit are taken in the meetings of the village elders presided over by the village functionaries, like the Pradhan, Dehuri and Ward Member. The village Darbar, an open space in front of the defunct bachelor's dormitory is the place where almost all formal and informal village meetings and all community celebrations are held.

The role of the village leaders is still considered essential and inseparable from the process of shifting cultivation. As mentioned above the traditional

secular headman and the ward members of the statutory Gram Panchayat in collaboration with the traditional village priest and with the approval of village elders take decisions associated with the practice of shifting cultivation. Those who do not act in accordance with the decisions and those who violate the taboo and do not honour traditional values and norms linked with shifting cultivation are not tolerated. The village priest, being the spiritual and the ritual head of the village, is the chief functionary to fix the dates of celebration of communal rituals which precede various major operations of shifting cultivation and also officiates in the rituals on behalf of the villagers. He is the ritual specialist to initiate tree felling, firing, sowing and harvesting in the swidden.

Thus, shifting cultivation is integrated and inter-twined with the political, religious and social system and is more a social activity than an economic pursuit. It ensures unity, collective outlook and cohesiveness of various units of social organisations, like the family, the *kutumba* and the village. The institutions, like the associations of the unmarried youths and the village political organization exhibit in their behaviour, loyalty and emotional attachment among the members at the time of actual operations.

In short the socio-economic implications of swidden / shifting cultivation have shown that:

1. The process among the Pauri Bhuyan is motivated by divine sanctions and was adopted as the means of survival from time immemorial;
2. It is a spontaneous adaptation to the topography and climatic conditions of the habitat;
3. It continues till today in less accessible pockets;
4. A clearing is used only for 2-3 years;
5. At present the recuperation period is reduced to 7 to 8 years instead of 12 to 15 years as in the past;
6. Clearing of swiddens consists of felling, cutting, slashing and burning the dried vegetative debris;
7. Farming operations from tree felling to harvesting is initiated by the village priest after performing necessary rituals;
8. Ownership of *jhum* land is vested in the village and the individual / household has only usufructuary rights;



9. The selection of the area and distribution of patches among households follow group deliberations and decisions taken in the meetings of the village elders under the village headman;
10. The allotment is proportional to the need and manpower available to the allottee;
11. In the allotment, the secular headman, the ward member, the village priest and destitutes receive priority;
12. It is a nucleus of an occupational complex around which other economic pursuits such as settled cultivation, forest collection, hunting, fishing, animal husbandry and wage-earning revolve;
13. It is a collective production system with the village at the apex and the household at the bottom;
14. It is continued as main source of livelihood for those who do not have permanent land;
15. It is carried upon the use of traditional skills and techniques;
16. It is a hard, arduous and risky job and not the occupation of the lazy and the lethargic;
17. Implements are simple, i.e., bullock drawn ploughs and hand tools;
18. It is organized with very little investment in seeds, implements and manure;
19. It is primarily labour intensive with very little specialization but based on division of labour;
20. It is free from the employment of paid labour;
21. It is accomplished by household labour complemented or supplemented by mutual help between participating households;
22. Different cropping pattern is pursued on in the same patch in different years of cultivation;
23. A variety of crops are simultaneously raised in different parts of the same patch under first and second year of cultivation;
24. Certain short-duration crops, like minor millets, maize and paddy are grown primarily for subsistence;
25. A few specialised crops like Niger, black gram, *arhar*, etc., are grown for exchanges / barter;

26. It facilitates the collection of a number of other items, like fodder, fuel, edible leaves, fruits and shoots, timber, thatching grass, fibre, etc., simultaneously;
27. Edibles collected from and around swidden and food crops grown in swidden help to maintain a balanced diet;
28. The cultivators do not consider it uneconomical as they obtain several other useful items in addition to the cultivated crops;
29. The yield per acre/ unit comparatively less than that from the wet land and plain land cultivation;
30. It is neither profit oriented nor for the accumulation of assets and wealth;
31. It does not run the risk of total crop failure either due to drought or excessive rain as crops ripen one after another at different times within 05 to 06 months;
32. It provides consumable food crops acceptable to the black-smith, the basket-maker, the oilman, the milkman and the potter in exchange of their merchandise;
33. It is functionally linked with the socio-cultural systems of which it is a part and
34. It is still a way of life with a number of inherent advantages in the context of its practices.

The swidden / shifting cultivation continues to be a problem of great concern all over the world in general and Tribal India in particular. On the other hand, the problem of shifting cultivators may vary from community to community. Even in the same community, there may be variation from area to area, and as such all cannot be dealt with a common set of programmes. Thus, before preparing any restorative and ameliorative programme for the swidden cultivators, the micro situations should carefully be studied and properly understood. Implementation of any programme should go hand in hand with follow-up action, so that the achievement of the desired goal is fairly achieved.

**Bibliography**

- Ahmed, M. 1965 Census of India, 1961, Orissa, *District Census Handbook, Keonjhar District*, Cuttack
- Bose, S. & S. Ghatak 1985 *Shifting Cultivation in India* in K.S. Singh ed, 'Economics of Tribes and their Transformation' New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company
- Chaturvedi, M.D & B.N. Pal, 1953 *A Study of Shifting Cultivation in Assam*
- Chowdhury, B. 1966-67 Forest Economy of Hill Bhuiyan. *Adibasi*, Vol. VIII, No I, TRB, Bhubaneswar.
- Chowdhury, B. 1967-68 Economic Activities of Pauri Bhuyan, *Adibasi* Vol. IX, No.3, TRB, Bhubaneswar
- Dalton, E.T. 1960 *The Bhuiyas* in 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal', (Reprint) Calcutta, rpt. (published in 1872).
- Dhebar, U.N. 1961 *Report on Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission*, Government of India, New Delhi
- Elwin, V. 1948 Notes on Juang, *Man in India*, Vol. XXVIII, Ranchi.
- Mahapatra, K & K.B. Debi, 1972-73 Shifting Cultivation in Orissa, *Adibasi*, Vol. XIV, No.4, TRB, Bhubaneswar.
- Misra, K.K. 1987-88 Shifting Cultivation in Orissa – A Rethinking. *Man in Society*. Bulletin, Dept of Anthropology, Utkal Univ.
- Mooney, H.F. 1951 *Shifting Cultivation in Orissa*.
- Patnaik, N. 1977-78 Economic life and food gap in Tamera- A Bhuiyan Village in Keonjhar district, *Adibasi* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1-4.
- Patnaik, N. 1982 *Shifting Cultivation in Orissa*. T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar, Unpublished Report.
- B. Chowdhury, P.S. DasPatnaik, & B.B. Mohnty,
- Roy, Sarat Chandra 1953 *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa*. (With comparative notes on Plain Bhuiyas), Man in India Office, Ranchi.
- Sachchidananda 1989 *Shifting Cultivation in India*. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
- Tripathi, D.P. 1960 *Shifting Cultivation in Orissa. Its causes and effects*. Bhubaneswar, Orissa

## LANJIA SAORA : A SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE <sup>1</sup>

S.C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

The “Saora” or “Savara” is a great ancient tribe of India as well as one of the oldest known tribes of Orissa. They are not only numerically large but also a historically and culturally significant tribal community of the State. They have been mentioned quite frequently in Hindu mythology and ancient classics, epics, *purans* and various other scriptures. Especially in Orissa, they have been very intimately associated with the cult of Lord Jagannath, who according to a legendary tradition originated as a tribal deity and was later brought to Puri under royal patronage.

According to Singh, “The History of the Saora from the earliest times has been narrated by many writers, notably Thurston, Bell, and Elwin. The name of the tribe has been known for about two thousand years. Pliny makes mention of Suri and Ptolemy of Sabari. Ptolemy particularized his description by saying that the tribe dwelt in the south west region of the Gangetic delta and at a short distance from the sea coast, making identification of the tribe with the Saora of Orissa possible. The name of the Saora also occurs both in the Mahabharata and the Katha- Sarit Sagar.” (1984: 1)

The tribe is called by various names such as Saura, Sabara, Sahar, Saur, Sora, etc and has their racial affinity with the proto-Australoid stock, which is dominant among the aborigines of Central and Southern India. They are widely found all over the Central India comprising the States of Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. They speak an ancient Mundari dialect of their own called ‘Sora’.

The nomenclature ‘Saora’ appears to have two connotations one derived from the ‘sagories’, the Scythian word for axe and the other from ‘Saba Roye’, the Sanskrit term for carrying a dead body. Both of them fit well with their habit

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Tribal Customs and Traditions, Vol. I, SCSTRTI, 2009, pp.179-188

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

of carrying an axe always on their shoulders with their primitive occupation of hunting and living on spoils of hunting.

Numerically, the Saora constitute one of the major Scheduled Tribes of Orissa found in almost all the districts. But their main concentration lies in a contiguous mountainous territory forming a major part of the agency tracts of the Eastern Ghats in Rayagada and Gajapati districts in Southern Orissa, which can be called, the "Saora Country". Their population in the state as recorded in successive Census enumerations from 1951 to 2001 is given below.

1951	-	1,91,401
1961	-	3,11,614
1971	-	3,42,757
1981	-	3,70,060
1991	-	4,03,510
2001		4,73,233

The census data show that the population of the tribe has been growing over period of time. Their population growth rate during the period 1961-71 was 10 percent; during 1971-81, 8 percent and between 1981 to 1991, 9.04 percent and between 1991 to 2001, 17.28 percent. Their sex ratio was 1030 in 1981, 1015 in 1991 and 1007 in 2001 showing numerical superiority of their women over men.

They were educationally backward. Their percentage of literacy as recorded in 1961 census was only 7.80 per cent. Over period of time it has successively improved to 10.20 per cent, 14.47 per cent, 25.58 per cent and 41.10 percent in 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 Censuses respectively. Their level of literacy as recorded in 2001 is higher than that (37.40 percent) of all STs.

The Saora society is divided into as many as 25 subdivisions such as Kapu, Jati, Sudho, Jada, Jara, Arsi, Duara or Muli, Kindal, Kumbi, Basu, Lanjia, etc. It is based on occupation, food habit, social status, customs and traditions. According to Thurston's (1909) classification, the Saora are divided into two broad classes, that is, the hill Saora and the low country Saora. Under the hill Saora category the following sub-divisions are included.

1. *Savara, Jati Savara* – they regard themselves as superior and eat the flesh of buffalo but not cow.
2. *Arsi, Arisi, and Lambo Lanjia* – their occupation is weaving coarse clothes as well as agriculture.

3. *Luara* or *Muli* – this section makes arrow heads and other iron articles.
4. *Kindal* – they make baskets for keeping grains.
5. *Jadu* – said to be a name among the Saora for the hill country beyond Kalakote and Puttasingi.
6. *Kumbi* – are potters who make earthen pots used for cooking or for hanging up in houses as fetishes of ancestral spirits or certain deities.

The Low Country Saora is divided into two groups:

1. *Kapu* – (denoting cultivator) or *Pallapu*.
2. *Sudho* – (good/ pure).

It has been further noted by Thurston that, the pure Saora tribes have restricted themselves to the hill and jungle tracts and valleys. But as the plains approach traces of amalgamation become apparent, resulting in a hybrid race, whose appearance and manners resemble those of the ordinary plains people. The Kapu Saoras are said to retain many of the Saora customs, whereas the Sudho Saoras have adopted the language and customs of the Oriya castes.

The “Lanjia Saora” who are called the “Hill –Saora” by some noted ethnographers like Verrier Elwin, constitute an archaic section of the tribe. They inhabit the enchanting and mountainous “Saora Country” in Southern Orissa. They are famous for their expertise in terrace cultivation, shifting cultivation, elaborately religious lifestyle, artistic skills for producing beautiful wall paintings, pictograms popularly known as icons and their peculiar traditional male dress-style in which the ends of the loin cloth hangs like a tail at the back. Therefore their neighbours call them “Lambo Lanjia” meaning, “having a tail”.

As stated above, the **Lanjia Saora** represent a primitive section of the Saora tribe inhabiting a contiguous mountainous territory stretched across Gunupur Sub-Division of Rayagada and Parlakhemundi Sub-division of Gajapati districts of Southern Orissa where the bulk of their population is concentrated. This picturesque territory with its undulating terrain, rolling hills, terraced paddy fields, perennial hill streams and patches of lush green forests lies at an average elevation of 2000’ above the sea level. It forms a natural geographic unit, comprising fertile valleys of the Vamsadhara and its tributaries between the mountain ranges of the Eastern Ghats.

The climatic condition of the region is more like that of the Deccan plateau. Because of its elevation, the area experiences a mild and moderate climate, with a short and mild summer, moderate monsoon and a long winter.

The hot summer lasts from March to May and chilly winter reigns from October to February. June to October is the time for monsoon. Seventy-nine percent of the rainfall occurs during the monsoon, i.e. June-October. The months of July and August are the rainiest months. The average annual rainfall over this hill tract is 67.05". The spatial distribution of rainfall in this area is largely influenced by the Eastern Ghats.

In the absence of separate census enumeration for the Lanjia section, their exact population is not known. However, their population in the areas covered by two Micro Projects viz, LSDA, Puttasing and LSDA, Serango is 9661 as per the survey conducted by SCSTRTI during 2001-02. By 2007 this has increased to 11215 (5597 males and 5618 females) showing numerical dominance of women over men according to another socio-economic survey conducted by SCSTRTI in collaboration of the concerned Micro Projects during 2007 for preparation of Conservation-Cum- Development Plan for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) for the 11th Five-Year Plan. Similarly their level of literacy has gone up from 27.23 percent in 2001-02 to 32.22 percent in 2007.

The Lanjia Saora by their appearance resemble the other pre-Dravidian tribes. They have long heads, flat noses with expanded alae. There is a depression at the root of the nose. Facial prognathism is marked. The hair is wavy and curly but individuals with straight hair are also found. The skin colour is brown to dark brown. There is a speciality about the dress of a Saora man, which consists of loincloth about six feet long and about ten inches in breadth. This is tied around the hips, which hang down in two strips, the one in the rear being longer. The traditional dress of Saora woman is a waistcloth with gray borders, which hardly reaches the knees. The skirt is above three feet in length and about two feet in breadth. In winter or cold weather she covers her upper part of the body with another piece of cloth tied at the back with a knot.

The Saora women are not fond of adorning with bundles of necklaces that are made of beads or metals. A few necklaces of beads, round wooden plugs, spiral rings made of brass or bell-metal or aluminium in the fingers and toes, little rings, in the alae of nose and metal anklets are worn by the women. All these ornaments are available in their local weekly markets. Now men wear dhotis, shirts, banyans, pants and women wear sarees, blouses, petticoats etc.

The Saora habitats are located amidst most inaccessible hill region claded with thick forest, making it very difficult to reach there, through zigzag steep hill paths. They generally live in small villages and construct their houses on the hill slope or at the foot of the hills. Whether small or big, the Lanjia

Saora villages are long established in their present sites. The settlements have come up in undulating terrain and houses remain scattered. It might have linear streets and sometimes houses might be located here and there depending upon places and slopes available. Close to the settlements megaliths are erected to commemorate the dead kins. Two wooden posts, called Gasadasum or Kitungsum installed at the entrance of the settlement, represent the guardian deity of the village. In these days due to the impact of modernization and development intervention, many remote Lanjia Saora settlements have got a facelift. Approach roads connect them and inside they have concrete street roads and paths. Modern *pucca* houses have replaced their tiny old huts.

The Saora houses are single roomed and rectangular in shape and are fairly high. Though the plinth is sufficiently raised from the ground, the roof is proportionately kept low. There is a high front verandah. The walls of the houses are made of stone pieces set in mud. The walls look reddish because of red earth plaster, which is locally available and is used for plastering. From the roof hang a number of household assets like baskets, gourd vessels, clothes and umbrella. Things like spears, bows and arrows are fixed in the walls. Agricultural implements are kept in one corner of the house. The sacred pots, gourds and baskets containing sacred objects, like special clothes of the ancestors and tutelaries are hung against the walls, which are painted with ikons. On the side of the house a cowshed is constructed.

The well-to-do Saoras build bigger houses fitted with carved doors and having spacious verandah. A Saora having more than one wife has to construct separate houses for wives. At the time of constructing a new house rice and wine are ceremonially offered to the earth goddess and a pit is dug in which the first pillar is fixed.

Saora economy is primarily based on shifting cultivation and is supplemented by terrace cultivation. They also resort to occasional hunting, rare fishing and round the year forest collection for their subsistence. The Saoras are the best-terraced cultivators. The terraced fields in which water flows throughout the year are locally called, *Sarroba* and are exclusively meant for paddy cultivation. The upper terraces, which are dry, is locally called as *Jyanum* and used for cultivating ragi (*elusine corocana*), *biri* (*phaseolusmungo*) and *kulthi* (*dolichos biflorus*).

In the little garden around the residential houses they grow maize, tobacco, chilly and vegetables, like pumpkin, gourd, bean, brinjal, etc. during rainy season. Papaya, banana, lemon and orange plants are also grown in the



kitchen garden. Coconut plants, which are also found in the area, are recently introduced. In and around the village settlements jackfruit, mango, tamarind, *mohua*, date-palm and sago-palm trees which are individually owned are seen.

Every Saora village has a well-defined boundary and its inhabitants carry on shifting cultivation in the hills located within the village boundary. Some hills are close to the village and others lie at a distance. Traditionally the hills were distributed on the basis of *Birinda* or extended families. Members of a particular *Birinda* used to have swiddens exclusively in a hill and no outsider was allowed to share the hills for shifting cultivation. An individual who has been cultivating a particular plot continues to own it as long as he is capable of cultivating it. Thus individual ownership of swiddens on hereditary basis is in vogue among the Saoras.

Certain rituals are attached to shifting cultivation. A ceremony is performed on the day of sowing. Before the seeds are mixed and broadcast, the village *Buyya* and *Kudan* worship, the hill-Gods by offering them liquor and sacrificing fowl and goat.

A small ritual, which involves the offering of either a fowl or a goat to the hill God called Barusum, is observed towards the end of August after *Kangu* is harvested. The next ceremony follows before *Jana* is threshed and *Kandula* is harvested. On this occasion fowls are offered to the hill-Gods. Among the Saoras there is a belief that if these ceremonies are performed they will get good crop from the swiddens.

The principal food of the Saoras is gruel (*pej*) prepared out of rice, ragi, *jana* or *ghantia*. Besides, they take vegetables grown in kitchen gardens and fruits, roots, leaves, tubers and honey collected from forest. The non-vegetarian food is much more relished than the vegetarian diet and no festival is observed and no guest is entertained without non-vegetarian food.

The smallest social unit in the Saora society is the family which is mostly of nuclear type. Generally a family comprises parents and their unmarried children. They have no exogamous totemic clan, no phratries and moieties, except the local patrilineal descent groups or lineages called *Birinda*.

The Saoras are unique due to the absence of clan or sib organization, that is common to most of the tribal societies in the country. Without clan they lack in the complementary institutions of totemism and taboos in matrimonial relationships. Instead there are extended families called *Birindas* which consists of descendants from a common ancestor of 4-5 generations. Marriage is prohibited within a *Birinda*. The members of a *Birinda* stand to each other as

blood brothers. They participate in *Guar* and *Karya* ceremonies with their contributions. The *Birinda* also inherits the property of an heirless member. A remarkable feature is that among the Saoras, a woman from birth to death belongs to her father's *Birinda*. Her *Birinda* membership does not change by her marriage. After her death the members of her own *Birinda* may claim to perform her funerary rites and *Guar*. Such claims are accepted by her husband's family ungrudgingly. Nevertheless, *Birinda* is not synonymous with clan or *gotra* where members living in far off places, observe, common rules of exogamy.

The Saora love their children very much. When a woman proved to be barren, her husband may marry another woman or adopt a child. The pregnant woman does her usual work up to the time of delivery. When the labour pain starts, she is confined to a corner of the house and an experienced elderly woman acts as a midwife and rubs her abdomen with castor oil. This leads to easy delivery. The umbilical cord is cut by a sharp-edged arrow by the midwife. The placenta is buried in a pit in one corner of the courtyard of the house. Then the mother and the new born baby take bath in tepid water. The pollution period is observed for seven days. On the seventh day the woman takes bath and cooks food, which is shared by the females of the house. Generally they prefer the names of the ancestors for naming the child.

The Saora marriage is not an elaborate affair. It is rather queer that the people, who spend most of their resources in observing a chain of expensive festivals and ceremonies, celebrate their marriage in a very simple way. There are various ways for acquiring mates. Few of them are, marriage by negotiation, marriage by capture and marriage by service. Of all these types marriage by negotiation is most common and considered prestigious in the society. The arrangements are made by the parents and relations of the groom who take initiative in the matter. In a stratified society of the Saoras, negotiation is made between two parties having equal economic and social status. For a son of *Gomang* (secular village head) another *Gomang's* daughter may be arranged and a *Royat* (commoner) may not venture to propose for a *Gomang's* daughter.

The Saoras do not observe village exogamy except where the village is inhabited by the members of one *Birinda*. In big villages having more than one *Birinda* marriages are often arranged within the village.

The Saora cremate their dead. But persons dying of cholera and small-pox are buried. As cremation is a family function, *Birinda* members participate in it. Some members collect wood for the pyre and the girls who are trained to act as assistants in funeral rites fetch water and prepare turmeric paste. Then, the corpse

is carried to the cremation ground in a procession accompanied by a musical band. The next day, they visit the cremation ground to examine the ashes with a view to find a sign of the cause of death. In the evening a fowl is killed in the cremation ground and cooked with rice which is shared by the members of the village. Then after a year or two the *Guar* ceremony is performed. On this occasion, *menhirs* are planted and large numbers of buffaloes are sacrificed.

Perhaps, the religion of no other tribe is so elaborate as that of the Saoras. It is true that without understanding their religion, one cannot understand other aspects of their life. The concept of Supreme God is almost absent among them. In different parts, different Gods are considered Supreme. Moreover, there can be no standard catalogue for these Gods, for the list continually changes as new ones are introduced and old ones are forgotten.

All the varied aspects of their environments are associated with some God or other. The Saora Gods differ from one another in composition, function, character and nature. Some are benevolent; some are neutral and some others malevolent. All these Gods and spirits have constant demand on the living beings. If their demands are not met they may cause harm.

*Sonnum* or *Sunnam* is the general name for the Saora deities and spirits. The deities are called in different names such as *Labosum*, *Rudesum* and *Karunisum* etc. The word *Sonnum* is used in a general sense when applied to particular order of deities and spirits. Besides these, the Saora worship a number of evil spirits and malevolent deities.

The Saoras are very famous for their wall-paintings known as 'ikons' or 'italons'. Inside the house on the walls one often finds a group of sketches of religious significance elaborately drawn and are therefore called ikons. The exact symbolic meaning of the ikons which consists of various sketches of human being, horse, elephant, gunman, aeroplane, bi-cycle, sun, moon, etc. are very difficult to understand. An ikon is done to flatter and please the Gods and ancestors so that they may spare the members of the household from their invidious attention. At frequent intervals the ikon may be replaced by another depending upon the exigency of the circumstances.

The religious functionaries who cater to the spiritual needs of the Saora are *Buyya*, who presides over agricultural festivals, *Kudan*, the Shaman who combines the functions of priest, prophet and medicineman. His female counterpart is called the *Kudan Boi*. The position of the *Buyya* is ascribed, whereas that of the *Kudan* is achieved.

Ideally speaking, the Saora villages are self-governed and the traditional panchayat plays an important role in maintaining the law and order and village solidarity. In every village the people are under the command of two elders, *Gomang*, the secular headman and *Buyya*, the religious headman. The offices of both the persons are hereditary.

In every village meeting the *Gomang* has to preside over and initiate discussions and take decisions in consultation with the elders of the village. Ordinarily for any usual offence, the accused has to pay by way of fine in shape of two pots of liquor and one goat or pig etc. and to feed the villagers with these. The exact amount of fine depends upon the gravity of offence.

The Saoras are very artistic people. Their artistic skills are not only revealed in their wall-paintings but also in their dance and music. They, irrespective of sex, cultivate the art of dancing and singing, as a matter of natural habit. In their songs one can find a great deal of humour, romance and melody. In Saora dance, group of men and women, jumble up together and while dancing the drummers and the dancers advance towards each other alternatively with the rhythm of the music. Colourful costumes are used while dancing.

The musical instruments of the Saora are not many which consist of drums of various sizes and flutes and string instruments. The drums are of three types, a kettle drum, a double membraned drum and a large drum shaped like a bowl. There are brass cymbals, brass gongs and hide gongs. All these noisy percussion instruments are usually used at some agricultural festivals. At marriages, fiddles are popular. There is a two stringed fiddle consisting of a bamboo stem with half a coconut shell serving as a resonator. It is played by running a bow across it. A second kind of two stringed instruments, somewhat like a guitar, also has a bamboo stem, but here the resonators are two gourds. A third musical instrument, very popular at marriage is a rasp. It is made from a segment of bamboo and has a slit cut longitudinally down its middle portion. The slit is corrugated, and when scraped with a stick, emits a grating sound.

The Saoras who have very little knowledge about environmental sanitation do not keep their villages clean. Rather, their villages look dirty as cow-dung and other refuses like household dirt and animal excreta etc. are thrown here and there in the street. As such, the people suffer from various diseases of which malaria, gastro-intestinal disorder, diarrhea, dysentery, hookworm and roundworm infections are common. In these days this scenario is changing under the impact of external agencies and modernization.

Like their magico-religious life, dress-style, artistic talents and terrace cultivation skills, another important feature is their keenness to maintain their group solidarity and preserve their cultural identity by adhering to the ethics, values, morals, customs and traditions, which are unique. Their interpersonal relations are governed by fixed status and well-defined customs, which are applicable to all aspects of social life. The ethical percepts and norms are transmitted from generation to generation through the informal process of socialization.

The problems faced by the Saoras are manifold and deep rooted. Diminution of productivity of swiddens over the years and the ban imposed by the Government against shifting cultivation and hunting has affected their economy. Added to this is unchecked exploitation by the Doms, their Scheduled Caste neighbour, over them. The timid and industrious Saora have endured all the evils for centuries. Sometimes when things have gone beyond their limit of tolerance they have rose en masse to register their protests. But by and large, they have remained a simple, shy and peace loving folk.

Since the remote past the Lanjia Saora lived undisturbed in their remote mountainous habitat. In modern times, the rapid changes in administrative set-up and political climate of the country and their exposure to the external modern world have influenced the Saora way of life. For example, abolition of intermediary system has set the Saora free from the clutches of the oppressive feudal lords and their unscrupulous subordinates and this has contributed to the modernization of their political organization.

After independence, the welfare Government has taken a very benevolent attitude towards improving the lot of the downtrodden tribal people of this country including the Saoras. Various welfare measures initiated by the Government have resulted in exposing the Saora more and more to outside contact and pressures of ever-advancing and powerful social, economic and political forces. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Plan, Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach was adopted and Lanjia Saora was identified as one among 13 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) in Orissa. For their all round development of two Micro Projects, one at Puttasing in Rayagada district and another at Serango in Gajapati district have been established. The Micro Projects have adopted the basic approach that is, location specific and community specific holistic development of the area and the people. The objective is to raise their living conditions and change them from an archaic and pre agricultural stage of shifting cultivation to modern agriculture and the culture of such other beliefs and practices. The impact of the political change, election system, and local self-government have triggered off various political processes and generated new leadership among them.

**Bibliography & References**

1. Baral J.K. & R.C. Sahoo 1980-81 Fight between Liliputs - Panos vs. Souras of Ganjam, *Adibasi*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-4, pp. 61-67.  
1989 The Changing Pattern of Saora Leadership, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, pp. 1-6.
2. Bebarta, P. C. 1959 Concepts of Disease and Therapeutic Practices among the Hill Saoras of Orissa, *Vanyajati*, Vol. VII, pp.44-48
3. Chowdhury, B 1963-64 Saora. *Adibasi*, Vol.V, No. 3, pp. 101-106.  
1964-65 Doripura-A Magico-Religious Ceremony curing fever among the Hill Saoras. *Adibasi*, Vol. VI, No.1, pp. 29-34.
4. Das Patnaik, P.S. 1967-68 Pattern of Indebtedness in a Saora Village, *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No.1, pp 40-49.
5. Das, H.C. 1965 Changing Economy of Saora Community. *Orissa Hist. Res. J.* Vol. XIII, No.4, pp. 39-42.
6. Das, N.C. & Patnaik, P.K. 1984-85 Comparative Demographic Analysis between the Traditional and the Hinduised Saoras. *Adibasi*, Vol. XXIV, No.3 & 4, pp. 18-23.
7. Das, Nityananda 1965-66 The Birinda of the Lanjia Saora. *Adibasi*, Vol. VII, No.2, pp. 5-12.  
1967-68 Saoras and the Panos of Ganjam Agency, *Adibasi*, Vol. IX, No.3, pp. 44-52.
8. Das, Nityananda & Chowdhury B. 1964 Economy of Saora Ceremony. *Vanyajati*, Vol.12, No.1, pp. 17-24
9. Dasgupta, C.C. 1938 Human Sacrifices and the Sabars of Orissa. *Man*, Vol. 38, No.15
10. Francis, W. 1907 *Gazetteer of Vizagapatam District*, Vol. I
11. Mohanty, B.B. 1988 A Glimpse of Social life of the Lanjia Saora, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, pp. 16-21.
12. Mohanty, B.B. & S.C. Mohanty 2009 Tribal Customs and Traditions, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

13. Mohanty, S.C. 1992 Birinda -the Agnatic Lineage System of the Lanjia Saora, *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVIII, No.6. pp 24-28
- 1994 Social Control, Tradition and Transition in Lanjia Saora Society. *Adivasi*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 1&2, pp. 56-61.
14. Mohapatra, G. 1983 The Soura View of Good Life and Development, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXIII, No.2, pp. 30-40.
15. Munro, A.C. 1955 Saora Children and Work, *Adibasi* Inaugural Number, p.39.
16. Panda, J.K. 1965-66 Changing Saora Culture, *Adibasi*, Vol. VII, No.1, p 71.
17. Patnaik, N. 1980-81 *Jagannathpur: A Changing Saora Village*.
- 1989 *The Saora*, (Popular Series on Tribes) THRTI, Bhubaneswar
18. Patnaik, N. & H.S. Mishra 1976 Election and Pattern of Leadership in two Lanjia Saora Villages of Gumma Panchayat, Ganjam, *Adibasi*, Vol. XVI, No.3, pp. 1-15.
19. Patnaik, U. N. 1955 Saora of Ganjam Scheduled Areas, *Adibasi*, Inaugural Number.
- 1963-64 The Saora of Ganjam Hills, *Adibasi*, Vol. V, No.1, pp. 6-13.
- 1964-65 A Saora House, *Adibasi*, Vol.VI, No.1, pp.49-50
20. Rowney, H.B. 1982 *Souras*, The Wild Tribes of India, pp. 93-94,
21. Roy, S.N. 1927 Savaras. *Man in India*, Vol.7, pp.177-336
22. Russel, R.V. & Hiralal 1916 *Tribes Castes of Central Provinces of India*, Vol. III, Part-III, pp.464-81.
23. Singh, Bhupinder 1984 Levels of Leadership in Saora Society, *Souvenir, Adibasi Exhibition*, Bhubaneswar, pp. 20-28.
24. 1984 *The Saora Highlanders*, Bombay, Somaiya Publication, Pvt., Ltd.
25. Thurston, E. 1909 *Castes & Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. III, pp. 357-415.

# SAORAS OF GANJAM SCHEDULED AREAS <sup>1</sup>

Udaynath Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

There are several ways of pronunciation of the name of this tribe in English and in the local vernaculars. The correct pronunciation in English is Saora and this is the way the Saora himself pronounces the word. In Telugu the word is pronounced 'Savara' and in Oriya 'Saura.' But neither of them is correct. The Saora is mentioned in the Ramayan as existing in the hilly areas of South India when Rama with his consort and brother was doing the 'vanavas.' Plini and Ptolmi mention the 'Sauri' and the 'Saora'. There are several other authorities also who trace the Saoras to the period of Rig-Veda.

The language of the Saoras is included in the Munda family, according to Mr. Grierson in his Linguistic Survey of India. According to him, the language has been influenced largely by Telugu and is closely related to Kharia and Juang.

The Saora is of light build, generally short in stature and dark in colour. He has a wiry physique with a narrow forehead and blunt nose. The women are dark in colour and are also lithe and wiry. The women have curly hair and blunt noses. The tribe is, therefore, capable of strenuous field work, exposed to the sun and the biting winter.

The Saora scoops out every possible depression alongside a *nala* or on the slope of a hill and converts it into a paddy field. In the former case, long and high embankments are constructed along the *nala* side and the *nala* is choked practically. In the latter case, the Saora prepares a layout of paddy area by terracing. He is very skillful in this and so terraces the fields that there is never a fear of rapid drainage, water-logging or destruction of the bund of the terraced

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in the Inaugural Volume of ADIBASI that took birth in the name of "Orissa Tribes Research Journal", Vol.I, No.I, 1955, pp.7-11.

<sup>2</sup> Member of Odisha State Civil Service



field. Without using any technical equipments and without any technical training, the Saora so lets out water from the higher fields to the lower across the contour terrace bund that water spreads out evenly in the field and passes down into the field next below in a smooth manner. The ingenuity of the Saora in terrace cultivation is simply admirable.

Next comes 'Podu' cultivation, known elsewhere as axe or Jhuming cultivation. This is condemned on all hands as pernicious and as tending to denude the natural forests growing on the hill-sides, and the hill slopes. The method of this cultivation is very interesting. The method of the Saora in this cultivation is different from that of the Khond. The latter raises a single crop or a small number of crops on the hill side and lives on this 'Bogodo,' as it is called, only for a short period to watch the crop when it is maturing, from the attack of the wild birds and animals. Hill-gram, Sua, Kueri and pumpkins are practically the major crops raised by a Khond on the *bogodo*.

The 'Bogodo' of the Saora is a much more interesting affair, although the geographical features of both the varieties of 'bogodo' are almost common. The preliminaries of cutting up hill sides for *bogodo* are also common. The following are the interesting features about the *bogodo* of the Saora which deserves mention.

During the month of May, before the monsoon sets in with all its virulence, the Saora starts his *bogodo* or *podu* cultivation. He invites the entire population of his street and the men, women and children work on the hill side with the 'Gobla', as it is called. The 'Gobla' is an instrument tapering towards the handle with a sharp iron spike of the length of 3 to 5 inches, fixed with an easy angle at about 4" from the stout end. The people stand in a row and go on scraping the hillside beginning from the bottom. Boulders are not interfered with and even stones of smaller size are let alone. Close to the boulders, wherever there are any, pumpkins are planted along with any other creeper vegetable. Plantains are also planted close to such boulders. The idea is that the depression near about the boulders would retain moisture for longer periods so as to allow these plants to thrive. These creeping plants are planted first in small patches and then castor is sown all over the area. Along with castor, *juar* is also broadcast. After these, a number of seeds of vegetables are sown practically all over the area. If there is a cool corner anywhere, turmeric and ginger is planted. If there is a stream-passing by, a few oranges find their place there. The cereals and millets which are shown on a *bogodo* of a Saora along with oilseeds, chilies, yam, plantains and other orchard plants all number about 22.

When the plants start flowering, the Saora shifts himself into a house built on the *bogodo*. Very often the Saora continues in the village but takes his food on the *bogodo* which his family members bring up. In a number of cases, which are not few, the Saora takes his residence in the *bogodo* house for the entire period during which the crops are harvested. Maize is the first crop which he gets. Then follow asparagus, beans, vegetable marrow, lady's finger, gourds, pumpkins, ash pumpkins etc. in quick succession. During the six months beginning from August, the Saora gets plenty of vegetables, millets etc. for his kitchen. Some of these which stand drying, like maize, asparagus etc., are dried and kept for the lean months of the year. The pumpkins are consumed, partly in the kitchen and partly disposed of at a nominal price. The runner beans are consumed in a like manner as well as the *juar* and the hill-gram. The quantity of hill-gram, *juar* and maize however form the bulk of the produce and after domestic consumption, they go to increase the economic resources of the family.

The Saoras, on account of their uncertain methods of cultivation, are probably unable to devote much attention on domestic animals. Although there are ample facilities for rearing fowls, the Saora does not take to it and he prefers to purchase a full sized bird for *puja* purposes, even at a cost of Rs. 20 in kind. Cows are used on the yoke and the yield of milk is so scanty that it is insufficient for the calf. The Adibasis do not utilize the milk of cows except for offering milk and raw rice to their deities on certain occasions.

The Saoras are not fond of a bath and would avoid one as long as possible. A child, after its birth, is however, given two baths a day for about one month. They are indifferent to clean their teeth daily and do not have the other clean habits. The men, women use the oil pressed from the castor and *mohua* seeds by an indigenous wooden press. They rarely use oil or fats in their diet.

Their wearing apparel is very scanty. The men use a loin cloth 8 to 10 feet long which is wound round the waist and across the seat covering the private parts. This loin cloth hangs down in the front and the rear and this leads us to the origin of the term 'Lanja Saora'. Even among 'Lanja Saoras,' there are two classes, the 'lanjas' and the 'lomba lanjas.' These two ends of the loin cloth hanging down on the front and the rear are embroidered in colours, and frills of embroidery adorn them. The colour adopted is the red. There is no apparel on the body of the Saora male and on the head; he invariably has a red turban, preferably of silk and into this turban thrusts a bunch of feathers of wild birds. Thus clad, with a bow and arrow in the left hand, a lamboo (long) stick in the

right, with an indigenous pipe protruding from the lips and gold *noli* on the ears with one or two necklaces across the neck makes the picture of a well-to-do typical Saora.

The Saora woman has just a loin cloth round her waist; has sometimes brass anklets on her ankles, brass or silver chains round her waist, bead or reed necklaces round the neck, a small nose ring on the nose, a peculiar ear screw in the ears with the lobe holes enlarged by a local process and with curly hair shining with castor oil. This sums up a Saora woman in prosperous conditions.

