

# *Didayi*

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## EDITORIAL

Dispassionately speaking the endeavour in producing Photographic Hand Books on the lifestyle and culture of the Scheduled Tribes is a commendable attempt of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Orissa. The current Hand Book is exclusively devoted to the Didayi, one of the Scheduled Tribe communities of Orissa which has been identified as a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) by the Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

The Didayi belongs to Proto-Australoid racial stock and speaks a language which is included in the Austroasiatic language family. They were known by themselves as Gnatre in the recent past and are called the Didayi by their neighbours, at present. They have a numerically small population residing in the lap of the Eastern Ghats, well known for varied geomorphological features with mountains, hills, forests, plateaus, valleys with frolicking hill streams. They occupy the interior area in Malkangiri district, the southern most district of Orissa.

Besides hinting at the Socio-cultural identity of the Didayi people, the volume depicts their ecological niche, settlement and habitation, demographic perspective, social life, economy and technology, political life, supernaturalism, worldview, ideology and value-orientations, dress, ornaments and their development intervention and perception in a concise way.

As a primitive Tribal Group the Didayi receives cent per cent Government of India Grants for their all round development through a micro project, Didayi Development Agency (DDA) established and managed by the State Government since 1986. The planned development efforts with multi-sectoral approach have been implemented for them with special emphases on the development of agriculture, horticulture, irrigation, drinking water facilities, communication, health and education in the realm of Conservation – cum – Development plan (CCD).

I hope the learned readers will look into the volume with interest and enjoy the photographic representation gracefully in order to derive a glimpse of the Didayi society, culture and development.

My sincere thanks are due to Professor (Dr.) K.K. Mohanti, Former Director of the Institute for his painstaking efforts in drafting out this volume.



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# DIDAYI



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## Introduction

The Didayi constitutes one of the 62 Scheduled Tribe communities living in Orissa. Their society is simple and population is small. As per Government of India norms and conditions the said S.T. community has been identified as one of the 13 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in Orissa. They inhabit the southern part of the Scheduled Area of the State, which is remote and inaccessible because of typical topographical situation. They have been inhabiting the area since time immemorial. Their culture has the tenacity to adapt themselves with the inhospitable eco-system for survival amidst all odds and challenges.

The Didayi belongs to the Proto-Australoid racial stock. They speak a language which has been included under Austroasiatic language family. The Didayi as a Scheduled Tribe group is confined to Orissa State only and found nowhere else in our country. They may be labeled as an humble people of the Eastern Ghats, which is famous for its varied geomorphological features amidst mountains, hills, forests, plateaus and valleys with frolicking hill streams against contrastive colourful sky blue and scenic greenery of the bountiful environment. Their small mountain settlements which are sparsely populated provide relatively isolated or secluded habitat full of pollution free, serene and calm surrounding.

The Didayi is a superimposed nomenclature on the original people, who called themselves as Gntare in the recent past.





## The Didayi Identity

The Didayi is one of the Scheduled Tribe communities of Orissa State occupying Serial No. 18 in the list of S.Ts. It constitutes a simple society with characteristic features, such as (i) small in scale with regard to numbers, territory and range of social contacts; (ii) possesses simple technology and economy; (iii) little specialization of social functions; (iv) absence of literature and hence any systematic art, science or theology; (v) structurally so simple and culturally so homogeneous, that they can be directly observed as wholes; and otherness in their way of life, as stipulated by Professor E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1972). The Didayi is a small tribe (census, 1961), a wild tribe (Elwin, 1954), etc. Further as per Haimendorf (1945) they belong to the stratum of primitive, semi-nomadic shifting cultivators, who have been subjected to the influences of an Austro-asiatic population (cf. Guha et al, 1970:1). They called themselves Gntare, but now as Didayi.

As a discrete ethnocultural group, the Didayi "is largely biologically self-perpetuating; shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unit in cultural forms; makes up a field of communication and interaction; and has a membership which indentifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order" (cf. Barth, 1969:10-11). As a multidimensional concept social identity incorporates "ideology, cognition, codes of conduct observable patterns of behavior, ecology, demography, technology, economic and power distributions and more" (cf. David, 1977:450). Further, at the conceptual level, Durkheimian 'collective representations' and Geertz's 'corporate sentiments of oneness' are reflected while assessing social identity. The Didayi identity is defined by themselves and also defined by others, which dichotomizes between self identity and non-self identity.

In a nutshell, the Didayi amidst definition and redefinition of identity and impact of the processes of socio-cultural change has been maintaining their ethnocultural boundary and cultural distinctiveness.





