

# Kutia Kandha



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## FOREWORD

The Photo Handbook on the Kutia Kandha, an identified Primitive Tribal Group is based on research study. It is an anthropological study reflecting Kutia Kandha's physical surrounding, society, culture and development.

The Kutia Kandha are very simple, innocent and sober people. They are very shy in nature. Occasionally they express their inner feelings only before a few with whom they have confidence and close intimacy. They are very faithful to keep their words and do according to the commitment. They have culturally established controlled behaviour, social harmony and devotion for supernatural that keep them happy. In course of living the life they imbibe many qualities that are needed for survival. They are very innovative, hard working and more or less egalitarian. According to them one can be happiest in the world by keeping good relation with spirits and unseen power. One can learn a lot of things from their songs, dance, music, herbal medicine, indigenous knowledge and technique.

The Kutia Kandha maintain symbiotic relationship with physical environment and other ethno-cultural groups. They have greater confidence on their experience and will-power and continue to do what one knows best. Even today 'shifting cultivation' provides them the minimum food security and their knowledge and skill in this regard are more rational.

Their love for the habitat, community men, traditions and customs deserve special mention. Now, the educated youths are quite conscious of their democratic duties, rights and responsibilities.

In marketing of their agricultural and forest produce the Kutia Kandha are often exploited by local traders and money lenders. Low yield, population pressure, scarcity, fluctuation in the environment and natural calamities are some of the main factors which hinder their holistic development. They have strong hold on their natural and human resource potentialities which are within their reach. Their customary laws and traditional council are strong enough for resolving disputes ensuring right justice.

The life and culture of the Kutia Kandha revolve round the forest. Forest plays a vital role in shaping their life style and culture. They have been living in the forest since time immemorial and believe that no body can deprive them of their rights on forest.

There is continuous effort to bring sustainable development of the Kutia Kandha. The younger generations are happy as development provides better opportunity to earn more and means to enjoy life. Wage earning is preferred by younger generation as they get cash immediately but the elderly people hate it as they feel it less dignified.

I hope this book would be of immense help for the tribal lovers, tribal tourists, tribal researchers, persons associated with the Kutia Kandha and general readers.



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# KUTIA KANDHA



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## INTRODUCTION



The Kandha are numerically preponderant tribal community with the largest population in Orissa. On the basis of the socio-economic and striking cultural characteristic features the Kandha can be broadly divided into several sections, such as Desia Kandha, Dongaria Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Bura Kandha, Sitha Kandha, Pengo Kandha, Nagala Kandha, Buda Kandha etc. The Kutia Kandha are a major section of the Kandha tribe who speak Kui, a Dravidian language. They identify themselves as Kuienju.

The Kutia Kandha mostly inhabit the southern part of Kandhamal district, however, some of them are also found in Kalahandi district. The Kutia Kandha of Belghar



area in Kandhamal district is found to be the most archaic and have so far retained their distinct socio-cultural characteristic features. The climate in Kutia Kandha area is comparatively cooler. Between November and

February, it is very cold and during March to mid-June it is comparatively hot. There is heavy rainfall during July and August. The temperature sometimes approaches the freezing point, particularly towards the end of December. The soil in the area is found to be red laterite. The hills around the village is marked by dense mixed forest and one of the common species in the forest is Sal (*Shorea robusta*), which is having manifold use in day to day socio-economic and religious life of the people. Apart from the Sal trees, varieties of huge trees, shrubs and herbs are common in the locality. Some of the trees which are having great importance in socio-economic and cultural life of the natives are Mango, Mahul, Sagopalm, Kusum, Asan and many others.

The Siali creepers and bamboo are very useful plants and abundantly available close to their habitat. Throughout the year, different edible roots, berries and some valuable forest produce are available contributing to the livelihood promotion of the Kutia Kandha. The reserve forest, very close to Kutia Kandha habitat is, used for 'shifting cultivation'. However, distant hills are covered with dense forest having perennial rivulets and streams. The common animals and birds are elephant, leopard, bear, wild goat, boar, monkey, deer, peacock, wild fowl, snake, mongoose, etc.





## SETTLEMENT AND HOUSE PATTERN



The settlement pattern and house types of the Kutia Kandha deserve special attention for its mode of selection of site, manner of construction, architectural design and placement of functional areas. More over significant landmarks in and around the settlement and structural look of the hutments are reflection of the socio-cultural identity, skill and technology applied for construction and functional use of space inside the house.

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Traditionally all Kutia Kandha villages were uniclans, but gradually most of the villages are found to be inhabited by people of many clans and other ethno-cultural groups. In spite of that they have strong feeling of togetherness, mutual help, community co-operation, social solidarity and values of group life.