The Saora, men, women and children, take to drink as a national habit. The *sloop* juice is partaken freely by the womenfolk but they do not take *mohua* liquor so much. The 'londa-moddo' which is a preparation peculiar to the Saora areas is a very strong drink and all men do not partake of it. Drink is not taken to as a habit by the entire population. Only people beyond age of 45 or 50 years take daily doses while the others take it whenever they get it. Every ceremonial, the 'Anthra' system of cultivation, the *podu*, the marriage and death ceremonies, the 'nuakia' are all occasions when drink is required to flow.

The Saora has no business habits. He is the easiest victim of the businessmen of the area who are invariably the Panos, and the Oriya businessmen, next in order. The following few paragraphs will describe the business talents of the Pano and the exploitation the Saora is subjected to. These paragraphs were the result of personal investigations carried on by the author in the latter half of 1954.

"Heard the exploitation of Lazze Mondal by a Pano of Kethung. Had seen earlier the sale negotiations of a half-arm (shirt) for 2 baskets of turmeric worth about Rs. 6, fixed Rs. 2 in cash."

"It is also complained that a Pano purchases some standing crop like turmeric and harvested *ragi* and postpone payments till the next crop. The next crop is taken again by the Pano on his assuring that he would pay for both. Sometimes he pays only for one crop and sometimes he just refuses to pay. The Saoras are not bold to challenge the Pano on account of the latter's superior intelligence."

"The Saora is completely dependent on the Pano and the only reason is that the Pano provides a market for the produce of the Saora. The Saora is shy of going to the nearest market and even there he is mercilessly fleeced if he ventures there. He goes to the market with high hopes but there meets with a

horrible combination from the purchasers. He offers to sell at the rate he is used to selling to the Pano and this Oriya businessman takes advantage of and forces the Saora to sell at lesser rate. If the Saora blinks or hesitates, the purchasers fix their own price, force it on the Saora. The Saora in the end finds that he would have been a gainer had he sold his produce to the Pano. The Pano concentrations play another trick. One Pano offers a price, a second offers something less, a third lowers it further and the last one combines all the Panos of the concentration and surrounding concentrations and all combined see to it that there is no purchaser for the produce. The Saora is more afraid of the Oriya and ultimately he sells the goods just for a song to the Pano. "

XXX Mondol purchased one pair of bullocks from one XX (Pano). The maximum cost of the pair would be Rs. 200/. He mortgaged land with a seed capacity of 1 *putti* 16 *mans* i.e. 2 *mounds*, 28 *seers* which would cover land about Ac. 2-30. The annual out turn of the land would be about 20 *puttis*, i.e. 30 *mounds*. Leaving the cost of cultivation at 10 *mounds*, per year, the net out-turn is 20 *mounds*. This is divided between the lender and loanee which works out to 10 *mounds* in each case. The Pano, therefore, gets Rs. 50/- a year. He has already got crops at the above rate for 2 years and is to get 6 more crops, according to the contract. The total amount he could get towards principal and interest works out to Rs. 400/-in 8 years.

The Pano offers to sell fowls at a very small profit if it is in cash. The Saora is invariably inclined to purchase it in kind and the kind payment is to be in Margasira when the *bogodo* yields fruit. In such cases the price of a fowl is 7 *manos* of *jonna*, or *sua* or *amgu*, *rugi* or *ghantia*. This may be given at the first harvest after the loan or at subsequent harvests.

Pigs are sold not in cash but in barter. The payment is 1 *putti* of *jiniso* for a pig worth about Rs. 5/-. The payment is as in the case of fowls."

The Saora is shy of strangers and he is suspicious of every one. He is very secretive and even his own kith and kin do not get hints of what the man is up to even if it is a case of murdering another person. He is not easily vindictive and revengeful but once his blood is roused, it is difficult to control him.

There are several classes of Saoras which can be called more or less castes rather than tribal subsections. They are the following:

(1) Jada Saoras (Highlanders). Their habitat is Gumma and Kolakota; (2) Mane Saoras live in Ojaigodo and Serango (3) The Jathi Saoras or the Lomba Lanja Saora live in Gumma, Ojaigodo and Serango ; (4) The Kindal

Saoras or the Sorada Saoras live in Rayagada and Jirango *muthas*. They are the people who do the basket weaving in the area; (5) the Luara Saoras and Muli Saoras are to be found in every important place in one or two houses. They are the blacksmiths ; (6) the Malla Saoras are to be found at several places. They are agriculturists but at some places they do basket weaving, etc. (7) The Bhimo Saoras are to be found in Leobo, Engersingi, Jirango and the Mandasa *malias*. (8)The Sudda Saoras are to be found in Ramagiri and Udaygiri. They are not tribals in the strict sense of the word and they live on agriculture only. They have copied the Oriya habits, customs and manners and also the Oriya religion partially, (9) Kampu Saoras live in the down hills of Parlakhimedi agency. (10) The Based Saora is also a class which lives down-ghats in the Parlakhimedi *taluk*. (11) The Mutha Saora is practically the Sudda Saora down the hills. They are to be found in the plains *muthas* of Parlakhimedi agency.

The first three classes of Saoras mentioned above, are the original Saoras who have been able to retain their cult, habits, manners and customs without any ad-mixture. These three classes do not eat beef and they look down upon the castes and tribes which eat beef. They, on account of economic pressure, borrow money from the Panos. But this does not mitigate their hatred of the Pano whom they call 'Jum-tum-maram' (beef-eater). These Saoras do not allow the Pano to take up residence in their villages. The Pano, even though he is called the *bariki* of the village i.e. the *choukidar* or the village servant has to live at a distance from the village and should appear in the village only when called or when business requires him. These Saoras do not interdine with Panos nor will they drink with them. The Saoras live in families in a village and in some cases; they also invite relatives to a newly formed village. It is not unusual to find two to three families of Saoras living in one house. The sons, after marriage, do not go to a new house as is the custom with the Khonds but they prefer to live with the parents as long as it is possible. The cooking is done in common as well as dining. One of the reasons for this over gregariousness of the Saoras seems to be that by such living, a man is able to get sufficient field hands for his fields.

That the Saora has less sex vice and sex sensitiveness is apparent from the customary forms of abuses indulged in by the Saoras. The common abuses are 'Asunjuma' (eat night soil), Kinsod (dog), Vang Botham (may the tiger eat you).

## THE SAORA OF GANJAM HILLS <sup>1</sup>

U. N. Patnaik

The Saora is carefree. There may be marks of patient resignation apparent on his face on a close study but his action and deportment is carefree. The presence of a stranger throws a shadow across his face especially if such stranger is inquisitive or sollicitous. If the stranger is uninterested in the Saora, the Saora is more so in him and they may pass each other at close quarters without leaving any impression on the Saora. The Saora knows sometimes a foe by instinct and then it is very hard for him to get over the mistrust of such other person. Left to himself, the Saora is carefree and quite cheerful. He plays on his *Saringi*, beats the *Changu*, and when there is company the group starts dancing to the tune of the *Saringi* or the *Changu*. Labourers at work on the road, break out for lunch. After lunch there is a moment's respite for smoking and then someone starts playing on the *Saringi*. The others listen, and then spontaneously start dancing. A group goes to meet an official. If the official is interested in the Adibasi he knows that they would express their goodwill towards him by a dance. He casually enquires if there is a *Saringi* in the company. Out comes the musician with his *Saringi*. The youngsters dance, the rest follow suit till the entire party forgets itself in the peculiar melody of the *Saringi* and the dance which it inspires.

The usual present of a rupee is just what is considered to be the goodwill present of the official. At dead of night when all are asleep the hill side resounds with the beatings of a *Changu* and if one is curious he would see a fire burning on a hill top with a Saora standing by it, beating his *Changu*. It is a puzzle as to whether this *Changu* beating is to scare away wild animals or scare out the feeling of loneliness of the *Bogodo*. When groups go to attend fairs and festivals the *Saringi* and the *Changu* are not silent. The wailing notes and the rhythmic beating of the *Changu* keep the pace of the company as battle drums

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No. I, TRB, 1963-64, pp. 6-13

and bag pipes do. While returning from the hill or from work the home coming is not silent but is to the tune of the *Saringi* or the flute.

In all religious functions music and dancing have their place. In addition a bell metal dish or plate of large size is tied to the neck of the boys who go on beating it to the tune of the drum and *Changu*. The dance has nothing of art in it. It is just stepping heavy and hard as if with the hope to catch the rhythm of the tune. Then women and children take part in such dances. All of them if not dead drunk, are at least well drunk. It is not the art; it is the rhythm which the Saora likes. He catches the rhythm and forgets himself in it.

The Saora is wiry. He can stand any amount of sun shine and the heat of the summer. He is also accustomed to the biting winter which he goes through with the scantiest clothing. Outdoor during the day in the winter he has no clothing except his loin cloth.

During nights he needs no improvement to it since the burning hearth keeps him warm. If he has to go out on work, or to watch the crop in the field he has just a cotton *chadder* of 10 or 11 counts and this keeps him warm enough. He is so ill clad that it is difficult to take courage and ask him if he feels the winter.

During the rains, the Saora is a sight to see. He does not venture out and if he does and is caught in a rain, he runs to the nearest tree, shrivels up and shivers. He cannot stand drenching. Is it due to the fact that he rarely takes a bath, or maybe it is due to his scanty clothing or it might be due to the diet of mango, tamarind seeds, *solpo* (sago palm) dust and jungle greens which he takes during the months of June to August. This needs closer study if not research.

The Saora is fond of snakes - and pursues one relentlessly till he catches and kills it. Even Cobras are eaten. As a dish, the cooked snake is the most delicious one to a Saora. The other inhabitants of the areas who do not eat snakes say with a sneer "the snakes fly at the smell of a Saora".

Rats and mice of the fields which are fat and in plenty go to the Saora's kitchen whenever one is caught and is eaten with relish. All wild animals and wild birds are always welcome.

The vegetable and the vegetarian food is however the normal menu. The kernel of the mangoes is dried and powdered. The powder is washed several times till the 'kasha' (acrid) taste is washed out. The powder is then made into a paste and cooked. The heart of the Sago palm (*solpo*) is split, the pieces left to dry and then the pulp is beaten to a fine powder. The powder is cooked with

edible roots, and leaves of a number of trees. Asparagus beans, climber beans, maize and *juar* are boiled and eaten. All the different vegetables that grow on a *bagod* (swidden) are boiled and eaten. It is very uncommon to see a Saora eating boiled grams or millets and rice singly. Invariably some edible green is mixed and the food is boiled to the consistency of porridge. Salt, chilies and onions are added when the food is partaken. Even the setting of the table is peculiar.

All the cooked food is placed in the centre and the group sits round. Each holds a deep leaf platter. One person starts serving with a dry bitter gourd ladle or as it is known in Oriya '*Donka*'. Some salt and chilly is kept on a leaf platter or *dona* and Saora eats with something like a spoon made out of a thick leaf. He does not eat with his hand and fingers. Occasionally salt and chilly is added for taste and the food is repeated in a 2nd or 3rd round. The Saora is a poor eater and usually is satisfied with the first *Donagul*. Everyone is cheerful and the eating goes on with plenty of chatting and talking. Not infrequently important decisions are taken at such table talk.

This table setting is gradually giving place to the Oriya way of things.

Food is being cooked on the field in Dekchis (aluminium cooking pots). Aluminium plates are being used and sometimes, cups. The deep leaf platter is giving place to aluminium plates. The tribal way is giving place to sophisticated way of cooking.

The ashes of a Saora should rest on his native soil. If he dies elsewhere and his ashes are not brought to the village of his nativity, the spirit will not only lose its interest in the village but is likely to cast a malefic eye on any living villager who passes that way. This is of course does not apply to deaths in the Assam tea garden where many a Saora dies every year. When a Saora dies for some reason in a village where he had gone earlier, it is the duty of his native villagers to go and get his ashes and dispose them of in the customary manner. On the death of a visitor or a relative, the villagers send word of the mishap to the native village of the deceased after cremating the dead body. The villagers of the deceased on getting the news start arrangements to get the ashes of the cremation. The ashes are called the bones.

The close relatives and the family members of the deceased go to the Gomang (headman) or to the Bhoya (tribal-cum-official head) and tell him of the fact and request him to go with them. Thus 8 or 10 people accompanied by an old woman start for the village where the death has taken place. Drums are beaten and pipes are blown on this journey and liquor or '*Solopo*' is partaken



moderately at the commencement and during this journey. The usual bows and arrows are carried as well as some matchlocks. They go to the house where their relative had stayed before his death. On reaching the house, the matchlock is fired once or twice into the air. Thereafter the villagers of that village accompany them to the cremation ground. A piece of bone is picked out from the ashes and placed in a new earthen pot. The pot is then covered. The old woman accompanying the party carries the pot on her head. Then amidst weeping and wailing the party related to the deceased starts on the homeward journey. The weeping is usually calling the deceased, "O' Son, where have you gone. 'O' Father, have you left us. 'O' Brother, why have you left us, what happened to you who has devoured you, which spirit has taken you from this earth and so on." The old woman is required to do most of the weeping and wailing.

On reaching the native village, the parties with others go to the village cremation ground weeping, bury the piece of bone at any corner, partake drink and return to the village.

The tomb stones of which every one of us have heard is to be found in the close proximity of almost every Saora village. The stones are planted in the ground and stand straight which recall the description of the stone hedge of *Briton*. There is however no cross stone on top of two upright stones. This presents a curious sight and one moving in the Saora area is struck by the imposing sight.

These stones represent the "*Goo-Aar*"; in the Saora language *Goo*-stands for burying or planting and *Aar* - stands for stone. The stones are planted more as tomb stones with of course a tribal importance attached to the ceremony which attends the planting and the peculiar significance it has. A big stone is planted for a deceased in a family. The ceremony is not performed every year nor is it done according to convenience. Availability of funds seems to be the important factor in deciding if the *Goo-Aar* is to be performed in a particular year. Absence of disease, illness or deaths in the village, bountiful crops is all factors which lead to the performance of the ceremony.

A day well in advance is fixed and it is usually done 15 days ahead of the day fixed. As soon as this is fixed distillation of rice arrack starts and preparations are set on foot to distil a large quantity of rice arrack. This liquor is so strong that the Oriyas say if you drink *Souda*, you will catch the *Khanda* (sword). These 15 days ahead of the day are spent in drinking, dancing, beating of drums etc. The dancing is continuous and the villagers go about, even women and children, beating drums, cymbals, bell metal big bowls etc. The *Mohuri* is

blown, the *Saringi* accompanies and two peculiar time marking instruments are also used. One of these is a bamboo on which notches are cut, across which another smaller bamboo piece is vigorously rubbed to mark time. The other peculiar instrument is a collection of reeds or thin bamboos tied together at one end and holding this bunch at one end with the left hand, the dancer beats on it with the right hand marking the time. Even small children of 4 to 5 years age join the dancing. The village dog also catches the infection and moves up and down. The dancers start at one end of the street, go to its other end and again return. There is not much of singing probably because everyone is so drunk that no singing is possible. This is the Saora dance. In such dancing the Saora forgets himself during the 15 days ahead of the fixed date for the *Goo Aar*.

The close relatives of the villagers are invited from far and near, and they send one or two buffaloes in advance for use on the occasion. These buffaloes are taken care of by the villagers till the day of the ceremony. During the intervening period, the villagers go to the adjoining hills and forests in search of stones. Straight stones are carefully selected and brought and kept. On the day fixed everyone drinks and even small children are dead drunk. All join in the dancing without an exception. The *Gomang* and *Bhoya* or if they are young, two to three elderly persons refrain from drinking. This is because there should be some persons in full possession of their senses in order to receive the guests and to treat them with respect. The rest are all drunk that day.

The Saora is dressed in his best. Feathers are tucked in his red turban. Everyone is fully armed in the tribal style, swords, *tangi* (axe), bow and arrows, guns, hunting knives are held aloft and brandished by the dancers. The minors sling a bell metal pot (*konsa*) from the neck and beat on it. Other children play on the two instruments described above. Some beat drums slung from the neck, the women dance in age groups and the total picture is just interesting to behold.

The guests are similarly attired and equipped and plenty of drink is made available to them. There are occasionally serious disturbances caused in case there is any inequitable supply of liquor. Such disturbances sometimes end in free hand to hand fight even resulting in casualties. The priest and medicine man is the *Kudan*. He is believed to be in frequent communion with the tribal Gods and with the spirits of ancestors. He knows medicine and adds spiritualism with medicine. He officiates as the priest at the place of *Goa-Aar*. Cooked rice, *Dal* and several other dishes are prepared and kept at the place of offering. The names of the deceased are uttered and the offerings in leaf platters are shown to the spirit of a deceased while uttering the name. Then the rice and curries are

given to sacrificial buffaloes to eat, while two persons hold the animal by two-horns. The name of a deceased is uttered while the buffalo is made to eat. When the buffalo starts eating a third man who is ready with an axe delivers a blow on the head of the animal with all the force he can muster. The animal rolls down and immediately its hooves are cut. This process is repeated till all the buffaloes collected for the occasion are killed. After the slaughter is finished, the tongues, the hooves and the ears of the dead animals are cut and the blood collected is poured at the place where the stones are planted. Thereafter the meat of the animals is collected, mixed with blood and cooked with *kangua* or *suan* rice. This is eaten by all the people assembled.

The sight of a *Goo-Aar* is awe-striking. The non-*adibasis* and strangers carefully avoid going near the celebration. Although the non-*adibasi* feudal head levies some *abawabs* for other festivals or functions he dares not demand anything on this occasion because of the dangers that attend any attempt to collect the *mamool* as it is called.

The Saora woman is generally shorter in build and inured to hard work from the age of 7. She works with the '*Gobla*' on the hill slope; she goes to cut Ragi, Red gram, Rasi etc. on the *Bogodo*. She joins the community paddy cutting (*ansara*) operation. She attends to the cattle shed and keeps it clean. She assists the mother and sisters in carrying utensils to the spring, for cleaning, in fetching water, in collecting fuel and in collecting edible roots and herbs. Her usefulness to the family starts strictly speaking even earlier. When the girl is even 5 years old, she is kept in charge of the baby so that the mother and elder sisters are free to attend to work that requires more strength. She is seasoned by hard outdoor work more than a boy of her age and is able to carry loads heavier than what a non-Saora adult is able to carry.

With nothing on the upper part of the body except a few bead or reed necklaces with small nose rings of gold or brass on the nostrils and long silver screw daughing from the lobes of the ears, a hair pin or more often a red ribbon or rag along the forehead keeping the hair down and with a coarse towel like cloth from below the navel up to about 4 inches above the knee joint, makes up the picture of a Saora belle. Sometimes, she has silver or aluminium bangles on her wrists, sometimes a silver chain is sitting loosely on the waist cloth round the waist. Anklets of silver are used by prosperous persons while usually a German silver or aluminium set is used by the common girl. The girls have muscular bodies and are capable not only of all the work of a housewife, but are capable of as much field work as an adult male field hand. The woman is not fond of

gossip, and is as busy as a bee all the year round. She is actually the person who works in the Bagodo besides doing all the feminine duties in the house.

It is for the above reasons that a woman among the Saoras is respected most. Another reason is that the females are larger in number than the males in the tribe. The woman is therefore not unjustified when she takes pleasure in feeling a sense of superiority complex over the male. Sex urge is not very great with either sex. Sex appetite is considerably less and the married life among them means a sort of partnership in agriculture and household management. It is for the reasons mentioned above that it is a good business proposition to have a number of wives and to allot each a Bagodo. The woman, who is fully under the influence of superiority complex, naturally does not take for a mate a male older than herself. She selects a male who is younger in age if the choice is left to her. If on the other hand the choice is with the male on account of his affluence, he does not hesitate to take a younger woman as his consort. There may be another reason. The man by his reckless life of dissipation probably loses his virility.

His continuous work in the heat of the summer, his dissipation through drink, probably contributes to the loss of virility at a comparatively early age. The fact however remains that a Saora woman prefers a husband younger than her and a male similarly does not run after girls but carefully selects fully grown maidens who would be good housewives and field hands.

There are the following three kinds of marriages among the Saoras. The most common form is the same as among the Oriya inhabitants. The parents start the negotiations after hearing of a suitable match in a neighbouring village. There is consideration in such marriage which is fixed up at the negotiation stage. The most important bride price is the number of pots of liquor which should pass from the groom's side to the bride's side.

The next form of marriage is what is known as *pangs* (slightly silent) which means giving liquor. When a man selects a bride, he talks it over with his relatives and friends; the entire village becomes aware of his intention or his affections. The villagers start in a body with a number of pots of liquor for the house of the girl. The pots are placed at the door of the girl and the carriers stand by or sit nearby. This offer is to be accepted by either the parents of the girl or their neighbours.

If any such persons come to partake of the drink, the party sits together and drinks and during this bout, the negotiations start. If on the other hand none of those villagers comes to drink, it is inferred that the proposal is not

favoured and the party returns home with the liquor. If the liquor is accepted, it is taken on one or more such occasions. The talks are resumed till the girl expresses her personal inclination to the proposal. Then on such an indication the girl's parents and villagers go to the house of the groom, drink liquor there and finalise the negotiation.

The third form of marriage is known as *Danda Boi*. A Youngman takes a fancy for a girl of another village. He tells his friends and all of them are on the lookout for an opportunity of kidnapping the girl. They individually and collectively watch her movements always searching for a convenient opportunity. When the girl goes to do Government work or when she is going to or returning from a market or a visit, the young man goes stealthily and catches her by the arm. Immediately his companions catch hold of her and drag her towards their village. If they are not noticed by the villagers of the girl, she is taken to the house of the groom. If on the other hand her people come to know, they start with *lathies* (sticks) and other weapons and if they are of superior might they rescue her effectively. If they fail or if the kidnapping is not interfered with, the girl is left at the house of the young man. She is persuaded by the villagers to agree to marry the young man.

The girl quite often resents the kidnapping and refuses food and drink for a few days. She is treated during this period practically as a prisoner though no serious restrictions are placed on her liberty and movements.

Word is then sent to the villagers and parents of the girl. They come and persuade the girl to remain with the kidnapper. If she agrees, which she very often does, she remains as wife with her kidnapper. If on the other hand, she had already her affection placed on some other person, she refuses to stay with the man and then she is allowed to go with her people. If she agrees there are eating and drinking and they live as man and woman.

If the girl does not agree there is a complaint to the *mutha* head and he after hearing the sides awards compensation in favour of the parents of the girl. He never forgets to levy for himself some amount on such occasions for the trouble he takes.

# PERSONALITY OF A TRIBAL <sup>1</sup>

Purna Chandra Swain <sup>2</sup>

During my field study in the winter of 1964, I had an opportunity to study the personality of a Saora in the village Kuttam in Parlakimedi Subdivision. The subject was an old man of 55 years of age named Jagu Gumang;. The questionnaire was prepared by me and was checked by Dr. N. Patnaik, the Lecturer-in-charge of our study team. The questionnaire was administered on the subject in presence of Dr. N. Patnaik. The interview was completed in two sittings. Jagu was at his best spirits while answering the questions. When I visited him with my Lecturer-in-charge he offered us two logs of wood to sit upon. He had finished his meals and was relaxing on his verandah. He had completed his work in the field and was satisfied about it. There was enough time to go to the Salap tree, so he was not in a hurry. There was no anxiety because he knew me and my purpose earlier. The interview was not new to him as he had been interviewed before. I offered him a 'PEEKA' which he readily accepted and enjoyed it to the last puff. The sum total of the interview is reproduced hereunder.

Jagu Gumang was not born in Kuttam. His forefathers lived in Abarda, where Jagu saw the light of the day. When Jagu was only 5 years old, Abarda area was declared as reserved forest. So, Jagu's father shifted to Gumma and made a temporary hut in the kitchen-garden of Gurunda Brahmin.

His father served under Madan Paika of Gumma as a *khamari*. Jagu had his mother's sister living in Kuttam who was well up and called Jagu and his mother to stay with her. But Jagu's mother made a hut in the lower ward of Kuttam and stayed there. However, Jagu stayed with his aunt. By this time Jagu's father was working as a *khamari*, his mother was working as a wage labourer and he himself, though a boy of only 6 years was tending cattle for his bread. In this way 4 years elapsed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VII, No.I, TRB, 1965-66, pp.61-66

<sup>2</sup> P.G. Student of Anthropology, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

When Jagu was 10 years old his father made a mud hut at the upper ward. (Uper Sahi) of Kuttam. Jagu's family now lived in this new house, for not less than 9 years. When Jagu was at the last phase of his teens his father breathed, his last.

Jagu was young and he wanted to marry a girl from his own village. He took Salap wine to the girl's house according to the custom. The girl was beaten at this. But she was bent upon marrying Jagu. Jagu was asked to pay Rs. 50 before the marriage was solemnised. He borrowed the amount from the Bisoi of Gumma. For this loan he had to sign a hand-note to serve as a debt bondage labourer at the rate of Rs. 12 per annum.

After his marriage his mother stayed with him only for a short period. When his mother died he shifted to the lower ward (San Sahi) of his village, where he is staying at present. His wife and he himself worked hard to earn a happy living.

During his stay at B.isoi's house as a *khamari* he made the best use of his merits. There was a large tract of jungle on the foot-hill, lying unattended to. He made up his mind to make terraces on the foot-hill and grow crops. He brought his plan to action. When he used to come home for his meals and rest from Bisoi's house, he instead of taking rest, used to remove stone boulders for making terraces. He worked hard without rest. His wife helped him in looking after the household affairs, which left Jagu at ease to go on with his plan. Jagu worked in this way for 4 years.

By this time the terraces were ready and Jagu started growing crops on them. With the completion of terraces Jagu was blessed with a son. After 4 years more he was fortunate enough to see the face of another male child. When the sons started growing in age Jagu worked hard to supply them with enough food and comfort. He used to stay at his field till late in the evening.

His wife was afraid of staying alone with the two young children in the lower ward (San Sahi), which consisted of one house and that was of their own. Jagu's wife requested him to shift to upper ward (Uper Sahi). Jagu shifted to the upper ward. By this time he had a daughter and another son. Jagu stayed at upper ward for 6 years. The behaviour and dealings of upper ward Saoras were foreign to Jagu. Jagu did not like all those. He was working in Bisoi's house and staying for a major part of the day at Gumma with other Hindus. So his ideas were moulded in a different fashion. When the dealings of the villagers became bitter

almost a year before last, he returned to his old house at the lower ward and staying there to date.

Jagu brought his eldest daughter-in-law from Libi and paid Rs. 60 to the girls' father. The middle daughter-in-law fell in love with his son and came to stay with them. Jagu was happy at the girls' work and behaviour and paid Rs.108 to the girls' father. He got his daughter married in Pedigila. His youngest son who is at his teens is not yet married.

Jagu understands the value of education. He sent his youngest son to the school at Gumma. But when he was hard pressed by work, he could not allow his son to continue his studies further.

Jagu eats thrice daily. In the morning he takes his meal at about 8 A.M., lunch is taken at about 2 P.M. and dinner by 8.P.M. Every evening he visits his Salap tree for Salap liquor (Eli). The Salap tree happens to be 2 miles away from his house and after drinking Salap some days he reaches home by 8-30 P.m. Before his arrival, his family members used to finish their dinner and keep Jagu's dinner in a bell-metal pot and curry in the gourd container. When Jagu arrives at the house he finds, most of the days, his family members sleeping after dinner. He himself finishes his dinner and after cleaning the utensils goes to bed.

Jagu understands the value of food. According to him Mandia is good in summer and rainy seasons. He says that Mandia is energy-giving food grain. Next to Mandia comes Jana, which is good to take in winter season. Kandula is valued most by Jagu as energy-giving item of food but he complains that after taking Kandula a man feels like taking more fluid. Rice has its importance to Jagu but he feels that rice gets digested sooner than that of Mandia or Kandula. Moreover, rice requires curry to eat with. Other food items can be, Jagu remarks, eaten without curry. Kolatha, though good, sucks the blood of the man. Ganga and Kosila are very light diet and is eaten mostly by children and persons with low physical standard. Jagu has no habit of eating Jhudanga. It is a cash crop for him. He sells all his produce of Jhudanga after keeping sufficient quantity for seed. He likes beans and Mung *dal*. Jagu, however, does not grow Mung. He says that if he grows Mung, he has to keep watch as it is eaten away by cattle. So he purchases Mung *dal* when needed. He likes cabbage and potato among the vegetables. Tomato though liked by him is not taken as it tastes sour. Jagu does not take milk or milk products. The only oil he uses is Til oil. Jagu is addicted to Salap liquor. He takes three times Salap when available. When he does not get Salap he does not bother much. But without Salap his body aches and he does



not get any taste in his food. When he gets more fatigued he likes to take Mahua, which refreshes him.

Jagu, after getting up from his bed, cleans his teeth. For cleaning teeth he uses tooth sticks. After cleaning teeth he cleans the tongue and cleanses the mouth with water. Whenever he feels call of nature he answers to it. After attending to call of nature, he purifies himself with leaves. He uses leaves, as water is not available everywhere: He urinates anywhere he feels urinating. Not attending to call of nature, he thinks, does not bring any disease. Jagu takes bath once a day, generally after the work is over at about 4 P.M.

If any member of his family suffers from cough or wound or boil, he takes him to the local dispensary. If anybody suffers from fever, he believes that some ancestor is angry with him and causing the disease. He offers sacrifices either pig or fowl to the ancestor for getting cured from fever.

Jagu loves all his family members equally. He distributes work among the sons. When his sons finish the work in time he feels proud of them. When the work is not done according to his wish he gets angry and calls names, but he never beats them. He pulls down his daughters-in-law when they do not cook food properly.

Jagu had no training in field. His father did not teach him the agricultural practices. He observed others making terraces and made terraces for his own use. He, however, has taught his sons the work that he does. He has taught his sons to make plough, yoke and leveler. His sons are now able to make bow and arrow, gourd containers without any trouble.

Jagu Gomang has seen many places outside his village. He has visited Parlakimedi, Aska, Berhampur, Kapuguda, Rusulkunda, Bauni, G. Udayagiri, Khajuripada, Narayanpur, Jiranga, Rayagada, Manjusha on different occasions. Parlakimedi he visited twice, once when he was sent by the Bisoi of Gumma with some flower plants to Maharaja's palace and once again in connection with a case in R.D.O's office. Aska, Rusulkunda and Berhampur he visited on his way to G. Udayagiri to attend a conference where only Europeans were present. He was called to the conference to perform Saora dance with his friends. He along with 30 other Saoras attended another dance performance at Rayagada. He saw innumerable people gathered both at G. Udayagiri and Rayagada. He met with other tribals, who came for dance there. But Jagu was at a loss as he could not talk with the other tribals due to their foreign tongue. Kapuguda, he visited when he was sent by Dhani Sena of Gumma as an impressed labourer. He had to carry

some agricultural products to Dhani Sena's father-in-law in Kapuguda. Narayanpur, Jagu visited when he was employed by Madan Mohan Bisoi of Gumma as a debt bondage labourer (Khamari). Jagu visited Bisoi's father-in-law's house in Narayanpur. It took Jagu 12 hours to reach Narayanpur. During his term of debt bondage (Khamari) Jagu was sent to Jiranga to collect oranges for Bisoi. Jagu dreams, but he does not remember the text of the dreams. He does not dream in the day time as he never sleeps in day time. Generally, he dreams Bisoi, Dhani Sena, Oxen, Buffaloes and his ancestors. His ancestors ask him in the dream to give pig or buffalo (Podhua) to them as they are starving.

### **His Aspirations in Life**

Jagu wants to hoard money and purchase more low-land for paddy cultivation. By purchasing land he can increase his agricultural returns and instead of a deficit family budget he can have a surplus family budget. These things he can do only by hard labour, he believes. To him, there is no other way of getting more money except by hard labour.

Jagu is at the age of 55 now. He wants to purchase paddy field enough for his 3 sons before his death. He has planted jack fruit, banana, mango, turmeric, *salap*, orange, papaya and tamarind. He wants to plant few coconut trees also. He feels that after his death his sons should not be in want. He always sees the welfare of his sons for the present and for the future.

## A GLIMPSE OF SOCIAL LIFE OF THE LANJIA SAORA <sup>1</sup>

B.B. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

The Lanjia Saoras, a section of the great Saora tribe are one of the primitive tribes of Odisha. The tribe 'Saora' or 'Sabara' is known to all in India as mention of it is made in our ancient literatures. It would perhaps mean that the Aryans designated all the jungle tribes with whom they come in contact as Sabaras. Cunningham has corroborated that in ancient times by whenever the name Sabara is mentioned; it meant all the aboriginals who are now called Kolarians. Nevertheless, the Sabara entered over a vast territory from Uttar Pradesh in the west up to Odisha in the East. The Hill Kharia of Dholbhum calls themselves as Sabaras and the Juang of Keonjhar do not hesitate to trace their origin from the Sabara. From these references it is rather difficult to accurately delineate the geographical dimensions of Sabara tribe.

The Saoras are mostly concentrated in the Parlakhemundi subdivision of Ganjam district and Puttasingi area of Gunupur subdivision of (former undivided) Koraput district. This is one of the most inaccessible parts of the State of Odisha. Here ranges of hills criss-cross the area, small streams and rivulets flow in all directions around the valleys, nature with all its endowments present in its naked revelations, tigers and malaria intercept free movement, money lenders and petty traders move from dawn to dusk, and plainsmen are afraid of spending nights in this area. Elwin has rightly described the Saora country as one of the most picturesque lands in the country. But all its beauty is marred by unhealthy climate. Anopheles mosquitoes are plenty in the area and fever is a common feature of the land. Added to it are the habits of Saoras, who throw all their dirt and debris on the village streets. The excreta of the pigs and dirt emit foul odour and provide breeding grounds for the germs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, 1988, pp.16-21

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 751003

The high hill ranges do not permit opening up of new roads. There are mainly five principal roads from (a) Berhampur to Parlakhemundi (b) Paralakhemundi to Serongo (c) Gunupur to Puttasingi (d) Khajuripada to Nuagada and (e) Chelligada to Ramagiri. All these roads are fairly good roads which are open throughout the year.

The hills of the Saora country are between 3000' - 4000' in altitude. On the North Serongo and Ajayagada high lands stand as great barriers, Mahendragiri and Devagiri stand as two posts. The Juntang hill towards the South follows their suite. Bad Deo and Ratni ranges surround Udayagiri area. Down below is the Puttasingi valley, with terraced fields and patches of forests. In Udayagiri area there is still some thick patches of forests. The road from Udayagiri to Parimal and Jhalarsingi and Parimal to Nuagada pass through thick patches. But in other parts forests have considerably vanished. The hills look desolate due to expansion of shifting cultivation and the thick woods which once harboured varieties of wild animals have thinned down. Broadly, the vegetation is of moist type in which *Shorea terminalia* *Adina* series are dominant. As Sal is the vigorous coppice and regenerates abundantly in the clearings; it dominates over other miscellaneous species. Besides that there are various types of grasses and creepers seen in the forests.

The soil of this region is determined by relief vegetation and parent rock materials. It is classified into lateritic or ferralitic soil formed under tropical rainy climate with a pronounced dry season (Gaussen, Legris & Viar, 1967).

The bio-climate of the area is hot and humid. The whole year can broadly be divided into three seasons. The winter starts from the month of November end, continues up to February. The summer starts from March and lasts up to June. The Rainy season begins from July and continues till September. May is the hottest month of the year, mean daily maximum temperature being 32-3°C (90-1 °F) and the mean daily minimum temperature 26.8°C. With the onset of monsoons in the third week of June the day temperature gradually decreases and the night temperature continues as it is in summer. At the end of September temperature decreases progressively and rapidly. December is the coldest month with mean daily minimum temperature of 16.2°C (61-2°F) and the mean daily maximum temperature of 26.9°C (80.4°F).

The average rainfall of the area is 1295.6mm (55"). The rainfall increases from the plains to the hills as the month progresses. The South-West monsoons come to the area by the second week of June and the entire area gets

maximum rainfall during its period. August is the rainiest month and the average rainy days in a year are 65 days.

### Population

The Saoras are found in almost all the districts of the State. However, they are mainly concentrated in the districts of Ganjam and Koraput. The total population of the Saoras in different census years is presented below:

Census year	Population of Saora tribe
1951	.. 1,91,401
1961	.. 3,11,614
1971	.. 3,42,757

These above census figures show that the population of the tribe is increasing. Within a span of ten years from 1961 to 1971 the tribe has registered a growth rate of about 10 percent. The total number of literates among the Saoras is 34,802 according to Census 1971 and the percentage of literates to total tribal population is only 10.15.

### Divisions

The Saoras have at least got 10 divisions depending upon their nature of occupations. These distinguished categories are: (1) Lamba lanjia, (2) Jadu, (3) Mane, (4) Raika, (5) Sarda, (6) Kindal, (7) Arsi, (8) Juari, (9) Kanchor, (10) Kuruma. Besides there are Sudha and Jati Saoras, and Jara Sabaras who speak Odia, and Kampoo Saoras who speak Telugu. These sections have become separate units by endogamy and according to their particular occupation, they are considered high and low by the other sections. The Jadu Saoras are not magicians, as the name denotes, but are treated low as they do not revere the cow. They live in Bada Kemidi area. The Mane Saoras of Ajaygada *mutta* work on brass and sell the products to other Saoras. The Raikas who live in Rayagada *mutta* do not eat animal flesh. The Kindal or Tankala Saoras are basket makers and work on bamboos. They exchange and sell the baskets for food grains and other household articles. The Arsi Saoras are considered low like Doms as they eat beef. The Juari Saoras cut date-palms and are found in Jirang and Ramgiri areas. The Kanchor of Badkemundi is good archers and the Kurumba Saoras are shifting cultivators. In addition to these sections, there are Kumbits who are potters, the Gantar who work on bell metal and the Luar are black-smiths. Of all these sections, the Lanjia, as they are called by others, are in a real primitive stage. They are called Lanjia because of the manner of putting on the loin-cloth

in which a long tail hangs behind. They are also called Malua as they live on the uplands or Mala. The Lanjia group is numerically superior to other sections.