## Ecological Niche



The maximum population concentration of the Didayi is noticed in Malkangiri district of Orissa. The Didayi habitation is situated towards the western part of the Eastern Ghats mountain ranges. The winding course of the Machkund river drains the area. The topography and the varied landscape includes residual hills or hills of circum denudation, undulating plateaus and Kondakamberu hill ranges and rugged surface with dense forests full of sal, teak and other wild trees. The Malkangiri plateau is characterized by hot and moist climate. Different types of bamboo and wild grass species grow in the area. The chief fauna includes tiger, bear, leopard, panther, bison, sambar, deer, langur and macque monkey, etc. Difficult terrains, mountainous streams and rivulets, steep hill slopes make the area inaccessible. Some of the Didayi villages in hill tops are situated at an elevation of 2000-3500 feet above sea level. The hills settlements are smaller and sparsely populated than their plains counterparts. Bayapada, a uniclans Didayi village in the hill Sub-area is situated at the highest





altitude of 3500 feet above the sea level. The foot hill villages have comparatively larger population with dense and permanent settlement and people have taken up settled agriculture as their chief occupation. The mountain and hill ranges are covered with dense mixed forests. The Didayi habitations consist of three broad sub-areas, such as the hills, plains and the cut-off areas, consequent upon the emergence of the Balimela reservoir for the hydel project.

The ecological perspective of the Didayi is to be analyzed holistically or from the point of view of anthropological ecology as humans are biocultural animals. The structure and functioning of an ecosystem subsumes human morphology, reproduction, population genetics, food and nutritional requirements, the ecology of health and disease, human adaptability, population processes, such as fertility, mortality, migration and population structure-the feedback between biological and cultural factors (technological, economic, organizational) in populations, spatial and economic distribution and ecological consequences of population trends. Further, such aspects as ecological perceptions, environmental cognition, language as cultural codification, ideology, creative thinking, planning and decision-making etc. are very much interrelated (cf. James N. Anderson, 1973;184). In a culture-system, we notice three layers, such as techno-economic, social-structural and ideological and the first layer acts as the basic foundation upon which the two other layers rest as superstructure. The techno-economic base or material base adapts to nature and the super structure to material base (cf. Sahlins, 1977:218).

The Didayi do not live in isolation as they come in contact with other S.T. groups, such as the Bonda, Gadaba, Paroja, etc.; S.C. group, such as the Dom and other caste groups, such as the Kamar, Gauda, Rona, etc. They maintain symbiotic relationship with their neighbours in culture contact situations. The impact of outside world is gradually increasing day by day. Their culture is perfectly in tune with their physical environment, but cultural nexus enjoys precedence over environment. In the ecological system the Didayi culture safeguards the interest of the people, acts as safety valve and accelerates adaption to changing situations with necessary coping mechanisms.





## Settlement and Habitation



The Didayi settlement pattern is very much in consonance with the prevailing topographical features. The villages in plains sub-area are more or less nucleated whereas non-nucleated in hills and cut-off-sub-areas. Their habitations do not follow any pattern, rather they are located in dispersed manner.

The *Didayi house* has rectangular plinth with an area of 13.5 feet long and 10.5 feet wide and is raised 1-2 feet above the ground level with mud platform. The outer walls are usually constructed out of mud and the inner

walls may be of wattle and daub. The house is covered with thatched roof resting upon centre pillars, beams and rafters of bamboo or wood. The centre pillars are strong enough to sustain the weight of the roof. Most of the houses are one-roomed, separated into two parts; one as living room usually occupied by husband and wife and the other as *store-cum-kitchen space* and the outer portion in the front side of the house has a verandah which is used by unmarried children for sleeping. There is only *one door* of the house for entrance and exit. The verandah has multiple use, sleeping and sitting, space for mortar and *wooden grinder*, installation of cradle with bed for infants, etc. The *cradle with bamboo framework* hangs from the roof by means of ropes for rocking.







The inner portion of the room provides space for sleeping, storage of household utensils and appliances and food grains on an elevated wattle platform and a hearth for cooking.





The floor and walls of the house are plastered over with cow dung and red coloured earth from time to time. The cattle shed, pig sty and goat pens are constructed outside the house, but inside the house premises. The roof of the house which is gable-shaped is thatched by different types of grasses collected from forests. Rice divination is performed while selecting the house site and in case of ill omen and unfavorable conditions, the house site is abandoned. Appropriate rituals are performed and deities are worshipped before, during and after house construction.

Currently, houses constructed by bricks, cement and concrete under the Indira Awas Yojana are found in villages.