In a typical Kutia Kandha settlement, two rows of houses, across a rectangular space, face each other. All the Kutia Kandha houses of a village maintain on single roof-ridge along a single row. Of course, each house has its partitioning wall, but the verandah run continuously from one end to the other. According to the economic condition and number of family members the size of house varies. The space i.e. the village street between two rows of the houses is quite wide, neat and clean. In the middle of the street Meriah pole is installed before Darani Penu (earth goddess) popularly known as Wanga Penu. The village courtyard is usually located in east-west direction. The 'Sun' is the supreme deity responsible





for good happenings. Moreover, sunlight is very powerful and washes away all evils hence each house must share sunlight of the day equally. In each Kutia Kandha village at least one Domb house is found. But Domb settlement is always located a little away from the Kutia Kandha settlement. The cowsheds are located close to the settlement.

While selecting a site for habitation, the major considerations are availability of high and elevated land, perennial water source and virgin forest having luxuriant growth of plants all around, so that land for slash and burn type of shifting cultivation, seasonal forest produce and materials for house construction are available in the vicinity.



The selection of a suitable site is followed by collection of necessary materials procured by the concerned household members. The male members collect required wooden pillars and beams, bamboo pieces, siali fiber and thatching grass from the nearby forest. The women are expected to perform all works connected with soil and plastering. Preparation of frame of the roof and thatching are the duties of the male folk. The females plaster the walls, prepare the hearth and raise shelves for keeping the cooking utensils and water pots. They use polished round stone pieces to make the floor smooth. Special care is taken to give the final touch to the place for ancestral spirits. Usually the main room is provided with a ceiling,







which serves as the store room. Apart from this, over the hearth bamboo, pole is horizontally hung for drying grains and meat. Inside the main room they keep goats and chicken at the opposite side of the hearth to protect them from wild animals. The Kutia Kandha main room is used for cooking, sleeping, storing, dining and other purpose as and when required and works like grinding of ragi and husking of paddy and small millets are also performed there.

The construction of house involves traditional technique, village co-operative efforts, division of labour and prescribed ritualistic observances. It may be constructed in a new site when the old settlement is abandoned or in the same settlement when the number of family members due to addition of members by marriage and procreation.

Due to unavoidable factors like short supply of wild thatching grass due to deforestation Khapar thatched houses are coming up in villages all over the area. The Kutia Kandha make Khapar themselves or by hiring Khapar-makers from the plains area for thatching their houses. The doors and shutters are made by the males and paintings on the walls are done by the female folk. The contents of the houses and the size of room may vary according to their respective need. The designs and paintings drawn on the walls depend on the women folk and their skill. To make the floor and wall surface smooth and beautiful they use graphite soil, red soil, and lime soil, which are available in their locality.





## ECONOMIC LIFE



The economic life of the Kutia Kandha directly and indirectly revolves round the forest. The forest provides them food, fuel and fodder and materials for construction of houses. The Kutia Kandha collect different varieties of mushrooms, green leaves, shoots, tubers, roots, stems, flowers, fruits, seeds, mango, kernels etc from the forest in their respective growing seasons. During the lean period many of them depend on the edibles of forest, which has gone down due

to depletion of forest. In the summer months they depend on jackfruits, mango and tubers and in the early rainy season they eat mango kernels and bamboo shoots along with several green leaves and mushrooms. Collection of lac, gum, honey, hill broom, fiber, leaf for preparation of cups and plates are occasional works, which fetch some cash to the Kutia Kandha.



Hunting is an expedition and occasional pastime, which remind them their important old traditions. It also provides them meat and the practice has manifold significance in their religious and spiritual life. They also go for fishing in the perennial streams and rivulets located close to their habitation. Because of forest depletion the flora and fauna are vanishing very fast and their environment is deteriorating. The Kutia Kandha are very much fond of fish and local perennial streams are major sources for fishing.

The forest in the Kutia Kandha area is very rich in different variety of bamboos. It is one of the important forest produce which is not only used for house construction but also used in every aspect of their day to day life. The Kuta Kandha make beautiful tobacco-containers and flutes using hollow bamboo shoots, mats, fishing traps, baskets and many other beautiful and useful household materials are made out of bamboo splits. They make bow and shaft of arrow out of bamboo.

The depletion of forest due to several factors including the pernicious practice of shifting cultivation has already threatened their survival. But shifting cultivation is unavoidable for their present survival. Quite a good number of people including the non-tribal inhabitants practice this cultivation. It involves a series of activities and situations full of expeditions, hard labour, skill, technology, appeasement of spirits and merry makings.

The village elites especially the magico-religious head and secular leader of the village in consultation with the elderly people demarcate the forest tract suitable for the shifting cultivation. For sometime they watch the growth of vegetation in the forest belt and accordingly they select a suitable patch of land left fallow since many years within their village boundary. A particular patch of forest is used continuously for three years for shifting cultivation. Then it is left fallow for more than five years. The fallow period may defer which depends on the growth of vegetation. In normal case after five to six years, they again come back to a particular patch. After selection of the site all the villagers prepare beer (Katul) out of small millets within a week and then perform necessary magico-religious rituals at the community level in the





village and subsequently in the forest tract selected for shifting cultivation. A large area is demarcated in presence of all the villagers keeping in view the consumption need of an individual family. Then the podu area is distributed among the families of the village on the basis of the number of family members. If the area is scarce then the land is equally distributed among the families of the village. But usually the former method is adopted as the area is quite vast. Some house owners cultivate two plots if the working members in the family are more. Area for each family is demarcated in presence of the villagers; hence nobody encroaches other's area. After allotment of plots each family takes care of its respective plot by demarcation mark and cleaning the area. Now a days shifting cultivation patches are owned at family level.