### **Physical Characteristics, Language and Dress**

The somatoscopic features as found among the Saoras are as follows.

Height—medium

Skin colour—brown to light brown

Build —athletic

Head form—long

Face—long generally some with marked zygoma.

Forehead—high and ascending

Nose profile—straight

Nose shape—broad

Eyes—narrow but not oblique

Head hair—plenty wavy to deep wavy

Body hair—scanty

The language of the Saoras belongs to Munda group of language as distinguished from the Dravidian and Aryan linguistic families. So, linguistically, the Saoras stand apart from the Koya and other Dravidian speaking tribes. The Saora language is very difficult and peculiar in its structure which is called 'Sora'. Late Gidugu Ramamurti Pantulu has published a dictionary of the Saora language.

During olden days, the women folk used to wear just a skirt and the men only loin cloth. These textiles were woven in those days by the local Dom weavers from the yarn hand-spun by the Saora themselves. This type of dress pattern is found now-a-days in the most interior areas of Sagada and Puttasingi valleys.

### **Settlement Pattern**

The settlement pattern of Saora villages do not confirm to any definite pattern. It is mostly of compact type as the houses are built on different uneven terraces on the hill slopes. The houses are jumbled up here and there and narrow lanes and alleys running up and down the terraces between houses.

Now-a-days, the traditional houses have undergone several transformations. However, in remote and inaccessible areas the old type houses are seen. Generally, the houses are rectangular in shape built over a high plinth. The size of the house is 4.4 m. x 4.1 m. and the height of the house is approximately 3 m. The floor is made of beaten earth and the walls are made mainly of bamboo or wooden pillars plastered with mud. The walls of the house are coloured with red earth. The roof of the house is made of bamboo and

wooden rods which are proportionately tied with *siali* creeper and is thatched by a variety of grass collected from forest.

The Saora houses are single roomed and inside the room there is a big shelf with strong stands covering three-fourth of the room. On this shelf all the articles of the house starting from food grains to small tidbits are kept. The open space inside the room is meant for husking grains and for dining. The hearth is always placed in far corner of the house close to a wall. The inner walls of the house are decorated with icons in honour of their Gods and ancestors.

### **Economic Life**

The economic life of the Saoras mainly centers on agriculture. They practice two types of agriculture—shifting cultivation on the hill slope and terrace cultivation on the gentle slopes at the foot hill. They supplement their income from land by foraging and food gathering. Mango, Mahula and mushrooms constitute important collections in seasons. Minor forest produce such as Karanja and Tola seeds from which oil is extracted, grass used for making broom-sticks and many types of medicinal herbs which they collect during their leisure time meet their own needs at home and form an important supplementary source of income.

The wild animals have become scarce as a result of shrinkage of forests and therefore hunting has become an occasional pursuit among the Saoras.

The Saora are the best terraced cultivators. The terraced fields in which water flows throughout the year are locally called *sarroba* and are exclusively meant for paddy cultivation. The upper terraces which are dry is locally called as *jyanum* and used for cultivating Ragi (*elusine corocana*). Biri (*phaseolus mungo*) and Kulthi (*dolichos biflorus*).

The terraces are built right up the beds of the hill streams and extends many hundreds of feet from the depths of the valleys to the hill-slopes and in some places rising up to the hill-tops. The terraces are works of great engineering skill. The platform of each terrace is flat throughout and the fall of each terrace is stone pocked. The construction of the terraces is so ingeniously and skillfully made that no soil is carried down with the water that flows from the higher terraces to the lower.

The terrace fields are privately owned and handed down from father to sons. These are valuable assets to the Saoras and sometimes mortgaged to local money and paddy lenders who are mostly of 'Pana' community.

Two varieties of paddy are grown in the terrace fields, the early variety called *Amba dhan* and the late variety called *Bada dhan*. The calendar of agricultural operations connected with terrace fields are given below.

*Agricultural Operations of Terrace Cultivation*

Early variety (month)	Name of work	Late variety (month)
1	2	3
December.	Preparation of seed bed	June
February.	Transplantation	July
April.	Weeding	September
May-June.	Harvesting	November-December

Ragi is cultivated in dry fields. No manure is applied in these fields. The transplantation of *ragi* starts after the first shower of rains and weeding and harvesting in the months of July and October respectively.

The Saoras grow pumpkin, cucumber, bean, pineapple, tobacco, maize and ginger in their kitchen gardens.

The Saoras observe certain rituals in connection with terraced cultivation. The principal one is connected with transplantation. Before, the seedlings are pulled up for transplantation; a ritual is performed in seed bed. On this occasion dried fish and fowl are offered to a deity called Jatra, The belief is that the deity will be pleased and protect the plants from pests and ensure a good harvest.

### **Shifting Cultivation**

In addition to wet or terrace cultivation the Saoras practice shifting cultivation quite extensively. The shifting cultivation is known by the term "Bagada chasa" among them and each and every family has a few patches of swiddens either in the hill slopes or at the hill-tops yielding mainly minor millets and pulses.

Among the Saoras, the swiddens are owned individually and are handed down on hereditary basis although there is no legal document in support of their ownership rights. They conceive of themselves not as belonging to their ancestral swiddens but rather as owning them. In their attitude there is all the proud possessiveness of the land owners in the plains who vigorously defend their right against any illegal encroachment. The land itself, the timber and fruit trees, and



game animals are as dear as life to the Saoras. Generally speaking the focal point of all activities in the Saora society is land and the root cause of Saora fituri is land alienation.

Every Saora village has a well defined boundary and its inhabitants carry on shifting cultivation in the hills located within the village boundary. Some hills are close to the village and others are at a distance. Traditionally the hills are distributed on the basis of Birinda or extended family. Members of a particular Birinda used to have swiddens exclusively on a hill and no outsider was allowed to share the hill for shifting cultivation. But with the increase in population and out migration changes have been noticed in this pattern. Today cases of outsiders cultivating hills belonging to a Birinda other than their own are not unknown.

A piece of land is cultivated for two to three years when successively different crops are sown. Then it is abandoned so that it could recuperate. A mixed crop of cereals, minor millets and pulses such as *elusine corocana*, *penicum liliare* and *penicum italicum*, *sorghum valgare*, *penisetum typhoideum*, *cajanus cajan* and *dolichos biflorus* are grown in the swiddens. This practice of growing mixed crops is dictated by their food habit and ecological conditions. The shortening of recuperative cycle, which is due to the shortage of land and population explosion, has caused more damage to the vegetation in the swiddens.

The Saoras work the soil by a piece of hoe called *gubla*. Unlike the Juang of North Odisha, they do not use plough in the swiddens.

The monthly calendar of agricultural operations connected with shifting cultivation is given below: -

Months	... Nature of work
November-December	... Forest clearing, Debushing
March	... Firing
April	... Dibbling, sowing
June	... Weeding
August-January	... Watching, harvesting

Certain rituals are attached to shifting cultivation. A ceremony is performed on the day of sowing. Before the seeds are mixed and sown broadcast the village *Buya* and *Kudan* worship the hill-Gods by offering them liquor and sacrificing fowl and goat. A small ritual which involves the offering of either a fowl or a goat to the hill-God called *Barusim* is observed towards the end of August after Kangu is harvested. The next ceremony follows before Jana is threshed and Kandula is harvested. On this occasion, fowls are offered to the

hill-Gods. Among the Saoras there is a belief that if these ceremonies are performed they will get good crop from the swiddens.

The principal food of the Saoras is gruel (*pej*) prepared out of rice or *rugi* or *jana* or *ghantia*. Besides, they take vegetables grown in kitchen gardens and fruits, roots, leaves, tubers and honey collected from forest. The non-vegetarian food is much more relished than the vegetarian diet and no festival is observed and no guest is entertained without non-vegetarian food.

### **Social Organization**

The social life of the Saoras is knit around harmonious relationship with the living as well as dead and there is a continuous process of reciprocation. This process is manifested in different social organizations and the community life is pregnant with this ideal. The environment in which the Saoras live makes them feel helpless without a strong bond of corporate living that gives way to corporate thinking. The ceremonies and festivals of the Saoras are the occasions when the social bonds are strengthened.

The smallest social unit among the Saoras is the family which is mostly of nuclear type. Generally a family comprises of parents and unmarried children. They have no exogamous totemic clans, no phartries and no moieties. The main exogamous unit is the lineage which is called 'Birinda'. The members of a Birinda which is based on patri-lineage believe to have descended from a common male ancestor. A woman does not change her Birinda membership even after her marriage.

### **Life Cycle**

**Birth** - The Saoras love their children very much. When a woman is found to be barren, her husband may marry another woman or adopt a child. The pregnant woman does her usual work up to the time of delivery. When the labour pain starts she is confined in a room which is generally a corner of the house. At the time of delivery, an experienced elderly lady of the village or of the neighbouring village officiates as the midwife. She rubs the abdomen of the pregnant woman with castor oil and this process facilitates easy delivery. The umbilical cord is cut by the midwife with a sharp edged arrow. The placenta is then buried in a pit in one corner of the courtyard of the house. Then the mother and the new born baby take bath with tepid water. The pollution period is observed for seven days. On the seventh day, the woman takes bath and cooks food which is shared by the females of the house. Generally they prefer the names of the ancestors for naming the child.

**Marriage** – Lanjia Saora marriage is not an elaborate affair. It is rather queer that the people who spend most of their resources in a series of festivals and ceremonies, on trifling causes, consummate marriage in such a simple way. Out of the different forms of marriages prevalent in their society viz. marriage by arrangement, capture, service, the Saoras have accepted the first form as the rule and others as exceptions. Polygamy in the form of polygyny is widely prevalent among them. The Saoras say that if a person has more fields to clear, he can go for several wives, as each of the wives can clear a patch of land, thereby enhancing the economic condition of the family.

In arranged marriages, the parents and relations of the groom take initiative. Generally, negotiations are made according to the status of both the parties, in some cases it is noticed that a man from lower Birinda has married a woman of higher Birinda by offering more pots of liquor to bride's parents. The bride price is locally known as "Panshal". The amount of *panshal* varies between Rs.60.00 to Rs.80.00 and 8 pots of country liquor. The Saoras generally prefer to marry the daughter of their maternal uncle. The father of the boy accompanied by some kinsmen visits the girl's house with a pot full of wine. If the girl's parents approve the proposal the wine pot is accepted and drunk in the presence of some important persons of the village. However, in this type of marriage, the opinion of the girl is also sought for. Thereafter, the groom's father accompanied by some kinsmen visits the bride's house on more than one occasion with one or more pots of liquor.

In one of such occasions an arrow is taken and engagement is finalized. On another day, the amount of bride-price is discussed and finalized. Bride-price is paid generally in both cash and kind. On the appointed day, groom's men visit the girl's house for betrothal taking nine pots of wine. On this occasion, they are entertained with festive meals consisting of rice, buffalo meat and liquor. One year thereafter, the bride is brought to the groom's house. The day is celebrated by dancing and drinking and from that day, they are recognized as husband and wife.

The Saoras also practice sororate and levirate forms of marriage, i.e., a man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister and woman can marry her deceased husband's younger brother.

**Death Rites** - The Saoras cremate their dead. But persons dying of cholera and small-pox are buried. As cremation is a family function, some members collect wood for the pyre. The girls who are trained to act as assistants in funeral rites fetch water and prepare turmeric paste. Then the corpse is carried

to the cremation ground accompanied by musical band. On the day following cremation, the family members of deceased visit the cremation ground to examine the ashes and to find out the sign of the cause of death. In the evening, a fowl is killed in the cremation ground and cooked with rice and bitter leaves which is shared by the mourners of the village. Then, after a year or two, the Guar ceremony is observed. On this occasion menhirs are planted and a large number of buffaloes are sacrificed. This is generally followed by three successive 'Karja' ceremonies in every second or third year to commemorate and to honour the dead of that particular period. This ceremony is generally observed in the months of March or April which is generally treated as off season for agricultural operations.

### **Religion**

Perhaps the religion of no other tribes is as elaborate as that of the Lanjia Saoras. From the olden times the Saoras of Odisha are associated with worship of "Lord Jagannath". Elwin has travelled through the length and breadth of the Saora country and has described the beliefs and practices of the Saoras at length. In his opinion, it is true that without understanding the religion of this tribe, one cannot understand any other aspects of their life. The Saoras believe in number of Gods and Goddesses which are invoked and propitiated so that they may grant prosperity and happiness to them. These Gods are worshipped in different ways at different times. Besides, the Saoras believe in ancestral spirits who are constantly watchful of the doings of the living generation. Any omission or negligence, breach of taboo and customary law on the part of the living generation is punished by disease, death or trouble to the family and to the villagers. According to the Saoras, the diseases are caused due to the anger of the deities, ancestors and black-magic of the sorcerers. The religious functionaries of the village is known as Kudan (Shaman) who also work as ambassador to the world of the Gods and convey the pleasure and displeasures of the divines to livings. The Saoras offer food, drink, meat and liquor to the Kudan at different occasions.

# COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL AND THE HINDUISED SAORA <sup>1</sup>

N.C. Dash <sup>2</sup>  
P.K. Patnaik

In the present paper an attempt has been made to find out the basic demographic differences between the traditional Saora (Lanjia Saora) and the Hinduised Saora (Suddha Saora). For the purpose of the study, two traditional Saora villages and one Hinduised Saora village in R. Udayagiri Block of Ganjam District were selected. Door to Door census along with the interview technique was adopted for collection of data during a period of 15 days stay from 15th to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1982.

Before coming to the demographic analysis, a brief description of the villages and the tribe under study is necessary. Munising, the Hinduised Saora village is situated one Kilometers North-West of Chheligada township. The State High way No. 16, Bhubaneswar – R. Udayagiri-Parlakhemundi, runs through the small township of Chheligada. Kulapathar, one of the traditional Saora villages is situated 3 Kilometer North-West of Munisingh. Munigadihi, the other traditional Saora village is located 3 Kilometers South-West of Munisingh. Munisingh is nearly 1800 feet above the sea level just as Chheligada. But the traditional Saora villages are above 2,000 feet amidst the dense forest. Locationally Munisingh, Kulapathar and Munigadihi form almost a triangle.

The Saora are one of the aboriginal tribes of Orissa. They are mainly distributed in Ganjam District and also found in Koraput, Sambalpur and Bolangir districts. Culturally speaking, the tribe at present has two broad divisions - the traditional and the acculturated. The traditional ones are the Lanjia

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIV, Nos.3&4, THRTI, 1984-85, pp.18-24

<sup>2</sup> Anthropology Department, B.J.B. College, Bhubaneswar

Saora. The accultured Saoras are of two types- the Hinduised and the Christianized. In the present paper we have discussed about the traditional (Lanjia) and the Hinduised (Suddha) Saora. Only the Lanjia Saora speak the traditional dialect which is a Austro-Asiatic language of the Mundari family. All the other groups who have almost forgotten the traditional dialect speak local Oriya fluently. So far as the Saoras of Munisingh are concerned, very few speak the traditional dialect, particularly the aged people. They are so much Hinduised - the process might have taken few generations - that the outsiders even confuse whether they belong to tribe. It is a fact that they were wrongly included under the Hindu caste in the 1971 census for which they were deprived of the facilities provided by the Government to tribal people for a few years. They ultimately had to take the help of the Court of law to avail of the ST facilities. Basically Suddha Saoras are plain dwellers closer to the other caste people and mainly live on agriculture. They also accept wage earning in lean seasons. Those who do not possess wet land, work as agricultural labourers in the nearby villages. Few of them go for wood cutting to the jungle and sell them in Chheligada market. On the contrary, the Lanjia Saoras live in the hill tracks amidst dense forest far away from the modern people. They are basically shifting cultivators and food gatherers. Very few of them take up wage earning.

The marriage and family pattern of the Suddha Saora is very much similar to that of the castes. Out of 25 families 14 are joint families and rest of 11 is nuclear families, whereas in both the Lanjia Saora villages all the families are nuclear. Arranged marriage is common in case of Lanjia Saora. Sororate and levirate are often practiced. The system of polygamy among the Lanjia Saora, is now not so common and there is none in these two villages. The age at marriage in case of Lanjia Saora is higher than that of the Suddha Saora. It is roughly 19 years in case of Lanjia females and 18 years in case of Suddha females.

Suddha Saoras are more aware of the family planning norms and economically better off than their counterparts. Their educational standard is also higher. The rate of literacy is nearly 24%, while among the Lanjias it is roughly 4% only (see **Table-3**). On the whole the world view of Suddha Saora is wider because of the above reasons than that of the Lanjia Saora.

With the above existing socio-economic and educational conditions, how the Lanjia and the Suddha Saora differ demographically has been discussed in the paper.

At the outset, population distribution by age and sex has been analyzed. The population distribution (see **Table-I & 2**) gives an interesting picture.

**TABLE-I**  
Percentage Distribution of Population by Age and Sex

Age group	Suddha Saora			Lanjia Saora		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-4	8.05	9.40	17.45	7.55	6.60	14.15
5-9	6.71	7.38	14.09	7.55	5.66	13.21
10-14	5.37	6.71	12.08	6.60	4.70	11.32
15-19	6.04	5.37	11.41	5.66	4.72	10.38
20-24	4.03	5.37	9.40	5.66	3.77	9.43
25-29	4.03	4.70	8.73	4.72	2.83	7.55
30-34	4.03	2.68	6.71	0.94	2.83	3.77
35-39	2.68	1.34	4.02	3.77	2.83	6.60
40-44	1.34	0.67	2.01	3.77	2.83	6.60
45-49	1.34	1.34	2.68	3.77	1.89	5.66
50-54	1.34	2.68	4.02	2.83	0.94	3.77
55-59	1.34	1.34	2.68	1.89	0.94	2.83
60+	2.01	2.68	4.70	2.83	1.89	4.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.22</b>	<b>51.68</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>57.55</b>	<b>42.45</b>	<b>(100)</b>

**TABLE-2**  
Percentage Distribution by Broad Age Categories

Age Group	Suddha Saora		Lanjia Saora	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
0-14	65	43.62	41	38.68
15-44	63	42.28	47	44.34
45-59	14	9.40	13	12.26
(15-59)	(77)	(51.68)	(60)	(56.60)
60+	7	4.70	5	4.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>(100)</b>

The child population in case of Suddha Saoras is comparatively more than that of the Lanjia Saora; 43.62% and 38.68% respectively. But in all other categories, the proportion of Lanjia Saora is more. In the fertile age group (seeing the reproductive capacity of the Saora we have taken 15-44 as the fertile group) the proportion of Lanjia Saora is 44.34% and that of Suddha Saora is 42.28%.

TABLE-3  
Distribution of Literates among the Suddhas & Lanjias Saoras

	Suddha Saora			Lanjia Saora		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	31	5	36	4	-	4
% to total population	20.81	3.36	24.16	3.37	-	3.77
% excluding 0-4 age group	25.20	4.07	29.27	4.26	-	4.26

TABLE-4  
Distribution of Marital Status of the Suddha and Lanjia Saora in the Fertile Age Group and above

Suddha Saora								
Age Group	Unmarried		Currently Married		Widowed		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15-44	11	5(16.7)	22	23(76.7) (82.0)	-	2(6.7)	33	30
45+	-	-	6	5(18.0)	3	7	9	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28(100%)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>
Lanjia Saora								
Age Group	Unmarried		Currently Married		Widowed		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15-44	11	4(19.1)	13	15 (71.4) (75.0)	2	2(9.5)	26	21
45+	-	-	7	5 (25.0)	5	1	12	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20(100%)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>

TABLE-5  
Distribution of Birth and Death during December 1981 – December 1982

Suddha Saora				Lanjia Saora			
Birth		Death		Birth		Death	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
3	4(Infant)	1	0	2	2(Infant)	0	1
-	-(Adult)	1	2	-	-(Adult)	1	1



Again in the economic active age-group the distribution is 56.66% among the Lanjias and 51.68% among the Suddha Saoras. So far as the aged distribution is concerned the proportion is almost the same in both the groups. The above picture shows that the Suddha Saora has a younger population compared to the Lanjia Saora. Because of this distribution the dependency ratio is comparatively more among the Suddha Saora (see **Table-6**).

As we compare the fertile age group, the Lanjia Saora exhibits higher proportion where as the child-women ratio is comparatively low in case of the Lanjias (see **Table-7**). The analysis of **Table -4** shows that the proportion of currently married females in 15-44 age groups is 71.4% in case of Lanjia and 76.7% in case of Suddha Saora. Further, among the currently married females, 75% in case of Lanjias and 82% in case of Suddhas are in the fertile age group. In case of unmarried distribution, the proportion is comparatively more among the Lanjia Saora in the same age group. So, either way we see the vulnerable females (females responsible for the births) are comparatively low in proportion among the Lanjia Saora. The age at marriage is comparatively high among the Lanjia Saora. It is nearly 21 years for males and 19 years for females. But among the Suddha Saora it is nearly 20 years and 18 years respectively. The age at marriage among the Lanjias is high because of the following factors:

- (a) Since bride price is still practiced, the young men decide to marry after being capable to pay the required amount.
- (b) Elderly girls are preferred as brides because they can perform household work efficiently and would help better in the shifting cultivation.

In general the social-economic condition of the Lanjias is such that young men prefer elder brides. At times, the age of the bride is found to be equal or more than that of the groom. Widow marriage is prevalent among the Lanjia Saora which is occasionally found among the Suddha Saora. The widow distribution in **Table-4** shows interesting features. In the fertile age group the widows are more in proportion among the Lanjia Saora. But in the aged group (60 years and above) it is seen that the number of widowers is exceptionally more among the Lanjias whereas the numbers of widows among the Suddha Saora is comparatively very high. This interesting distribution speaks of the mortality differentials. The Lanjia females die more in number compared to the Suddha females whereas the Suddha males die more compared to Lanjia males. This is because of the fact that the Lanjia females and the Suddha males are more exposed to risk.

The birth and death rates (**Table-6**) and particularly the birth rates show remarkable difference. These rates are calculated taking into account the previous year's live-births and deaths. It is seen that birth rates of the Suddhas and the Lanjias are 47 and 38 per thousand respectively. If we compare the finer measurements (**Table-7**), it is the Suddha Saora who shows higher rates of fertility than the Lanjia Saora. So, it can safely be said that the Suddha females are more fertile although they are exposed to the modern family planning programmes. Three important factors are combinedly responsible for this:

- (a) Comparatively low age at marriage among the Suddha Saora.
- (b) The Suddha Saora are better fed, particularly the expectant mothers get free food from the Mahila Samiti.
- (c) The proportion of joint families among the Suddha Saora is very high (56%) which indirectly contributes to the higher fertility rates.

**TABLE-6**  
**Distribution of Demographic Measurements**

Measurements	Suddha Saora	Lanjia Saora
Sex Ratio (S.R.) M/F	935	1356
Dependency Ratio (D.R.)	0.93	0.78
Crude Birth Ratio (C.B.R.)	47	38
Crude Death Rate(C.D.R.)	27	28
Natural Growth Rate (N.G.R.)	2%	1%
Infant Mortality Rate(I.M.R.)	143	250

**TABLE-7**  
**Distribution of Finer Fertility Measurements**

Measurements	Suddha Saora	Lanjia Saora
General Fertility Rate (G. F.R.)	233	174
General Marital Fertility Rate (G.M.F.R.)	304	235
Total Fertility Rate (T.F.R.)	6.8	5.5
Gross Reproduction Rate (G.R.R.)	3.5	2.8
Child Woman Ratio (C.W.R.)	867	714
a-P0-4/F15-44		
b-P5-9/F19-49	875	777

So far as the death rate is concerned, it is almost same in both the groups being 27 among Suddhas and 28 among the Lanjias. But the infant

mortality rate is higher in case of Lanjia Saora, because Suddha Saora are closer to the medical facilities. Taking the birth and death rates, the natural growth rate is calculated. It is seen that the growth rate of the Suddha Saora is 2% and that of the Lanjia is 1% only. Further the analysis of the finer measurements of fertility (**Table-7**) speaks of higher growth rate among Suddha Saora compared to the Lanjia Saora.

All the above analysis show that in spite of higher educational and economic standards, more exposure to the modern family planning programmes and medical facilities the Suddha Saoras are still in the beginning of the demographic transition. It is rather seen that the Lanjia Saoras having little exposure exhibit lower fertility rates compared to their advanced counterparts. So we conclude by saying that the mere exposure of the modern facilities does not necessarily affect the demographic behavior.

### References

- |                             |      |                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agrawala, S. N.             | 1973 | India's Population Problem                                                                                |
| Barclay, W.G.               | 1958 | Technique of Population Analysis                                                                          |
| Das, N.C.                   | 1979 | "Fertility Study of A Juang Village" <i>The Eastern Anthropologist</i> , Vo. 32, No. 3                    |
| Das, N.C.                   | 1979 | "Demography of the Gonds" <i>Man in India</i> , Vol. 59, No.3                                             |
| Das, N.C.                   | 1981 | "Fertility Differentials by Educational Standards". <i>Orissa Educational Journal</i> , Vol. 13, No.4.    |
| Mohapatra. L.K. & Das, N.C. | 1977 | "Social Structure and Demography of The Tribes of Orissa", <i>Tribal Problems of Today and Tomorrow</i> . |
| Tribal Research Bureau      | 1964 | The Tribes of Orissa. (A Special Issue of Adibasi).                                                       |

# THE INVARIANTS IN SAORA: A CRITICAL DISCUSSION<sup>1</sup>

B K Tripathy <sup>2</sup>  
Abhilash Nayak <sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

This paper on the invariants in Saora language is a modified part of the research report based on the empirical investigation in Rayagada district of Odisha. The lexicology of Saora language has been discussed from linguistic point of view. The language as we have seen is very rich in terms of its morpho-syntactic features. As there is a mismatch between many of the forms recorded by Ramamurti and the empiric data available with us, wider research is required to crosscheck and validate the data. It could be possible that the data provided in Ramamurti's Manual are purer than that of ours as the impact of the neighbouring languages cannot be ruled out. The initiative for Multi-Lingual Education covering ten prominent tribal languages (Saora included) of Odisha launched by the Odisha Primary Education Project Authority is a welcome proposition in the process of standardizing the language, enhancing its functional load and ensuring its prolonged life. The Saora community should be encouraged to do research from within on its language as it would bring out the nuances of the languages missed out by the external researchers. It is opined that more in-depth empiric research would explore the unexplored areas in the language.

## Introduction

Out of the 6000 plus languages spoken in the world, 4500 are indigenous. Though many of these languages have more than one million speakers, they run the risk of dying unnatural deaths. Lack of facilities for standardization and

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXII, Nos,1&2, 2012, SCSTRTI, pp.10-21

<sup>2</sup> Professor, P.G. Department of English, Sambalpur University, Odisha

<sup>3</sup> Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Center, Koraput, Odisha

governmental patronage push them onto brink of extinction. The hegemony of the dominating languages over the dominated continues unabated despite the sporadic initiatives for their standardization. Speakers of the dominated languages are often found in a complex relationship with the speakers of the dominating languages, as they apparently facilitate the weakening and extinction of their own languages, which require urgent attention. With this plight of the minor languages in the backdrop, the UNESCO apprehended that half of the languages spoken today would disappear by the end of this century and initiated the Endangered Languages Program to promote and safeguard endangered languages and linguistic diversity as an essential part of the living heritage of humanity.

Odisha is home to about 62 tribes who constitute a large number of aboriginal proto-Australoid populations. They are appropriately called 'adivasis (original inhabitants). They are predominantly forest dwellers but a substantial number of them started living in the towns and cities because of resource scarcity in their native villages and also due the allurements of urban culture and expectation of better living. Most of these tribes have their own languages but only a few have their scripts. Linguistically, the tribes can be categorized into three of the four major language families spoken in India: Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Kharia, Juang, Gadaba, Ho, Munda and Saora are among a few of the most ancient tribes whose dialects belong to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family, while those of Paroja, Oraon and Kondh belong to the Dravidian linguistic group. Most of these languages are endangered. Srivastava (1984) endorses this when he puts the tribal languages in the doubly disadvantaged group 'minority and powerless'. In a number of cases minority languages (especially tribal languages) are facing rapid attrition. These factors are: (a) language policies; (b) modernization; (c) speakers' attitudes towards their languages; (d) separation of the link between language and identity or a change in the speech community's perception of its identity (Pandharipande, 2002: 218). The Saora language also, being a minority language, in spite of having a population of more than three million and strong cultural heritage, is 'potentially endangered' (Moseley, 2011).

The Saoras are one of the most ancient but dominant tribes in the southern part of Odisha. Though geographically they are distributed across many States, like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam, they are concentrated in the Gajapati and Rayagada Districts of Odisha and Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. Saora (also Saora, Saonras, Shabari, Sabar, Saura, Savara, Sawaria, Swara, Sabara) is spoken by some 310000 native speakers (2007). It has several dialects and contains loan

words from Hindi, Odia, and Telugu. Yet in many areas it retains the power to assimilate these to Sora syntax and morphology. The Saora language has a script of its own called *Soran Sompén* (*Akshara Brahma*), invented on 18th June 1936 by Shri Mangei Gomango who was well conversant with English, Telugu and Odia. The 24 letters installed inside the OM shaped *Akshara Brahma* are the initial letters of 24 Saora deities. The *Akshara Brhama*, therefore, is no way less than a pantheon for the Saoras. In addition to these twenty four letters, the Saora numerals from one to twelve, its year of invention and recognition (1952) have also been included in the *Akshara Brahma*. Shri Gomango established a religious order dedicated to Aksara Brahma to lead the people of his tribe from ignorance to enlightenment, from darkness to light. As the script has been based on a Hindu mythology, it is yet to find wide acceptance among the non-Hindu speakers spread in other places (Nayak, I3, 1995). Emerson enumerates the use of this script in various religious contexts like a variety of printed materials, tracts, almanacs, invitation cards, and similar ephemera. Despite the enormity of the literature and text books produced in this language till date, the extent and quality of research carried out on this language is meager. However, like any other standard language, the language exhibits its richness in terms of its morphology and syntax. The present paper aims at highlighting the features of the invariants found in this language in terms of their conformity with and divergence from the features usually associated with the invariants in other language. The invariants in any language exhibit peculiar characteristics: they remain constant or unvaried even with the changes of number, gender and case or with the change of tense. But in this language we come across a few features which are not in tune with the common perceptions regarding the invariants. Among the invariants in Saora, we have the adjectivals, adverbials post-positions, conjunctions and interjections.

### Saora Adjectival

The adjectivals in Saora, despite coming under the group of invariants, show some strikingly divergent features, which seem to be unique to this language. The Saora adjectivals are uninflected forms that occur with nouns, mostly in pre-nominal positions, in typically endocentric modification of structures or predicate adjectives. The nouns following the adjectives take the prefix 'a' and the adjectives lose their endings '-n' or '-on'. This prefix before the noun is often found to be linked to the preceding adjective to indicate the relation between the two (the noun and the pronoun). If the adjective ends with the vowel 'a' or 'a', then this vowel is assimilated to the prefix 'a'. Similarly if the

noun begins with the prefix ‘a’, then the vowel is elided and is assimilated to the preceding prefix ‘a’.

*drin(g)-je-dan(g) a-tan(g)-arajan(g) a-jaa*  
 lonely road unripe fruit  
 (R) *pəlu-n-ə- ‘talij –that (is) white that cow, i.e. a white cow*  
*pəlu:-ta-ən – white cow*

In this example ‘talij-ən’ has been contracted into ‘ta-ən’ and ‘pəlu-n’ has lost its ending ‘n’. The adjectives also lose their endings ‘n/ən’ when they are used predicatively. In these cases the adjectives either take the intensifier ‘boiboi/bob-boi (very much) or are used independently. In these constructions, we often notice the absence of the verb, which is either silent or not marked.

*kun cel boi-boi langi*  
 that girl very beautiful  
 That girl (is) very beautiful.  
 (R) *unte-mandra: boiboi suda - that man (is) very big.*

Both in our data and in Ramamurti, we find the use of ‘dam/dəm’ as an intensifier.

*kun anib boi-boi dinga-(dam)*  
 that tree very tall  
 That tree (is) very tall.

Adjectives like ‘lan(g)am (handsome)’, ‘langi-n (beautiful)’, ‘dan(g)da-n’ and ‘dan(g)di-n’ (young woman)’ are virtual equivalents of compound nouns like ‘langa-mar’, ‘langi-boi’, ‘dan(g)da-mar’ and ‘dan(g)di-boi’. So the words derived from these adjectives also retain the distinction of gender. Both the Saora nouns and adjectives show vowel (tamme-new), consonantal (papur-old) and nasal (mettang-soft) endings.

On the basis of their functions, the Saora adjectivals can be classified into the following categories.

***Adjectives of quality:***

*bandrap*-angry,(M) *lama* - soft, *bansa* - good, *dangda* - young, *langa* - beautiful

***Adjectives of quantity:***

*alan bitti*- a lot of wealth, *bo-salen(g) daa*- a pot of water, *asodam ali*-a little of liquor

***Adjectives of comparison:***

*sukru-n atlin(g) mangda-n calaki*

sukru than/from Mangda clever

Mangda is cleverer than Sukru.

*sabitri-atlin(g) sabita langa-dəm*

Sabita is more beautiful than Sabitri.

In Saora we do not have different forms of adjectives for different degrees as we find in English and some other languages. In order to express an adjective in comparative degree, the speakers use two independent clauses with two semantically opposite adjectives.

*anin bodo-dam, nen bala-ti*

he healthy/strong, I strength not

*He is strong but I do not have strength/I am weak.*

(R) *amə n suda:, nen sanna*

he big, I small

I am smaller than him.

Sometimes the speakers use the intensifier ‘bob-boi/boi-boi’ (very) or ‘agada’ (more) before the adjectives to express the comparative degree of the adjectives. Often, ‘dam/dəm’ is also found to be used with the adjectives to express the adjectives in the comparative degree.

*gaman(g)-dam/agada-gaman(g)* - more rich or richer

*anga-dam/agda-langa* - more beautiful

Though Ramamurti mentions the existence of a comparative form (jin-jin-lanka:n-ə-ra:- a taller tree ), it has not occurred in our data.

To express the forms of the adjectives in the superlative degree, the Saora speakers use the phrases ‘sabi-atlun(g)/’at-lin(g)’ (of all) before the adjectives. This could be due to the influence of the speakers of the neighbouring language Odia in which ‘sabutharu’ (of all) is frequently used with the adjectives to indicate their superlative degrees.

*anin sabi-atlin(g)/atlun(g) langa-dam.*

She all than beautiful

She is the most beautiful of all (the girls).



**Participial Adjectives:**

Participial adjectives in Saora are formed by prefixing ‘a’ and suffixing ‘tin’ or ‘tin-an’ to the root verb. In this case also, the noun following the adjective takes the prefix ‘a’ before it.

*a-dimat-tin-an-a-paci a-de-gon(g)*

sleeping child wake not

Do not wake the sleeping child.

*a-benle a-jir-tin-a-anti a-binta-gong*

flying running bird aim not

Do not aim at the flying bird.

**Nominal Adjectives:**

*sindri-n-a-muṇa ara-n-a-kurci*

cotton bag wooden chair

**Numerical Adjectives:**

It is pertinent to note the changes that occur in both the nouns and numerical adjectives when they co-occur. The plural marker ‘ji’ is often omitted from the nouns when there are numerical adjectives before them and the adjectives refer to a number which is two or more than two. Like English and Unlike Odia, the numerals do not take any suffix with them to express their number. Of course, the simultaneous use of the plural marker ‘ji’ with both the numerals and the corresponding nouns is not rare.

*galji paci* - ten children (*Odia: dashajana pila*)

*bagunji mandranji* - two men

Mangei Gomango uses ‘er-th’, ‘ber-th’, ‘jar-th’, ‘ur-th’, mer-th’, tur-th’, gur-th’, tam-th’, ‘tin-th’ and ‘gar-th’ for the ordinals from first to tenth. But they seem to be more anglicized than original’. In our data, we have not come across instances like these.

**Adverbials:**

An adverb in Saora, like the adverbs in other languages is found to be used to modify the meaning of a verb, an adjective or another adverb. However, as regard the position of the adverbs we find a strong influence of the neighbouring Odia language. Like the Odia adverbs they are also found in pre-verbal and post-nominal/post-subject positions. In terms of their structures, the Saora adverbs can be classified into the simple ones and the derivatives. The

simple adverbs are mostly one word adverbs. They are used independently without any suffixes or particles attached to them.

(d)*riban-yesterday*, *muii* - day before yesterday  
(R) *nam/lemi-now bijo/bijodi* - tomorrow

The derivatives are formed by adding the following particles/suffixes to some nouns, adjectives and adverbs.

**ba:n/ban:** *a-bon-ban* - near the head, *a-don-ba:n* - near the body (R) *ə-kən'dun-ba:n* - behind him

**dom/dam:** *bansa-dam/langa-dam* - very well (R) *boi-'boi-dəm* - exceedingly

**ga:mle/gam:** *sarda-gamc* - gladly, (R) *kadin-ga:mle* - silently

**ge:** *asai-ge(i)* - like coal (R) *kumab-ge* - like ashes

**goi:** *ette-goi* - in that manner, (R) *enne-goi* - in this manner

**le:** *lisa-le/lisa-gam* - slowly, (R) *bansa:-le:* well (*bansa-gam is also possible*)

**dale:** *a-sui-dale/a-sui-dam* - generously

**loge:** (R) *uai-lo-ge* - loudly

We also find compound and reduplicated adverbs in this language. The compound adverbs are mostly compound nouns behaving as adverbs, being used as adverbs of place and time.

*dil-dinna* - every day

*riyen-riyen* - quickly

*julu-julu* - afterwards

(R) *jar-jar* - around

(R) *kote:n-'kote:n* - then and there

*anan(g) anan(g)* - sometimes

On the basis of their meanings and functions, the adverbs in Saora can be classified as adverbs of time, place, manner, degree, frequency, affirmation and negation.