## Demographic Perspective

An analysis of the demographic perspective of any ethnocultural group in a given ecologic niche raises a number of issues, such as

- (i) Adaption of the group to the ecologic niche (s) occupied;
- (ii) Dependence of the group of population on the exploitation of the niche (s);
- (iii) Carrying capacity of the niche (s);
- (iv) Variation in uniethnic and polyethnic situations; and
- (v) Osmatic versus non-osmotic boundary of the ethnocultural group (cf. Barth, 1969:20-21).

With the above analytic thrust in mind, we may discuss briefly the population dynamics of the Didayi in three sub-areas inhabited by them in Malkangiri district and these sub-areas may be called, the plains, the Hills and the cut-off area. Altogether there are 39 villages covered under the Didayi Development Agency (D.D.A), a micro project establishment in August, 1986 for the all round development of the Didayi identified and designated as a Primitive Tribal Group (P.T.G.) by Government of India. Out of 39 villages 37 are in Kudumulugumma Block and the rest 2 in Khairaput Block. The decennial population and variation in growth rate are given below:

| Census year | Population | Decade  | Decennial Growth (%) Positive (+) & Negative (-) |
|-------------|------------|---------|--|
| 1941        | 1661       | --      | --   |
| 1951        | N.A.       | --      | N.A.   |
| 1961        | 1978       | --      | N.A.   |
| 1971        | 2164       | 1961-71 | (+) 9.40   |
| 1981        | 1978       | 1971-81 | (-) 8.60   |
| 1991        | 5471       | 1981-91 | (+) 176.59                                       |
| 2001        | 7371       | 1991-01 | (+) 34.73  |
| 2007*       | 6545       | --      | -  |

Source : Census reports and \*SCSTR & TI Survey data.





The population growth trend is more or less positive, except the decade 1971-81 which records negative growth. The positive growth rate in 1981-91 appears to be abnormal.

In the plains Sub-area out of total number of 6 villages, Oringi village has the highest number of Didayi households (127) consisting of 571 population (2001-02), of which there are 281 males and 290 females. In the Hills Sub-area out of total number of 18 villages, Damodarbeda village records the maximum number of 97 households comprising 464 population, of which there are 227 males and 237 females. In the cut-off sub-area out of total number of 15 villages Orapadar village has 60 households consisting of 279 persons of which there are 139 males and 140 females. In the 3 sub-areas taken together, the average household per village comes to 33.67 and the average population figure is estimated at 146.85 per village.

The sex ratio of the Didayi may be considered as normal and it may be stated as follows:

| Census Year | Population |      |        | Sex ratio** |
|-------------|------------|------|--------|-------------|
|             | Total      | Male | Female |             |
| 1961        | 1978       | 962  | 1016   | 1056        |
| 1971        | 2164       | 1131 | 1033   | 913         |
| 1981        | 1978       | 968  | 1010   | 1043        |
| 1991        | 5471       | 2694 | 2777   | 1031        |
| 2001        | 7371       | 3516 | 3855   | 1096        |
| 2007*       | 6545       | 3064 | 3481   | 1136        |

Source : Census Reports and \* SCST&RTI survey data \*\* Number of females per 1000 males.

In the context of Literacy status of the Didayi we may compare the figures of 1961 and 2001 available with us from census. In 1961 the total illiteracy rate was 97.27 whereas it is 86.38 in 2001. In 1961 illiteracy rates for males and females were 95.22 and 99.21 respectively whereas in 2001 these were 79.77 and 94.07, respectively. The above figures show slight increasing trend in literacy. Further as per the SCSTR & TI survey in 2007 the literacy rate for the total population, male and female is estimated at 7.36, 12.34 and 2.99, respectively. However, the literacy rate is very low among them and proverbially low among the womenfolk.

The Didayi villages are, by and large, uniethnic, but polyethnic villages are found with the Dom and the Kamar people etc. in some villages. Insofar as the socio-cultural boundary maintenance is concerned the Didayi is relatively non-osmotic.