Cutting of the trees in the plot is done in February and March by their respective family members and are left for some days to dry up. Care is taken to have equal distribution of twigs to cover the whole area. While setting fire they see that the fruit trees and herbal medicinal plants are not burnt or affected.

The work of sowing of different seeds starts in the months of May and June. Specific variety of seeds is stored for shifting cultivation area, which are first sown in the field then hoed. Some varieties of seeds, particularly vegetables and pulses are sown after digging the soil by a pointed stick. Both males and

females work in sowing operation. When plants in the field grow the weeding is done by women folk. During weeding and flowering of the crops some propitiation of deities and sacrificial offerings may be needed to save the crop from the natural calamity and attack of insects and locust.

When crop plants are grown in crop fields, the jungle animals start creating problems. They raise temporary huts in the fields or on a tree according



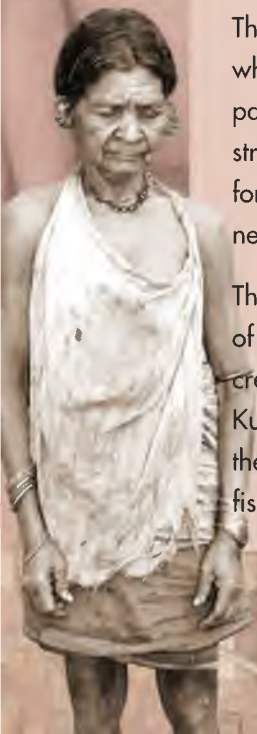
to the suitability, to protect the crops from wild boar, deer, sambar, peacock, wild fowl, etc. using their traditional devices.

The harvest of crops usually takes place after performance of rituals and sacrifices to appease the spirits linked with agricultural operation as different crops get ready in different times. Hence, they harvest crops one after the other quite leisurely. They start harvesting corns when these are fully mature. Till completion of the harvest of all varieties of crops grown in the field watching huts are not demolished.

During last four decades attempts have been made by the Government to the Kutia Kandha from the practice of shifting cultivation. Unless some viable economic alternatives are provided this practice may not stop completely. However, in the natural process the area under shifting cultivation has gone down. Govt. officials particularly the Forest Department personnel create problems during practice of shifting cultivation. Enforcement of new forest policy has deprived them from their right over the shifting cultivation land under their possession.

The Kutia Kandha have plains valley table land on very gentle slope area. These areas are cultivated where ragi, small millets, oil seeds and some vegetables. The Kutia Kandha use natural manure particularly cow dung on these lands for better production. They are also having wet land close to the stream or valley surrounded by hills from all sides. The Kutia Kandha have great liking and preference for these wet lands. They have emotional attachment for wet land and take all steps to convert valleys near streams into wet land.

The material culture of the Kutia Kandha is the revelation of their indigenous technology, traditional knowledge and creative skill. With regard to the material world of the Kutia Kandha mention may be made in broader sense of the houses, hunting weapons, agricultural implements, fishing nets and various traps, musical instruments, dress





and ornaments, household utensils and appliances, personal belongings and multifarious arts and crafts. In the Kutia Kandha community every individual is skilled in some kinds of crafts and are traditionally trained in making several items he needs. There are experts in certain items but in one way or the other each Kutia Kandha is an artisan. The Kutia Kandha mostly use bow and arrow of different kinds, axes, adzes, spears, swords, knives, harpoons, pellet bows, traps, nets, guns etc. The agricultural implements, such as dibbles, pointed sticks with iron picks, hoes, spade, crowbar, ploughs, yoke, levelers, sickle, etc. are the most popular. The musical instruments, like flute, conical drums, single-membrane drum, violin, harp, trumpet, musical bows, gongs, etc. are further subdivided according to their size, shape, mode and occasion of use. They use several types of baskets mostly made out of bamboo splits. Various earthenware pots are supplied to them by the potters living in the plains area as they themselves do not make pots.

Some of the male members are very good bamboo and wood carvers and they do it as per the demand of their tribesmen. A lot of usable items are made by them out of wood, bamboo, gourds, horns, hides, leaves, stones, etc. for their own use. Among household materials mention may be made of grinding stones, husking pestle and mortar, leaf made umbrella, caps, etc. The personal belongings like smoking pipe, tobacco container of various designs and knife are significant. Although a lot of plastic and other items are found to be used by them, so far the traditional materials are having its own luster and socio cultural significance. Certain materials used by the Kutia Kandha are symbols of their self-identity, e.g. palm leaf knitted head-band, designed bead necklaces, and the engraved bamboo tobacco container etc.