Adverbs of time are either simple or compound ones. Though they are often found with 'n/ən' in their ends, they being the invariants do not undergo any changes with the change of tense and number of the verbs.

*at-kulin* - at last

*togald-ən* - in the morning

*miin-num-ən* - last year

It is to be noted that the adverb 'lemi/lami/nam (R)' is used to indicate different shades of meaning like now, today etc. It is also used as component of two other adverbs (lemin-tan-still and lemi-a-miin-num-this year). Adverbs of place can also be simple or compound.

*julu-n* - behind, *pada-n* - outside (R)*jaitan* - down, *dilli-n* - in Delhi

Ramamurti records a peculiar use of the archaic prefixes like 'mid-', 'bar-' and 'er-' with 'da' to mean 'in one place', 'in two places' and 'in three places' respectively but similar samples have not been found in our data. To express the adverbs of manner, the Saora speakers normally use the particle 'gam'/gam-le' (Saora equivalent of English -ly) with the adjective. Besides this, suffixes like '-e' and '-goi' are found to be used with the adjectives. Of course, we come across some natural adverbs of manner (which are not derived). The use of reduplicated forms for expression of manner has also been attested.

*Bigda* - separately, *lis-lisan* - slowly, *sub-sub-gam* - falsely, *ette-goi* - like that

Adverbs of frequency are either simple adverbs or compounds. Use of reduplicated form is also not very uncommon.

*ba:r-ba:ran*-again, moreover, *arjai*-often/everyday, *angijja*-never, *bo-tan(g)ar*-once

It has been noticed that the word 'tan(g)ar'(meaning *road*) is compounded with the numerical adjective to indicate the frequency of some action(once, twice, three times....). The informants could not explain the reason behind this peculiar use of the word 'tan(g)ar'. Adverbs of degree and quantity are also one worded or compounds formed with the addition of 'dam/gam'(very rare) to the adjectives or intensifiers. Some of them are also reduplicated forms.

*aso-ala-le* - more or less/almost

(*asokan* - little *alan* - a lot)

*kuddab-gam*- completely

(R) *bade'-bade* - enough

*agda/agada* - much

*okka* - only

### ***Interrogative adverbs:***

Interrogative adverbs in Saora are simple, compound or derived in their structures. The simple interrogative adverbs are one word adverbs whereas the compound ones are formed by the addition of post-positions to the adverbs). When they are derived, they are formed by the addition of suffixes to the existing adjectives or adverbs.

*anan* - when  
*yangam* - how  
*itin* - what  
*butin* - who  
*butin-adon(g)* - whom  
*butin-ate* - whose  
*itin-asan* - why

Adverbs of affirmation and negation in Saora are often used in isolation because they are used in response to questions that need 'yes/no' as answers. So they can also be called as sentence adverbs.

*au/ a a* – yes, *sari* - right, (R) *u?u* - yes  
*ijja* - no, *sari-ti/te* - wrong, (R) *amədoi(əga:sa)* - not at all

The Saora speakers of Andhra Pradesh use 'oa' or 'an(g)a', those of Gunupur area use 'padia' whereas speakers of Gudari area use *ijja/ijja soi/orikka* to mean 'not at all.'

Conjunctions in Saora show two broad divisions: the Coordinating Conjunctions and Subordinating Conjunctions. Though most of the Saora conjunctions are simple, derived and compound conjunctions have also been attested. The Coordinating Conjunctions in Saora can be the Cumulative or Copulative Conjunctions, Adversative, Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions and Illative Conjunctions.

***Cumulative/Copulative Conjunctions:***

*paravatin da kuntin skula-n il-le-ji*  
Parvati and Kunti school went  
Parvati and Kunti went to school.

Ramamurti mentions 'ba:r', 'ba:r-ən', 'ja:', 'gamle' as the other variants of 'da' but we have recorded the use of 'ba:r' and 'anan' and the other forms have not been observed.

*Mangdan da Harin bagun-ji gada-n il-le-ji*  
Mangda and Hari both went to the forest.

***Adversative Conjunctions:***

*Anin lami-a-dina it-tai-bin gam-e-tin mantram an-i-ai-tin*  
He today comes to said but not come  
He had said that he would come today but he did not come.

*Anin adonga-n dal-te delijja itta*  
 He health in good not still came  
 He was ill/not in good health, still he will come.

***Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions:***

*Raman siiaṅ ki skula-n it-te*  
 Rama home or school went  
 Raman will go to home or school.

In this language the conjunction 'ki' is also used to express the sense contained in both 'either...or' and 'neither...nor'.

*lami/lemi savitri-n ki gurubarin moinna a-ni-ai-le-ji*  
 Today Savitri or Gurubari none not come  
 Today neither Savitri nor Gurubari has come.

Ramamurti records the use of 'ja:', 'ja:-ja:', ude-'ude', 'de-e', 'de ete', 'po po' as the variants of 'ki'(or). The use of 'ki' as a disjunctive conjunction is a clear instance of the influence of the neighbouring language Odia.

**Illative**

*riban/ruban yangam-de-len gur-re gamle-n-den tan(g)aran sal-dale*  
 Yesterday certainly rain as road muddy become  
 It must have rained yesterday as the road has become muddy.  
*aman anin-a-don(g) kani-I-e antasan/untasan anin an-ni-ai-tin*  
 You him scolded hence he not come  
 You scolded him, hence/so he has not come.

Mohanty records the use of '-ntasan', '-ntasakka', saliti' and 'unti-asan' as the variants of this conjunction whereas Ramamurti mentions 'untēn-ə-m'me:le', 'untēn-əpse:le' and 'untēn-'asən' as its variants. 'Kan-te-asan/kantasan' (therefore) is another illative conjunction in this language.

The Sub-coordinating Conjunctions in this language also can be broadly classified into:

**A) Conjunctions of Time:**

*nen a-dolai amuda anin jagan anda-e-tin*  
 I reach before he place left  
 He had left the place before I reached.  
*(nen) a-anda-le-nen sikkoi/a-uttare anin gna-i-tin*  
 left I after he entered  
 He entered after I (had) left.

Anga-te(when)', 'akadi(while)', 'samayi(at any time)' are some other Sub-Ordination Conjunctions of time attested in this language.

**B) Conjunctions of Reason:**

*Nen barab-da-lin gamle-n-de anin gatra-jin-tin*

*I angry became because he insulted*

I became angry because he insulted me.

Ramamurti records 'iten-asan' as the variant for this. 'Yan-a-san' (why) is also used as a subordinating conjunction indicating reason.

**C) Complementary Conjunctions:**

*nen er-galam anin mii-nu-man uan dako-ne-tin*

*I not know he last year where stay*

I do not know where he lived last year.

**D) Conjunction of Result or Consequence:**

*anin daka-n sarda de-li gamle/da rapti-a-gij-in-t-in*

*He so much happy became that cannot see me*

He was so happy that he could not see me.

'Pantikoi (as soon as)' is another subordinating conjunction that indicates result or consequence.

**E) Conjunctions of Concession:**

*anin kar-ran bara-ne-t-in etija anin a-baran sel-le*

*He hard worked though he his-work failed*

He failed in his work though he worked hard.

'Degon(g)/jəna/ jəna-de are used as the variants of this conjunction. 'Delija' (although) is also found to be used as a Subordinating Conjunction indicating concession.

**F) Conjunction of Comparison:**

*nen atlun(g)/atlin(g) anin agada dengi*

*I than she more tall*

She is taller than me.

**G) Conjunction of Condition:**

*aman karran(g) bara-lin-en-de mapru sai-t-am*

*You hard work if God help you*

God will help you if you work hard.

Ramamurti also records the use and existence of some other conjunctions like 'mu-nən-kan'(by the by), 'ju:lu'/'tette-sitəle'/'tenne-sitəle'/'ən-səri□səle ten(then)', or 'ete'e:te(whether) and '-be'/'-le-be'/'de-le-be'(till) which can be used to introduce or connect clauses of equal or unequal cadre but they have not been attested in our data.

### Post-Positions:

The pos-positions in Saora are equivalents of the English prepositions. They are used with the nouns and pronouns in the formation of different cases and in other contexts where it is necessary to relate one linguistic item to another. Though most of them are simple ones, a couple of them are formed by the addition of prefixes or suffixes.

#### **andale/(R) omd"-le/'sedia-le (except)**

*aman andale nen bar maina-te*

*you except I again none*

I have none (to call my own) except you.

#### **asan/(R) əm'me le/əp'sele(for)**

It is used as a case marker for the dative

*nen-asan anin dinga lagga-ne-tin*

*I for he much pain*

He took so much pain for me.

#### **atlin/atlun(than)**

It is used as a casemarkers in the ablative.

*nen-atlin/atlun anin agda dinga*

*I than he more tall*

He is taller than me.

#### **ruan/(R) 'batte'/'ruan'/'tudu-le'(with)**

*sitan ruan lakmin andi-ne-tin*

*Sita with Laxmi played*

Sita played with Laxmi.

#### **dang-di(upto)**

*anin deulan dangdi il-le-ji da jar-nai-ji*

*he temple up to went and returned*

They went up to the temple and came back.

#### **ban/(R)'adəm-ba:-n(near/at)**

*garjan-ban-len a-garjan(g)-ji*

*village near our their village*

Their village is near ours.

Instead of calling it a post-potion, Starosta calls it a Noun Auxiliary because it forms an integral part of the noun and precedes the nominal or personal suffixes.

(S) *garja-ba-n-to*, at the village  
*grja-ba-n səri*-from the village

In Saora there are many widely used post-positions like *battu/batin'*(by), *len/(R)'le:-ən'/-do:ən/pəlati'kui/ə-berna(on),lin(g)an/ lun(g)an/(R) le:-ən/-'de:e-n(in)*, *akandun-ban* (afterwards), *padan*(outside), *a-lun(g)an/(R)le:-ən/'er-'su:le-bel*(within), *atrandi/(R)ə-tə'ra:ndi:n, -le:n*(in the midst/amidst), *barre/(R) batte*(in exchange of), *sikoi-den/a-uttare/(R)ə-'de:le:n, ə-tiki*(after), *amanen(g)/(R) muka:-le(n)*(towards), *ammuda /(R)'enrə-de:n/m'man*(before), *anruka*(by), *tarann(g)di/ (R)təra :ndi:n/təra:ndi: len* (between), *adayar/(R)jar-jar, ə-pai-pai* and *unji-se-ən*(around).

### Interjections

The interjections in Saora are very limited in number.

*O-O*(joy)  
*oi/itin gai* - What?(surprise)  
*ai/agai-alas!* (sorrow)  
*itin a ganroi* -What a shame!  
*Ijja* – No (disapproval)  
*Sari* - alright (approval)

### Conclusion

The language as we have seen is very rich in terms of its morpho-syntactic features. After more research, it would be possible for scholars to explore the unexplored areas in the language. As there is a mismatch between many of the forms recorded by Ramamurti and the data available with us, wider research is required to crosscheck and validate the data. It could be possible that the data provided in Ramamurti's Manual are purer than that of ours as the impact of the neighbouring languages cannot be ruled out. The initiative for Multi-Lingual Education covering ten prominent tribal languages (Saora included) of Odisha launched by the Odisha Primary Education Project Authority is a welcome measure in the process of standardizing the language, enhancing its functional load and ensuring its prolonged life. People from the Saora community should be encouraged to do research on this language as it would bring out the nuances of the languages missed out by the external research scholars.

\*\*\*\*\*



## References

- Emerson, Michel (2009). *Proposal for encoding the Sora Sompeng script in the UCS. International Organization for Standardization*. Pp.1-5
- Mahapatra, Khagehwar. (1978–1979). “SoraN SompeN’: A Sora Script”. Unpublished conference paper. Delhi, Mysore.
- Mohanty, Gopinath. (1973). Saora Language (Odia).
- Moseley, Christopher (2011). *Encyclopedia of the World's Endangered Languages*. Pp.341-342
- Pandharipande, Rajeswari V. (2002) "Minority Matters: Issues in Minority Languages in India". *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)* Vol. 4, No. 2.
- Nayak, Abhilash.(1995). A Morpho-Syntactic Study of the Saora Language spoken in the Koraput District of Odisha. Unpublished PhD Dissertation: Sambalpur University, Odisha.
- Ramamurti, GV. (1931). *A Manual of So:ra Language*. Madras: Superintendent, Government Press.
- Srivastava, R. (1984). “Linguistic minorities and national language”. In Florian Coulmas, ed., *Linguistic Minorities and Literacy: Language Policy Issues in Developing countries*, 99–114. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Starosta, Stanley.H. (1967). "Sora Syntax: A Generative Approach to a Munda Language". Doctoral Dissertation: University of Wisconsin.
- Tripathy, Bijay K. (1993). "Structural Description of Sambalpuri". D Litt. Dissertation: Sambalpur University.
- Zide, Norman. (1996). “Scripts for Munda languages”, in Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, eds. *The world’s writing systems*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

# THE BIRINDA OF THE LANJIA SAORAS <sup>1</sup>

Nityananda Das <sup>2</sup>

The Lanjia Saoras here after called Saora are the most backward section of the great Saora tribe who live in the Agency tracts of Ganjam district and in Pottasingi P. S. area of Koraput district in the State of Orissa. They inhabit the Eastern Ghats hill ranges varying from 3000-4000 ft. Their population according to 1941 Census was estimated in Ganjam Agency 95,479 and in Koraput 52,518. In 1961 Census the population is 1,31,000. They are called by this name on account of the manner of putting on their loin-cloth with an end hanging like a tail from the waist. They are also called Maliah (Mal-hill), Jati Saora. The Tribe has been described in the ancient literature as a component of the great Sabara stock that extended from Gujrat in the west to the coastal plains of modern Orissa in the coast. Cunningham has considered the Bhils also as Sabaras. In Sanskrit Sabara or Sabara means a mountaineer barbarian or savage. In fact, the Aryans designated almost all the Jungle tribes as Sabaras.

The Saoras of Orissa owe their importance to a legend which connects them with Lord Jagannath of Puri. It is said that the Sabara king Viswabasu was worshipping lord Jagannath in his mountain Kingdom. An Oriya king could not succeed to persuade him to part with the deity to be installed in the temple at Puri. Then he sent secretly an emissary in disguise who succeeded in transferring the deity to Puri. Authenticity of this legend cannot be documented, but it has its impact on the social and religious life of the people and even today a section of the priests in Jagannath temple of Puri are considered to be of Sabara origin.

Elwin has described the religion of the tribe magnificently in 'Religion' of An Indian Tribe', which made them known all over the world. To the students of anthropology and religion, his book opens up a new chapter. Never before, the religions of any tribe has been studied in such detail. There is hardly

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1965-66, pp. 5-12

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Director, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

any contemporary tribal community who has such elaborate religious organization, beliefs and rites like those of the Lanjia Saora. Elwin is right in saying that without understanding the religion of the tribe one cannot understand any other aspect of their life. There is hardly any other contemporary religion having so many super-natural beings all functioning, all important, all demanding their rights and exercising their influence over the living beings.

Nevertheless there is another very important aspect of Saora culture which puts the tribe on a unique position in ethnographical map of the world, the absence of "clan" or "sib" in their social structure. A clan or sib consists of blood relations of one side only who are joined into an exogamous unit. A common residence, mystic tie or descents from an animal or plant or material object were stated to be characteristics of a clan. Rivers defined a clan "as an exogamous division of a tribe the members of which are tied together by a belief in common descent, common possession of a totem or habitation of a common territory. Lowie omitted totemism as an integral component of a clan due to its absence in many tribes of America, Africa and Asia. Besides, he dropped common territory as there are instances of a clan spreading over a large area.

In *Notes and Quarries of Anthropology*, a clan is defined "as a group of persons of both sexes, membership of which is determined by unilateral descent, actual or putative with ipso facto obligation of an exclusive kind".

A Clan or Sib therefore has the principal function in regulating marriage, inheritance of property and other social, economic and political events like funeral, warfare exchange, barter, etc. In the history of anthropological thought there is special importance of clan or sib. Morgan and Tylor advocated that clan is the primary social organization of all people while family evolved later. This view of Morgan was adopted by Engels who became one of the founders of Marxism. Hence there rose a controversy on this issue. From the researches among the contemporary backward people it was well established that some of the most primitive tribes like Onges of Andaman, Bushmen Hottentots of Africa and some Eskimo groups do not have clans but they have well organized families as the unit of social organization. In this respect, the Lanjia Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput, who are certainly a real primitive tribe confined to a specific geographical habitat do not have exogamous clans or sibs and associated totemism.

They have families as the unit of social organization, and Birindas are groups of extended families controlling marriage, inheritance and other social functions.

The Gamang of Pottasing when interviewed stated that Birinda consists of descendents from a common ancestor for 3 to 4 generations. From the village Sagada it was learnt that not all the descendents of a common ancestor are in one Birinda for all time to come. In course of time some separate and form another Birinda. Enquiries from Parlakimidi agencies showed that the Birinda structure is a loose union of families. In a Birinda there may be twenty to thirty families or only 5 to 10 families. In Udayagiri agency where Hinduisation has been felt to a greater extent, Birinda is gradually transforming into Gotra, by adopting a Gotra names from Hindu society.

The function of Birinda is clear. Marriage within the Birinda is strictly prohibited. The members stand to each other as brothers and sisters. "It is highly objectionable for a man to take a woman from the same Birinda" said the Gamanga of Patilli. This not only offends living beings but dead too. It may so happen that the two neighbors in a village may belong to two different Birindas. Hence taking a girl from the neighbor's house for marriage is possible, while in different villages there may be members of one Birinda among which matrimony is not possible. The members do not associate any Guardian Angel with the Birinda and totemic rites connected with plants and animals are not there. The dead ancestor's within living memory, not supernatural beings are considered to be founders of the Birindas.

The Birinda brotherhood is called upon to participate in the birth and death rites not only as visitors but are expected to contribute for expenses which are of course reciprocated. Saora have a large number of funeral rites out of which first funeral rite called 'Guar' and the second funeral rite called 'Karjya' are the most important. These ceremonies are not only elaborate affairs but drain away a good part of Saoras' resources as one or more buffaloes are sacrificed. Birinda members have to donate some cash for the sacrificial buffaloes. Well-to-do kins may contribute a full animal. All these payments are reciprocated by the receiver to the giver when similar occasion arises. In Liabo village at the Guar ceremony of Sirpini two buffaloes were supplied by his Birinda men of two different villages. One of those villages was of her brother's and the other of her sister's. With proper observance of these ceremonies the dead can only be admitted into the under worlds of ancestors and Gods.

When someone dies issueless the Birinda members inherit his properties. A *panchayat* of the Birinda brotherhood convened for this purpose, decides who of the members should inherit it. It becomes obligatory for the inheritor to perform the first funeral Guar ceremony for the deceased. It will be worthwhile to state that in Saora culture a great emphasis is laid on this ceremony. Without

the performance of this ceremony there is no peace to the soul of the dead, as he cannot be admitted to underworld. Such a soul not only becomes source of trouble to his family members but also to the general communal life. As such a soul cannot get a place among the ancestors of underworld. It has to move about between the land of living and dead, around human habitations and bring in epidemics, diseases, pests and man-eating tigers.

Another important aspect is the woman retaining her father's Birinda after marriage. In different societies it is obligatory for a woman to change to the clan or Gotra of her husband after her marriage. In a patriarchal society where inheritance is through the father's line we do not find any incidence of two clans or Gotras within one family. But the Saoras having patriarchy and patrilocal residence permit a woman to retain the membership of her parent's Birinda after her marriage. After her death the members of a woman's Birinda may demand her dead body to be cremated in their village, not in the village of her husband. When it does not become feasible, a portion of the ash after cremation is taken to their own cremation ground and ceremonially buried. This is the vital trait through which woman maintain their social position in the Saora Society. Her brothers and sisters belong to her Birinda, as also the children of her brothers, but not of the sisters. Her own children do not belong to her Birinda but to her husband's Birinda. Therefore, her own children could be married to her brother's children. Cross cousin marriages are therefore common.

Another interesting institution in Saora society is marriage of a step-son and a step-mother. Saoras marry several wives. It may so happen that at the time of death of the father, there may be very young junior wives. There may be grown up sons from senior wives. As those sons and the step-mothers belong to different Birindas, one of the sons can keep as mistress one of the young step-mothers on his father's death. Such a marriage is called 'Yayangkoi'. The spirit of the deceased father then admonishes them in dreams and threatens them to cause harm if a proper ceremony is not held. The son then buys a buffalo, two bangles and a new cloth. The buffalo is ceremonially sacrificed and offered to the spirit of deceased father. In the ceremony, one of the older relations acts as the dead father. After the ceremony the step-son and his step-mother are recognized as man and wife.

Birinda members are exogamous and strictly observe incest taboos. It was gathered that there are sometimes violations of the incest taboo where somebody develops affairs with another member of opposite sex within a Birinda. On such occasions there is strong social disapproval and the offenders may have to leave their home and hearth. Often they use to run away to the tea

gardens in Assam and do not return to their village during their life time. But such instances are rare. At Manumgul village one has kept his sister as mistress and they have issues. They are considered outcastes and do not have normal social intercourse with others.

In a small Saora village there may be members of one Birinda or sometimes two to three Birindas. In big villages there are several such Birindas. In big village there are several such Birindas. In Sagada there are nine Birindas among 110 families. In 100 families at Kalakote there are as many as eleven Birindas. While in Tabar Potta all the seven families belong to one Birinda, and they have members of their Birinda in Patta, another village in the neighborhood, from which they have all come to settle in the present site. In multi-Birinda villages there is free mixing of unmarried boys and girls while in mono-Birinda village absolute restrictions are perceptible, as all the inmates are agnatic kins. Hence in the former case quite a larger number of marriages take place within the village.

Saora memory being short it is difficult to gather genealogy beyond three generations. Besides, I had no opportunity to make detail studies on this line in various regions of Saora land. From the few genealogies collected at Sagada, Rejintal and Taraba it could be found that a Birinda divides and each unit becomes an independent unit with the increase in number of members. A too unwieldy growth could not absorb all the obligations and restrictions. That is why it divides. Migration of a Birinda member to another settlement or village also affects the structure. After three generations (sometimes more or less) the migrants cut off social ties with their agnates, though they may refer them as "Sudh" and do not observe the regulations and obligations towards them, as own Birinda members like attending Guar and Karjya ceremonies with animal and grains. Marriage restrictions may still be followed except in exceptional cases when someone takes a mate in tea-gardens, or while working as Goti (servant) in the family of the girl. Then it is argued that the Birinda has already been cut off and no penalty is fixed for the breach. This has happened in case of Parjon in Potta village who eloped with a girl named Japni from Tabar Potta, whose families were once upon a time members of one Birinda.

When a group of Saoras call at another village with a marriage proposal, they may discuss in detail all possible genealogy of the members to stress out probabilities of their Birinda ties. If no such link can be established beyond three generation, then it is granted that there is either no tie or if any, exists, it can be ignored. This is a pragmatic approach to proceed with negotiations without unnecessarily hindering the same.

Birinda is a democratic force in Saora society. Its members are all equal in their rights and privileges. No doubt older members have some say but not to any great extent to impose any arbitrary decision on the younger. Birindas are knit around the general, social and political structure of a village. They all abide by the decision of the Gamang and Bhuiya in secular and religious affairs. It has no such function as the Kondh agnatic territorial clans have in claiming a particular Soil (area) as their own. In this aspect Saora Birinda is a loose union of members.

Saoras dread like the Hindus and few other tribes to die issueless. For them life after death in the other world is more important than life in the world. For entry into the underworld of deads, proper ceremonies (Guar and Karjya) have to be performed by the children and other kinsmen of the dead. Birinda membership is a security against the contingency of one dying issueless. If one dies issueless the Birinda members can claim his properties but simultaneously should perform the funeral ceremonies. Besides, Birinda also cuts down a good deal of disputes over inheritance of the properties of the deceased. If anyone inherits such properties without the complementary obligations, he draws the vengeance from the dead and is sure to face calamity. Security in this world and in the underworld is thus achieved through the Birinda structure. It helps in curbing bride price as well as dowry. As the woman retains the membership of her own Birinda after her marriage and her Birinda agnates have a right to claim her body after death and perform funeral rites, she continues to be a part and parcel of the family to which she is born. She claims her personal possessions during and after her marriage. Hence, there is lesser social necessity to pay a heavy bride price to get a girl and corresponding dowry to be paid to her during marriage.

From the above study it can then be revealed as to how a simpler society without clan or sib orients itself to discharge all the social functions and religious obligations. It has devised the Birinda structure which practically functions in all respects as a clan in controlling social and psychological frontiers, but simultaneously cuts down multiple restrictions of totemism leaving a free hand to the Saoras to plan their social events. In its various aspects a Birinda is a loose association of its members, but simultaneously fosters a strong bond among them. In fact, Birinda structure enables the Saoras to lead a less complicated life arranging their own houses according to necessity and demands.

DORIPUR :  
A MAGICO RELIGIOUS CEREMONY FOR  
CURING FEVER AMONG THE HILL SAORAS <sup>1</sup>

Bhagirathi Choudhury <sup>2</sup>

The hill Saoras who are commonly known as Lanjia Saoras and also Malua Saoras, constitute the most primitive section of the great Saora Tribe in Orissa. They are widely distributed in the Agency tracts of (undivided) Ganjam and Koraput districts. In spite of sustained activities of the Christian missionaries during the last forty years or so, attempts of the Government to provide special provisions for their upliftment and occasional migrations as labourer in tea-gardens in Assam, the hill Saoras have remained in a very primitive condition far away from the touch of modern civilization. Only a few of them have been converted to Christianity. The rest have retained their customs and practices intact. They speak a dialect belonging to the Mundari family of the Austro-Asiatic languages and very few can speak any other language.

They are primarily shifting cultivators, although, wet cultivation is also resorted to in terraced fields whenever available. The hilly forests provide them with varieties of edible roots, fruits and animals for hunting to supplement their dietary requirements. Liquor is obtained from the *mohua* and *salap* (sago-palm) trees. The petty traders belonging to Dom community visit the Saora villages with the articles of daily use for barter.

Like many other primitive tribes they attribute the causes of natural calamities, diseases and unnatural deaths to the deities, dead ancestors and sorcery. The deities and the dead ancestors, who are supposed to be in search of food and drink in the underworld are watchful about the negligence and wrong-

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VI, 1964-65, No.1, pp.29-34

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, T.R.B. Bhubaneswar



doings of the people and bring about diseases and other troubles. Thus diseases are believed to be caused spiritually and are treated spiritually according to established procedure of diagnosis and sacrifice. The ceremony of "Doripur" described here is one of the magico-religious rites for curing fever. In the month of April, 1963, this ceremony was celebrated in the village Jangjangal of Gumma Panchayat Samiti in (undivided) Ganjam district. It is a typical Saora village surrounded by hills on all sides. There are altogether twenty families out of which seven families are Christian converts since 1959.

Saku Mandal of the village has two wives who are the sisters of a co-villager, Upi Saora by name. He has five children through them. Both the wives and all the children were suffering from fever one after another. On two previous occasions Suku had consulted the village shaman and sacrificed a fowl and a pig to Dorisunum (the god of the cattle grazers who brings fever to the people). Lastly the youngest son of the junior wife suffered severely. This necessitates diagnosis by a shaman. On the ninth day of April 1963, the first wife requested the village shaman to diagnose the cause of the sickness. The shaman expressing his anxiety enquired very seriously and sympathetically about the ailing persons and at once sat down for diagnosis with the help of a winnowing fan and the rice brought by Suku's wife. A wick was lighted. The shaman holding the wick in his left hand, rubbed rice grains round and round with incantations to invoke the deities, ancestors and his tutelary to locate the agent of sickness and to determine the sacrifices required. Being possessed by his tutelary, his hand got stuck to the winnowing-fan and Suku's wife had to apply much strength to detach it. Then the shaman became the vehicle of his tutelary and informed her that Dorisunum was responsible for the sickness. When enquired about the remedy, he readily prescribed the ceremonial sacrifice of a buffalo.

### **Ceremony**

Suku at once arranged all the articles required for the rite. He consulted the Gamang (the secular head of the village) and village elders and decided to perform the ceremony on the 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1963.

*Rite in the Courtyard* – At about 8A.M., the ceremony was started in front of Suku's house. A new earthen pot containing rice, salt, onion and chili; a winnowing fan containing three basketful of rice (about two kg.) a brass, a ring, a bow with arrows, a leaf-cup filled up with medicinal bullets and a leaf hat were placed on the ground and two bamboo splits were placed in front of Suku's ailing wives and children who were sitting in a row facing the shaman. Eight leaf cups were then prepared and spread on the ground by the shaman.

The commencement of the ceremony was then marked by the beating of the drum by Suku and recital of incantation and offering of wine in the leaf cups by the shaman to deities and ancestors. Then he threw rice in four directions and upon the patients. A wick was lighted. He put on the leaf hat, picked up the bow and arrow while calling the dead and deities began to dance to the accompaniment of beating of the drum. He picked up the 'bullets' one by one on the tip of his arrow, shot them in four directions, then at the buffalo and also at each patient after heating them in the flame of the lamp. Then the shaman picked up the bamboo splits and heated them in the flame of the wick. While dancing he invoked Turkadora (servant or Dori sunum) to accept the 'combs' as his presentation. He combed the head of each patient for three times. Then holding the earthen pot containing chilli, rice, salt and onion, he called on Dori sunum saying:

"I am offering you rice, salt, chilli, etc. and going to sacrifice a buffalo to you. You take these and prepare your meal near a water source".

Then he moved the pot over the head of each patient with a prayer for their recovery.

*Rite inside the House* - After the conclusion of the rites in the courtyard, the shaman conducted another rite inside the house. Two leaf cups containing rice, another cup with chilli, salt and onion and a basketful of rice covered with a new cloth were placed near the mortar. A wick was also lighted. In the meantime, the eldest son of Suku brought the hairy tip of the sacrificial buffalo's tail and handed it over to the shaman. The Shaman then invoked the deities and offered wine to them. Reciting spells he signed the tail of the buffalo. He mixed the ashes with rice and threw them upon the sick persons. The venue of the ceremony was then shifted to the outskirts of the village.

*Rite in the outskirts of the village* - At the entrance of the village, the shaman arranged his altar under a Mohua tree. Some women at a short distance were seen busy in preparing hearths and carrying water for cooking the feast, while several others sat down to stitch leaf-cups. Near the altar two women were engaged in cooking the food separately for the deities. Several young men gathered under another tree to kill the sacrificial animal, which was dragged to that place.

*Sacrifice of buffalo and distribution of meat* - Killing of buffalo by the Saora is a pathetic sight to new visitors. The mode of killing which I saw in several villages revealed the Saora's knowledge in buffalo anatomy. With the

blunt end of an axe a single blow was administered to the joint of the head and the vertebral column. The animal making pitiable noise crumpled down, and another person pierced the heart with a long time knife to let out blood. Although the animal was still groaning under such torture, one person cut down the horns with an axe and others started skinning. When the skinning was over, the blood discharged from the heart was collected in a pot.

A cup of blood, a front leg and the head were handed over to the shaman, who placed these near the altar. Two legs and one-third of the lung, heart and liver were taken by the owner. A small quantity of flesh and the rest of the lung, heart and liver were used for preparing the food for the deities and deads. One leg, the entrails and some strips of flesh were given for feasting at the spot. The remaining quantity of the meat was distributed equally among the families who contributed rice for the feast and participated in the ceremony.

*Preparation of Food* – Following items of food for the feast and for the worship were prepared separately:-

- (a) Rice and millet mixed together were boiled in water to prepare porridge.
- (b) Flesh mixed with rice was boiled in water.
- (c) Some portions of lung, liver and heart mixed with rice-flour were boiled with blood and water.
- (d) Flesh being added with salt chilli and turmeric was boiled in water.
- (e) Some portions of liver, lung and the heart were roasted in burning amber.

After cooking, there was the important task of cutting the boiled flesh into pieces for distribution.

*The Worship* - In the meantime, the shaman invoked the deities and the ancestors and offered wine and rice mixed with the blood of the buffalo. Then he himself began to beat the drum, slowly at first and then more rapidly and prayed the deities, especially to Dorisunum, to accept the food to bring health and happiness to the family and also to the village. While reciting spells he poured water on the head of each patient. Different items of cooked food were handed over to the shaman. After invoking the dead and the deities, he offered these items along with wine. After this he himself took wine and went on calling the ancestors and the deities and passed into a trance. He became possessed by a number of deities and dead ancestors. The long conversation, which took place between the audience on the one hand and the shaman acting as the vehicle of the unseen powers on the other is briefly noted below:-

Turkadora, the servant of Dori sunum came first and it was declared that he sucked the forehead, neck, back, hands, legs and great toes of each patient. The earthen pot containing rice, onion, chilli, salt and flesh of the buffalo was offered to him. He wanted his stick, which was at once given. Holding the stick with his right hand and keeping the pot on the head, the shaman acted as if walking with these materials for Dorisunum, his master. Then he was possessed by another servant of Dorisunum and informed about the arrival of his master. He asked for water to drink and went away.

After this Dorisunum himself came and demanded “why you first gave me a fowl and then a pig but not a buffalo at the first instance. Do you know that I was in need of buffalo for my cultivation? When you did not comply with my demand for a buffalo, I attacked most of the members of the family”. To cool down his anger all persons sitting by his side flattered him, and offered wine with great care and devotion. Suku, the head of the family celebrating the rites, conveyed him the difficulties he had to undergo to get a buffalo on credit. When a cloth was handed over to him, he exclaimed “This is not a good cloth and you are giving me only one piece. What I will say when my daughter will ask for one? Take this back and get two nice pieces immediately”. Suku immediately replied, “I have given you a nice cloth, but you considered it to be bad. Please be satisfied with it. If dissatisfied come with me to my home and select one”.

Dorisunum said, “Very good, I am satisfied with it and let me wear it”. The shaman representing Dorisunum, got up and put on the cloth and sat down and said to Suku, “You promise to give another buffalo after his recovery of your wives and children”. Suku replied, “Please help me to harvest a good crop so that I would be able to give one”. Dorisunum asked for wine which was at once given and went away. There was silence and everybody had some palm wine.

Then the shaman was visited by a series of ghosts one after another. Some of these ghosts came to take wine and food, some made fresh demands for sacrifice, and some of them warned their relatives about their negligence, carelessness and breach of taboo. Most of them were persuaded to depart after taking wine. At last came to ghost of Indam, the last Gamang of the village and father of the present Gamang. He was offered wine immediately. After tasting it he said “Oh, this palm wine is very bitter, I won’t take it. Give me Mohua liquor”. At once *mohua*-liquor was given to him. While drinking it he enquired about the welfare of the village. He asked why they had not made the clearing for the year. The Gamang who was sitting by his side told how everything was going

on well except a few people suffering from disease. He asked his son to look into the welfare of the village. After taking wine, he went away.

After this, the shaman rubbed his eyes as if waking from a heavy sleep. He stretched his arms and legs, spat on his hands and wiped his face and thus broke his trance and became normal. Once again, he sat down to invoke the deities and deads who were offered wine. He removed the ring worn by Suku's sick son and placed it on the altar. While reciting incantations he sprinkled water over the patients. He then gave one share of offered food to each of the patients who were required to eat it there and then.

*Distribution of Food* - The different items of food prepared separately for offering, were distributed into a number of shares in leaf cups. The Gamang, the Mandal (assistant to Gamang) and the Buyya as village officials received ten shares each. The shaman (who is also the Buyya of the village) received ten shares of cooked food and a leg of the buffalo. The owner who is also the Mandal of the village got ten shares extra and the head of the buffalo besides his share of flesh taken earlier. All families who contributed rice for the feast received one share each. Then all who were present near the altar proceeded towards the cooking place to attend the feast. When the ceremonies were going on, several persons carefully distributed the festive meals into a number of leaf cups. In the presence of Gamang, the shares were distributed at the rate of one share for each member in the family. The rest were distributed among the persons present. Elderly persons got four shares each, while children were given only two shares each. The feast was concluded with drinking of wine at 2P.M.

### **Conclusion**

The most acute problem faced by the Lanjia Saoras, inhabiting the inhospitable Agency tracts, is disease. This has resulted in the development of an elaborate system of magico-therapy. The consequent ceremonies bring heavy pressure on the Saora economy. This is the root cause of their indebtedness and conversion to Christianity. They cannot go to hospital to take medicine to cure diseases, because of their fear of offending ancestors and deities. However, their constant contact with the converted Saoras, who visit hospital for treatment, causes reaction in their minds. This provokes them to evade the indebtedness and misery by changing their faith.

## A SAORA HOUSE <sup>1</sup>

U.N. Patnaik

The Saora house is a thatched hut of small size with earthen walls and pillars, posts, beams and rafters of upsized timber. The door frame is also of the same material and the door-leaf, except in the case of a prosperous Saora, is of sliced bamboo woven together. The plinth of the house is generally high enough to allow free drainage but houses with low plinth are not rare to see.

The verandah is kept neat and clean and it is in great use. Paddy and other grains are husked there. Grains are sorted before they are taken to the kitchen. Siali ropes are twined there and mats with date leave are woven here. The men and women sit there for a chat during spare time, smoking. The men sleep on the verandah during the summer season. It is the sick room during the day and close to it on the village street the new born baby has its bath daily twice for a month. The house-wife and the girls of the house plaster it frequently with mud and keep it always neat and clean.