## Social Life

The existence of moieties/dual organization among the Didayi in the past is debatable. The present ethnographic scenario does not confirm to its existence in the true sense of the term. There exists sharp distinction between consanguineal groups or designated as brother groups and the affinal or friends group. The consanguineal clan groups are not inter marrying and they choose life partners from affinal groups of clans. The clans are totemistic. A number of clans are found under each totem. The Anthropological Survey of India study (1970) reports five totems, such as Nkoo (tiger), Mala (cobra), Gbe (bear), Mosali (crocodile) and Goi (tortoise). The Didayi call a group of clans as Gta, which is associated with a totem usually an animal and neither a plant species nor any material object. They avoid doing harm to the totemic animal but do not observe any ritual for its perpetuation. Every gta has its origin myth and the ancestor is not genealogically traceable. The common origin of clans make them exogamous. Similarly fraternal clans avoid inter marriage. The fraternal clans or phratries consist of a number of clans which are exogamous. Thus each phratry is a unilineal descent group which includes two or more number of clans interrelated to each other. Each clan consists of a number of lineages (biria) which are corporate descent groups or consanguineal kin groups and are ancestor- oriented, whether or not genealogically traceable. The lineage is strictly exogamous and it regulates marital union among the Didayi. Each lineage is a patrilineage as descent is counted in father's line. The ancestor of the minimal lineage is usually genealogically traceable and it occupies a significant position in the Didayi social structure. Besides regulating marriage the minimal lineage plays crucial role in life-cycle ritual observations connected with child birth, puberty rites, marriage and mortuary rites. Each lineage includes a number of lineal / collateral extended families and nuclear / simple families. The Didayi family is patriarchal /patripotestal, patrilineal, patrilocal/partivicineal and patronymic. The family is headed by the eldest male member of the group who plays the chief authoritarian role in matters of decision-making, ownership and inheritance of property and the maintenance of all internal and external affairs of the group. Soon after marriage the





son usually constructs his own house and lives with his spouse forming the neolocal family of his own, away from his natal family. The Didayi family is pre-eminently monogamous although polygynous families occur rarely. The nuclear/simple families consisting of husband and wife and their unmarried children are preponderant in hills and Cut-off Sub-areas, whereas some extended families are found in plains Sub-area. The Didayi family guarantees socio-economic rights and obligations for each member. As the Didayi people are very peace-loving and generous inter-family relationship with the lineage is cordial and based on reciprocity, mutuality and cooperation, Among the Didayi different ways of acquiring mates are followed, such as the marriage by negotiation (toso), marriage by ceremonial capture (udalia), marriage by service (gariya), etc. The junior levitation is admissible in their society and it is accomplished only with the consent of the woman. The ritual kinship or bond friendship (masat) is also come across. In so far as the kinship type is concerned the Didayi Kinship may be labeled as bifurcate collateral. The Kinship system plays important role in the maintenance of patterns of social behavior, usages, inheritance and succession and also in the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-religions nexes. Through Kinship the Didayi emerges as a compact and cohesive ethno cultural group since time immemorial.





## Dress, Ornaments and Personal Adornment

In olden days, bark thread was used to prepare traditional cloth (Kisalu) to cover private parts of the body and for modesty. Currently, cotton cloths, purchases from weekly markets are used by both men

and women. The Didayi women are wearing white or red coloured sarees with blouse, whereas men wear narrow strip of cloth or long cotton cloth while going out and in festive occasions. Young men are seen using trousers with full/half sleeve shirts and banians. Colourful dresses are preferred during fairs and festivals. However, types of their dress are scanty.

The Didayi women use neckless/necklets of aluminum, brass or silver along with colourful beads garlanded through strings. Other ornaments worn are aluminum anklets, brass rings in fingers and toes, brass nostril rings, nose-gays, brass rings in ear helix and lower lobes, aluminum and glass bangles, etc.

The Didayi are careful about their personal adornment and cleanliness. In order to enhance their personal appearance women comb their hair and put attractive knots at the bun. Men and women pare their finger and toe nails as and when necessary. Men shave their face hair and cut their head hair from time to time. In ceremonial occasions, flowers, feathers, reed hair bands are used for beautification of the body.





## Economy and Technology

The Didayi economy is precisely subsistence-Oriented. Their subsistence economy is characterized by simple technological base, simple division of labour based on age and sex, rudimentary investment of capital, small production unit, household-oriented production decision, scanty or limited availability of cultivable plains land, etc. The socio-economic units of production, distribution, consumption and exchange are simple and fairly based on family and lineage. The subsistence economy of the Didayi is circumstantially imposed on them and is beyond their control because of harse physical environment coupled with abject poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, health hazards and the like. Considering their eco-system, traditional economy, low technology and supernatural beliefs and practices connected with economic activities and the impacts of modernization and planned development intervention, their economy can be classified broadly into the following types :

- (i) Hunting, collecting and gathering ;
- (ii) Shifting (swidden) cultivation ;
- (iii) Settled agricultural and non-farm labour ;
- (iv) Animal Husbandry ; and
- (v) Kitchen gardening and horticultural plantation.