The fascinating bead necklaces and excellent tobacco-containers are vanishing crafts and need immediate attention for their promotion. By and large, the Kutia Kandha in several villages have retained their traditional material culture as much as possible.

The Kutia Kandha females from their early childhood adorn their body with many kinds of ornaments starting from bead necklace to silver jewellery of



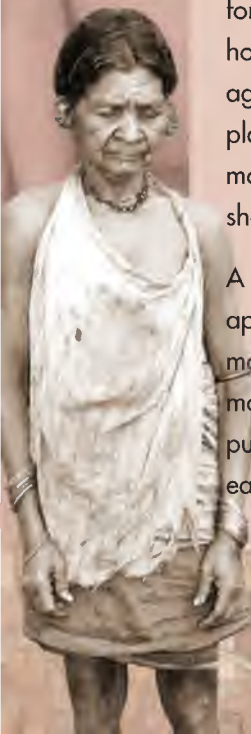


different designs. Ornaments made by Scheduled Caste people out of brass in the lost-wax process are purchased and used by the Kutia Kandha. The females use ornaments of different varieties all over the body from head to toe. The rings, hair clips, bead necklace, comb necklace, a type of seed necklace and palm leaf knitted band are worn for decoration and beautification of the body. Sometimes

these are put on as a symbol of status and social prestige. Females put on two pieces of clothes one at the waist and the other hanging from the neck up to the waist to cover the upper part of the body. Forehead band made out of palm leaves and beads are made by themselves. Scanty tattoo marks on the face of the women enhance their beauty and traditional adornment pattern reveals their socio-cultural identity. Male folk put on Dhoti and also some ornaments to make them attractive.

The Kutia Kandha work very hard in the shifting cultivation fields in expectation of good harvest. A major part of the crops particularly pulses and oil-seeds are sold for money. Forest produce collected by the female folk and occasionally by the male members are sold in the market or to the near by co-operatives for cash. The Kutia Kandha even today in remote inaccessible villages never go to work for money in the house of other ethno-cultural groups. They usually do not employ themselves for wage earning in agriculture sectors but many of them have accepted works, like road construction, timber cutting, forest plantation work, etc. They sell domesticated animals and birds for money at the time of absolute need. A few Kutia Kandha have shown interest to work in company, NGO and Government offices.

A major part of their income is expended for celebrating festivals, appeasing innumerable spirits, Gods and Goddess, celebrating marriage ceremonies and death rituals. Next to that they spend more in food items. The Kutia Kandha living in remote villages purchase salt, chilli, clothes, baskets, agricultural implements and earthen ware pots from the weekly market whereas those living







adjacent to towns purchase food-stuff and modern items from the weekly and daily market. They also spend for house thatching and repairs. Quite a substantial part of their income is spent for dresses, cosmetics, agricultural implements, ornaments and their ration. Youths spend for purchase of clothes and narcotics. The women purchase jewellery, cosmetics, fancy items and gifts for their lovers. The unmarried elderly girls purchase modern cosmetics and plastic items. At present, the Kutia Kandha are using bicycle, radio, torchlight, umbrella, shoes, designed boxes and many others modern items.

A number of money lenders and investors belonging to their own community and other communities reside in their areas. The main reason for which the Kutia Kandha go for loan are shortage of food for use in the lean period, payment of bride price and expensive marriage feast, ritual for birth and death, drinking habit, prolonged illness and fulfilment of multifarious social obligations. Natural calamities, celebration of Mariah sacrifice and to fight cases in courts are some of the occasional heavy expenses which compel them to indebtedness.

The Scheduled Caste business men and local Sahukars, who advance loan either in cash or kind, exploit them by charging high rate of interest. Since the Kutia Kandha pay back the debt as per his commitment, no body loses the temptation of investing among these faithful borrowers. As and when required very valuable possessions, like ornaments, utensils, trees, wet-land even agricultural implements and personal belongings are mortgaged.

Specific works are earmarked for respective sex groups though a lot of works are performed by both the groups particularly in agricultural operation. Women perform household works, such as cooking, husking and plastering of houses. Females work much more than that of male folk and rarely one can find a Kutia Kandha woman sitting idle. The works which need much concentration, like weeding, transplanting, reaping and collection of corns, etc. are mostly performed by the women though it is not



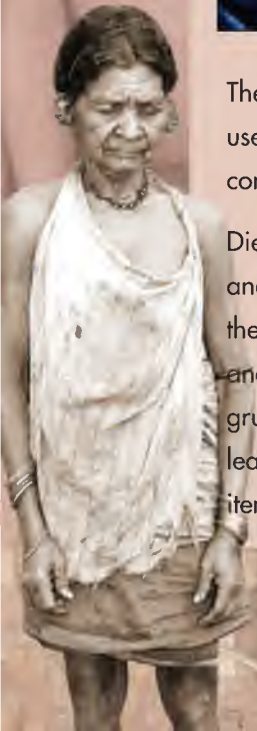


tabooed for men. However, each sex group sticks to its prescribed works as per social sanction. Works are not strictly assigned according to one's age and sex. In practice minor works that need less strength and minimum strain are performed by the old people and very young boys and girls.