The door-leaf has a peculiar contrivance which answers the purpose of locking. The contrivance is common and even though every house has it there is no fear of theft and house breaking. There is a hole in the top centre of the door frame through which the hand is thrust in and a bolt fixed in the inner side is pulled into position to prevent the door from opening from outside. While opening, the bolt is moved to a side and the door opens. The bolt is a piece of wood about 6" long. Where the family can afford it, a lock is put on the door which has its staple and chain. The houses of the Gomang, Bhoya and the Bodo Rait have invariably locking arrangements with chain and staple.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VI, 1964-65, No.1, pp.49-50

The main room is a small passage like room. It is carved out by partitioning a room into the living room and the kitchen. There is a partition between these two and generally wooden posts fixed in the ground form the partition. It is mud plastered in the majority of cases and is about 3' high. There is a shelf like arrangement made of wooden planks placed lengthwise across a number of posts throughout the length of the room. The hearth or fire place in the kitchen has a continuous fire burning and one sees a few pots and a number of bitter gourd "lokas" in the kitchen.

The floor of this main room has two holes at which the girls of the house pound corn or husk it in the morning even before it is light, for the breakfast of the family. The husking is done by a cylindrical wooden piece about 3' in length and 4" in diameter. The stouter end is used for adding weight to the pounder while the thinner end with an iron band round it is used in husking. The girl wields it squarely and makes a sharp hissing sound when the blow lands on the grain. There is yet another contrivance for husking. It is a wooden *chakki* two circular slabs of hard wood each about 10" thick. The upper slab is held in position by a small wooden spike or projection fixed to the slab below. The grain is pushed in a cavity in the upper slab and then the slab is turned round and round. This is just a *chakki* as we call it but of hard wood and made by the Saora himself. The Saora is not a stone cutter and has to meet his needs in the above manner.

A portion of the main room alongside the rear wall is the place where drinking water and water for the kitchen is kept. Wooden posts of a height of 3' to 4' are driven into the floor. There is plank decking over these posts over which the water is kept in earthen pots. Rarely brass utensils are used and whether it is of brass or of earth, the pot is kept scrupulously clean. Just a few feet above the pots are kept the 'Dumba Dumbi' of the house. These are the family Gods and are kept in earthen pots of small size. These contain drawings or effigies of the Gods and they are indoor Gods of the Saora.

At the very entrance of the main room a bamboo hangs breadth wise suspended from the rafter. Slung from this bamboo one sees the halters of the cattle, the "make noises" of the goats, the plough ropes, etc. Where ever the man is lucky he has a packet of elephant dung strung from this bamboo. Pieces of dried buffalo flesh are also to be seen so slung. The bows and arrows are struck in the thatch of the roof within reach. The *globla*, the sickle, the *barsi*, the knife are all stuck into the roof. The "Powder flask" usually a buffalo horn with a metal cap is also

there. Spare *gobla* handles are either slung from a bamboo rafter or are stuck into the roof. Fibers collected from the forest used for twining rope are also there.

Towards the centre of this main room are suspended the seed grains of the Saora. Seed maize and seeds of asparagus beans, pumpkin, etc. are tied in leaf packets and suspended. On top of these seed grains are some spare dry and hollowed gourds for use as pitchers for keeping or fetching water or as handles for serving cooked food.

On a second floor formed by the decking over the fire place there is the granary of the Saora. The grains are kept in big split bamboo receptacles. These as well as all other items in the two rooms are smoked to a shining dark brown colour. The fowls of the family are driven into a trap like contrivance in the space below the water space. Goats, if any, are tied along with the cattle. The cattle shed are either a separate hut or an extension in the back of the house accessible from outside.

There are no plates and cups in use and no metal plates or dishes. Leaf cups, platters, known as *Dona*, serve the purpose. The living room which is the main room accommodates all the members of the family during the rains and winter. There are no pets except a dog and the dog sleeps in the house or on the verandah or in the cattle shed. The house of the Saora does not require to be spacious. He has few wants. He lives for the day or at best for the morrow. The vegetables fetched from the Bogodo, the corn and grain as harvested all go straight to the kitchen. The produce of the Bogodo in excess of daily requirements is kept either green or dry for sale to the peddlers who come with salt, tobacco, etc., to the Bogodo for barter. The house with the cattle is to be exact, a "Noah's Arc".



# MATERIAL CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE LANJIA SAORAS <sup>1</sup>

B.B. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

“Man may be conceived as living in a five dimensional world. First, there is the world of nature that which offers resistance to human effects and whose powers and laws he must obey. Secondly, there is the conceptual or symbolic world by which he interprets and envisages the natural world. Thirdly, there is the world of cultural reality, the man made world of artifacts and social facts which is the creation of society. Fourthly, there is the ideal world of nature and actual world of culture, the deal world of utopians and the intelligible world of ideal forms. Fifthly, there is the private world which the ego inhabits and which he does not share with others” (Foster, G. M.:1965). The culture study of any community without the study of the functional importance of material objects and the role these play in other aspects of life such as economic, political, religion, educational and social is incomplete.

The Saoras are numerically one of the largest tribal communities of Orissa found in all its 13 (former undivided) districts in varying number. But their main concentration is in the districts of Ganjam and Koraput. It is only in these two districts that the primitive section of the tribe which is known as Lanjia Saora is found. The Paralakhemundi subdivision of Koraput district (now a new district named Gajapati) from the contiguous and compact Lanjia Saora habitat. The Saoras of other districts are very much influenced by the caste Hindus among whom they live and have become Hinduised, more or less, in their way of life. This paper gives an account of the material culture of the Lanjia Saoras who are mentioned henceforward simply as Saoras.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 3&4, 1989, pp.24-28

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, T.H.R.T.I, Bhubaneswar

### **Population**

It is not possible to mention the exact population of the Lanjia Saoras as Census of India does not give section-wise population of the tribes. However, the total population of the Saoras in the state according to 1981 Census is 3,70,061 which accounts for 6.26 percent of the total tribal population (59,15,067) of the state. By their numerical strength, they occupy the 3<sup>rd</sup> position among all the Scheduled Tribes. Their level of literacy is 14.47 percent according to 1981 Census.

### **Habitat and Settlement Pattern**

“The Saora has an eye for beauty”, says Elwin (1955) describing the location of the Saora villages. Any traveler to the Saora land is struck with the settings in which the Saoras set up their villages. It would be fair to quote a paragraph of Elwin here. “It would be hard to find a more excitingly lovely place than Thordrangu, dinging to the hill-side with a superb view of the lower hills and plains. Talasing too is built on the brow of a hill and from its cliffs you can look across to the splendid height of Juntangbaru. Bodokhara another beautiful village - a cup of the hills of great rocks overlook it. Sogada is a valley surrounded by steep hills and terraced fields, the eye is enchanted by quiet beauty of the scene. Tumul must be one of the loveliest places in India, where you look across green carpeted terraces and waving palms to range upon range of near and distance hills”. To add to it the views of hill ranges from Manimgul, the paddy fields from Kalakote are superb. Ajoygoda is situated in a basin from where the giant Debagiri hill rises to one side. There are villages having scenic paddy fields like Kalakote and terraced fields like Boraising, Tumukur and Sagada. There are also picturesque villages like Tobarpatta and Jung-Jung without paddy fields.

The Saoras generally prefer to build their hamlets on high lands and hill slopes which are free from any water logging problems. Other considerations which facilitate the selection of site are nearness to forest and hill springs. While engaged in shifting cultivation the well-to-do Saoras build small huts on the swiddens. They continue to live most of the time in those huts till the crops are harvested. Sometimes, they take their cattle to those huts. During these days the villages look empty.

The Saora villages do not conform to any particular type of settlement pattern. Saora houses are often built in rows leaving a street in between. Sometimes there are several rows of houses with streets in between two rows,

crossing each other at right angles. Sometimes, the houses are arranged in rows one above the other like terraces and all the rows face to the same view. In many cases the houses are jumbled up here and there and there are narrow lanes and small openings to which the doors of the houses open.

There are small villages of 4 to 5 families like Laiba and Tobarpatta. There are large villages like Barangasing, Boramsing, Patilli, Sogada, Tumulo, Parisal and Tipising, consisting of 100 or more families. A village might have several hamlets. At the entrance to the Saora village there are gate keeping Gods who are offered food and animal flesh during festivals. They ward off epidemics, burglars and other mischievous elements. The Saora thus take adequate precautions to save their settlements from unwanted elements. Although their villages are beautifully situated and houses are neatly arranged, those are the dirtiest of the tribal villages. The houses are well kept and colour washed. The floors look like cemented but simultaneously they throw all darts, peelings, debris and cow dung just near their houses. During February and March, the village is full of corns of millets and other such stuffs. The Saora urinate just near their houses. Added to these are the pigs, fowls and cattle's who continuously move about and make the place dirtier. No Saora thinks of cleaning his village streets. There are small gardens adjoining the houses where they grow tobacco, gourd and maize. Such gardens are not seen in large compact villages like Sogada or Tumulo.

Saora houses are rectangular in shape and are fairly high. The plinth is high while the roof is proportionately low. There may be a single door or in some houses there is a back door, just in line with the front door. There is a high front verandah sometimes six feet in height. The verandah may be narrow. The headman or some well-to-do Saoras make it wider. The walls of the house are made up of stone and mud. In Udayagiri area, where there is dense forest, the walls may be built up of bamboo or wooden planks and plastered with mud. The walls are coloured red with red earth.

Inside the house lies a big shelf with strong stands. On this shelf which covers about  $3/4^{\text{th}}$  of the house, are kept all the articles of the Saora beginning from food grains to tiny tidbits and clothes. The open space is meant for husking grains with pestles, and for dinning. The hearth is located at one end adjoining to a wall, underneath the shelf. A fire burns at all times for which the house interiors are thus full of smoke. In winter and rainy seasons, all the family members sleep under the shelf. In summer some may sleep on the verandah. Usually all the inmates, parents, their children and even the visiting relatives

sleep in the same room as they do not have separate dormitory houses for the unmarried boys and girls like other tribes such as the Juang, the Bonda, the Dongria Kandha etc. The plough shares are piled at one corner may be near the back door when there are two doors. Dried buffalo meat is hung from a pillar for future consumption.

On the walls there are ikons representing men, archers, gunmen, mantle bearers, kings, queens, elephants, horses, dogs and any other form which the Saora consider important and near it hang from the roof several pots of rice, grains and some herbs and leaves. These ikons - all for the Kitung, the God who created the Saora, are an integral part of their religious beliefs and practices.

The house is kept as a fortress for the family to which their ancestors pay visit frequently. The village chiefs and other well-to-do Saoras build huge double roofed houses with spacious verandahs. Their doors and frames are decorated. Sometimes a Soara has more than one house meant for different wives. They sleep on mats made up of palm leaves. The chiefs however have got some wooden furniture. String beds are not uncommon, as in case of the other tribes.

A Saora house contains varieties of articles, and in this respect they are far better than other tribes. There are varieties of clothes preserved for generations, some being very old and tottering. There are baskets of various sizes which they purchase from Tankla Saoras or from the Doms. In these baskets they store food grains, and carry their stuffs to the markets for barter or sale. Artistic designs in basketry are not very much observed among the Saora. Besides, there are metal and earthen pots. Every well-to-do Saora house may contain a bell-metal pot, purchased from local traders. Besides, there may be earthen pots of different sizes. In some they store water, others are used for cooking, and some others are used for varieties of purposes. The Saora do not have potters in their community. They depend for these on the potters in the plains. The Doms supplies these pots at their door steps if they could not have gone to a market to purchase these. They also keep varieties of knives as a Saora will always carry a knife fixed to his loin cloth wherever he goes. A list of some household articles are given below with their English equivalent names-

<u>Local Name</u>		<u>English equivalent</u>
Mandi	:	...
Lab-dangi	:	Earthen Pitcher
Ding-Ding-Dangi	:	Pot for cooking rice
Kudu-Gini-Gini-Koo	:	Gourd container

<u>Local Name</u>		<u>English equivalent</u>
Gharana	:	Wooden pressure
Mari	:	Seed container
Tudu	:	Basket
Madi	:	Basket
Sanure	:	Leaf Umbrella

### Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dress of the Saora consists of a loin cloth for the males and a simple skirt for the females. The skirt is put around the waist and the upper portion of the body is left uncovered. In this respect they differ from other tribes except the Bonda of Malkangiri who also do not cover above their waists. The clothes are hand spun and are woven by the Dom. The male loin cloth is about six feet in length and about 10 inch in breadth. There may be longer pieces. The cloth may be plain or be decorated with red tassels at the ends. In Badakhimidi and Rayagada areas, the decorated pattern is not seen. In Serongo area they are rare, but in Gumma and Puttasingi areas, these types of clothes are seen plentifully. This cloth is tied around the hip, passing through the private parts. The ends hung in the front and at the back like a tail, the later being longer for which they are called Lamba Lanjias.

The female skrit is about 3ft in length and nearly 2ft. in breadth. There are brown borders and some designs at the ends. Women tie their skrits around their hips with the belly projecting. The length of the cloth is sufficient to wind around the legs and the breadth reaches up to the knee. At the present time, the Saora have taken to mill-made clothes and females are seen with a second piece wound around their bodies. Those who have returned from Assam Tea Gardens and Christian converts are seen with blouses and sometimes *sarees*. The males generally do not put on anything except their loin clothes. But now-a-days, they have taken to different modern dresses available in the local markets or brought from Assam such as shirts and short trousers. These clothes do not fit at all. It is rather interesting that while the males have taken to other varieties of dresses, the females still cling to their traditional skirts. While going to towns or to meet some important persons, the Saora males put on such modern dresses. During dances they tie a turban and wind some coloured clothes around the body. On the turban they fix feathers. The coloured clothes which they tie as turbans are called "Mane Gamchha", and these clothes are dedicated to the God - "Mane Sunum". These are to be brought out on special occasions.

Unlike the Bonda, the Saora do not have such huge bundle of necklaces of beads and metal. They do not have also metal head dresses like the Koya. In the words of Elwin, "The Saoras are not good at ornaments". It is a fact that the Saoras purchase any type of beads and ornaments and put on these without leaving for symphony and symmetry. Women may have brass or aluminum rings in their fingers which may number up to ten in each finger. Metallic necklaces are very common. In the legs they also put on bangles of bell metal and brass. The most peculiar ornament is the round wooden plugs put on the earlobes of the women. From childhood the females begin wearing small wooden plugs in the ear holes and as they grow up gradually the hole gets enlarged. Adult women sometimes have wooden plugs of 4" to 6" diameter. The pinna is pierced and small metal rings are worn. In the hair they put on bell-metal hair pins. In the nose there are generally three rings two on the alae and one on the septum. The well-to-do men put on gold necklaces and earrings. The Saora purchase their ornaments from the market and keep those with personal care. After death the dead ancestors may demand to see those personal belongings from the living. A list of ornaments used by both the sexes is given in the following table.

#### Ornaments used by Saora Women

Name	English Equivalent	Materials used
Drinatang	Nacklace	Gold or Silver
Tangam	Beads	Beads
Piprang	Earring, ear ornaments	Silver
Anangulu	Ornaments	Any metal
Kudu	Bangle	Silver
Andudak	Anklet	Bell-metal
Yen-Sing	Finger ring	Brass or Bell metal
Danusig-ji	Toe ring	Bell-metal
Sikidi	Waist chain	Silver or brass
Danang-bub	Coloured tassel	Thread

#### Ornaments used by Men

Kudupi	Nose ring	Silver or Brass
Pangalu	Ear flower	Gold or Silver

#### Agricultural implements

Agricultural implements of the Saora are not many. They practise both plain and swidden cultivation and as such two different sets of implements required for both the type of cultivation are seen in a Saora house. 'Irtub' or

'Isha' is the traditional wooden plough. Its trunk, handle and neck are made up of one piece solid wood usually from 'Sarangi' tree. This wood is hardy and light. The blade of the plough is much narrower than those used in the villages in the plains. Another type of plough called "Patta-Irtub" which is used by them is quite different from the plough mentioned above. Although the work and method of operation of both types are the same but the latter is made of three pieces of wood and the former, one wooden piece. Besides the plough, other implements used in plough cultivation are yoke, leveler, spade and sickle, etc.

In comparison to plough cultivation, implements used for shifting cultivation are very simple which consists of an axe for felling trees and a digging stick or hoe for dibbling the rock bed. A hoe is a forked piece of wood tipped with a pointed iron.

The Saoras know how to make the agricultural implements, except the iron parts which they purchase from the local markets. Sometimes, they get these made at home whenever blacksmiths visit their villages during agricultural seasons. A list of their agricultural implements is given in the following table.

#### **Agricultural Implements**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Saora Equivalent</b>	<b>Material used for construction</b>
Plough	Irtub or Isha	Wood, Iron
Yoke	Rasang	Wood
Leveller	Hinsa	Wood
Spade	Koddada	Wood, Iron
Bill-hook	Kondatur	Iron
Sickle	Kadtib	Wood Iron
Rope	Artap	Siali fibre
Axe	Areadrum	Wood Iron
Crowbar		Iron
Digging Stick or Hoe	Lalaboi	Wood, Iron

#### **Hunting and Fishing Implements**

Hunting as a subsidiary occupation has lost its importance in the Saora subsistence economy since long due to deforestation and consequent scarcity of games. However, occasionally they go for hunting to distant forests. The implements used for hunting are bow and arrow, axe, etc. The bow and the arrow shaft are made by themselves and the iron parts are either purchased from local market or made by the blacksmith.

### **Musical Instruments**

The Saora being fond of dance, song and music like other tribes possess a good number of musical instruments, the main among which is 'Tamak' (drum). It is a cup shaped hollow wooden structure with a diaphragm made of buffalo or cow hide. They beat the drum with sticks using both the hands. Another musical instrument is a bamboo flute of about one feet length and one inch diameter. Some holes are perforated along its length for playing the wind. The other musical instrument possessed by the Saoras is a buffalo-horn trumpet. It is about one foot in length having a small hole in the middle for blowing air. 'Sarangi' is another type of string instrument which most of the Saora youths like to play. It consists of four parts. The base part is made up of hollow bamboo tube, two bamboo pegs and a coconut cell and some strings. The other part of the instrument consists of a bow shaped structure in which some strings of horse hair is tied from one end to the other. The operator holding the base part of the instrument in his left hand and the other part in the right hand plays the instrument to produce musical sound. Sometimes a bunch of arrow shafts are beaten to produce musical sound. During festivals and leisure times when Saora men and women dance, they play these instruments. Generally, the instruments are played by the man folk and the women dance with the rhythm of the music by singing songs.



# FOOD HABIT OF A TRIBAL COMMUNITY <sup>1</sup>

Purna Chandra Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

The tribal community described in this paper is the Saoras of Gunupur Agency in the (former undivided) district of Koraput. They are one of the important tribes of the State. Numerically, they constitute the second largest tribe, first being the Khonds. The section of Saoras in my study area are known as Lanjia Saora for the manner of putting on the loin cloth with an end hanging at the back like a tail (*lanja*). The hill ranges of Eastern *ghats* on which Saoras live, are extended up to Ganjam district. In Gunupur area, Pottasingi is an important place. The Headquarters of a Panchayat is located here.

The present paper is based on a study in the Lanjia Saora village - Rijintal about 7 kms from Pottasingi. While discussing the food habits of the Saoras an attempt has also been made to analyze the manner of different types of food preparation and their nutritional value.

Food is the hub of primitive life. Like other jungle tribes traditionally, the Saoras are also hunters and food gatherers. Food quest is the propelling force behind cultivation, collection of forest produce and hunting. Traditionally, the Saoras have to arrange feasts for counter-acting any breach of tribal law. Offerings are made to Gods to seek their blessings. The daily time table and routine revolve around the axis of food. Many of the rituals and ceremonies have food quest and harvesting as their basis. Food is the means to satisfy not only hunger but it also has a social significance too. The Saoras attach great importance to the production and the gathering of food as one of the main links

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.3, 1967-68, pp.20-25

<sup>2</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar

of social cohesion within the village community. They assist one another in the production or acquisition of food. Food is consumed by the family. At feasts and ceremonies, however, all households of a village join in a common lunch or dinner. Thus, the communal feast ensures group solidarity.

A Saora takes 'Peja' (gruel of Jana, Ghantia, Kangu, and Kosala) in the morning and goes to the forest or to the field. If there is more work on 'Bagada', his wife supplies him the lunch there, otherwise, the Saora comes back home by 1 p.m. or so and again takes Peja (occasionally, Saoras take rice, especially in harvest time). In the afternoon he does some minor works and thereafter in the evening takes his dinner - 'Peja' or rice. A Saora does not get curry with every meal. Salt and chilly are his prime side dish. However, the Saora has a taste for the curry and whenever possible takes curry meal. Sometimes it so happens that all the family members are required in the field for work. At that time food is cooked in the field and eaten by all the members of the family dining together. Sometimes Saoras go the distant places for cultivation. There they cook and eat together. The pot of gruel (Peja or rice) is kept in the centre and all the members squat themselves around with *sal* leaves in their hands. Then one after another takes 'Peja' from the common pot and pour it into their leaf plate. Self service is done at 'Bagada'. However, in the house when Saora takes his meal, the youngest lady serves the food. But there is no hard and fast rule for this type of serving. Sometimes the first or second wife also serves. A man feeling hungry goes to the place of hearth where the cooked food is kept and serves himself. Water is taken after the meal with the help of the gourd spoon (*danki*) and the hand and mouth washed with water.

When some member of the family is absent, other members of the family take their meal leaving his share. When the person returns, he finishes his meal and cleans the utensil and goes to bed, if it is night, without disturbing other members of the family.

Food occupies very important place in the life of Saora. From dawn to dusk they are engaged in procuring food. They either go to the forest to collect roots and tubers or engage themselves for the most part in the most un-economic kind of cultivation, i.e., 'Bagada'. They give food as gift to God to receive his blessing as men are cured by satisfying God with sacrifices. Thus, food overshadows the complexities of the Saoras life.

Food in a simple society is not only a means to satisfy hunger but also one of the cohesive forces in the community. The more the conditions for getting the food are inhospitable, the more will be the communal interest in

food. Of course, among the Saoras, we do not find such intensive communal activity for food production. Where gathering is the only for procuring food, we find intensive communal activity. Even now also the Saoras whenever they go to collect roots and tubers in the forest they go in groups. Food production has indeed a social significance, for it is one of the life giving forces of the society. The quest for food is the motive force behind cultivation, collection of roots and tubers and hunting. Whatever Saora collects or produces, he tries to make it more tasteful and delicious. So he prepares different items for his dish.

### Preparation of Food

Every Saora family prepares the following items for the meal:-

Name of the food	Preparation
Rice	Either of rice, Jana or Ganga
Jau	Either of Mandia or Salop
Peja	Either of Jana Ghantia, Kangu of Kosala Boiled food of Kandula, Jhudanga of Bargudi
Curry	Vegetables-Pumpkin (Boitialu), gourd, aru, bean ( <i>simba</i> ).
Meat Curry	Meat either of buffalo ( <i>podo</i> ), pig ( <i>kambu</i> ), fowl, goat, birds, snakes, hare, peacock, bear, tiger, deer, <i>kutura</i> .
Fish Curry	Dry fish curry and dry meat curry

Now we will see how the dishes of different types are prepared.

#### Rice :

Saora use earthen pot for cooking. First water is kept in an earthen pot over burning hearth and when water gets boiled the rice is put inside the pot. The rice, however, is not washed before putting into the pot. When the rice gets boiled the water is taken out and the rice is ready for serving. Sometimes they add vegetables with the rice. Jana rice is also prepared in the similar fashion.

#### Salop Jau :

First of all Jana, Ganga or Ghantia rice is boiled. When the rice is boiled enough, *salop* solution, after being stained is added to the boiled rice and again

Lanjia Saora

heated moderately. Heating more, after adding the *salop*, spoils the taste of the *jau*. Required quantity of salt is added before the pot is taken out of the hearth.

#### **Mandia Jau:**

Mandia is first powdered. Then the water is heated in an earthen pot. When the water gets boiled the *mandia* powder is mixed with water and a thin paste is made and added to the boiled water and stirred at regular intervals. Then required quantity of salt is added. When the mixture gets cooked, the pot is taken out of the hearth and eaten when cooled down.

#### **Jana Rice:**

As in the case of rice, water is boiled first and when water gets boiled, the Jana rice is put into it without washing. When the rice is boiled properly, the pot is taken out of the hearth. In this case it will be interesting to note that unlike rice the excess water is not taken out of Jana rice. But in some cases the rice water is also taken out. It depends on the taste of the individual.

#### **Peja:**

Peja is the staple diet for Saoras. As the people are, so is their diet - very simple way of preparing. For preparing Peja, first some water is taken in a pot and heated on a burning hearth. When water reaches little below the boiling point, some *ghantia*, *kangu*, *kosla*, or *jana* is put into the pot. The mixture is stirred and when cooked well, is taken out of the hearth. No salt is added. The important factor in this case to note is that more than one variety of food crops are mixed and cooked.

#### **Pumpkin and Gourd Curry:**

Pumpkin and gourd are cut into small pieces first and then boiled. When the pumpkin gets boiled, required quantity of salt and chilly are added. To make the dish more palatable, sometimes onion is added, if available. Some Kandula or Jhudung is also mixed with the pumpkin curry.

#### **Dry Fish Curry:**

Dry fish is put in turmeric water and then boiled. After boiling salt and chilly are added. In order to increase the taste of curry, little tamarind is added which makes the curry little acidic and thereby palatable.

### **Fish Curry:**

The fish, if big, is cut into pieces. Scales or gills are not taken out. First water is boiled. When water gets boiled the small pieces of fish are put into the boiling water. Required quantity of salt, chilly and turmeric are put into the curry. Saoras do not favour the idea of frying the fish before making curry. They believe that if the fish is fried, the fish will get mixed with the soup (*golijiba*). Sometimes pumpkin, gourd or any other vegetable are also added to the fish curry.

### **Meat Curry:**

Meat is first cut into small pieces and kept in a pot and after adding little water is boiled over the hearth. When the meat is boiled, required quantity of salt, chilly and turmeric are added. Sometimes pieces of gourd are also added. If available, onion or garlic is added. Enough of soup is left with the curry. Saoras like to take the soup with the rice, while eating. When there is meat or fish in Saora house, he generally prepares rice, as rice fits well to meat or fish curry. Meat is prepared by men and is cooked by women.

Among the various items, Saoras take only few items like 'Peja' and rice which remain constant throughout the year whereas the other items are seasonal. So far the curry is concerned, salt and chilly are used throughout the year. Other dishes are seasonal and occasional. When the stock of rice falls short they either borrow or substitute rice with some other cereal crop available with them. Sometimes they consume those items which are gathered from the forest, i.e., various kinds of fruits, nuts, roots, leaves and tubers. The powder of *sagu* seed is most important item in this category.

The economic life is concerned with the production and consumption of foods. Before using the new crops like *kandula*, *jana* or mango, they first propitiate the deity concerned and then only they eat the particular crop. As for example, before gathering raw mangoes from the trees in the forest they propitiate a deity with a pig or fowl and then start gathering. This shows how the food producing and consuming aspects of Saora are strictly tinged with religious fervor and strong religious bias over the producing and consuming aspects. This is an indication of the exertion of minimum human ingenuity. Saoras use the available food sparingly and save for the future. They try to exhaust those food stuffs which will be spoiled if these are kept for longer. They try to do their best not to waste the cooked food. But unfortunately, they are ignorant of food preservation. The only way known to Saora is to keep a lead or

any other covering over the cooked food. Saoras preserve uncooked food stuff for a long time. This category generally includes dry meat and *valia* (cashew nut). When the meat is available more than their requirement then they dry some portion. The meat, when completely dried, is stored for future use. During rainy season the Saoras use the dry meat as their food.

It is found that the Saoras community no social arrangements for supplying food to its members during the time of food scarcity. It is the responsibility of the family as the primary social unit. When the family is charged with the responsibility of securing its own food, there is competition between different families in the community in this regard. Under the above circumstances, the status of a Saora family is always determined in accordance with the food they have and consume.

### **Daily Food and its Value among Saoras**

After discussing the food types, let us see the daily food habit and its value among Saoras. To Saoras, *kandula* and *mandia* have nutritious food values. Rice and Jana come next. Rice is no doubt a favourite food of Saora but they do not get it in plenty. They like most to take rice with curry. According to Saora, Ghantia and Ganga are energy giving food stuff. Saoras are aware of the food values of milk and ghee, but they rarely take these.

Food value is always judged by the time a particular food takes to get digested. The food that gets digested earlier is believed to have less food values by the Saora. For instance, *kangu* and *kosala* are believed to have less food value as it is digested faster.

Sometimes food value is considered in accordance with its availability. When food is scarce, Saoras accept the unwanted foods. During the food scarcity the roots and tubers are valued much. Although the Saoras like to take meat still they do not consider that it has food values. The reasons for this are given in many ways. One of the reasons is that the meat comes from the old and weak buffaloes. Moreover, the meat is not tasteful as the buffaloes do not get sufficient fodder. Saoras value pork more than buffalo meat because while cooking pork some oil comes out of it whereas no oil comes out from the buffalo meat. Pleasure and change of diet induces Saoras to take meat. The other important reason for taking meat is that it is offered to God and they must eat the offerings to God. The same belief is found with other animals like goat, cow and chicken. Fish has no food value although they like to eat it. It is due to

limited supply and availability. Fish while cooking in their way, gets mixed up with the soup. Although it has no food value, still they eat it whenever available.

Saoras use *salop* (sago palm powder and juice) as their food and drink. They consider that the *salop* has much food value. Salop is taken every day, if available. It is a habit with Saoras, good or bad to visit the Salop plant thrice in a day once early in the morning, afternoon and in the evening. Salop is always welcomed because it causes stimulation. Sometimes they take Mahua liquor, if available. Fowl meat has little food values to Saoras. They believe that they take fowl only because it is sacrificed to God. On questioning about its food values, it was replied that fowls are birds and they eat only rubbish and insects. So they do not like its meat. In this village every household keeps some chicken but they never take its meat unless it is sacrificed to God. Saoras do not take eggs. The eggs are used only for hatching and even they do not sell the eggs.

In addition to the above mentioned food, Saoras take a variety of roots and leaves from the jungle. They like mango and jackfruit the most. Also they take orange and date. In these areas Saoras produce plenty of oranges but they do not take and sell all of these.

Out of the above mentioned foods, Saoras generally take 'Peja' and rice regularly. But they like curry, veg or non-veg if it is available. During summer they take *mandia jau*. Salop remains constant for the whole year as food and drink and it plays an important role in the food habit of Saoras.

# HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN SAORA ECONOMY<sup>1</sup>

R.V. Sarma <sup>2</sup>

“The inveterate romanticists will find in them a people after his dreams. The romanticists among the anthropologists and Philanthropologists (a term used by Verrier Elwin) still fondly nurse the belief that the individuality and culture of some tribes can be preserved in its purity while they are set on the course of economic development. The Saora are a fine specimen of independent and gay people with their own religion, social system, culture and economy”. Thus described Singh (1984) in his introductory remarks of the book published based on the field work conducted among the Saoras.

Saora is a ‘primitive tribal group’ inhabiting in the hills of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. However, a wide range of variation of the phonetic expression of the name of the community is noted by different scholars (Elwin1955). Elwin observed that Saoras were an important and widely scattered tribe and perhaps the confusion about the name was due to the fact that from the earliest period, the Saoras are broken up into different sections.

Saora inhabiting different parts of the county do not exhibit cultural homogeneity. External forces made considerable inroads into the cultural life styles of Saoras inhabiting West Bengal, Assam and other places. However, as has been noted by Singh (1984) in the case of Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput district of Orissa, the Savaras inhabiting the hill tracts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh too retained mostly their ‘primitive’ traits in all walks of their life. The continued interest in the activity of hunting as an economic and recreational activity, both at once, illustrates the point.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXI, Nos.3 & 4, 1991, pp.31-36

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, University of Hyderabad



In Andhra Pradesh Savaras are concentrated in the districts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram. In Srikakulam, the population of Savaras is 22.8% out of the total tribal population. Jatapu, a tribe whose population (42.8%) outnumbered the Savaras in the district and has been living in close association with Savaras. While Savaras live in small settlements on the hill slopes, Jatapu settlements are at the foot of the hills. Jatapu consider themselves to be superior by virtue of their food habits over the Savaras, but share bond friendship, extend fictitious Kinship, participate in certain rituals and live in total harmony with Savaras.

Studies on Savaras of this part of the country are few and far between. Elwin (1955), Srivastava (1971), Suryanarayana (1978), Singh (1984) made significant attempt to study religion, problems of education, the institutions of marriage, family, kinship and leadership respectively of this community. Earlier, Sitapati (1938-43) and Rama Murthy (1938) published ethnographic notes covering particularly the social organization and Saora language, respectively. No significant attempt has been made to understand the Savara economy in detail. Recent study of Murali Manohar (1985) however, throws some light on the economy of the tribals of the district of Srikakulam in general. But the place of hunting and trapping in Savara economy has been totally neglected.

It is attempted in this brief paper to present some details on this aspect basing on the field work conducted for about three and half years amongst this community.

Hunting and trapping is an important activity among Savaras. It is evident from the following observations: 1. The frequency of hunting operations. 2. The special desire that is generally expressed by any male member to possess the weapons used in hunting. 3. The frequent remembrance of those who had shown excellent hunting skills. 4. The frequent remembrance and grief expressed over the death of *Veta Kukka* (hunting dog) which played a heroic role in the past hunting expeditions. 5. The keen desire by almost all families to domesticate at least one dog for hunting. 6. A general interest and curiosity shown in the health of the dog that proved to be heroic in the hunting expeditions by all members of village but not definitely the least important one. 7. The cultural adjustment to provide 'free time' for hunting.

Hunting is carried out in the 'leisure' time. Much of the hunting is said to be possible only during the month of January and May. This is because: 1. Owing to the physiographical conditions they would not be busy with agricultural work. 2. The forest growth is not very thick and so tracing of the

animal/ bird is easy and 3. Some 'leisure time' is available on account of religious sanctions. Savara men and women are to observe a total work holiday on the days when some agricultural activities of the next season are initiated and also on the day earlier to collection of different types of forest produce.

### **Type of Hunting / Trapping**

Savaras distinguish between different types of hunting/trapping. They are primarily A. *Roppudu Veta*, B. *Ratri Veta* and C. Trapping of wild Fowl. Techniques, time and planning of activities differ according to the nature of animal/bird they wish to capture/kill. An account of different types of hunting and trapping activities are presented below.

#### **Roppudu Veta (hunting by chasing)**

*Roppudu Veta* is very popular and is aimed at hunting of *Pedda jantuvulu* (big animals) like deer, antelope, boar, wild pig and bear. It requires a big group with minimum of 8- 10 members. There is no maximum limit. All the members who wish to join are accommodated. This is carried out during day time. The group consists of 3-6 members with skills in shooting, throwing of *ballem* (spear) and other sharp edged weapons. Others are unskilled. Though one of the members acts as a leader, he is guided by the advice and suggestions of others, particularly the other skilled persons.

#### **Planning for Hunting**

This type of hunting activity is more secretive these days, since hunting of wild animal is prohibited under law. Intention of planning for hunting is not made public in advance. Small group of 2-3 persons discuss and plan first in the evening, earlier to the day of hunting. This is later communicated in person to other members of the village secretly. It is felt that if public announcement is made, it would be carried over to the forest officials intentionally or unintentionally and that would bring problems to them. The actual plan of hunting activity and preparation for hunting starts only a few hours before going for such expeditions. The plan particularly covers two aspects: 1. which part of the forest would yield the game; and 2. who would take which role in the activity.

With regard to the first, discussion and consultation will be made with all the people who had gone into forest a day or two earlier for collection of forest products, firewood or for acquiring wood for agricultural implements. If any of the villagers report having seen some animals or heard the *Arupu* (cry) or observed footprints or excreta, elaborate probing is made and accordingly a decision is made. However, a preference is always given to go in search of those

animals, meat of which is more delicious and the kill of which would give them better returns. With regard to taking of appropriate roles, discussion is made with regard to who would use which weapon. It takes a long time before arriving at a final decision in this regard. Normally, more than one member in the group who propose to join the hunting expedition possesses the required skill of using a specific weapon. This leads to debate and decision among the group members.

However, in this context it is interesting to note that the 'experts' do not by themselves express the desire to handle a particular instrument. Group members have to propose the name. Even then he would not readily accept. He would refuse and propose another person's name. Only after a prolonged effort he would get convinced.

All the members take an early breakfast and start before the dawn. All the members carry some weapon or other. One or two younger men are, however, assigned the specific work of supply of drinking water to the group members.

As soon as the group reaches a particular area, members search for foot prints or the excreta of the animals in order to confirm the habitation of the animal in that area. Once the habitation of the animals is ascertained, the skilled persons take positions at different places. The unskilled persons from the other end chase the animal shouting loudly towards the place where the members of the team wait to shoot. The animals are shot at or injured by throwing spears and such other weapons. At the same time dogs which accompany the team are also pressed into service. The dogs chase the injured animals and further cause injuries resulting in the death of the animals.

### ***Ratri Veta* (Night hunting)**

There are two type of *ratri veta* (night hunting), in both of which usually persons with hunting skills only take part. However, one or two youngsters trying to acquire skills in shooting or throwing *ballems* (spears) also follow the elders. In any case, the night hunting groups will be small, consisting of 5-6 persons. Unlike the *Rappudu Veta*, this type of expeditions requires strict maintenance of silence among the group and so it is expected that the group consists of very few members. If there are more members, they form small groups and go in different directions. However, no member is forced to join this group or that group. This sometimes results in unequal distribution of members. In case too many members opt to join one particular group, the activity is cancelled, as no one can say 'no' and displease any person who wishes to join the group. Since it is generally agreed that they will not be successful, if the group is big, they would prefer to cancel the hunting expedition.

One type of game that is chased out in the night time is essentially the small animals like rabbits and birds like peacocks. The members do not go into the forest interiors, but venture only where there is thin growth of forest. For shooting peacocks, early morning is preferred. At the cock's crow, around 4 a.m., 3-4 persons go in the direction from which they hear the peacock's screech. Ultimately they wait under the tree on which the bird takes rest. When the bird comes down in the morning, it is shot at or killed with some other weapon.