As majority of the Didayi people live in hills and forests, they regularly collect non-timber forest produce to earn their livelihood. However, timber is collected for house construction. They collect different types of edible roots, tubers, fruits, leaves, flowers, mushrooms, shoots, honey, etc. from forests through group endeavour with the participation of men, women and children. Hunting as a part of food gathering economy is also pursued by the Didayi. Due to the imposition of forest regulations and depletion of forests the incidence of hunting has decreased to a considerable extent. The bow and arrow as simple implements are used by them for hunting samber, goat, deer, squirrel, wild cat, hare, jungle fowl, birds etc. The Didayi also engage themselves in fishing in rivers, perennial streams and tanks. They use country boat, hand operated nets and different types of fishing traps and baskets for fishing.







The Didayi pursue *shifting (swidden) cultivation* on hill slopes which is known to them as *bri*. It is also known in the area as *podu chas*. Although shifting cultivation is pernicious for the maintenance of ecosystem and causes rainlessness, loss of soil fertility, soil erosion and is low yielding in nature they have not abandoned it, because of the absence of viable livelihood alternatives. It supplies food for about 2-3 months in a year. The tools and implements used for felling trees, slashing of bush and shrubs, hoeing the soil and harvesting are simple which include axe, hoe, sickle, etc. They practise multi-cropping in swidden plots and the crops include jawar, black gram, red gram, oil seeds, millets, brinjal, tomato, chilly etc. Shifting cultivation in hill slopes is one of the means of their subsistence economy even today. They usually cultivate the plot of land for 3-4 years, after which it is abandoned because of exhaustion of fertility of the soil. They may return to the abandoned plot again after 12-15 years. The shifting cultivation in *bri* plots adjacent to the village are preferred. Various stages of *bri* cultivation of the Didayi are (i) selection of the *bri* plot, (ii) felling of trees and bushes, (iii) setting on fire of the felled tree branches, bush and shrubs after they are dried (iv) spreading of ashes throughout the plot, (v) fencing of *bri* plots (vi) hoeing of the plot (vii) sowing of seeds, (viii) weeding, (ix) harvesting and (x) threshing. Bamboo or wooden sticks are usually used for threshing along with winnowing fans for separating chaff from the grain.

In settled agriculture the Didayi use plough and bullocks. The yield of crops per hectare is definitely more in plough cultivation than in shifting cultivation. The cultivation of land begins soon after the first





shower of monsoon. Settled agriculture is practised in permanent low land where rice is mainly grown. Although now a days some farmers have started using chemical fertilizers, cowdung manuring is the traditional way. After ploughing wooden leveler is utilized to level the land. While ploughing and leveling they use animal power of bullocks and cows. In the months of May and June seeds are sown. The weeding is performed soon after sprouting of plants. The Didayi men plough and level the land. The weeding is done both by men and women. In the months of October and November rice is harvested. Both cows and bullocks are used for threshing. They use winnowing fans for separating chef from paddy grains. The common practice of rice cultivation is through broadcasting and mono-cropping.

In the recent past, only pigs and dogs were domesticated by the Didayi. Now a days they have started domesticating cows, buffaloes, oxen, goats, sheep, fowl, etc. By and large, cows are not milched. Cattle are reared for ploughing, for payment of bride price etc., As per COATS, Koraput study (2001-02) animal husbandry contributes only 11.83% of their total annual income and the average annual income per households comes to Rs. 1250/-. The livestock raising is encouraged by the availability of grass land in hills and cut-off sub-areas. Poultry is practised in the household level for sale in markets and for sacrificial purposes in different rituals.

The Didayi have developed their interest in Kitchen gardening and horticultural plantations soon after planned development programmes are implemented in their habitations. They usually grow seasonal vegetables, Popeya, banana, tobacco etc. in kitchen gardens and mango, jackfruit, tamarind in horticultural plots.

The landless labourers engage themselves in wage earning in agricultural lands and non-farm labour, such as construction of roads, culverts, bridges, houses, etc.

A concise account of their production factors, such as land, labour, capital and organization reveals that there





is paucity of cultivable land in the area; labour which is inalienable does not get opportunity for full employment; capital formation is remote because of lack of surplus production; and economic organization along with production decision is household based or kinship oriented.

Although their economy has been monetized, barter system still persists and in weekly markets they exchange some commodities which are either produced or collected against essential commodities for their daily use.



A cursory look into their consumption pattern shows that ragi their principal food. In addition, they consume rice, edible roots and tubes, green vegetables, bamboo shoots, green leaves, etc. Non-vegetarian items consisting of chicken, mutton, fish, etc. are used in festive occasions. They use salt to taste, chillies, other spices for preparing curries. As beverage, they drink *sago-palm* juice and wine. Now a days young men have started drinking tea and coffee.