Because of several socio-economic reasons there is economic interaction between the Kutia Kandha and other ethno-cultural groups. They have economic link with the local Doms and Sahukars. Time to time peddlers dealing with several trade items, visit their area to meet the material needs of the Kutia Kandha. Business people reach them to collect their seasonal agricultural and forest produce. Barter system to some extent so far exists. Money as a medium of exchange has dominated throughout the areas. Markets are not only the places of economic interaction but also centres for multifarious socio-cultural activities.

The Kutia Kandha families contribute for community level feast and festivities. The community funds are used for this purpose also. At the time of Meriah sacrifice families of different clans living in village must contribute.

Diet routine of the people varies according to season and economic condition of the families. In general they take three times a day, i.e. morning, mid-day and in the late evening. Meals comprise of ragi-gruel, maize, millet and rice. Moreover, green leaves, vegetables, dry fish and meat are important item & in their diet. Multifarious edibles, like,



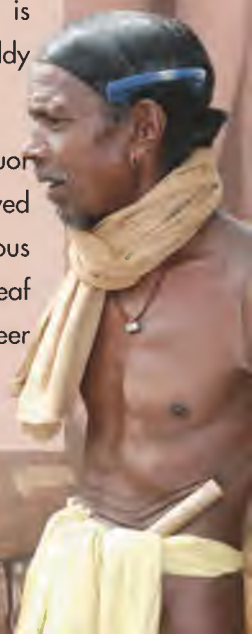


mushrooms, roots, shoots, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds are also consumed as per availability in different seasons. The Kutia Kandha depend on yam, tubers, bamboo shoots, jack-fruits, Mahua flower, mango during summer months and mango karnel during lean period.

The regular daily diet of the Kutia Kandha comprises rice or minor millets with dal or green leaves. In the working season they may carry cooked food for the whole family to the place of farming. Many of them raise temporary huts and cook there during their working period in crop field. There are families having two cooking places, one at home and the other in the field. In fact, food items are abundant in the winter months. They like buffalo flesh, dry fish and other non-vegetarian food more than vegetarian food. In all festive occasions and ceremonies, they relish non-vegetarian items. Whatever food is left after consumption is utilized in the next day meal. Sacrificial meat and ceremonial food are neither cooked nor eaten by the female folk due to socio-religious prohibitions.

The Kutia Kandha do not drink milk. Eating egg and pork is strictly prohibited for women. The emerging youths of both sexes have given up eating beef. During pregnancy a few food taboos are observed. Children are not given any special diet. No doubt that people in the area specially the poor Kutia Kandha suffer from vitamin deficiency and are in need of nutritive food items. During lean period rice made available by the Government and the Micro Project is encouraging them for cultivation of good variety of paddy and vegetables for consumption and sale.

They prefer to take their own brewed rice beer, Mahua liquor and Sago-palm sap. They usually consume rice beer brewed out of small millets and it is used for magico-religious purpose. They also use various narcotics, like tobacco leaf powder and paste. Herbal medicines are added in rice beer and sago-palm-juice to make it intoxicant.



## SOCIAL ORGANISATION



The Kutia Kandha are famous for their strong and unique social organization. However, as an endogamous community they are having their distinct language, territory and style of life. Social organization among the Kutia Kandha involves the whole network of social and religious elements between different individual and groups. There are groupings among them for several social purposes which is reflected in pattern of management of individuals and groups within the prescribed social framework. Each such group may be identified through kinship ties and codes of conduct in general.

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The family, is the smallest but primary and dominating social unit among the Kutia Kandha. It is mostly nuclear, patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal in character. Like many other tribal communities their major economic, social, religious and re-productive activities revolve round their family. Husband, wife and their unmarried children live together under the same roof and share common kitchen. The moment the son gets married he constructs his own house with the help of the villagers. If parents are alive the youngest son is expected to remain with them at their old age. He is expected to take adequate care of his widow mother and unmarried sisters. A Kutia Kandha may







marry more than one wife but both the wives and their children share the same hut and hearth and lead harmonious conjugal life. Cases of levirate and sororate are also found. There are incidences of divorce and remarriage. In several villages one can come across single member family, double-member family, extended family, etc. Distant relatives may stay with some nearer one due to former's domestic problems as a helping hand. The male head, holds superior position and has the final say in important

family matters. The wife is very sincere, devoted to her husband and dedicated worker. She is a good partner in all social activities. It does not mean that her position is low in the family. Husband-wife relationship is very intimate and both of them manage with mutual understanding. At the time of birth of a child, husband takes adequate care of the wife and performs all rituals till the purification ceremony. In spite of intimacy, co-operation and remarkable co-ordination between the couple there are occasions of conflict and quarrel at times and it may lead even to divorce. In no case a husband is expected to be misbehaved or beaten by the wife which is a social offence and she should be fined by the traditional council. Extra marital relationship and incest are seriously viewed in the society. A woman, if suspected to be a witch or proved barren may be divorced.