People take an early dinner and go in hunting expedition to catch rabbits. In this case also a small group is preferred and no sharp weapons are needed. Guns fitted with powerful torch lights are preferred, as rabbits run fast. The colour of the rabbits is usually white and their eyes glitter strikingly. This makes location of the animals easier. As and when they come across the animal, torch lights are focused. When the animal becomes steady facing the powerful light, it is shot immediately. If the target is missed, other members of the group try to chase and hit the animal with sticks. Sometimes the animal may get injured with the bullet, but may escape into a bush. In that case, dogs are pressed into service at the day break. The dogs smell the blood sprinkled at the spot and lead the members to the place where the animal lies dead.

Hunting of big animals carried out during night time is very risky and cumbersome. A pit of about 4-5 feet is dug at the place where the animals are supposed to visit frequently. 3-4 members hid in the pit. The pit is covered with big logs. However, some space is left in between the logs to project the guns to shoot the animals. Some water is stored in a trough at a distance of 5-6 feet from the pit. The water is a trap for the animals. The members observe the water level in the pot and ascertain if any animal visited that place. Once they are sure, the following night 3-4 members wait in the pit and shoot the animal that comes to drink the water. Two or three persons who accompany the team, particularly the probationers, climb up trees and watch carefully. This type of hunting is very difficult because the members have to remain vigilant and sleepless throughout the night. But the result is more rewarding than other types.

#### **Trapping of Wild Cock (*Adavi kodi*)**

Unlike the other type of game, this is essentially the concern of the individual. Sometimes two or more members may participate but they belong to the same household. Moreover, unlike the other game where the members are mostly young, the trapping of forest cock is attempted under the guidance of an experienced person. This is also carried out during the day time. The essential requirements of this hunt are: (1) a net and (2) a trained *adavi kodi* (wild cock).

The net is spread out in the forest inhabited by wild cocks. Their habitation is ascertained by their cries in the early morning. If any egg or egg shells are found in that particular area, the habitation is further confirmed. After spreading the net, the domesticated cock is directed to cry and invite its species. As and when the cocks approach, they are trapped in the net.

#### **Success rate in Hunting/Trapping Expeditions:**

Every hunting expedition is not rewarding. Success rate in *roppudu veta* is particularly poor, compared to *ratri veta*. There are large number of beliefs associated with successful hunting expedition. The failure of the operation is mostly attributed to those beliefs, rather than to the skill of the hunters. The variation in the beliefs in the different villages and the stories of origin of those beliefs suggests that these are group sentiments rather than 'beliefs'. For example, in the village Manapuram, a few years back the people killed a bear by hitting on its head with an axe. The bear was earlier shot by a gun. After some time the person who was an 'expert' in shooting become incapacitated. All the hunting expeditions after this incident did not yield any result for five successive years. Since then, the villagers held the belief that 'once the animal is injured with a bullet, it should not be hit on the head with any axe. The only way to kill it is to cut the neck with knife'. A similar kind of story runs in Manda colony, where it is believed that if any member applied oil to his hair either on the day of hunting or a day before, he would miss the aim.

In the *roppudu veta*, in a period of five months (January- June), in the year 1987, 13 expeditions were undertaken and only five times they were able to kill a game. They were fortunate to get a deer killed by a *chindave* at one time. The *chindave* disappeared with the cries of the group, leaving the dead animal near a bush. This rate of success was considered to be rare by the villagers. During the previous two years, only eight animals could be killed during the same period. *Ratri veta* aimed at killing of *pedda jantuvulu* is more rewarding. During the period of five months from January to June, hunting activity of this type was carried out on nine occasions. Twice, the teams were successful. On one occasion, the team successfully killed two wild pigs. During the same period, in the same village, successful hunting of one rabbit and four peacocks was reported. The success rate in the case of rabbits is by far poor (one in 16 times), while it is the maximum in the case of peacocks (four out of seven times).

#### **Hunting/Trapping as an Economic Activity**

Except the trapping of wild cock other games are not very much commercialized. In the case of trapping of cocks, the birds caught are usually

sold in the weekly markets. Thus, it becomes a direct source of income. At least the members in seven households in the three villages surveyed are preoccupied with this activity during the summer season. The average earnings from this activity during the three month period (February-April) were reported to be Rs. 60 per month. But the maximum earning is observed to be Rs. 310 for a total period of three months in the case of *Savara Masadu* of Manda colony. Though the activity is economically rewarding, only few individuals undertake this activity because of two reasons:-

- (a) Only few possess the trained wild cock. The wild cock is captured only by accident and
- (b) Only few persons know how to make the nets to trap the birds.

The economic returns of the hunting expeditions of other types are difficult to measure. The game assumes economic significance only when the meat of the animals is considered as rich contribution to their diet. The meat is not consumed all at once but preserved after drying it in sun for further use. The meat thus is used as a substitute to the side dish for a number of days. As such it reduces the expenditure on some other food items. The economic significance of hunting needs to be observed at a different level also. The Saora economic organization is based on reciprocity and is intrinsically associated with their socio-cultural life. Reciprocal exchange of goods, services and cash occur at many occasions. Invitations to dinner/lunch on the occasions of marriage or celebration of other ceremonies mean an obligation of the part of the invitee to give/ present/contribute something in kind or cash to the host. Many a times, such give and take of goods/grains/ cooked food items take place between families without assigning any special reason. In such reciprocal relations, however, the giver and receiver, both are conscious of quantity of items given/received. A person receives and returns in kind or cash of the same value which he has received earlier. The meat of the game is not wholly consumed by family members themselves. Part of the meat (or the cooked meat) is distributed to others within the village, kinsmen in neighboring villages or Jatapus with whom they have bond friendship. It is always expected in such cases that those who receive would definitely return 'something' which would not be of just equal value but significantly "higher". This is because they have presented something which is rare and delicious. Thus, hunting gives rise to "economic" calculations among the tribesmen and their neighbours.

Now improved communication facilities, settlement of non-tribals in Savara villages have brought out changes in Savara economic life. Transactions involving money are increasing. Hunting is gaining the economic value, as the

demand for the meat of different animals and birds is increasing in the neighboring towns. However, Savaras do not always exploit the situation and take the meat for sale in the neighboring towns at a high price for fear of being caught by the police. The meat is, however, secretly consumed and sold at low price sometimes. Otherwise, the meat is sold to the non-tribals who have settled in the village or in the neighboring villages. It is also common in these days to exchange the meat for other commodities which the *Konda Vyaparulu* brings to their villages.

Generally, Savara have a tendency to sell meat of the peacocks. Peacock meat is not considered by them as a rare delicacy. Secondly, only a few persons are involved in the peacock hunt. Thus, there is more likelihood for arriving at a decision to sell the meat.

Sale of a part of the meat of other big animals like wild pig, antelope, deer and wild goat has also been reported in the area of field work. It has been reported that the total earning from the sale of the meat of these animals at different times during the months of January to May, 1987 was Rs.1450. The sale of deer's skin and horns or peacock feathers too fetch money for the Savaras. The earning from the sale of such items was reported to be Rs.200 in the same village. Thus the total earnings from hunting come to Rs.1650. The average income from hunting and trapping of animals per household (total 22 households) comes to Rs. 75. But the contribution of hunting towards the economy of six (27%) households in the same village varied from Rs.30 to Rs. 475. The average income from this source is Rs.165 for these households. This income for these six families constituted about 5.08% of their total income from shifting (*podu*) cultivation and forest produce together for the same year. It is again 10.52% of the total earnings from *podu* cultivation and 11.57% of the total earnings from the sale of forest produce, separately.

### Summing up

The hunting and trapping of animals is not a major subsistence activity of Savara in these days. With regard to the significance of such activity the Saora is, perhaps, more sincere in his reply, as he say: "We give only small quantity of meat to the VDO or BDO or his staff. But it is a testy food item. We don't receive cash for it directly. Such transactions help to strengthen the bond. But for strong friendship he would not have got us a housing colony or free supply of seeds or repair of our tank. The returns are delayed, but they are much and much more".

"Occasionally we send meat of wild pig or peacock to our brothers (Missionaries). Brothers would be very happy, because they can buy anything in

market but not peacock meat or meat of wild goat or wild pig. Brothers oblige by visiting us and giving medicines even when we call them in the mid night. Would the Doctor at the PHC come that time and if not obliged, how much money would he demand?"

"I make it a point to send some portion of the meat of wild animals whenever killed to the '*Guruvu*'. He gives me money whenever I request for. The amount could be small. But it is given when I badly need it to save my honor. It would carry more value at such time than its real value."

Thus the economic value of hunting and trapping among Savaras cannot always be expressed in quantitative terms. Nevertheless, increase in communication facilities and possibility of sales within the village to non-Savaras in recent times have brought out some changes. Hunting and trapping marginally contributes to the economics of at least some households in the three Savara villages surveyed.

### Notes

- (1) See, Kar, R.K. (1981), Savaras of Mancotta: A Study of effect of Tea industry on Tribal life.
- (2) In Srikakulam and Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh they are called 'Savaras'.
- (3) Savaras consume the meat of *Nalla bakkalu* buffaloes, and Jatapu not.
- (4) Field-work was conducted during the years 1983-87.
- (5) Savaras make a distinction between *Konda vyaparulu* and *Konda sahuکارulu* (petty traders and wholesale business men). The prefix Konda refers to hill, and so it is to indicate those doing business in the hills.
- (6) Members of the 'Brothers of Saint Gabriel' who started a voluntary organization with head quarters at Hyderabad.



## References

- Elwin, Verrier (1955) *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*, London, Oxford University Press.
- Kar, R.K. (1981) *The Savaras of Mancotta: A study of the effects of Tea industry on the tribal life*, New Delhi, Cosmo Publication.
- Rao, Muralikrishna (1988) *Marketing in Tribal Economy*, New Delhi, Inter India Publications.
- Sitapati, G.M. (1938-39) The Saora and their Country, *Journal Andhra Historical Research Society*, Vol.12, pp. 2, 3 & 4.  
(1940-41) Vol. No. 13, pp. 384.  
(1942-43) Vol. No. 14, p. 1.
- Singh, Bhupinder (1984) *The Saora Highlander: Leadership and Development*, Bombay, Somaiya Pub. Pvt. Ltd.
- Srivastava, L. R. N (1971) *Identification of Educational Problems of Saroa of Orissa*, New Delhi, NCERT.
- Suryanarayana, M. (1978) *Marriage, Family and Kinship of the Saoras of Andhra Pradesh*, (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis), Waltair.

## PATTERN OF INDEBTEDNESS IN A SAORA VILLAGE <sup>1</sup>

Pravansu Sekhar Das Patnaik <sup>2</sup>

The study of indebtedness was undertaken in course of conducting the survey of submersible villages under the Salia Medium Irrigation Project in Banpur Tahasil of Puri district. In the village there are 168 Saoras who belong to the great Saora tribe largely concentrated in Ganjam Agency of South Orissa. In this background the problem of indebtedness has been studied in the village Sundari to know the economic adjustment of the people in their present economic set-up and the various factors and forces which have induced them to incur loans from private agencies. The study also reflects certain aspects like, capability of the people in paying off their outstanding debts and their fate.

Sundari is a small village, one and half miles to the north of the main Salia Dam. It is situated on the top of a small hillock, surrounded by shrubby forests. The village is not connected with outside world except by narrow footpath.

The village has twelve Saora families with a total population of 63, out of which 24 are males and 39 are females. About three to four generations back, one of these families migrated from village Manjusa near Paralakemundi and came to this place. They call themselves Bhima Saora and belong to single Bhima 'Birinda'. Birinda is the exogamous extended lineage (kinship) unit among the Saora as the Saora unlike other tribes have no clan system.

The Saoras in this village have totally given up their traditional occupation of shifting cultivation in the present set-up and have adopted plain land cultivation like their neighbouring castes and tribes. Paddy cultivation is their

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.1, 1967-68, pp.40-49

<sup>2</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

main source of living. Besides that, cereals, fruits, flowers, leaves, roots and tubers supplement their diet. About 90 percent of the families are engaged in agriculture.

In this area there are only two varieties of land, such as *biġa* (wet land) and *padar* (up land). The Saora villagers do not possess any wet land. Upland is found in abundance in their area. Total area of upland owned by the people is five 'bati' and ten 'mana'. The extent of utilization of total land in the possession of the villagers is shown in the table below:-

#### Land Utilization

Total land in 'Bati' and 'Mana'		Homestead Land		Land under Cultivation		Cultivable land lying fallow		Non- cultivable land	
Bati	Mana	Bati	Mana	Bati	Mana	Bati	Mana	Bati	Mana
5	10	-	10	4	10	-	5	-	-

(An acre is equivalent to roughly 2 Manas and one 'Bati', to 20 Manas/10 acres)

#### Cultivable Land Lying Fallow

Out of 10 *mana* of cultivable land, 3 *mana* of land are not cultivated because of forest growth. Two *mana* of land have been left uncultivated by one family since 1964 because those lands will be submerged in the Salia irrigation project. All these cultivable lands are lying scattered in and around the village within a radius of two miles.

#### Size of Agricultural Holdings

As in the case of other agriculturists the size of holding has a tremendous importance for the Saora cultivators. If the modern cultivator needs a bigger and more fertile land for raising his standard of living, the aboriginal requires it for meeting his bare necessity of coarse grains. In fact the latter wants more land than the former, for he relies more on the natural powers of the soil, and has extremely limited means to augment the fertility of soil by artificial means.

#### Distribution of Agricultural Land

Community	Total No. of Households	Number of Households with				11-15 <i>mana</i>	16-22 <i>mana</i>
		No land.	1-3 <i>mana</i>	4-6 <i>mana</i>	7-10 <i>mana</i>		
Saora	12	2	2	2	2	3	1

Out of 12 families, 2 households do not possess any agricultural land. Two land owners hold 1 to 3, 4 to 6 and 7 to 10 *mana* of land, each. The table shows that only three families or 25% of the land owners own 11 to 15 *manas* of land. Only one family or 8.3 percent of the landowner holds 15 to 22 *manas* of land. Average size of the holding per family is about 9 *manas* of land.

Despite the fact that each family possesses about 9 *manas* of land, the condition of each family is not very promising because all the lands are *padar* lands where from only a single paddy crop is raised in a year and other cash crops and cereals, etc. grown in these are paid up to the local 'Sahukars' towards repayment of outstanding loans. Since the river Salia is flowing much below the level of the village, the river cannot be utilized to irrigate the lands. Hence the villagers solely depend on rainfall.

Except agriculture, they have got other sources of livelihood like forest collection, wage-earning, *baramasia* (annual contractual labour).

### **Forest Collection**

By tradition Saora is a forest dweller. Forests being the very fountain of life for the tribe, it has shaped their habitat and economy. Most of the activities pertaining to food quest are performed in the forest. The Saoras consume grain and other crops which grow luxuriantly on the *padar* lands. Fruits, flowers, leaves, roots and tubers which supplement their diet are obtained from the forest. Wild animals from deer to mouse which are found in the forest and near perennial streams are hunted for eating. Fish, a delicacy in Saora's diet, are caught from small streams, ponds and water holes lying in the interior pockets of forest. They collect materials such as bamboo, timber, thatching grass, rope, etc., from the forest for constructing their houses and firewood for cooking and warming their dwellings. They sell firewood in the neighbouring villages. The clean castes, though living in the close proximity of the forest do not generally go for forest collection and depend on the Saoras and other tribes for supply of firewood which cost nearly Rs. 0.75 *paise* per bundle. Bamboo, timber, thatching grass, etc. are also procured and sold by the tribesmen in the neighbouring villages. Thus forest is the major source of income for the Saora and almost all the families are engaged in forest collection. The average income per family from this source is about Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 annually.

### **Wage Earning**

Out of 2 families, 8, work as casual labourers, 2, work for 8 months and the remaining families are wage earners throughout the year. This is their main

source of income during the lean months. Males, females and children above 14 years go for wage earning. Generally they prefer to work for agriculture and for house construction in the neighboring villages not very far from their own village. They get their wage on daily payment basis. The prevailing rate of wage for male is Rs. 1.50 p. and for female and for children, Rs. 1.25 p. On a rough calculation the average income from wages per family is about Rs. 120 over a year.

#### **Annual Contractual Labour (*baramasia*)**

It is not a major source of income for all the families. Only two persons are engaged as *baramasia* at Janteswar. They get 8 *maunds* of paddy and one cloth annually. In the morning they are provided with breakfast. A *baramasia* earns about Rs. 180 annually. The Saoras in this locality do not like to remain as annual labourers because, it is very difficult to assess the income of the families, which depend on agriculture and they cannot correctly state the quantity of agricultural produce. The produce are not measured or weighed, but are kept at home and subsequently paid to the Sahukars towards repayment of outstanding debts. It is also difficult to make any assessment of the income of the families, who depend on forest collection and wage earning, etc., which do not ensure steady and regular income.

An attempt has, however, been made to find out the approximate income of the families engaged in different economic pursuits. A table relating to the monthly income of different families is given below. The average annual income is Rs. 658 per family.

Community	Total No. of families	Number of Families with Monthly Income of				
		Rs. 1-25	Rs. 26-50	Rs. 51-75	Rs. 76 - Rs. 100	Rs. 101 - Rs. 124
Saora	12	5	3	2	1	1

#### **Expenditure**

Like income, it is very difficult to assess the expenditure of the families. The Saoras could give only a rough estimate of expenditure on different items of daily life. In fact most of them were unable to count even the number of persons in their families. It was therefore not possible for such simple people to give exact figures about their expenditure for the whole year.

However, an attempt has been made to state the approximate expenditure of the families. A table showing the monthly expenditure of different families is presented below. The average annual expenditure comes to Rs. 763.

No. of Families with Monthly Expenditure of								
Community	Total No. of families	Rs. 1-35	Rs. 36-60	Rs. 61-84	Rs. 85 to 108	Rs. 109	Rs. 109 to 132	Rs. 133
Saora	12	5	3	2	1		1	

An analysis of Saora's sources of income and the items of expenditure reveal their standard of living. There is an excess of expenditure over income in case of all the families. Hence, cent percent of the families are having deficit budgets. In other words nobody is able to meet their expenditure from their meager income. Hence, almost all the families are in bad debts.

The above figure on income and expenditure relates to the year 1965-66. This was the year of drought, which is the main factor for such a large deficit.

### Indebtedness

To supplement the deficit, each family had to run to the local money-lenders or Sahukars to borrow either money or grains.

Before going to details, it is necessary to say that the Soaras are so ignorant and illiterate that they are unable to tell exactly the amount of their debt. They do not maintain regular accounts nor are they told by their creditors about their outstanding debt amounts at the end of every year. Moreover it is very difficult to get any information regarding debt by direct questions. They are living in acute poverty and therefore, there is greater possibility of them falling easily into the clutches of the local money-lenders and a lesser possibility of getting out of debt due to their low income. However, an attempt is made to show the debt position of the villagers in the table below for the year 1965-66.

The average debt per family in kinds and in cash is about one quintal and fifty-seven Kg. paddy and Rs. 155.83 in cash or about Rs. 230 in total in cash and kinds

The incidence of debt analyzed from this angle bears some relation to the average debt per family. Where the percentage of cash loans is higher than grain loans, the average debt per family is also found higher. The reason is that Saoras find it more difficult to repay the cash loans which remain outstanding. The following table indicates the proportion of grain and money loans in the village.

Position of the Villagers for the Year 1965-66				
Total No. of Families	Name of Indebted Persons	Debt in Kinds	Debt in Cash	Year and month of bringing loan
12	Sanya Saora	2 quintals of paddy	200	1965-66 Falguna & Chaitra
	Ania Saora	2 quintals of paddy	200	Ditto
	Giria Saora	4 quintals of paddy	300	Asar
	Dama Saora	30 K.G. of paddy	40	Magha
	Kula Saora	50 K. G. of paddy	140	Magha
	Arjuna Saora	2 quintals of paddy	120	Jestha
	Pandia Saora	4 quintals of paddy	500	Aswin and Falguna
	Kalia Saora	50 K.G. of paddy	40	Chaitra
	Guna Saora	35 K. G. of paddy	40	Chaitra
	Haria Saora	85 K.G. of paddy	50	Chaitra
	Barikia Saora	25 K.G. of paddy	40	Chaitra
	Gadua Saora	2 quintals of paddy	200	Magha
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18.75 K.G.</b>	<b>1,870</b>	

#### Proportion of Grain Loans and Cash Loans

Name of the village	Total No. of families	Total debt	Grain loans	Money equivalent to grain loans	Percentage Col. 4 to total debt	Cash loan	Percentage of to total debt
Sundari	12	Rs. 28.70	18Qu. 17 K.G	Rs. 1,000	34.9	Rs. 1870	65.1

The Saora take recourse to cash loan only when they purchase articles of consumption directly from weekly markets. Ordinarily they are habituated to barter system. Out of 12 families within the monthly income group of Rs. 1 to Rs. 75, the extent of indebtedness among 10 families exceeds Rs. 230. Among the 2 families, earning more than Rs. 75 per month, the extent of indebtedness exceeds Rs. 300 or above. The cause of increase in the extent of indebtedness with the rise in income may be attributed to the fact that such families with higher income have greater credit worthiness as their income is the security against loans.

The following table exhibits an approximate relationship of economic position of the family with indebtedness and expenditure for the year 1965-66.

Name of the village	Percentage of deficit families	Average income per family in the year	Average expenditure per family in the year	Average debt per family in the year
Sundari	100%	Rs. 658	Rs. 763	Rs. 230

#### Purpose of Loan

Ordinarily Saoras do not borrow if they get normal yield of crops in successive years. With the produce they somehow manage their consumption needs and preserve the seeds for sowing. They are able to meet their cash requirements either by selling cash crops, firewood, leaves, etc. in the neighbouring villages or in the weekly markets. The ratio hangs on a delicate balance as they are petty cultivators. A slight failure of the crop immediately pushes them below the margin and compels them to borrow either for maintenance or seeds. Crop failure and fall in agricultural returns were the factors for which the villagers suffered a lot last year.

The statistical analysis of the purposes for which loans are contracted shows that over 80 percent of borrowings are for domestic consumption and seeds. This high percentage of loans for the said purposes may be due to the poor yield of crops. The next important purpose for which they incur loans is rituals and festivals. About 8 percent of the total debt is incurred for meeting expenditure on these. Next to it is marriage for which they also incur loans. About 6 percent of the total debt was incurred for meeting expenditure on marriages. If one has not collected some money by selling his surplus cash crops, he has to take cash loan either from a well-to-do Saora or from the Sahukars. Nearly 2 percent of



debt is found to have been incurred for purchasing cattle or on miscellaneous items like payment of fines for forest offences or purchase of utensils, etc.

### **Security for Loans**

Saoras do not borrow in large sums but in small installments as and when so required. Their moveable assets are few. They are essentially cultivators and partly food gatherers. An average Saora has hardly any disposable surplus at the harvest. So when a loan becomes an unavoidable necessity, he surrenders his claim over future yield to the Sahukar as a security for the loan. In case the Saora debtor fails to repay the interest or capital, his cattle are either taken away by the Sahukar or are sold off on the spot.

Squeezed to the last by the pressing circumstances, a Saora would mortgage the silver ornaments of his wife. The Sahukar's greed, cunningness and malpractices find full scope for exploiting the ignorant Saoras. In fact, they have practically nothing movable or immovable to offer as security, except their personal labour or fruit of their hard work.

### **Sources of Loan**

Lack of communication, inaccessibility and an altogether strange social environment prevent any public finance institutions for extending credit facilities in this area. Hence, there is no Credit Co-Operative Society or Graingola in and around the village. Only those persons who live either in the village or near about and too have an intimate acquaintance with the Saoras take the risk of advancing loans to them. However, the money lenders of Banpur and other neighbouring villages like Janteswar, etc., do their business to a considerable extent. The investigation reveals that about 80 percent of the money-lenders belong to Banpur who belong either to Khandayat or Teli castes. About 20 percent of the money lenders belong to other neighbouring villages who are either Teli or Karan by caste. They are well aware of the character and credit worthiness of each of their clients. They charge high rate of interest. They visit at the time of harvest for recovering their dues. The legislation to control high rate of interest is of little help to the Saora as the money lenders do not maintain any regular accounts nor do they give any receipt to their debtors for their repayments.

### **Interest**

Ordinarily, the rate of interest charged by the Sahukars varies between 25 to 50 percent per annum. The majority of loans is against personal security, owing to the fact that land is non-transferable and cannot be offered as security

against loans. In the absence of any tangible security the rate of interest is bound to be high. Usually a rate of 25 percent is charged on grain loans borrowed for consumption purposes with the condition of repayment of the loan at the next harvest. In certain cases the rate on such loans may go to up to 50 percent where the grain loan is incurred for seed purpose. A rate of 50 percent or 75 percent is charged on cash loans and if the debtor fails to repay at the stipulated time, the interest is compounded.

Generally the loans in kinds are repaid in kinds. When that is not possible, cash crops are appropriated towards the interest. The following is the rate of interest paid in kinds:-

I Adda is equivalent to half seer

I Adda mustard = 2 Adda paddy

I Adda Niger = 2 Adda paddy

I Adda Biri = 2 Adda paddy

I Adda Mung = 3 Adda paddy

I Adda Koltha = 1.5 Adda paddy

In case of cash loans, the interest is paid in cash.

### **Time of taking Loan**

Living from hand to mouth, they frequently resort to loans even just after the harvest. At harvest they repay the outstanding debts. Thereafter in the months of 'Magha' and 'Faguna' (December-January) they go to the money lenders to get loans in cash to celebrate various festivals and to perform marriage ceremonies. Sometimes to meet the emergencies like performing 'Sradha' ceremony they also approach the money lenders for seeds. During these months loans are mostly incurred in kinds.

### **Payment of Previous Loans**

The study in this village reveals that all the 12 families have received compensation for the loss of their lands for construction of Salia Irrigation Project. The total amount of compensation received by 12 families is Rs. 33,800 paid in the year 1963. During these years, the compensation amount has already been spent by the people for purchasing land, paying off old debts of 1963-64 and 1964-65, purchasing food stuff and for other purposes.

### **Conclusion**

An analysis of the distribution of debt burden shows that almost all the Saoras owe a debt of over Rs. 230 (including grains) per person. From their average income, their economic handicaps and the inability to save, it is clear that

these people will not be able to free themselves from indebtedness in the near future. The position is further aggravated due to the drought conditions in 1965-66 during which they have incurred money loans. Under the pressing circumstances, they were not able to pay off their old debts - not even a single family.

The high rate of indebtedness and the pattern of life were shaken consequently on the execution of Salia Medium Irrigation Project. Since 1963, compensation was received for their loss of land amounting to Rs. 33,800. It has been found that the cash compensation has been mostly utilized in other things and paying off the old debts of 'Sahukars'. Moreover, the imminent prospect of losing about 102 acres of *padar* lands which is going to be submerged also affected their interest for cultivation and land use. Therefore, at the present moment they feel insecure and whatever cash compensation was left has been mostly used for the maintenance of the families. The picture therefore shows the growing indebtedness of the tribal villagers which has emerged due to interplay of multiple factors coupled with overall backwardness. The tribals of this village who have given up quite a good number of their cultural traits to adapt to their present environment have now been subjected to the malady of displacement. Government wants to rehabilitate them provided they pay Rs. 500 as 'Salami' which they are unable to pay. The payment of cash compensation was certainly a shortsighted policy as they have spent out the whole of it for meeting their bare subsistence needs.

The prospects of displacement in 1967 have made them extremely panicky and with the debt mounting without any prospect of future acquisition of land have considerably affected their normal life. It has therefore been strongly suggested on the basis of our findings that the tribals should be rehabilitated on land by the Government without asking for 'Salami' and they may be provided with agricultural implements, etc. to start a new lease of life. A word of caution should be thrown that if proper attention is not paid, the condition of the people in these villages will be extremely miserable after the submersion of their village in July 1967.

# SAORA AND PANOS OF GANJAM AGENCY <sup>1</sup>

## (A Study into Social Inter-Relationship)

Nityananda Das <sup>2</sup>

In 1960 there was rioting between Saoras and Panos at the village Bhramarpur in R. Udayagiri taluk. It was reported that the Saoras of village Rogoisingi attacked the Panos of Bhramarpur and looted their property, burnt a few houses and one old man also died. The law and order problem was dealt by the police and Magistracy. Many Saoras of adjoining villages were arrested and prosecuted. It necessitated posting of a contingent of armed police at Bhramarpur. By taking some repressive measures the conflagration was controlled. Some of the Saoras involved in rioting were ultimately sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The dispute between Panos and Saoras was on account of some cultivable land enjoyed by the Panos since a considerable time. The Saoras of Rogoisingi claimed back the land in 1959.

This was opposed by Panos. They sought legal advice and the law on adverse possession was on their side. Saoras on the other hand were aggrieved as they felt the land to be morally theirs. Their forefathers had pledged the land to Panos towards some outstanding debts. They felt that during all these years of possession the debt would have been fully satisfied. If there was any amount outstanding that could be settled. Panos on the other hand being landless had to solely depend on the land. Their trading activities had declined due to various forces. Due to Hinduization, conversion to Christianity and wider contacts, Saoras had given up buffalo sacrifice in the area. Panos reluctance to concede to the request of Saoras, was widely resented.

Saoras of adjoining villages met in a conference and decided to forcibly take possession of the land. This was resisted by Panos and there ensued the rioting.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol.IX, No.3, 1967-68, pp.44-52

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Director, Tribal Research Bureau, (now SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

In this context the Tribal Research Bureau made a study of the situation relating to the conflict between Panos and Saoras regarding the ownership and possession of land in the Saoras land of Ganjam district. The finding reflects on the socio-economic relationship of Panos and Saoras.

Panos have been described as a parasitic group solely living as petty traders. They originally came to the agencies as weavers. Being a low untouchable caste in the plan is they preferred to lead an arduous life in the difficult terrains of the agency. Before a few decades these areas were considered extremely unhealthy and inaccessible. The administrative machinery did the minimum to govern the area through intermediaries known as Bissoyis and Patro. Saoras were not conversant with Oriya and required gents to liaison with authorities and outsiders. Panos worked as such and won confidence of Saoras. In course of time they found the profession of weaving no more lucrative and became petty traders.

Saoras distracted by illness offer sacrifices to their innumerable gods and spirits. These gods and spirits torment them with heavy demands of sacrifice. The dead seeking admission to the underworld also demands sacrifices. If those are not conceded they generally inflict diseases and disaster on the living beings. Panos utilized the situation to provide sacrificial animals to Saoras. The *mamuls* or levies by Mutta-heads brought misery and dejection. Crops they grew, fruits borne on the trees on their hills mostly found their way to the Mutta-heads and their assistants. During the lean months, when most of the food grains had been exhausted, malaria and other diseases became widespread. The curing of diseases required larger number of sacrifices. The Panos were at their door steps to help Saoras. They advanced grains, animals and cash. When the debt swelled Saoras allowed Panos to cultivate their lands towards the satisfaction of those debts. The agreements were oral. But possession being 9 points of law Saoras virtually passed on the ownership to Panos. Very often finding no other alternative to survive in their home land Saoras migrated to tea gardens in Assam. This resulted in undisturbed possession of their land by Panos.

Gaudas (herdsmen) also came to the agency in search of better pasture. They established contacts with Saoras and advanced cash to them to meet their urgent needs. Under similar circumstances as in case of Panos described above Saoras allowed them to have possession of their land. Thus most of the valuable paddy fields passed from the Saoras who were more interested in shifting cultivation on the hill slopes. They were also obliged not to come in direct conflict with Panos and Gaudas who were closer to the non-tribal Mutta-heads. The Mutta heads allowed them possession after receiving some fees and usual *mamuls*.

Some Saoras of Rogoisingi returned from tea garden. They had acquired new values. Tea gardens also taught them ways of modern life. They returned with some savings, and were naturally interested to get back their land under the control of Panos. Panos, however, were not prepared to accommodate such demands. This was the reason for the conflict and antipathy of Saoras. Saoras of Rogoisingi in the meantime were converted to Christianity and acquired new outlook. They were no more interested to be callous with their usual complacency.

During the sowing season of 1960 some Saoras forcibly started transplanting paddy in the disputed land. This was obstructed by Panos by use of force. This was the immediate cause for the conflagrations. One afternoon, the Saora of village Rogoisingi and their kinsmen from far and near attacked Panos of Bhramarpur. By the same time another incident took place at Barnsingi in Parlakimedi taluk. A few Saoras who returned from tea gardens, demanded back their land in possession of Panos of village Asrayagada. When Panos were reluctant to comply, Saoras wanted to take possession of the land by use of force. Besides these two major incidents, there were many other cases of minor skirmishes between Saoras and Panos arising from possession of land.

From a study of these incidents it was found out that such disputes should not be judged strictly from the point of view of law and order. It is a fact that Saoras have parted with their land before several decades and at present those are held by Panos, Gaudas and others by adverse possession. Saoras acquiesced the position for many years. When consciousness arose among them they are now unwilling to accept the situation with usual timidity. Spread of education, activities of social workers, missionaries, and various development programmes have expanded their outlook. They have acquired new values and they feel that the land which they have parted under duress, morally belong to them, though due to adverse possession legal ownership has passed to others.

Land problem in tribal areas has been a subject matter of study for nearly a century. It is a fact that by cunning and superior wit, the non-tribals have acquired interests over tribal lands. The backward tribals being more attracted to hill cultivation and being unable to repay their debts were obliged to accept the situation.

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes (Dhebar) Commission in course of their itineraries in various States was told by tribal leaders, social workers and administrators that the various laws and regulations forbidding alienation of land from tribals to non-tribals have been the least effective to

check the process. The tribals continue to part with their land mostly by oral agreements. The creditors remain in possession of the land. Whenever the dispute reaches authorities, the tribals themselves accept the position and under the rule of adverse possession the non-tribals acquire ownership. Sometimes the tribals pledging their land to non-tribals, continue to work for the creditors and cultivate the same plots of land. Whenever any enquiry is instituted these tribals give evidence that they own those lands not the creditor. Thus the operation of law becomes in fructuous, in spite of the best wishes of the authorities.

It is worthwhile to discuss the debt bondage (Goti) system prevalent in its most virulent form in certain parts of Koraput. (Ref- the table below)

#### Total Population in Different Areas and Number of Gotis and Sahukars

Sl. No.	Area of Investigation		Villages Studied	No. of families	Total Population	No. of Gotis	No. of Sahukars
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
1	Kumbhikota	..	3	111	398	19	6
2	Laxmipur	..	2	418	1,374	26	15
3	Kakiriguma	..	4	829	3,282	176	83
	<b>Total</b>	..	<b>9</b>	<b>1,358</b>	<b>5,054</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>104</b>
1	Potangi	..	2	-	685+225	39+8	20
2	Pokali	..	2	-	670	31	15
3	Chandaka	..	2	-	616	25	13
4	Sunki	..	2	-	496	10	7
5	Ampasali	..	2	-	382	16	9
6	Kunduli	..	1	-	590	37	11
7	Nandapur	..	1	-	2,000	40	23
8	Padua	..	3	-	1,395	18	12
	<b>Total</b>	..	<b>15</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,059</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>109</b>
1	Semiliguda	..	3	-	1,233	31	15
2	Koraput	..	6	-	2,419	55	31
3	Dasmantapur	..	5	-	141	31	21
	<b>Total</b>	..	<b>14</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,062</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>67</b>
1	Narayanpatna	..	5	604	2,268	79	23
2	Bandhugaon	..	5	564	2,422	88	29
3	Almanda	..	2	297	1,361	35	16
4	Kumbriput	..	2	158	625	36	6
	<b>Total</b>	..	<b>14</b>	<b>1,623</b>	<b>6,656</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>74</b>

The practice of Goti originated from heavy indebtedness among the tribals. They were first deprived of their lands which were pledged to the creditors. Thereafter finding no other alternative to survive they pledged their services to the latter. The Goti system was widely criticized even before independence. The Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee, constituted by the erstwhile provincial Government of Orissa, recommended for its immediate abolition. Accordingly in 1948 a regulation was issued prohibiting the practice of debt bondage. However the lacunae in the regulation and other social conditions stood on the way of its effective implementation. As per a study conducted by TRB in some selected areas of Koraput, by 1962, there were 799 Gotis bound to 354 Sahukars or creditors. The table above gives the picture.

#### Distribution of Gotis and Sahukars

Sl. No.	Area	No. of Villages	Gotis		Sahukars	
			Tribal	Non-Tribal	Tribal	Non-Tribal
1	Kumbhikota	3	19	-	3	3
2	Laxmipur	2	21	5	7	8
3	Kakiriguma	4	157	19	3	47
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>58</b>
1	Potangi	2	36	11	2	19
2	Pokali	2	18	13	-	14
3	Chandaka	2	16	9	2	11
4	Sunki	2	6	4	-	7
5	Ampasali	2	13	3	3	7
6	Kunduli	1	34	3	2	9
7	Nandapur	1	30	10	-	23
8	Padua	3	11	7	2	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
1	Semiliguda	3	28	3	2	13
2	Koraput	6	55	-	4	27
3	Dasmantapur	5	25	6	7	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54</b>
1	Narayanpatna	5	76	3	2	21
2	Bandhugaon	5	88	-	-	29
3	Kumbhariput	2	35	1	2	4
4	Almanda	2	35	-	-	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>70</b>



It is clear that although the law prohibits debt bondage, the social condition did not permit a *goti* to free himself from bondage. Once an old man who has worked as a *goti* for last twenty years objected to the enquiry on his status. He said that officers and social workers come to enquire about his condition, but they could not improve it. They go back from where they come, and thereafter he had to again seek employment with his Sahukar. Then the Sahukar would refuse to entertain him, as he was suspected to have told something to the authorities against the Sahukar. This brought misery for the old man from which the authorities and social workers could not save him. Thus he was reluctant to give any further information. This attitude of the old man, explains the condition of the *gotis* and their world view. He feels that legally, the Sahukar has no right to keep him bound for years or generations. But his nurture and environment make him quite helpless to find any other avenue for escape.