## Political Life

The traditional political organization of the Didayi was a three-tier system, such as the (i) central organization, (ii) Regional organization & (iii) village organizations. The central political organization which had the headquarters at Kudumuluguma is at present defunct and has lost its vigour and vitality. Similarly, regional organizations existed with a number of contiguous neighbouring villages with common access to forests, shifting cultivation plots etc. The village political organizations were considered the most vital ones which regulated all socio-economic activities of the Didayi. Although their economy was at the subsistence level each village was more or less self sufficient. They had their village councils (lepar) which were well organized and were looking after all activities concerning social, economic and religions spheres. *The village head was known as the Naik who was assisted by the Chalan and the Barik.* All household heads were members of village council. The secular head was the Naik who in consultation with the sacerdotal chief, the Palasi and elderly persons of the village was adjudicating cases for their judicious disposal.



Consequent upon the introduction of the Panchayati Raj system and formation of 3-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the traditional political system is gradually disappearing. The office bearers of the statutory PRIs are elected people's representatives, such as Ward Members, Chairman of Panchayat Samity and the Zilla Parishad, etc. The PRIs are more concerned about the planned development efforts undertaken in their villages. It is also felt by many that the traditional leaders need not be segregated totally and may be taken as coopted members in such meetings organized for the development of the community. Currently, the erstwhile traditional system and modern PRI system are no longer found to be conflicting with each other.





## Supernaturalism

The supernaturalism or belief in supernatural beings and ritual practices connected find their explicit expression in the Didayi way of life. They differentiate between the sacred and profane. Both animism (concept of soul) and animatism (concept of life) are the principal components of the Didayi religion. Their religion helps maintenance of group solidarity, maintains moral values and determines value orientations in their community and fulfills their physical as well as social needs. In order to overcome mundane miseries, distress and hurdles in their perpetual struggle for existence, they surrender themselves before the invincible supernatural powers. Through religion they maintain social integration, rationalize their roles, enforce social control and derive mental peace for survival. The supernaturalism precisely embraces both religious beliefs and practices as well as magical beliefs and practices, which are but two antithetical approaches; the former subscribing to the act of surrendering whereas the latter to compulsion. Both are the two forms of cultural responses to the unseen and unknown.



Didayi are polytheists and their theological pantheon includes a number of supernatural beings who are benevolent / malevolent/ambivalent. The Didayi religion is anthropocentric. They believe in the Mother Earth and her consort the Ant-hill. They believe in a number of gods and goddesses as their consorts. The ASI study

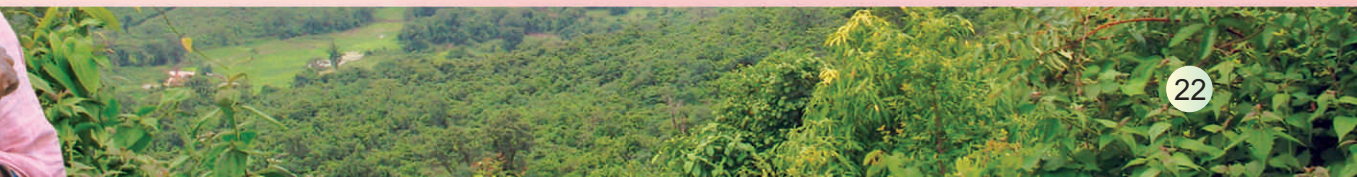




reports as many as 8 (male) gods with their respective consorts (females) or goddesses. They are *Buro Bhairo* and Nanangri, Bangur and Raskurku, Goa and Sendia, Rau and Aksia, Gond and Suni, Thakran and Burimata, Jainimata and Rekapaidu and Bok and Pa. Among the Didayi, Palasi acts as the sacerdotal chief. Other religious practioners who render necessary help to the Palasi in different rituals and ceremonies are the Kitang Pujari, Doecongre, Sihdarnare, Dumbare, Gharware, Gediare, etc. (Op. Cit. 152-53).

A number of festivals are celebrated by the Didayi throughout the year for different purposes and important festivals are Lendi Pande, Ghia Pande, Siboloye Hia, Jugulubar Hia, Ciangei Hia, Doase Hia, Goesendia Hia, Singuti Hia, Raskurku Hia, Dosra Hia or Bhairo Puja, Rokdia Hia, Osarke Pande and many more (cf. Guha et al, 1990). They worship deities and utter the name, Mapru (a corrupted term of Mahaprabhu) in almost all pujas while uttering mantra-incantations. Their puja and sacrificial ceremonies are elaborate and offerings differ from one ritual to the other.