The children are looked after with love and affection and are excused for their minor mistakes. Nursing part is left to the mother. However, father takes care of his children according to necessity. During the childhood a





female child is more attached to the mother and a boy helps his father in his works. Boys and girls are liked equally without any discrimination.

Above the family, lineage is found to be the next important bigger social group to unite people for specific socio-cultural and economic purposes. The lineage is a corporate group, and a permanent framework to provide political, jural and ritual

status. The significant role of the lineage in birth, marriage and death is unavoidable. It is seen that same lineage members may reside outside their own village but the emotional attachment and mutual socio-economic obligations between the lineage members remain intact.

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Like lineage group affinity, clan which is exogamous is found to be quite prominent for its network and socio-cultural function. The clan includes a large number of lineages and all the clans men were living together in a particular village in the past. But now-days multi-clan villages are more in number. However, all the clansmen still maintain strong social network and regarded as brothers and sisters and are considered as the descendants from one common ancestor. Therefore, clan exogamy is the basic rule among the Kutia Kandha. With regard to possession right over clan territory and celebration of Meriah sacrifice by the members of a clan is most vital. Any sexual offence between the members of the same clan is the greatest social crime and seriously viewed by the community. A Kutia Kandha is always proud of his clan and clansmen.

The Kutia Kandha are well known for their clan organization. There are some uniclan villages, which are in due course, growing into multi-clan villages. However, within a village there is always a dominant clan. Clan organization is very important in respect of matrimonial matters. All the uniclan villages maintain the rule of village exogamy. The boys and girls of the same village are strictly





prohibited to marry, even if they belong to different clans. They are also prohibited to do dance together. The clans are territorial units and its members may inhabit separate villages. The members of original clan the right to live and work in the village. Even there are some specific village ceremonies in which only members of the main clan participate. However, village community members may be of different clan groups who maintain strong unit in respect of many social, economic, political and ritual activities.

The Kutia Kandha of a particular village interact with each other for several economic, social, religious and political functions. Each village is a self-contained unit. A Kutia Kandha is conscious of the rich heritage of his village and intensely feels his belongingness. The Kutia Kandha village is a cluster of households related to each other by lineage membership. It brings different individuals and groups of the village to one fold.

Apart from kinship, the social life of the Kutia Kandha inside village and outside is based on different associations and institutions. Peer groups, the children, youths, elders and old people constitute different groups for different purposes. Neighborhood relation may be formal or informal but always there is sense of understanding and mutual help among neighbours. Different sets of formal and informal groupings are marked in community level rituals and festivals.



## LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

The traditional political organization of the Kutia Kandha manifests through the position of leaders, their status and role, trial of various cases and decisions given by the authorities. It clarifies the functions of the authorities in a particular framework. The leaders may be classified as traditional and modern according to their membership and mode of selection and function. As per customary law all the members obey the decisions of the authorities in all possible secular matters. The traditional leadership is hereditary but the modern leadership is through election. A leader among the Kutia Kandha may be an active participant both in the traditional as well as modern political council.



The leaders of the Kutia Kandha community are *Mutha Majhi*, *Majhi*, and important persons of the village. The *Jani* who is basically the magico-religious head of the village also actively participates in the traditional village council. All the above posts are hereditary; however, if necessary in exceptional situation a new person may be selected. The status of the traditional leaders is ascribed rather than achieved.

The *Mutha Majhi* exercises control over the Kutia Kandha at *Mutha* level. His role and advices are taken into greater account. He may be invited on specific socio-political occasions. The *Majhi* who is the village secular head looks after the traditional political matters of the village. This post is very prestigious and hereditary. The '*Majhi*' previously was being selected by the '*Mutha Majhi*' and since then the post is succeeded in family or lineage level. '*Majhi*' is the custodian of the village fund and







revenue. He plays an important role in giving decisions in secular matters. He does not receive any remuneration but a good deal of prestige and special status. In case of individual disputes, family conflicts, group rivalry and inter-village rivalry *Majhi* solves the problems.

The *Jani*, the magico-religious head is also an active participant of the traditional village council. He is the formal spokesman of the village and keeps an eye over the happenings and decisions. At the time of any conflict and quarrels his words and decisions are sincerely taken into consideration. Every one in the village pays regards to *Jani* and his status and prestige determine the dignity of the village in the area. However, he consults *Majhi* on jural and political matters.

The traditional village council of Kutia Kandha constitutes traditional authorities and eldest male heads of each household of the village. The *Majhi* or *Jani*, according to the necessity calls the meeting of the village traditional council. All the members of the council sit together usually in the evening hours and freely discuss different issues. Although, all the members are free to participate in the discussion, but final decision is given by the *Majhi* in connection with secular matters, whereas the *Jani* decides the magico-religious issues. In almost all cases the decision given by the traditional authorities are unanimously accepted. The accused person may be fined and out of this liquor is purchased for consumption by all the members of the council. The Kutia Kandha never gave very painful or expensive punishment for minor offences. In case of adultery, i.e. when a girl keeps illicit relationship with the boy of other community, when a boy or girl married any one other than a Kutia Kondh, pregnancy before marriage and breach of incest taboos, the persons concerned are fined heavily and directed to undergo a series of ritualistic observances for purification. In certain serious cases the offender may be excommunicated from the village and community. Such cases are decided in the presence of *Mutha Majhi* and *Majhis* of several villages.