There is quite a bit of resemblance between the *gotis* who have been deprived of their lands and are bound to Sahukars in Koraput and the Lanjia Saoras in Gnjam Agency.

In Rogoisingi there was congregation of missionaries belonging to different denominations, viz, Canadian Baptists, Roman Catholics and Lutherans on the 13th August 1967. The purpose was to bring in a compromise among Panos of Bhramarpur and Saoras of Rogoisingi. Some of the Saoras who were convicted and sentenced to prison terms on charges framed in 1960, have now returned to their villages. The echo of Bhramarpur incident in 1960 was required to be counteracted. The Saoras of the village being now converted to Christianity and the Panos who are Christians were to be made friends through the auspices of the missionaries. The missionaries re-emphasized the necessity not to disturb the status quo possession affecting the law and order. Panos of Bhramarpur who are in possession of the land are to enjoy those under the terms of settlement and Saoras were chided not to interfere with that.

Such a truce may perhaps not be lasting one and there is every chance of eruption of conflict at a future date. It is a fact that Panos and other non-tribals who are in possession of Saoras land have no other alternative way of living. Trading in sacrificial animals has declined in Udayagiri area. Karja and Guar, the expensive funeral ceremonies necessitating sacrifice of buffalos have been given up. Similarly, Doripur and Yuyunpur which require compulsory buffalo sacrifice are no more in evidence. Hinduism and conversion to Christianity have changed the traditional beliefs of Saoras of this area. Panos, therefore, have been deprived of a bumper trade in buffalos. Social workers and the Bhoodan movement have

inculcated new ideas and Saoras are now bringing their produce to markets instead of disposing those to Panos at their door steps. Panos and Gaudas in agencies therefore mainly depend on cultivation. Thus the conflicts between Panos and Saoras need not be viewed purely from the point of view of law and order but from the point of socio-cultural edifice and the corresponding change of social values. Unrest among tribes in many tribals area are now in evidence. Some of those come to surface and draw immediate attention of others. But there are many situations which remain dormant. The latter are actually more important. In the past there have been a good number of conflagrations in the Saora country necessitating police action. There have been periodical agitations which could be easily suppressed as consciousness among Saoras was not much. But as the situation stands now it may become difficult to view these land disputes as local issues. It is therefore necessary to make a through survey of such disputed lands in different villages by competent revenue officials in collaboration with social workers and social scientists. With adequate statistical data it may be possible for State Government to provide alternative land wherever necessary to Saoras in lieu of land they have been deprived of. It is also worthwhile to rehabilitate Panos and Gaudas in agency area in suitable land. Until and unless Panos are properly resettled they will foil development programme in the area. As intelligent they are, they will definitely exploit Saoras and no amount of administrative pressure will relieve Saoras from their attachment with Panos. But at present who has studied the socio-economic life of Saora could assert that the relationship is one of symbiotic rather than parasitic. Even after conversion Saoras are remaining obliged to Panos who are earlier converts and are functionaries under the church. Hence it is not correct to say that by casual propaganda, etc. foundation of Saora and Pano relationship would be shaken up.

The basic concepts of Saoras have been changing fast. There are now young men who have been educated in cities. They feel detested with life in their homes. The tribal feeling is rising. In the recent Panchayat election Saoras are being elected as Sarpanches and ward members. Two Saoras who were former social workers are elected as chairman of Panchayat Samitis. Interviews with some of them show how they are keen to wrest powers from the non-tribals. 'We Adibasis' have been the dominant feeling among them. Their dissatisfaction over the State of affairs in Saora land is openly discussed. The partisan attitude of local officials to help non-tribals over the interest of Saoras is decried. In the past Saoras have risen in defiance of law and order. Special officers appointed by Government from time to time have reported on the cause and motive behind

those unrests. It is now time to review those and solve the local problems in relation to the felt needs.

In my report on Saoras in 1958, it was indicated that any ameliorative measure for Saoras, would not succeed, without corresponding measures to improve Panos. Panos are not strangers in Saora land. Rather they are the only group who are the closest to Saoras. Panos have been described as parasites, exploiting Saoras in various ways. Since two decades all sorts of propaganda have been directed to dislodge Saoras from the influence of Panos. Yet the former hold steadfastly to the latter, though very often reduced in intensity. Hence a close study has revealed that Pano- Saora relationship is not one of parasitism, but symbiosis. Panos help Saoras during the lean months.

They bring various articles to the doorsteps of Saoras and also advance credit on oral promise to pay back. Old and infirm animals are exchanged. Bare necessities of life like salt, tobacco, dry fish, and clothes are freely advanced. Sacrificial animals are provided, when Saoras distracted by illness are in immediate need for those. No doubt Panos get back their advances with high rates of interest. But the service which Saoras get from Panos has not been substituted by any official or non-official agencies. Paddy loans from grain *golas* etc. are difficult to obtain. The procedure is cumbersome and time taking. The repayment is not accepted in cash or by substitution. In Pottasingi Panchayat, the grain *gola* has hardly loaned out 5% of paddy stock during the last five years. The paddy was transferred to the plains, as Saoras were not interested in borrowing. Mainly Panos borrowed some paddy, sometimes in the names of Saoras. Of course Saoras prefer millets and maize for their diet to paddy but difficulty in repayment stands as the main hurdle.

It is therefore; clear that Saoras and Panos maintain a symbiotic relationship for mutual benefit. Saoras engage Panos as errand men and liaison agents with outsiders. Panos are interpreters to visiting officials. Panos were converted fairly early and they are appointed as preachers by the church. Christian Saoras have to look to them in discharging religious functions in marriage and funeral etc. thus the hold of Paons does not diminish. Hinduization and other contracts generate some antipathy for Panos, but Saoras very find that Gaudas, and Kumutis are more oppressive than Panos. Even local officials have often little sympathy for Saoras and Saoras efforts to get redress to their grievances from them lead to bewilderment. Thus they find in Panos, the intimacy and friendship which they are unable to find among others. This being the secret of Panos' bond with Saoras it is difficult to wear Saoras away from Panos.

It is not prudent to assume that with the introduction of development measures, the Saora-Pano relationship would break. Panos are fairly intelligent to adjust to the changes. They take new role befitting to the situation. With the increase in the rate of conversion Panos work as preachers and priests, and retain their hold on Christian Saoras. Similarly Panos are school teachers in Saoras area and dominate in village affairs. As secretaries and ward members or sometimes as Sarpanchs they dominate the Panchayats. Social workers as well as right thinking administrators fervently desire to break the unholy tie of Saoras with Panos and others. But they have not succeeded, as they assume the tie as one of parasitism. A parasite could be eliminated by various drugs. But when the relationship is symbiotic accruing mutual benefit to both the partners the tie is hard to be snapped through outside pressure and propaganda.

Thus the proper course now would be to gear up the administrative and welfare machinery to substitute the fiduciary role of Panos, Gaudas and others with Soras. Panos and Gaudas have formed an integral part of the population in Saora land. Hence they could not be eliminated from the area. We have to first accept this position, without any dogmatic bias. That being accepted, the task would be simpler. Panos are mostly landless. They have taken to conversion and education early. They have wider contacts with officials, traders and missionaries. Thus they have greater bargaining power as a splinter group. The point that no improvement would be possible in Saora land without participation of Panos, Gaudas and Paikos is a priori. Keeping this in view young men among Saoras are to be mobilized and guided to take up leadership in the area. They are to be associated in all enterprises like sale purchase scheme, grain golas, educational institutions etc. with the active participation of Saoras the schemes may be reshaped. By that the world view and interpersonal relationship of Saoras with outsiders can be enhanced to accept innovations and changes. Here the attitude of officials, particularly petty ones has to be harnessed, so that Saoras, do not look at them with awe and antipathy. At present Saoras consider official agencies as impersonal and alien. Till this attitude persist the tribes in general and Saoras in particular remain indifferent to introduction of new measures due to lack of their confidence. Winning confidence is a laborious task and, needs tact and a good deal of social engineering. Those should be our guide line in improving the situation in Saora land.

# RELATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SABARA WOMEN: A MULTIPLEX NETWORK ANALYSIS <sup>1</sup>

R.P.Sarma

The Sabaras are the fourth largest tribal community in Odisha after Konds, Gonds and Santhals. Their references are found in the epics of the Ramayan and the Mahabharat and it is believed that they are one of the ancient aboriginal tribes of this country. The Sabaras are known by the different names in different parts of Odisha as Saura, Soura, Savara or Sahara. In their language they call themselves "Sora" and their language as "Sora Langam". About 13 per cent of Sabara population of the State is found in the district of Koraput. They live in aboriginal conditions and modern civilization has not yet made any impact on them.

The Sabaras are classified into two types: Lanjia Sabaras and Sarada Sabaras. "Lanjia" in Oriya language means tail. These Sabaras both men and women wear a four inch wide piece of cloth in their loins hanging about eight inch long both front and back side as tails; hence they are known as tailed Sabaras. In some regions they are termed as Malia or Jungle Sabaras. The Sarada Sabaras are little more civilized than the Lanjias, hence they call themselves "Sarada" or pure.

## **Objective of the Study:**

The main objective of study of Sabara women in this paper is twofold: Firstly to examine their family structure and economy as it is and analyze their economic activities concerning with their life style. Secondly to make network analysis of their social structure with regard to (a) family relation and the processes of lending and borrowing among themselves (b) collection and sale of forest products and (c) purchases for the family.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, VOL. XXX, NO. I, 1990. pp.12-19

**Sample Size:**

The village Gadiabang, 4 Kms from the sub divisional town of Gunupur in the district of Koraput has been selected for the study. Even though the village is nearer to urban civilization, its impact on the Sabara community is very little. There is a Primary Sevashram School operating from 1965; a tube-well at the entrance of the village and the village is well connected by a *pucca* road.

According to 1981 census the village consisted of 32 households with a population of 130; at present there are 51 families with a population of 203. At random 11 housewives have been sampled out from the four rows of houses consisting the total village for investigation. In the first round of the survey the basic data with regard to their family structure and economic activities were extracted with the help of the village teacher who speaks their language. On the second round the 11 housewives were again enquired about their contracts among themselves for preparation of networks. Name, age and marital status of the 11 sample women are presented in Table I.

**Family Structure:**

The Sabara families are smaller in size. The average family size is 3.90 persons. Of the 11 families investigated, only three families have four children each and the rest have single child. On an average the number of children per family is less than two. Among the sampled housewives nine are from the families of the same village and two belong to other villages. Marriages are decided with the initiation of the female partner; parents generally never interfere, boys and girls are free to select their life partners.

The women when select their partners prefer younger lads than their age. The sample investigation shows that the mean age of the husbands is 26 years in comparison to wives' 34 years. The range of age difference is as wide as 25 years.

Eight housewives have thin gold rings in their nose and silver rings in the upper ears. They were given ornaments at the time of marriage by their

parents. No housewife purchased any other ornament since their marriage. These eight ladies have large holes in their ears without any ornaments. Previously they were using bubs prepared of a particular wood as ornaments; as one set of bubs become loose for the ear holes, they were being replaced by another set of bubs with higher diameter; and in the process the ear holes become very large. The younger maids today neither use wood bubs nor other ornaments in their ears.

TABLE-I  
Family Structure of Sabara Women

Sl. No. (1)	Name (2)	Age (3)	Marital status (4)	Children (5)	Infant Mortality (6)
1.	Galuri	30	I	4	....
2.	Addi	35	I	4	M
3.	Labari	28	I	I	M
4.	Mangidi	40	2	....	....
5.	Body	27	I	I	M
6.	Admi	43	W	4	....
7.	Dengun	30	S	I	M
8.	Saintary	21	I	I	....
9.	Manjai	60	I	I	M
10.	Lossari	28	I	....	....
11.	Thupali	28	2	I	....

W: Widow, I: First marriage, 2: Second marriage, S: Two wives, M: Mortality.

#### Cultivation:

The Sabaras are not accustomed to settled land cultivation and most of these tribals in the interior area still have no settled land cultivation. Only few families in the village have settled land cultivation, which are provided by the Government by clearing the forest. Two of the sampled families have converted the dry land provided by the State into fields suitable for cultivation of paddy. The Sabaras of this village do not use any standard agricultural methods for cultivation. They still use the archaic method of loosening the earth with hand implements, throwing seeds on it and then turn up to the field only at the time of harvest. In the entire village there are two pairs of bullocks for the purpose of cultivation provided under the I.R.D.P. scheme of Government of Odisha

recently. The average settled land holding of the sample families is 1.69 acres and yield of paddy is only 1.03 quintals per acre.

Shifting cultivation is the way of life for the tribals and so to say it is the main occupation of the Sabaras. This type of cultivation locally known as “*Podu*” is operated on the slope of the nearby hills. The area of *podu* land per family ranges from 1.5 to 4.5 acres. The area depends on the ability of the family members to clear the forests. Both men and women work together for all *podu* operations, even the single widows take up *podu* on their own. On *podu* land mainly maize (locally known as “*Jonna*”) is cultivated, which is their staple food. Rice meal is taken occasionally which is regarded as luxury. They grow an *arhar* variety called “*Kandul*” on both plain and *podu* land which is a good cash crop. The yield of maize on *podu* land is also very low; it is around 40 Kg per acre. On the basis of requirement of one Kg. of rice/*Jonna* per individual per day, the total agricultural production from the plain and *podu* land supports a family of four for about three months in a year.

#### Collection of Firewood:

Firewood collection is the main occupation of the Sabara women which provides them minimum sustenance throughout the year. Both the sexes collect firewood but the collection of Mahua flowers is done exclusively by women and children. Mahua flowers are mainly stored for preparation of wine throughout the year and the surplus is exchanged for eatables and household purchases. One head-load of firewood collected by women is sold at Rs. 6, while tow loads on balance over the shoulder of a man gets twice the value of a head-load.

#### Pattern of Consumption:

The Sabara families live very simple life. Daily food requirements are limited to the three following items only. This is the average daily expenditure for a family of four, which includes two children. On this estimate a family’s annual expenditure comes to Rs. 2,300 only.

Maize 3 Kgs.	Re. 6.00
Salt	Re. 0.25
Chilies	Re. 0.25
Total	Re. 6.50



The Sabaras are not accustomed to vegetable curries and occasionally take beef by boiling it with salt. Both men and women never use upper garment while in the village. When they go to the town, the women cover their bust with a *chadar* or wear a blouse. A blouse is used for several years. A two meter piece of cloth is worn by the women above the knee. Since there is no night lighting arrangements in their houses they take their night meal in the dim fire wood light of the hearth. The younger generations of girls now use frocks, *ghagras* and *choli*. Many young men now switched over to wearing half pants instead of cloth.

### SOCIAL NETWORK

In a community the social and economic relations are interlinked and each influences the other. An individual typically participates in a social system involving many other individuals who are significant reference points in one another's decisions. The nature of relationships, a given member has with the other system members effect an individual's perceptions, beliefs and actions. Development of a community mostly depends on social behaviour than on economic inputs. The use of economic inputs must be on the basis of social behaviour at a point of time. Social behavior can be analyzed either on the basis of attributes or on the relational perspective so far as the former approach has been utilized by the social scientists to analyze the socio economic behaviour of a community. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive but complementary to each other. Relational measures capture emergent properties of a social structure that cannot be measured by aggregating the attributes of individual members.

In this paper an attempt has been made to prepare a set of three sociograms on the basis of network of social relations. The first sociogram indicates a relational network among the 11 Sabara women based on frequent lending and borrowing of food grains and other material of household use. About 50 per cent of the network actors, the sample women have family relationship in one form or the other. The inter-relationship among the 11 actors is presented below in the form of an Adjacency Matrix K.

This is binary matrix of relations such that  $X_{ij} = 1$ , if there is an age or relation and 0 if there is no edge between them. The V's, 1 to 11, are the network members. The number of 1's in the corresponding row or column of the matrix indicates the degree of the member or actor. Higher the degree of an actor more is the popularity of the actor in the net work structure.

	V I	V 2	V 3	V 4	V 5	V 6	V 7	V 8	V 9	V I 0	V I I
V I	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
V 2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
V 3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
V 4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
V 5	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
V 6	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
V 7	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
V 8	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
V 9	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
V I 0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
V I I	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

As it can be verified from the matrix that the actor 6 has the highest degree of 7 that is, it is directly connected to the 7 of the 11 members in the network. The graph of the network is presented in figure 1. The number inside the circle indicates the serial number of the sample women given in table above.

The density of this network is 0, 31; which is a ratio of actual linkages to the total number of possible linkages in the network. In this network the total numbers of possible relations are 55, but the actual relations are 17. Higher density more closely the members of the network are related. A clique is a closely connected sub-graph or a social circle in a network. Six cliques can be identified in fig. 1, in the form of triads. They are (1,8,2) or (10,3,6), (3,7,5), (4,5,6),(5,6,7,) and (10,6,5). Since a clique is a closely related social circle any one of the cliques can be selected for injection of new ideas and concepts to be spread in the entire network.

The second sociogram is based on the social linkages with regards to the main economic activity. The main economic activity of the village is collected of fire wood from the forest and sale these in the town, cutting and sale of fire wood are mostly done on the same day. The second network of social relations in their main economic activity is presented in figure 2.

The second network is in several ways different from the first. The first one was is a planar graph while the second is a non-planar. A graph that cannot be drawn on a plan without a crossover between its edges is called non-planar graph. In the figure-2 the edges between the actors 2,5 and 4,6 cannot be drawn without the crossover. The density of the network remaining the same the structure of the second network is different. In the second network there is one isolated member No.9; not linked with the rest of the network members. Actor

3 is a pendant vertex, that is, it is linked to a single member of the network in the second sociogram in comparison to its position of degree 3 in the earlier network.

The third sociogram is prepared for analysis based on the household purchases. Both for the purchases made inside the village from the peddlers and for the marketing in the town linkages are established for the third network. Since the purchases are very few the relational structure is also simple and limited. This network is presented in figure 3. This third network is a different one from the earlier two. Graph theoretically the first two networks are same because it contained same number of vertices and edges, even though they are different in structure; but in the third network the edges or linkages are fewer. Hence the density of this third network is 0.20. In this network there are two isolated members, 9 and 11.

**Reachability:**

Reachability is another aspect of network analysis a social scientist uses to manipulate the behavior of the network members. Through how many steps or links an actor is reachable in the network is the main concern of the network analyst. In a complete network, i.e. when all the network members are directly linked with each other, any member can be reached with a single link. But in the lower density networks reachability requires more than one step.

A three step reachability matrix has been compiled for the first sociogram.

K =	2	6	3	3	3	3	3	4	0	7	2
	6	2	3	1	5	10	1	4	1	3	0
	3	3	6	4	11	13	4	2	2	8	2
	3	1	4	2	9	11	2	1	2	4	1
	3	5	11	9	10	13	10	2	1	12	4
	3	10	13	11	13	10	12	2	1	15	7
	3	1	4	2	10	12	2	1	3	4	1
	4	4	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	2	1
	0	1	2	2	1	1	3	0	0	2	1
	7	3	8	4	12	15	4	2	2	6	2
	2	0	2	1	4	7	1	1	1	2	0

Each element in K<sup>3</sup> matrix indicates the number of three step paths through which a member is reachable from another member. For instance K<sub>25</sub> = 5; this indicates that the members 2 and 5 can reach each other in three step

links in five ways. From the network No.I, it can be verified that the five paths are:-

1 (e5, e6, e8), 2(e5, e10, e13), 3(e5, e7, e12), 4(e3, e4, e8), 5(e5, e15, e14).

The zero elements in the matrix show that two members in the network cannot reach each other in three step link.

**Network Multiplexity:**

A network compounded of two or more types of relations is called a multiplex network. In this paper three separate networks have been worked out for the II sample Sabara women of Gadiabang. A synthesis of the three networks is presented below as a multiplex network. The members of the network who are linked in the similar way in all the three networks are naturally more influential in the community and a social scientist takes up these active members for the initiation of development process.

The relations presented in the matrix below show that these relations are common to all the three sociograms presented earlier. How the multiplex network is different from the rest of the three networks can be visualized if it is seen in a graph form. This is shown in Fig. 4. This multiplex network is a disjoint one. There are three isolated members 7, 9 and 11, who are not connected to the network. There are two sub-graphs, the largest with 6 actors and the smallest one with only two actors. In the larger sub-graph there is one clique with three members, viz. 4, 5 and 6; these three are the most influential in the entire network of Sabara women in the village.

The multiplex matrix of the three networks is given below:-

M=	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

### Conclusion:

The study reveals the following facts, on the basis of which we have to evolve a strategy to develop the tribal community in general and their women in particular.

- (1) The Sabara community is at an ultra under development” level. The Planning Commission in 1985 put the cut-off point of Rs. 6,400 of household income for the identification of poverty line. This amount now stands at Rs. 8,500 calculated on the basis of average 6.6 per cent increase in price index during the 7th five-year Plan Period. As there are no savings or borrowings of any significant nature, the daily household expenditure of Rs. 6.50 can be accepted as household income of these Sabara families. According each Sabara family has a total annual income of Rs. 2,300. This means the poverty of a Sabara family in the village is down 75 per cent below the cutoff point.
- (2) There is a primary school in the village since 1965 but literacy is zero. There is a tube-well but the water is not used by the villagers. There is a *pucca* road connection from the town and a local bus operates twice daily through the village but so far modernity has not touched villagers.
- (3) The Sabara women are dominant in the family system and contribute equally to the family income alike their husbands. There is no complete social network among the Sabara women as it is commonly believed, but there are many social circles inside the networks. The network densities are low, but it is higher than the network densities of urban communities.

### Suggestions:

As it shows that there is very meager impact of modernization on the Sabara community in spite of several planned strategies of rural and tribal development evolved and experimented by our planners since 1951. My suggestions may be regarded, as further addition to the strategies already there in sufficient number, but I feel these are worth for an experiment.

- (1) There is a school, two teachers have been working there since last 25 years but there is not a single adult who can sign his or her name. The 1981 census records show that the literacy of tribals in Orissa is 13.95

per cent. Assuming that the tribal literacy was zero in 1951, it shows that during the last 30 years only about 14 per cent of the tribal could be made literates. The children are not being sent to the school because the parents feel that the education is of no use to the family immediately; instead they prefer to engage them in the household work which is believed to be more productive. Further it is found that the children are not at all interested to learn a “foreign” language or other than their mother-tongue which is neither spoken nor understood by anybody in the village. I suggest that the Sabaras may be taught in their own language through Oriya alphabets in order to increase the educational level of the community. There is no need to develop a separate script for the Sabara language to add to the eleven types of scripts we are having in India today, they can be taught in their language through Odia script easily. Both the parents and children would be more interested in their process of education. Once they know the Odia script gradually they will be attracted to learn Odia when they realize that it is necessary for them. The estimated Sabara population now is about 4.5 lakhs in the State. Hence a suitable education programme may be developed for the Sabaras in their own language.

- (2) Most of the school teachers today in the tribal villages neither attend school and even if they go occasionally nor reside in the village with family. Instead of a teacher a multipurpose work may be appointed to do the job of a teacher, health and medical visitor and a development worker concerning the village. The teacher should be given necessary training in the respective field and more important is that he should stay in the village itself with family. This will have a good demonstrative effect’ on their pattern of consumption and attitude towards life.
- (3) The network analysis shows that there is a strong social circle among the Sabara women in the village. Out of 11 sample women, 27 per cent, that is three women, viz. Mangidi, Body and Admi-the numbers 4, 5 and 6 in the networks-form a strong social circle. Economic development requires a change in the way people think, feel and act’. Development as an objective and development as a process both embrace a change in the fundamental attitudes to life and work’. If the closely related three Sabara women are motivated and their outlook influenced it will spread to the entire community through the social networks. Development cannot take place if there is no urge for development. Lack of interest in

material advance' seems to be one of the main reasons of under development of these aboriginal tribes. When these Sabara women were asked about their requirement for their improvement, four of them told to provide land for cultivation and the rest reluctantly expressed that they need money to repair or construct houses. Nobody demanded any modern amenities or household goods for their family. Unless aspirations are aroused among the Sabara community for development, spoon feeding of projects by dumping money cannot make any headway to develop them. They have to be motivated through the initiation of a social circle, especially through the women folk of the community. This approach may be slow, and desired results may not forth come immediately, but once caught up the community will be progressed rapidly. We have lost 40 years expecting quick results and once we stop expecting quick result initially; this new approach will get unexpected results.

### References

- (1) Census of India (Orissa) 1981, Part IX (IV) Special tables for Scheduled Tribes.
- (2) A.G. Frank, "Dependence, class and politics in Latin America (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972.)
- (3) R. Nurkse, "Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries". (Oxford University Press, 1967), PP.58-59.
- (4) Gunnar Myrdal. Asian Drama, An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations. (Penguin Books, 1968), Pp.851.
- (5) P. Streeten, The Frontiers of Development Studies, (Mac Millan. 1972), Pp .30.
- (6) P.T. Bauer, Dissent on Development, (Harvard University Press, 1972), PP. 78f.

# SAORA WOMEN: A STUDY ON THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS<sup>1</sup>

Tarini Patnaik <sup>2</sup>  
Sarat Das

Status, though difficult to conceptualize and often elusive for empirical grasp, yet its idea is essential to an understanding of social stratification, social mobility and the line. In the past, status was a juristic term connoting the individual rights and duties as relevant to him/her condition and station in life. In the past, status was a juristic term connoting the individual rights and duties as relevant to him/ her condition and station in life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century social upheavals had shaken the old order to its foundation. This came with Max Weber who pointed out that status, class or income and political power are the three major dimensions of social stratification. A different interpretation has distinguished the work of Anthropologist, Ralph Linton. According to him, status is primarily a position in a social structure involving rights, duties and reciprocal expectations of behaviour, none of which depends on the personal characteristics of the status occupants.

Generally, status is of two types i.e. ascribed and achieved. Ascribed status is that which is inherited, such as sex, race or ethnicity or overtime, age and is crucial to define the basic patterns of people's lives. Achieved status, on the other hand, is acquired through personal effort or chance possibly from occupational or educational attainment.

Professor R. H. Lowie prescribed four determinants to assess the status in its multifarious dimensions. These are i) Actual treatment, ii) Legal status, iii) Opportunity for social participation, iv) Character and extent of work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVI, Nos.1 & 2, 1996, pp.61-65

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistants, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



This article deals with the socio-economic status of the Lanjia Saora women. Social economic status mostly determines the behavioural make up of an individual and provides an insight for him / her future success.

Therefore, the knowledge about the social and economic status of the Saora women will be helpful to the social scientists to foresee the behavior in changed conditions that has occurred after lurching of different developmental programmes. It is also highly essential on the part of the planners to measure the present status of the women section which will help them to know the gap and the quantum of efforts required. The present status of the Saora women is delineated on the basis of the data collected from a Lanjia Saora village.

In Orissa, Saoras are one of the major tribes. The Lanjia Saora belong to the primitive section of the tribe, Saora. They are found in great compactness in the Parlakhemundi sub-division of Gajapati district and Gunupur sub-division of Rayagada district. The tract stretching from Parlakhemundi town to Gumma and beyond up to Serango and the country lying with a radius of about 20 kms. from both these central places have many Saora villages which are located in the fertile valleys. The total population of the tribe as per 1981 census is 3,70,061 which constitute 6.26 percent of the total population of the State. On the basis of their numerical strength they occupy third position among 62 tribal communities. The sex ratio as per 1981 census comes to 1030 females per 1000 males. Educationally the tribe is backward. The percentage of literacy among them is 14.47 as compared with 34.23 percent for the entire population of the State as per 1981 census. However, they show an increase in their literacy rate by 4.32 percent over the earlier figure of 10.15 percent recorded in 1971 census.

The economic life of the Saoras is primarily based on *podu* cultivation and terrace cultivation with occasional hunting and food gathering. Especially, the Saoras of Parlakhemundi are the best terrace cultivators. In their society, family is patriarchal; the residence is patrilocal and descent, patrilineal. Membership in the family is acquired by birth but girls after their marriage leave parent's family and stay with their husbands. The Saoras are unique due to the absence of clan. The *birinda* as patrilineage has its structure and function.

Among the Saoras the women have their distinct position. They have freedom in selecting their mates. The institutions, like marriage and family bestow a significant status on them. Though generally, monogamy is common, polygyny is also permitted. It is mainly resorted to for the expansion of shifting cultivation in which Saora women work more than men and they constitute the major work force. It is a sign of prestige and prosperity for the Saora men to

have more wives. Thus, women help in enhancing the social and economic prestige of men. Another remarkable feature among the Saoras is that a woman belongs to her father's *birinda* (extended lineage) even after her marriage. In widow remarriage and divorce equal opportunities are given to both the sexes.

The Saora society being patriarchal, the status of women is expected to be low. But in reality women in their society are neither ill-treated nor suppressed to enjoy a subservient position. There is no absolute dominance of man, though in theory he is the head of the household. Women have a high and honoured place in the society. The Saoras believe that growth of the family largely depends more on women. So they consider that greater sin is committed when a woman is killed than a man. A person killing a woman should offer 8 buffaloes where as 7 buffaloes are prescribed in case a man is killed. In religion also Saora women have a distinct position. The existence of female 'Shaman' called 'Kudanboi' justifies importance of women in religious life. The Saora men also pay due respect to their women. Once someone is engaged to a girl, he should not even touch her before marriage is consummated.

So far as the legal status of the Saora woman is concerned, she cannot sell properties or enter into an agreement to transfer of property rights in any manner. Of course, she can sell her personal and self acquired assets with the consent of the husband. They also have right over certain movable properties and immovable assets to a limited extent by virtue of marriage, personal endeavour and by way of receiving gifts and compliments. Thus, though husband is the customary owner and inherits property, it is the women in the family who virtually control the family purse and play a decisive role in respect of control and management of the family assets.

In the economic front, Saora women play a more significant role. The Saora males appear to be less capable and less enthusiastic in economic activities than the females. The women are very hard-working, laborious and active. As the Saoras are shifting cultivators, the help of women is indispensable to them. Cleaning the shrubs in swidden (*podu*) lands, manuring, hoeing, dressing, reaping, winnowing the crops after harvesting etc. are exclusively done by the women in addition to their household works. Even Saora women plough the terraced lands.

Thus, Saora women by virtue of their substantial economic contribution are regarded as assets to families of both parents and in-laws. After dealing with a brief account of the socio-economic status of Saora women in their social structure, an attempt has been made to analyze primary data collected through field study to assess their present status.

The objective of the study was to find out the major socio economic problems that Saora women confront in their day to-day life. Three types of schedules were administered for data collection from primary sources.

- a) Village information schedule
- b) Household schedule
- c) Individual schedule

A sample of 111 females were selected using purposive sampling. The selection was based on age, marital status, educational standard and land holding. One female from each of the household was selected.

The study was conducted in Tumula, a village on the Gumma hills in Serango P.S. of Parlakhemundi subdivision in Gajapati district. The village is about 45 k.ms. away from the Parlakhemundi sub-divisional headquarters.

#### Demography of the Village:

##### (i) Households:

Total	111
Non-Converted	46 (41.45%)
Converted	65 (58.55%)

The village is homogeneous in its composition inhabited by 111 Lanjia Saora families. Out of these 111 households 58.55 percent families are converted to Christianity.

##### (ii) Population:

	Non-Converted	Converted
Total	241	348
Male	103	156
Female	138	192

The population distribution above shows that females outnumber the males, the sex ratio being 1,274 females per 1,000 males as against 1,030 females per 1,000 males as per 1981 census.

##### (iii) Education:

	<u>Non- Converted</u>	<u>Converted</u>
Total Literates	50 (20.75%)	153 (25.98%)
Male Literacy	41 (39.80%)	130 (50.19%)
Female Literacy	9 (6.53%)	23 (6.96%)

The above figures indicate that 34.46 percent of the population is literate. Further, it is seen that converted Saora both male and female show a higher rate of literacy than the non-converted Saora. This implies the influence of Christianity.

**(iv) Land Holding:**

Marginal Farmer	107 (96.39%)
Small Farmer	4 (3.61%)
Big Farmer	Nil (0.00%)

The above figures show that majority of the families are marginal farmers which deprives them from being economically sound through agriculture.

**(v) Income:**

Below Poverty Line 71 households -	(63.96%)
Above Poverty Line 40 households -	(36.04%)
(Taking poverty line for the rural area as Rs. 9,000)	

About 64 percent of the families have their annual income below Rs. 9,000 which implies that they have not crossed the poverty line.

**Social-Economic Status of the Sample Women:**

**(a) Age:**

Between 10-14 years	12 (10.81%)
Between 15-19 years	90 (81.08%)
60 and above years	9 (8.11%)

The above figures show that most of the respondents were between the age-group of 15-59 years.

**(b) Marital Status:**

Unmarried	36 (32.44%)
Married	62 (55.85%)
Widow	12 (10.81%)
Divorced	1 (0.90%)

The above table shows that majority of the respondents are married.

**(c) Mean age at Marriage:**

Between 15-19 years	2 (2.67%)
Between 20-24 years	47 (62.67%)
Between 25-29 years	21 (28.00%)
Between 30-34 years	5 (6.66%)

The above figures indicate that age at marriage is highest in the age group 20-24 years.

**(d) Education :**

Illiterate	95 (85.59%)
Just literate	2 (1.80%)
Having school education	14 (14.41%)

The above figures indicate that about 86 percent of women are illiterate but 14.41 percent having school education can be trained to take the leadership for the rest. Below the age group 29 years not a single women is even found to be just literate. Adult education may prove fruitful to this group of women.

**(e) Economic Activities:**

Cultivation	52 (57.77%)
Shifting cultivation	83 (92.92%)
Agricultural wage earning	25 (27.77%)
Non-agricultural wage earning	0 (0.00%)
Forest collection	72 (80.00%)
Service	0 (0.00%)

**Average Annual per-capita Income:**

Cultivation	Rs. 200
Shifting cultivation	Rs. 1,260
Agricultural wage earning	Rs. 150
Forest collection	Rs. 1,000
Per capita annual income	Rs. 1,718.28

Out of III sample women, 90 women (81.08%) who belong to the age group 15-59 years constitute the work force. Their work participation in different economic sectors shown above reveals that they are exclusively engaged in primary sector of economy i.e. cultivation, shifting cultivation, agricultural wage earning and forest collection. Not a single woman is found employed in any secondary or tertiary sector. During the course of interaction with the respondents it is found that shifting cultivation is a part and parcel of their life and they have no confidence in their ability to take up non-traditional work. Heavy pressure on land leads to under-employment and low per capita income. Degradation and reservation for forest also act as a set-back on their economy, as next to agriculture they get their subsistence from forest. It is also found during the study that forest collections are mainly marketed by the women at the Gumma weekly market. They are found exploited by the local traders.

The extent of influence of women on their husbands in decision making is shown below:-

<b>Decision Areas</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Marriage of children	3.98	III
Education of children	3.53	IV
Expenditure pattern	4.91	I
Construction of house	3.04	V
Adoption of new shifting land	3.98	III
Debt & payment of loans	2.85	III
Health & Hygiene care	2.75	IX
Religious matters	2.95	VII
Family planning	3.01	VI
Household task	4.52	II
Dowry payment	1.98	X
Litigation matter	1.01	XI

The Saora women have influence more or less on their husbands on above items. They exercise their influence on three most important areas i.e. expenditure pattern, marriage of children and adoption of new agricultural lands.

Sources of information utilized by the Saora women:

<b>Information sources</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Radio	3.01	VII
V.L.W.	3.95	V
Anganwadi	4.01	IV
Family	8.25	I
Friends & Relatives	7.01	II
Tribal Development Agency	3.02	VI
Village Leaders	6.82	III

The above figures reveal the intensity of the use of different information sources by the Saora women. The three most important information sources utilized by women are family, friends and relatives and village leaders. Among the institutionalized sources, Anganwadi comes first followed by V.L.W., Tribal Development Agency and Radio. No doubt, the above finding is real in the sense that family, village leader and peers are very close to them. On the other hand, the institutional sources have some bottlenecks in rearing and educating them. However, to maintain high degree of fidelity in communication more information support should be provided to Saora women by the institutional agencies.

## Conclusion

The study illustrates an all-round socio-economic status and living pattern of Lanjia Saora women. On the whole, women in the Lanjia Saora society occupy a dignified position enjoying considerable freedom in social life. They do not have the feeling that they are inferior to men. They do not face evils, like adultery, rape, beating, bride burning etc.; neither they feel insecure in their in-laws' house. The Lanjia Saora women share the duties and responsibilities of maintaining the daily life of their families on equal terms with the male folk.

On the other hand, the economic scenario of Saora women continues to be significantly dominated by agriculture, terrace cultivation and allied activities. Saora women in particular constitute a laborious work force that was found to have enormous potentiality without proper avenue for its utilization. Moreover, the Saora women are quite responsive and have influence on their husbands. It is a positive sign which the developmental agencies can explore to fortify their efforts to ensure acceptance of the development programmes by the tribal families.

Lastly, the Lanjia Saora women are in that stage of development which is primarily growth-oriented economic development. The first and foremost need is economic development which should then be followed by development of linkage between economic development and social change.

## References:

- (1) Devendro, Kivan, 1985 *Status and Position of Women in India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Bombay.
- (2) Elwin, V. 1995 *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*, Oxford Univ. Press.
- (3) Evans-Pritchard, 1965 *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and other Essays in Social Anthropology*, Faber & Faber Ltd., 24- Russel Square, London.
- (4) Patnaik, N. 1989 Environmental Changes Affecting Tribal Women, *Adibasi*, Vol.XXIX No.3&4, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- (5) Ptnaik, N. (Ed.) 1989 *The Saora*, Popular Series on Tribes, T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

# SAORA RIDDLES <sup>1</sup>

Hrushikesh Mahapatra

It is very well known that study of riddles is very important for the study of life and culture of a community. Like myth, legend and folktale, riddle is an important component of folklore. The composition of a riddle is made up of two parts. One part is question and the other part is answer pertinent to the question. Usually in the question part a fact is concealed by means of either metaphor or a simile where as the answer part of the riddle reveals the secret. Because of this concealment, riddle attains its unique beauty, significance and form. Riddle stimulates the inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity in men. The cultural background of the riddle is very vast and varied.