The magic was prevalent among the Didayi in the recent past and now a days its importance is waning due to various processes of socio-cultural change. The Guniar performs magical rituals by uttering mantras. Various forms of magic prevalent among them are, the effects of evil eye, curing of snake bit, ailments and diseases, curing of sterility etc. In magical rituals offerings include rice, milk, molasses, banana, coconut, incense, flowers, etc. The chicken, goat and pig are sacrificed and blood is sprinkled on the rice to be offered and drinks are offered for propitiation of deities. Traditionally they had also belief in black magic, oracle, divination, etc. To sum up, the Didayi sympathetic magic follows two principles, such as homeopathic or imitative (like produces the like) and contagious (once in contact always in contact). The practical and positive aspects of magic include sorcery and witchcraft whereas the negative aspect pertains to taboo. Now a days their ethno medicinal practices minus magical rituals are appreciated by outsiders.





## Worldview, Ideology and Value-orientations

Although the Didayi worldview is limited and shallow they are conscious of their inner world of existence and the outside world around them for interaction. They are fully aware of the galaxy of deities, cosmic elements, man, nature and spirit complex, etc. and classify different elements and phenomena in their own way. The prevalence of totemic clans with their myths of origin speak of their indigenous wisdom. The customary law regarding excommunication and readmission to the tribal community bear testimony of their worldview. They discriminate between the right and the wrong in their own ethical standards. They believe that wrong / evil-doers are liable for spiritual vengeance and punishment during their life time and they have no definite idea about rebirth after death.

The Didayi are sober, simple, docile, amicable and gentle. They are hospitable to outsiders and guests and take care of them during their stay in the village. Both secular and sacerdotal heads of the village are given the highest honour and greeted in important ceremonial occasions, with due respect. Their worldview is reverberated in their ethos, ideology, belief, values, etc. It is a collective cultural experience of the group. The Didayi worldview conceptualizes and delineates the web of relationship-man-man, man-nature and man-supernatural through their folk knowledge. As a cultivator, whether in settled agriculture or swidden cultivation, the Didayi has folk knowledge regarding production operation and technological back up. Their worldview is reflected in lullaby for infants, the establishment of ritual Kinship, observance of ceremonies and rituals connected with child-birth, marriage and death, Kinship usages for joking, avoidance, sanctions and taboos, etc.

The above events as parts of their cultural experiences speak their worldview in a wider sense. They observe different festivals with exuberant joy and sing folk songs with musical accompaniments. For instance, at every stage of wedding they sing appropriate songs pertaining to different events and such songs are either sung individually or in a group. The theme of songs may be melodious or full of pathos depending upon the situation, e.g. melodious songs are sung during exchange of love between lover and beloved in a romantic mood. The chanting of incantations during obsequies have pathetic appeal to spirits.



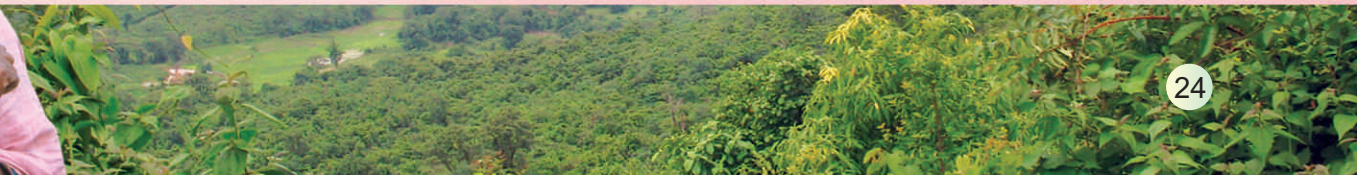


The ideological sub-stratum acts as the superstructure upon the two sub-strata, i.e. techno economic and social structural. The Didayi manifest very delicate and clear understanding of their life situations which are full of joys and sorrows, upheavals and downfalls, etc. In their socio-religious activities they show more cooperation than conflict. The secular as well as sacerdotal chiefs and elderly persons get adequate respect of their fellow men. They surrender themselves before supernatural elements in order to get rid of all evils. Through observance of different ceremonies they make all attempts to appease deities for the perpetuation of good life and happy life.

Didayis have their own value system which is deciphered through study of their life style and culture. The value-orientations, of course, differ among age-sex groups, such as among males and females and among the young, adult and old people. The value orientations change keeping in view various processes of socio-cultural changes inside and outside the tribal community. Adherence to customary laws presupposes their desire to upkeep the prestige of their community at large, safeguarding their traditions and culture.

### **Cultural Fragrance :**

The Didayi have repository of splendid oral literature represented through myths, folktales, folk songs, proverbs and riddles. They sing and dance with musical accompaniments in festive occasions and life-cycle rituals and express their emotions. Either men and women dance together in a group or women dance exclusively. The song, music and dance in their community provide unique opportunities to rejoice, recreate and boost integration. The movement of limbs, posture and gesture, melodious songs, rhythmic play of musical instruments make the Didayi dance colourful, lively and attractive. Both song and dance holistically reflect their intimate relationship with nature, supernatural elements and their own tribal world.