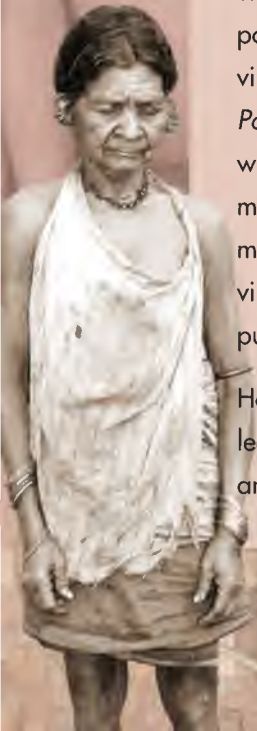
The traditional village council discusses the wide range of topics starting from a quarrel and conflict between two persons to all feasts, festivals and common socio-cultural matters. It upholds the customary law, ethics and social harmony.

The traditional leaders in the Kutia Kandha community are wise, helpful, well behaved, judicious and impartial. The traditional council and leaders are day by day losing importance due to introduction of modern *Panchayatraj* system.

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The modern *Panchayatraj* system has not brought any immense change in the traditional socio-political structure. The traditional authorities like *Majhi* and *Jani* who are working in the traditional village council are also found to be work with Government officials as ward members in the *Panchayatraj* system. Each village is having a ward member as the representative of the village to work with the Government officials for planning and bringing into action the developmental programmes. In many villages well-to-do and conscious Kutia Kandha are representing as ward members. A ward member exercises full power in deciding issues in connection with developmental activities. In several villages where the traditional leaders and Ward Members are different persons they are found to be pulling on quite well.

However, it is undisputed truth that virtues of the Kutia Kandha traditional council and traditional leaders should be respected. Attempts should be made to revive those age old traditional institutions, and combine the two for community maintenance.





## LIFE CYCLE

A Kutia Kandha married woman is expected to conceive. If it is delayed several apprehensions are made in connection with her fertility and future. A pregnant woman is given adequate care because one of the ancestors is expected to take birth. Childbirth irrespective of sex is believed as the outcome of blessings of the supernatural power. Barrenness is regarded as a stigma hence the concerned woman is looked down upon by the community and family members. She is treated with herbal medicines and magical rituals.



Cessation of menses, giddiness and vomiting tendency are the primary symptoms of pregnancy. It is further confirmed with abdominal protuberance. The pregnant woman has to take sufficient rest and she is prohibited to perform heavy works in order to avoid miscarriage. A pregnant woman observes all socially prescribed taboos.

A woman is expected to give birth in her husband's house. An experienced woman helps in the delivery. In case of difficult delivery they seek services of magico-religious specialist. The child and the mother are looked after by the father of the child. He takes all pains to help the mother and the child. The pollution period is over after one month of the delivery. Then mother takes care of herself and the baby.



Name giving ceremony is conducted after the 3rd day of the birth of a child. A 'Siali' leaf is shown to the child uttering the names of the ancestors. While uttering the name of a particular ancestor, if the child catches the leaf, it is believed that the same ancestor has been born. The child is treated accordingly by the family members and the kith and kin. But the name giving ceremony is celebrated by inviting relations both from father and mother's side. Mother's brother sacrifices a



pig on this occasion. The magico-religious observances by the family members and enjoyment of traditional drinks are of special mention. The parents, siblings, kinsmen, villagers, and others play vital role in early socialization process of a child. The children acquire knowledge about the environment, culture, people and spirit world.

Adolescent period is quite vital as they behave differently with opposite sex groups. The dormitory life among the Kutia Kandha influences the socialization process, personality formation and community life. Sex life is controlled to a greater extent. Illicit relationship and pregnancy of unmarried girls are seriously viewed.

Marriage among the Kutia Kandha is







regarded as a sacred institution. Preliminary arrangements for marriage are made by the parents. Normally, initiative starts from the boy's side. Marriage by arrangement is the usual age old practice. However, other types of marriage like marriage by love, capture, exchange and intrusion are also practised. Sororate and Junior levirate are also practised. One may marry more than one wife but monogamy is mostly preferred. Marriage is strictly prohibited between boys and girls of the same clan and outside the Kutia Kandha community. Either the husband or the wife can divorce only when both of them are totally unable to adjust.

Marriage by negotiation is prestigious, expensive, elaborate and time taking. One has to pay rice, wine, buffalo, clothes, brass pots and arrows as bride price. In the marriage ceremony family members, distant relatives, villagers enjoy feast and drink. After the completion of marriage rituals the couple is expected to lead a life as per the expectation of the society members. Husband exercises enormous control over the wife, however, the latter is not looked down upon. If a wife divorces, her parents have to pay back the bride price as per demand from the husband's side.