Here is a study of the riddles of a primitive section of the Hill Saoras of Orissa (Odisha) that has been collected from Serango of Parlakhemundi area in Gajapati district.

Saora riddles are closely related to their life. Scholars have divided the riddles into two groups one of culture and the other of utility. The division under culture involves folk riddles and literary riddles and those under utility are for explanations, jokes, celebrations and recreations.

## **Social Setting of the Saora Riddle**

(a) It seems that riddles may be asked throughout the whole year. But mainly during autumn, inspired by the old people, boys and girls come together for questioning and answering riddles.

(b) The evening is the appropriate time for riddles. Sometimes, to break the monotony during work, they utilize working hours for questioning and answering riddles to relax and refresh.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXV, Nos.1& 2, 1995, pp.33-34



(c) Riddles are indulged in mainly by children or young people of both the sexes. Two individuals or two teams may ask riddles to each other. It is clear from the social setting of the Saora riddles that riddles are mainly considered as a form of entertainment and therefore are indulged in the evening and during the less busy month of the year i.e. autumn.

The Saora term for riddle is 'Digur' or 'Adigur'. The specialist in riddle is called as 'Digurmar'. He/She is liked by the young Saora folk. It has been observed that Saora girls are more conversant in riddles than the boys.

The riddles of the Saoras have been classified as under.

1. Related to natural phenomena.
2. Related to animal world.
3. Related to food and vegetable world.
4. Related to human body.
5. Related to jokes.
6. Related to domestic life.

In the following paragraphs each of the aforesaid groups of riddles is given.

### I. Riddles related to Natural Phenomena

- (a) *Raja aon rupti adi Samabe, taglen Mangili gi gi Ii binden gitadi ? - Tutuee.*  
(One can see the king's sons but can never count them, what is it? -Stars)
- (b) *Tar tangana amangtin, Je tongan tikite ? - Taagi.*  
(The white bullock is followed by the red bullock, what is it? -Fire)

### 2. Riddles related to the Animal World:

- (a) *Raja asi kiditang? - Yantan.*  
(King's Chain, what is it? -Black ants).
- (b) *Yagi muyun Janang, bagu muyun janang achhudae, ab ga gaden daku, itin ate? - Gullu.*  
(The growth during three to four years is not reducing or increasing, what is it? -Snail).
- (c) *Kunde amanara ra ra Malin dakutin? - Pander.*  
(It has bulging eyes, what is it - Rabbit)

- (d) *Bamnara ganurja game, tarbuja game, gablena gablesite ? - Banum.*  
(It always stands the rain, cyclone and sun but never breaks, what is it?  
White ant—Moundi)
- (e) *Edalin dakutin Kudun aaglenji den yaptin ? - Padur.*  
(The dry leaching wholes are concealed when filled with water, what is  
it? -Crab hole in the field).

### 3. Riddles Related to the Vegetable World and Food

- (a) *Agur dangan jatan, yaga dangan lanka ? - Alae*  
(The red pot below, the black pot above, what is it? 'Valia' , a type of  
oil nut).
- (b) *Asudamar taramdin, asanamar ya ya ren dakutinji ? - Sarugae.*  
(An elderly man surrounded by youngsters, what is it? —Arum).
- (c) *Mane gan ousalan tarang din. ajelub, tarangdin ajangan alungan ajelun ? -  
Bhada.*  
(Flesh below the outer skin, is the bone containing flesh, what is it? -  
Mango.
- (d) *Laden atal tal li Ii site ? - Sindi*  
(Lady's necklace beads are in bundles, what is it?—Date palm).
- (e) *Rajana abanda anti ja ah gae ? - Pedida.*  
(Birds are unable to drink water from the king's pond, what is it? -  
Coconut water).
- (f) *Ranjana alantada butija galraptie? - Paidi.*  
(No one can drink water from the king's spring, what is it?—Green  
Coconut water).
- (g) *Raja abaengu atentie? - Arresim.*  
(King's brinjal without stalk, what is it? - an Egg).
- (h) *Dubula tongan endungte, Yaga tangan lulesite, itin ate? - Kan-Lae.*  
The white bullock is sleeping, the black bullock is roaming, what is it?  
- Pumpkin).
- (i) *Sabayindina sautikadabling dakutin? Kinteal*  
(It stands always with the shaking sword, what is it?—Banana leaf).
- (j) *Atin barulingan sering, pudri ganamur tin lasoti nai? - Abagur.*  
(Who ascends from the hill top releasing smoke?—Mahua flower).

- (k) *Rajana akadip butin ablinge ruptite? - Kinteal.*  
(Who can tell the name of the king's Sword?—Banana leaf).

#### 4. Riddles Related to the Human Body:

- (a) *Lungar lingan tar piden tare site? - 'Jah'*  
(The white mushroom of the rainy season are dazzling within the cave, what is it?—Teeth).
- (b) *Aboe manra tabdang erete eraite ? - Madd.*  
(It moves to and fro within the twinkle of an eye, what is it?-an Eye)
- (c) *Bada gadubar abur aboi aruken? -Kuyu.*  
(The hill is full of ups and downs, what is it? - Hair style)

#### 5. Riddles Related to the Jokes

- (a) *Bamnara irebenden etigai soulagte ? - Ungulu.*  
(Where ever a man goes another follows him, what is it?—Shadow).
- (b) *Rajana arta edele arabtibe? - Tangar*  
(King's yoking rope cannot be turned, what is it? – Walking on the hill road).
- (c) *Aboi bangu rungligan, atom tumle jilibinden Urubinden a bongay? - Kinsoal.*  
(Which cannot be straightened with the help of a bamboo pipe? - Dog's tail).
- (d) *Yung ladib, itin ate? - Bajlana.*  
(It is like Sun rays, what is it? - Spitting).
- (e) *Yagi abban galji ajingan? - Ara.*  
(It has three heads and ten legs, what is it? - A man ploughing with two bullocks).

#### 6. Riddles Related to Domestic Life

- (a) *Sodamar bintalenden engange, sanamar binta—lenden Yagte? - Sannar.*  
(Bigger hunting parties miss the game, where as smaller parties gain it, what is it?--Comb.
- (b) *Gamlinbin gantin, unglin bin dugte? - Sanag.*  
(It moves in to the room and also outside the room, what is it? -Door).

- (c) *Kudana jaljal diasingen jaler dakutin ? - Janah.*  
(That cleans the house, court yard and back yard, what is it?—Broom stick).
- (d) *Kuda lingan gablena gablesite, tagija game, Mayuja game? - Donki.*  
(It rests on the fire place, without fire it is cool, when cooked it resists the heat, what is it?—Pot earthen or metal).
- (e) *Kadia tangan lasote, dubula tongan edaiate, itin ate ?- Along.*  
(Replace the black bullock by white bullock, what is it?—Straw).
- (f) *Atagin tagin upte? - Satua.*  
(It does not distinguish between hot and cold, what is it?—Ladder).
- (g) *Aerte anang aduloee, ayartinayen among abe? - Daba.*  
(It goes with empty stomach and returns with full belly, what is it? - Carriage of water in the earthen pots).
- h) *Aboi nin aonal ling, yagi unji tangataji? - Taagding.*  
(Three/four persons are dancing on a point, what is it? - Rice pounder).
- (I) *Asudamar gable site, asudamar endugte? - Tudu.*  
(Bigger ones are sitting idle while the smaller ones are roaming about, what is it?—Small baskets).
- o) *Arsin ajang rujudang ajadang? - Randa.*  
(The monkey's bone is undulating, what is it?—drying of paddy).
- (k) *Antar jumte, antar asangten dangee yamle tangseng leni dakutin ? - Gurudiar.*  
(It rolls round with a stick, feeds and clears the bowl, what is it? - a Grinder).
- (I) *Alungan aurnta jan gan daku, baeran ajelun daku?- Alsing.*  
(Bones are covered by flesh, what is it—thatch of a house (Kachha).

From the examples mentioned above it is clear that the riddles of the Saoras reflect the different stages and conditions of life like a parody. Their use of riddles reveals the depth involved in their meanings. These are both thought stimulating and highly entertaining. When the Saoras thatch their house they replace the old straw by the new straw. It is indicated by the riddle, "Kadia tangan losote, Dubula tangan odaete."

For different fruits and foods taking different shapes, sizes, and colours, they have composed their riddles. During summer, mango is an important food item of the Saoras. It is explained in the riddles, "Manegan

ausalan tarandin din ajelub, tarong din ajangan alungan ajelin." The food 'egg' is explained in the riddle, "Raja abaengu antentie". The Saoras have planted coconut trees in the hills. The riddles related to these plantations are also in vogue among them. It is explained in the riddles "Rajana abanda anti ja ah gae" and "Rajana alontoda buija galraptie". Similarly different aspects of Saora life are explained in different riddles.

There is a conscious recognition of the fact that riddles act as a functional device for social entertainment and they are considered as criteria of Intellectual skill and wit as well. Like any other riddles, the Saora riddles also perform the educational function because of the nature of its very content.

It will be an understatement to say that riddles are basically recreational in nature. On the contrary, it evokes the loftiest of ideas in a Saora mind. To have a clear cut understanding of their life in their very context, proper understanding and explanation of their riddles are necessary.

### References

1. Bhagabat Durga—"An outline of Indian Folklore" (Calcutta, 1958 March).
2. Dundes Allan—"The study of Folklore" Prentice-Hall Inc Englewood Cliffs N.J. 1965.
3. Thama Raj. Y—"Riddles reveal life activities (Article) in the *Journal of Folklore*, August-1988 (Indian Publication).

# SOCIAL CONTROL & TRADITIONAL SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE LANJIA SAORA OF KORAPUT <sup>1</sup>

Sarat Chandra Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

Every society has developed some mechanisms of social control for ensuring regulated life of persons as its members. The mechanisms are manifested in simple forms through folkways, mores, sanctions, and customs and in elaborate forms of law, backed by enforceability, authority and power structure and administration of justice. The simple society represented by the Saora is no exception to this.

Ralph Linton (1936) holds the view that, when the individuals have adjusted and organized individual behaviour either consciously or by trial and error, towards group consciousness and a feeling of 'esprit de corps', it has transformed itself into a society with some degree of social solidarity. To ensure its continued existence, the society must have some agencies of control to regulate adult behaviour and inculcate in the young the mores and folkways of the group. In simple tribal societies, kinship units, like family, lineage, clan, phratry, moiety, band or village community, inter-village organizations and the tribe as a whole has been largely responsible for the development of social solidarity and the regulation of social behaviour.

The real social group exists only when it functions as a unity. This unity comes into being when the individual members are bound by certain bonds or ties which make their lives and behaviour closely interdependent and infuse into their minds the feelings of oneness, solidarity and communal interests. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVI, Nos. 1 & 2, 1996, pp.40-46

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

group creating bonds in the tribal society are: 1. Kinship and blood ties, 2. Marriage, 3. Common and simple magico-religious beliefs and practices, 4. Common language/ dialect, mores and folk traditions, 5. Common territorial affinity, 6. Common economical life, 7. Loyalty to common authority, 8. Common social institutions, 9. Common political system and law and order machinery, 10. Mutual give and take and interdependence, 11. Common living, experiencing and acting together. These bonds keep the individuals emotionally attached to the community and create a common group identity that holds the members together. Some of these factors in respect of the Saora society responsible for maintaining their social control and solidarity shall be discussed in the context of the political system and law and order machinery.

To Durkheim, social solidarity is a moral phenomenon which can be studied best through an analysis of the very factor which brings about the principal forms of social solidarity and that is law or customary law. In an undifferentiated tribal society an act is criminal when it offends strong and defined states of collective conscience. The collective or "common conscience" according to Durkheim is the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society and forms a determinate system which has its own life.

The "Saora" or "Savara" are a great ancient tribe. They have been mentioned quite frequently in Hindu mythology and ancient classics, epics, *purans* and various other scriptures. Especially in Orissa, they have been very intimately associated with the cult of Lord Jagannath, who according to a legendary tradition originated as a tribal deity and was later brought to Puri under royal patronage.

The tribe is called by various names such as *saura*, *sabara*, *sahar*, *saur*, *sora*, etc and have their racial affinity with the Proto-Australoid stock which is dominant among the aborigines of Central and Southern India. They are widely found all over the Central India comprising the States of Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. They speak an ancient Mundari dialect of their own called 'Sora'.

The Saora constitute one of the Scheduled Tribe of Orissa. They are found in almost all the districts of the State. But their main concentration lies in a contiguous mountainous territory forming a major part of the agency tracts of the Eastern Ghats in Rayagada (formerly undivided Koraput district) and Gajapati districts of Southern Orissa which can be called, the "Saora Country".

Numerically, they constitute the third largest tribe in Orissa. Their total population in the State, as per 1981 census is 3,70,061 which accounts for 6.26

percent of the total tribal population of the State. They have registered a decennial growth rate of 8 percent between 1971 and 1981. Their sex ratio comes to 1030 females per 1000 males showing numerical superiority of their women over men. They are socially, economically and educationally backward. Their percentage of literacy as recorded in 1981 census is only 14.47 percent.

The Saora tribe is divided into a number of sub-tribes, such as Kapu, Jati, Sudho, Jadu, Jara, Arsi, Luara or Muli, Kindal, Kumbi, Basu, Lanjia, etc. The "Lanjia Soara" who are called the "Hill-Saora" by some noted ethnographers like Verrier Elwin, constitute a primitive section of the tribe. They inhabit the "Saora Country" in Southern Orissa as described above. They are famous for their expertise in terrace cultivation, shifting cultivation, elaborately religious lifestyle, artistic skills for producing beautiful wall paintings, pictograms popularly known as icons and their peculiar traditional male dress-style in which the ends of the loin cloth hang like a tail at the back. The term "Lanjia" meaning "having a tail" has been bestowed upon them by their neighbours referring to the fashion of wearing long-tailed loin cloth by their male folk.

Many prominent authorities like, Thurston, Dalton, Campbell, Macpherson, Russel, Taylor, Cunnigham, Fawcett, Risley, Ramamurty, Sitapathi Pantulu, Munro, Singh, Elwin have written about the Lanjia Saora. The most vivid account of the tribe have been given by Verrier Elwin in his famous book "Religious of an Indian Tribe" in which, he has described their complex and elaborate magic-religious beliefs and practices that has made the tribe known all over the world.

Like their magico-religious life, dress-style, artistic talents and terrace cultivation skills, another important feature is their keenness to maintain their group solidarity and preserve their cultural identity by adhering to the ethics, values, morals, customs and traditions which are unique. In this respect the Lanjia Saora are a well-organized group. They understand the essentials of moral law. They have their own conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad. Their interpersonal relations are governed by fixed status and well defined customs which are applicable to all aspects of human social life. Their traditional society is mostly governed by their customary law corroborated by ethical norms and public opinion. The ethical percepts and norms are transmitted from generation to generation through the informal process of socialization. They are well aware of the fact that social group depends on an orderly social life through proper observance of social norms and customs.



Verrier Elwin (1955) wrote “the ethical codification is of external actions rather than of virtues and dispositions, it is not burdensome, but exact, not heroic but meticulous and though it is unwritten, and in a way untaught, it is known to every child. It defines the limit within which one should walk and so long as these limits are observed, it is an insurance against ghostly evils. These conditions sometimes lead to a self-conscious scrupulosity, sometimes to an irritating assumption of complacency, but on the whole they help the Saora to live well.”

The most important factor of ensuring social conformity is the fear of religion. Religion forms an indispensable part of Saora life. The fear of supernatural punishment acts as a powerful deterrent against violation of established customs. The only remedy in case of violation is the speedy expiation of the sin and the propitiation of the angry deity or spirit. “Punishment by the Gods is a more serious matter. All the Gods punish any diversion from the formalist path of safety, the breach of a taboo leads to almost immediate, and certainly automatic, retribution. But the greater Gods such as ‘Uyungsum’ and ‘Darammasum’ are said to punish men for ‘Sin’. (Elwin : 1955).

The type of law established in the Saora society is an index of the strength of collective conscience based on common beliefs and sentiments. ‘Law’ according to Raddiffe-Brown (1952) is a means of “social control through the systematic application of force of the politically organized society”. Citing the views of Pospisil (1971) it can be said that in the Lanjia Saora society, “law manifests itself in the form of a decision passed by a legal authority (council, chief, and headman) by which a dispute is solved, or a party is advised, or by which approval is given to a previous solution of a dispute. This form of law has two important aspects; A decision serves not only to resolve a specific dispute, which represents the behavioral part played by the authority while passing the sentence, but it also represents a precedent and an ideal for those who were not party to the specific controversy. They regard the content of decision as a revelation of ideally correct behaviour.”

The Lanjia Saora being a primitive tribe have no written law but have their own norms and customs supported by social and supernatural customs. There are no political bodies, law making and enforcing agencies like legislature, police, executives, judges, lawyers and courts. But they have evolved their own systems, mechanisms, institutions and organizations for ensuring social control and administration of law and justice. Their politico-jural system is not a matter of law, as we see it but of tribal customs and practices comprising the obligations imposed on the individuals to ensure conformity.

“Customary laws are traditionally established practices which are honoured automatically without outside insistence or interference. Internal force and validity of the society make them faithfully observe the customarily hallowed practices and to punish those who infringe the time-honoured traditions. It is also observable fact that the ongoing processes of social change, contact with outside agencies, changed notions of value systems cause changes in the customary laws and practices.” (Goswami, 1979). The present taboo against beef-eating and restrictions against marriage by capture in the Lanjia Saora society are examples of their changing attitudes and value systems reflected in their collective conscience in respect of customs and practices, under the changing environment of modern times.

The significance of socio-political aspects comes from the fact that a substantial part of the law functions through the political system and its institutions, and it is difficult completely to separate law and political organization. Political organization is defined “as the organized ways of applying force to the maintenance of ordered relations between categories or groups of people. (Beals and Hoijer, 1971). Like other societies, the political organizations of the Saora do more than dealing with conflicts involving the social order; it also provides means for taking group decisions and administering programmes. This organization centers around an indigenous leadership which 1) command respect and allegiance of the tribes-men, 2) maintain peace and harmony among the group, 3) organize and direct community enterprises and 4) conduct group activities like agitation, raids etc.

“In the distant past when the Saora society comprised of patrilineal bands of multi-family aggregates, it might have had the characteristics of an egalitarian society. The ‘Birinda’ system of social organization points to the earlier extended patrilineal band organization. It may be surmised that in course of time, when population increased and the Saora changed from migratory to sedentary habits, villages grew and they settled down in the villages on permanent basis.” (Singh, 1984).

The Saora still have an organized political set up mostly confined to the village level. In each Saora village, there is a secular headman (Gomango / Naiko), sacerdotal headman (Buyya/Karji/Jani), headman’s subordinates (Mandal/Dalbehera), messenger (Barik), astrologer (Disari) and Shaman (Kudan /Beju). By virtue of their knowledge, experience, service and specialization in their respective fields, they have been holding positions of respect and authority in the village. In the recent past, the village headman yielded vast powers for the

maintenance of law and order, peace and good Government in the village. The other leaders were guardians of the cultural, religious and economic norms of their traditional society.

Singh (1984) wrote, "With elaboration of political organization, the egalitarian character of the society was modified. The present Saora society conforms to the characteristics of rank society". The offices of the 'Gomango, Buya, Mandal are held by the eldest male members of the respective families. The Gomango presides over the village meetings and the Buya and other leaders take active part in the discussions". Although the Gomango and the Buya are men of great influence and wield authority and power, they are not authoritarian in their decisions on problems concerning the village affairs. Every decision taken at a village meeting is arrived at democratically in consultation with village elders. In this sense, the Saora society resembles an egalitarian society. But there is a degree of difference between members of the general public and the secular and religious headman, which detracts from its egalitarian character.

The homogenous Saora village is an independent, autonomous and self-sufficient socio-political unit with remarkable cohesion and continuity. The village organization also possesses, a well defined territory, a hierarchy of responsible and respectable aristocracy and leadership and a traditional village council composed of family heads. Called "Birinda Neti". The organization is based upon democratic principles. The matters concerning the village are decided in village meetings held under the chairmanship of the Gomango in presence of other leaders. The meetings are attended by the family heads whose membership and attendance in the meetings are obligatory. Decisions are reached mostly by consensus and not by majority vote. Punishment for various offences consists of impositions of fines on the offender in forms of cash, liquor, goat, fowl etc. which are offered to the gods and spirits and then consumed in a communal feast.

Buya, the sacerdotal head acts as a mediator between the villagers and the supernatural. He supplicates the deities for their blessings and benevolence for the village community. Every activity of the village like the transaction of the landed property, construction of new houses, wedding rituals, agricultural operations, detection of crime, communal festivals and ceremonies etc. are considered to be religious affairs.

Supernatural sanctions operate the machinery of social control and play a significant part in promoting conformity with accepted moral standard of the contemporary society. The religious belief and practices exhibit two main

characteristics of Saora social life. In the first place each village seems to be autonomous and self-sufficient. People show loyalty to Gomango and Buya. They believe that the spirits of departed leaders are most important. They appear in dreams and warn the ruling Gomango and Buya against any violation of Saora norms and customs and ritual practices. In the second place, the Soara style of life is believed to be sanctioned by the supernatural world and any disturbance in the regularity of their life causes anxiety and illness and invokes the wrath of the spirits, resulting in suffering, disease, draught and other calamities.

Prior to independence, the Saora areas in Ganjam district were being administered by the feudal chiefs, *zamindars*, *bissoyis*, *doras*, *patros* and their managers, agents and subordinates. The British agents occupied the area in 1766 through conquest and treaties. Each hill-tract called Maliah' was divided in to a number of administrative units known as 'Mutha'. The Mutha administration was functioning under a Mutha Head called Muthadar, Bisoyi or Patro. The Bissoyis were maintaining a set of subordinate officers namely, *paiks*, *naiks*, *adhikari*, *hudadars*, *sardars* etc. stationed at strategic places inside the territories to administer the area, maintain law and order and collect revenues and taxes.

Maltby's account (1882) shows that there were eleven Bissoyis in Parlakhemundi agency area. Each of them was in charge of a small fort with their small private armies who were acting as police of the region to prevent the Saoras from raiding the plains. They were collecting *mamool* or dues from the Saora in kinds of grains, fruits, vegetables, animals, pots and minor forest produces. They were also implementing the barbarous custom of free and forced labour called "Bethi Paiti".

Under British administration, the Bissoyis were taken as service 'Inamdars' holding their respective Muthas in proprietary rights on the condition of keeping the Saora quiet. They were maintaining a number of Paiks (soldiers) and Pessaniyas armed with matchlocks and were entitled to receive *mamools* from the *royats* as their remuneration. In addition to that, the Bisoyis and their staff were granted with rent-free lands for their services. Their offices were hereditary. But the Bisoyis and their agents were tyrants and exploiters of the tribals. They were quite demanding and resorting to violence, oppression and terror if any one dares to refuse them. The Saoras were mortally afraid of these tyrants. Even today Saora oldmen remember them and their ghastly deeds with hate and contempt.

The administrative arrangement for the Saora living in Gunupur area of Koraput was different. It formed a part of Jeypore Zamindari ruled by the

Maharaja of Jeypore. There were no feudal chiefs, landlords, and overlords, Mutha-Heads or their agents to oppress the tribals. The Saoras were paying their taxes directly to the Government.

The Saoras of Parlakhemundi area according to Elwin (1955) were “not successful in defending themselves against the Paiks, the servants of the Bissoyis, who come round with violence and threats and to collect one tribute for the Bissoyi’s and another for themselves. This results in a very wretched physical condition and timidity and depression. The Paiks came round like raging lions and collected dues for the Bissoyis (together with what they can snatch for themselves)”.

The village administration at that time was entrusted to the village level officials such as, Gomango or Mandal (secular chief), Buya (religious chief), and their assistants like Dalabehera, Barik, etc. “The Gomango and the Buyas are not only the wealthiest but were also recognized in the past by the Government and used to receive an official turban which was a greatly prized possession. The Gomango was the intermediary between the Government and the people, and it was by his orders that the villagers went to work for officials and the local lords known as ‘Bissoyi’. His presence was essential at all village functions. In Koraput, he was the arbiter in matrimonial disputes and he had the final say in the allocation of rent. Where the Buya priest, in his secular capacity, was head of a separate quarter in a village, he could be almost equal to the chief in importance.” (Singh, 1984).

The term “Gomango” is synonymous with the lineage head. It also means rich and important person. The offices of Gomango, Mandal, Buya, Dalabehera and Barik are hereditary and succession is based on the rule of primogeniture. Gomango is the secular head in charge of politico-socio-cultural activities of the village and in the past he was the revenue chief at the village level serving as a link between the village and the Mutha Head or the State administration. A position equal to him is held by the religious head, Buya, who presides over religious functions and holds an influential position in village meetings. Besides, there is Disari, the astrologer who forecasts auspicious time for conducting rituals and ceremonies in respect of marriage, death, birth, agriculture and communal festivals.

The village officials are men of high social prestige, wealth and status. Even though the offices like those of Gomango, Buya, Mandal and Barik, etc. were abolished after independence and these traditional leaders have no official status at present, the Saora continue to honour them and their role in village affairs still continue to be decisive.

Elwin (1955) writes, “The Saora recognized four different kinds of male religious functionary, each with his special duties and rewards. The Buya is a village official who performs the office of priest in most of the Ganjam villages. The Kuranmaran is the Shaman-Diviner, medicine-men and celebrant at every kind of sacrifice. The Idaimaran is an acolyte who assists the Shaman and performs menial duties at the funerary ceremonies. The Siggamaran has the duty of cremating the corpse and performing other duties at a funeral. The official Buya, who is often called the Sadi Buya (the priest who has been given a turban, called Sadi, by Government), is generally the head of one of the quarters of a village and in the Ganjam villages, acts as second in command to the Gomango. The priest officiates at the harvest festivals, and has his part to play at marriages, funerary rites and other sacrifices sales and mortgages of land and liquor yielding trees, partition and other dispositions of property, and divorces effected in the council of village elders, presided over by the Gomango and Buya, by means of long and tedious proceedings, involving various religious ceremonies. In the old days the village chief and priest had quasi-magisterial functions, and the authority to settle a number of criminal and civil cases and to impose fines.”

Intra-village affairs are decided inside the village with the intervention of village leaders and council of elders. Inter-village disputes relating to boundary issues, trespassing into lands and forests, trespassing of cattle, marriage by capture or elopement, interpersonal quarrels, etc. are decided in a joint meeting of village leaders and elders on both the sides, sometimes with intervention of the leaders of a third friendly village.

The general atmosphere of Saora religion is one among the forces making for a good orderly social life. Saora religion may not aim at making people better, nor it rewards or punishes good or bad conduct, but it forms the natural soil in which good human qualities grow. The general tradition of how men should behave towards the gods emphasizes the way they should behave towards their fellowmen. It is dangerous to show proud behaviors before the gods, because humility is the most ideal of human virtues. The stress of duty, the importance of hard work and doing one’s share, the charm of hospitality, the need to avoid violence and lies, the priority of community over the individual, these things are not only demanded by the religion but as well by the community through its customs and traditions.

The way in which the Saora institutionalisms maintain social discipline, is by the pressure of public opinion, expressed in every possible way and in all the time. As this opinion is inexorable, it does not ask the people to be religious

but it insists that they should conform to the rules of “Ersi (sins) and “Ukka” (social offences). There is no sympathy for the person who breaches them and suffers supernatural punishments. Human penalties are inflicted by the traditional tribal council for violation of customs of “Ukka”. But the most dreaded penalty of ostracism or social excommunication which is used with so devastating effect by the tribal leadership and councils in other tribal communities is rarely resorted to by the Saora leaders.

### Bibliography & References

- Baral, J. K. & R. C. Sahoo 1980-81 Fight between Liliputs, *Adibasi*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-4, pp.61-67
- Veaks R. L. & Harry Hoijer 1971 *An Introduction to Anthropology*, The Macmillan Company, New York.
- Choudhury, B. 1963-64 Saora, *Adibasi*, Vol. V, No.3 pp101-106.
- Das, N. 1965-66 The Birinda of the Lanjia Saora, *Adibasi*, Vol. VII, No. 2 pp. 5-12
- Elwin, V. 1955 *The Religion of an Indian Tribe*, Bombay, Oxford University Press.
- 1964 *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, Oxford Publishing House.
- Gluckman, M. 1968 *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Goswami M.C. 1982 *The Customary Law and Practices of the Pati Rabha of Assam*. The Law Research Institute, Eastern Region, Gauhati.
- Hoebel, E. A. 1954 *The Law of Primitive Man*, Cambridge Mass, Havard University Press.
- Mohanty, B. B. 1988 A Glimpse of the Social Life of the Lanjia Saora, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, pp. 16-21
- Mohapatra, G. 1983 The Saora View of Good Life and Development, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, pp. 30-40
- Panda, J. K. 1965-66 Changing Saora Culture, *Adibasi*, Vol. VII, No. 1,p.71
- Patnaik, N. 1989 *The Saora*, THRTI
- 1970 Changing a Community's Culture, *Man in India*, Vol. 50, No. 2 pp. 189-96

Lanjia Saora

- Patnaik, N. & H. S. Mishra 1976 Elections and Patterns of leadership in the Lanjia Saora Villages of Gumma Panchayat, Ganjam, *Adibasi*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, pp. 1-15
- Patnaik, U. N. 1963-64 The Saora of Ganjam Hills, *Adibasi*, Vol.V No. 1, pp. 6-13
- 1955 Saora of Ganjam Scheduled Area, *Adibasi*, Inaugural Number.
- Pospisil, L. 1971 *Anthropology of Law*, Yule University, Harper and Row, New York.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1933 *Social Sanctions*, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Mac millan Co. New York Vol. III, pp. 531-534
- Roucek, J. S. 1965 *Social Control*, New York, D. Van Nostrand.
- Roy, S. Etal 1990 *Tribal Customary Laws of North East India*, B. R. Publishing Corpn, New Delhi.
- Roy, S. N. 1927 Savaras, *Man in India*, Vol.7. No. 4, pp.16-58.
- Singh, B. 1984 *Levels of Leadership in Saora Society*, Adibasi Exhibition Souvenir, BBSR, pp. 20-28.
- 1984 *The Saora Highlanders*, Bombay, Somaiya Publications.
- Sumner, W.G. 1907 *Folk ways*, Ginn & Co. New York.
- Thurston, E. 1909 'Savaras' Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol.VI, Madras, pp. 304-347.
- Aparajita, U. 1988 Traditional Political Organization of the Saora, *Adibasi*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, pp. 29.



# MUTATION AND PERMUTATION IN THE CULTURE SCAPE OF PTGs <sup>1</sup>

Harihar Das <sup>2</sup>  
Devi Prasad Das

The theory of evolution believes in the mutation and permutation of building blocks of genes which brings in bewildering biological species from unicellular amoeba proteus to human being with complex structure of genetic arrangement. Adaptability to accompanying eco-habitat sets the tune of genetic configuration of biological species. In this continual process, we see natural selection plays a pre-dominant role in accommodating or rejecting the viability of existence of a particular species. The 'One' that fails to closely follow the competitive process of existence vis-a-vis the eco-habitat, it is out rightly rejected by the dynamic laws of evolution. Starting from the origin of the living world long ago biological species come and go notwithstanding the changes in the matrix of the nourishing world. It points out the elimination of the Dinosaurous and other giant animals once dominated the world.

The same process of accommodation and rejection is found in the components of ethnic cultural moorings of the world that provides the required basis of sustenance to man. The changes set in by different agencies may be cross-fertilization of cultures, changes in geographical and eco-habitat, technological factors and social legislations. The mutation in ethnic society without having an outside window beyond their encysted habitations is influenced by this change provoking agencies. They sneak into the placid ethnic society slowly yet steadily.

The present article is premised upon the micro and macro level changes visible in the Lanjia Saora tribe, one of the Primitive Tribes of state. It attempts to make a comparative analysis of the virgin Saora tribe and the acculturated Saora in the matters of language, religious beliefs and practices, life style, family life, economy, occupation, health care, festivals, values and motives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVII, Nos. 1 & 2, 2007, pp. 158-60

<sup>2</sup> Elwin Gabeshana Parishad, Bhubaneswar

## Virgin Saora Tribe

### **Language**

Saora language is of Austro-Asiatic type belonging to Munda group (Elwin, 1955) as they are one of the principal Munda speaking tribe (Haimendrof, 1982). In this language there is repetition in their speaking of words and the second word as a synonym to the first word is always repeated as 'Tangli – Mangli' (cattle) or Jojongi – Yoyongi (ancestors) and the like. The tribe also uses riddles. The Lanjia Saoras speak their mother tongue though often it is deformed under the influence of Telgu or Oriya languages. A few of them can speak any language other than their own. The Saora language is flexible, always ready to coin new words, well adapted to the instant needs.

### **Religious Beliefs**

Saora religion is largely a matter of personal relationship. The Saoras have strong religious beliefs and practices. They call *Sum* to any God. Elwin has counted as many as 171 Saora Gods. Elwin remarked on their religion, "The great advantage of Saora religion is that it enables a man to do something about his worries. It personifies them which in itself makes things easier and tells him that there is a way of putting things right".

### **Life Style**

Saora life is very simple. Basically the males put on a loin cloth hanging down in front and back and the females put on a towel sized cloth to cover their bodies. So far as their food habit is concerned they eat whatever they get at hand. They can kill and eat any animal food in the jungle. Many people have started cultivating rice in their terraced fields. But they grow millets in their swiddens on the hill slopes and it constitutes their staple food.

### **Social Organisation**

Elwin comments "The most remarkable thing of the organization of Saora society is its lack of organization." It has no exogamous totemic clans, no phratries, and no moieties. The only unit of kinship is the extended family or lineage descended from a common male ancestor and called Birinda. The Birinda regulates sex and marriage as an exogamous unit. Saora marriage is a simple affair. The groom visits the bride's home with wine and if the latter accepts and tastes it the engagement is made and a few days after, marriage takes place. Premarital sex is not uncommon but violation of customary rule invite imposition of negative social sanctions through community action.

### **Economic Life**

The Saoras possess three kinds of farmlands – (i) *Saroba*, the the most valuable terraced paddy fields, (ii) *Baseng*– the less fertile up and dry land and (iii) *Bagado*. (swidden). Mainly variety of minor millets, cereals, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables are grown in the swiddens (*Bagado*) and *Baseng*.

The Saoras are experts in terrace cultivation in which they produce paddy only. They grow a variety of cereals, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables in their *Bagado* (swiddens) and uplands (*Baseng*). Besides they supplement their livelihood by raising horticultural plantations, seasonal forest collections and animal domestication.

The land mark of their economic existence is their traditional labour cooperative (*Ansir*) through which fellow villagers, kith and kin come forward to help a needy family for labour intensive works.

### **Health Care**

The Saoras have strong beliefs in the efficacy of magico-religious remedies for various kinds of ailments. The Shamman – the magico-religious specialist locally called Kudan (male) or Kudanboi (female) goes into trance, communicates with the aggrieved god or spirit and conducts appropriate ritual sacrificing animals to appease it and relieve the client of his/her trouble. They also administer herbal remedies.

### **Festivals**

They observe a series of festivals round the year connected with their social and economic activities. In these occasions they worship their deities and spirits offering food and animal sacrifices. Festivals are observed with traditional dancing, drum beating and liquor drinking. A common feast is arranged for all after each ceremony that is enjoyed with either buffalo or goat meat. Village priest, Buyya and magico-religious specialists – Kodan and Kudanboi play an important role in the performance of community festivals.

### **Values and Motives**

The Saora concept of values, ethics and morality is high. They do not conceal the crime they commit. Generally they regard life as precious gift of god. Killing a woman is an unpardonable sin. They hate a person who is very proud and a person who is a miser. They are proud of their group solidarity and maintain the traditions of mutual hospitality and co-operation. Scandal mongers and greedy people are disliked by all. They disapprove jealousy and love to maintain social equality. Mutual cooperation is preferred to competition. Unlike

Hindus they do not believe in ultimate rewards and punishments. Behaviour towards God is extended in the same way as behaviour towards fellow beings.

### **Saora Tribe under Mutation**

The present generation Saora tribe is undergoing the process of acculturation effected by various agents of planned change and modernisation. Rapid changes are taking place in their life style due to changes in their eco-habitats. Earlier the process of mutation was very slow but the ongoing process of globalization, the information technology revolution, planned development intervention and several other internal and external factors have made their cumulative impact in the transformation of Saora culture. This has caused the tectonic plates of Saora ethnicity to be impacted heavily. It is worthwhile to take note of the changes in the traditional Saora society and ethnicity in all the fields.

The Saora today have been acculturated to an extent. The Shudha Saora and the Christian Saora are more acculturated than their primitive counterparts like the Lanjia Saora. While the Sudha Saora moves towards the Hindu Society, the Christian Saoras go by the Christian way. These processes have started centuries ago. In present time globalization brings the two groups of Saora under one platform. The development intervention by the Government brings socio – economic changes in varying degrees among all the Saora.

Mutation and permutation is an indication of the mobility of Saora society. The changes are brought about by planned process. It is mostly directed to make the people to move further from their age-old culture. The sustainability of the development process, the most powerful changing agent is based upon imported ideas. The Saoras by and large lag economic prosperity as compared with the mainstream society. The PTG development approach by the Government with more emphasis on family oriented development approach will bring skewed change in the time to come. It is high time to give adequate safeguard for their cultural base as well as cultural identity at the same time enabling them to make the best of both the worlds.

### **References**

- I) Indian Culture and Personality by S.K.Panda , Published by Discovery Publishing House , Delhi
- II) Understanding Change by S.C.Dube, Published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- III) Tribals and their Culture, Volume – I, II, III by G.K. Ghosh, Published by Asish Publishing House, Delhi