## Development

### Intervention and Perception

The Didayi is one of the 13 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Orissa, who was identified as such because of stagnant or near stagnant population growth, pre-agricultural economy, low level of literacy, isolated habitation, etc. Keeping in view the above situation Government of India provides cent percent special grants for the all round development of the S.T. communities through operationalisation of micro projects. The Didayi Development Agency (DDA) as one of such micro projects with its headquarters at Kudumulugumma in Malkangiri district was established in August 1986 and subsequently in October 1986 it was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, as an autonomous body. The planned development effort had multi-sectoral approach comprising such sectors as agriculture, horticulture, irrigation, drinking water facilities, communication, health, education, etc. The geographical area of the DDA is 250 square kilometers. The Agency includes 2 blocks, 4 gram panchayats and 37 villages / hamlets. As per the survey conducted by the S.C. & S.T. Research and Training Institute, Bhubaneswar during 2007, the total Didayi population was 6545, consisting of 3064 males and 3481 females and the sex ratio was 1136. The total literacy during the above period was 7.36% out of which males constituted 12.34% and females 2.99%. Thus the literacy rate was low and proverbially low in case of the Didayi females.

It is apt to state here that the annual funds received for development programmes during the initial year 1986-87 was Rs. 475000.00 which subsequently increased to Rs. 2400000.00 in the next year i.e. 1987-88. However, the funds allotted for development expenditure varies from year to year. Over a period of 10 years, the maximum grants received was during 1987-88, followed by Rs. 1796000.00 in 1995-96. Regarding the status of the project during 2007-08 it may be mentioned here that funds from two sources were received i.e. (i) from SCA to TSP and (ii) under CCD (Conservation-cum-Development) plan : The expenditure incurred during 2007-08 under CCD plan was to the tune of Rs. 31.38 lakh and Rs. 38.47 lakh under the SCA to TSP. The activities undertaken under the CCD plan





were the construction of Educational complex and Community centre and SHG building. Under the grants from SCA to TSP the activities undertaken were the provision of drinking water facility and piped irrigation, land development and banana plantation.

The Didayi development perception is unique as is evidenced from their practice and theory. They take all efforts to preserve their traditions and culture and simultaneously take the advantage of planned development efforts undertaken for them. It is because of their cultural apparatus they have been surviving amidst ecological and geophysical hazards and socio-economic odds and backwardness. In course of time they develop appropriate coping mechanisms to eke out their living under peculiar and disadvantageous situations. They possess indigenous knowledge about resources which are locally available and exploitable for their benefit what they require at present, is the scientific and technological know-how from various experts. Despite patriarchal situation or male dominance, the Didayi women are capable of empowering themselves as they are honest, dutiful, hardworking and sincere in all walks of life; right from domestic chores to out door activities. The Didayi women earn and contribute to the common pool of the family income. Didayis are convinced that their human resource is bound to enhance through capacity building programmes in spite of low level of literacy. The Didayi has its own responses to various challenging situations faced during the planned development intervention, specially meant for their community.

Basing on their development perception it is apt to point-out that they have very simple and limited aspirations and the primary focus is livelihood promotion. Their women folk have developed the propensity to save either in cash or kind and it is seen from their modest contribution and involvement in maintaining Self Help Groups (SHGs). Although they have still confidence on the ethnomedicinal practices for healing, they have shown interest for modern allopathic medicine at the time of dire need. Being aware of the pernicious effects of shifting cultivation they intend to have terrace cultivation in hill slopes as a viable alternative economic pursuit. They intend to have value addition for the non-timber forest produce along with wider marketing network. They have also developed keen interest in horticultural plantations to boost their economy. Despite the





negation of universal enrolment and retention even at the primary education stage, they are gradually showing interest to send their children to schools. They have favourable attitude towards Water Harvesting Structure (WHS), weir dam, lift irrigation, etc. which promote irrigation for agricultural activities. They are showing increasing interests for growing cash crops, cattle rearing and fishery. Majority of the villagers feel that they have been benefited through poverty alleviation programmes as well as from NREGP, but they demand more for their sustenance.

It may be remembered that our planning has not been perfectly in tune with their felt needs. The implementation of various programmes lack sincerity of efforts and dedication of development practitioners to ensure popular participation. In other words, the planned development intervention is ought to be people-friendly, eco-friendly and need-based so that the attainment of sustainability is assured in the long run. That is what our empirical research findings among the Didayi conclude.





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