A dead body may be cremated or buried depending upon the nature of death. The persons having normal death are burnt in the cremation ground. In case of death due to small pox, drowning in water, falling from tree, attack of the wild animals, etc. the corpses are buried. The pollution period is observed by all the lineage members from 3 to 8 days. All the kinsmen are invited, Drinks are brewed and buffalo, goats and



chicken are arranged within a stipulated period. Apart from magico-religious celebrations and ceremonial feast and drinks are major activities. According to the Kutia Kandha the dead lives in the house and village in form of spirits and take rebirth in the same family after a generation. Ancestral spirits have important role to play especially in birth, marriage and death ceremonies and keeping health and happiness of living beings.





## RELIGION

The Kutia Kandha consider religion as the most sacred and centres round number of gods, goddesses, deities, spirits and various natural objects. They are very sincere, dedicated, devoted and dutiful to their religion. Many performances are associated with magic and sacrifice or both.

In the Kutia Kandha area certain symbolic structures represented by wooden poles, notched bifurcated wooden pillars, bamboo frames, stones, small huts, raised platforms having vermilion marks and blood spots, in leaf cups, leaf plates, bamboo baskets, etc. are of magico-religious significance. Each spot has its own significance because it provides shelter to spirits and deities of certain special power. The first magico religious centre that attracts the attention is the place for *Dharani Penu* represented by three pieces of stones. She is the creator of human beings who protects the community,

and ensures fertility. Usually the villagers at community level offer sacrifice for health and happiness of their own and their livestock. In the middle of the village exists a bifurcated notched pillar and at the end of the settlement a very long bamboo with a piece of triangular cloth on its top which symbolizes the village deity. Its significance is seriously felt at the time of *Mariah* sacrifice.

Every village has its own magico-religious specialist. The *Jani* is the full time magico-religious specialist of the village whereas the *Kutaka* (Shaman) functions as the family level specialist. He is an astrologer-cum-healer, and is evil and respected for his skill and awarded high status in the community. The 'Jani' performs all the major sacrifices and is in charge of all magico-religious activities.





He keeps better relation between the people and the spirits by satisfying the latter in the prescribed manner. The *Jani* is the custodian and transmitter of the magico religious traditions from generation to generation. Among the Kutia Kandha magico-religious activities there are the taboos inflicted on the women. A lot of prohibitions are to be seriously observed by the women. They are not allowed to touch the sacrificial food and participate in the community level magico-religious activities.

The magico-religious performance is associated with several types of sacrifices and observances. Most of the magico religious performances are followed by music, dance and drinking. The observances are arranged in such a manner that it gives chance to every individual and units of different villagers together to enjoy. A lot of materials, like small baskets, pots, leaf cups, sun-dried husked rice, powder of red and white colour, turmeric, flower and fruits are necessary for sacrifice of animals for the magico religious performances.

The Kutia Kandha magico-religious activities are highlighted in several feasts and festivals. Among the major festivals, mention may be made of *Meriah* sacrifice, *Puni Kalu*, *Dadbinere*, *Dasehera*, *Kandanga Dakina*, *Basa Dakina*, etc. *Meriah* festival (*Bia Katina Dakina*) is the most significant and expensive one celebrated with series of observances and propitiations. This festival is communally observed mainly to appease the *Dharni Penu*. Previously a human being was offered for sacrifice but now-a-days a buffalo is taken as the substitute. Although at the community level one or two buffaloes are sacrificed, at the family level different birds and animals, like pigeon or chicken, goat, etc, are offered in the names of several spirits well known for specific function. The socio-cultural interaction, bond friendship







between clans and villages and feeling of oneness among groups are projected in different phases of ritualistic observances. This very costly sacrifice is observed by the community in an interval of three to five years which may vary according to the specific situation and indication of the spirits and diviners.

Beliefs and practices concerning life-cycle rituals, agricultural operations, and house construction, food-gathering and hunting, use of musical instruments and to satisfy countless deities are some of the special features of Kutia Kandha magico- religious activities. Pollution and sickness are also linked with magico- religious activities. Auspicious and inauspicious omen, taboos and social life, personal behavior, production and consumption and their life-cycle rituals are significantly influenced by the magico-religious

activities. Even accidental and unnatural deaths are related to divinity.

The ancestors of the Kutia Kandha are treated like living beings. They are remembered in all important occasions. The Kutia Kandha in general never displease their ancestral spirits.

The sorcery and witchcraft are two dreaded aspects for them. A sorcer and a person dealing with black magic are feared by them. The spiritual foundation among the Kutia Kandha is so strong, that it overrides all other aspects of their life. However, magico-religious activities are found to be very helpful in keeping them together. Establishment of peace and maintenance of social harmony and controlled behavior of the groups are possible due to their magico-religious rites.

According to the Kutia Kandha production in land and forest, fertility at home and upkeep of health and happiness can only be possible by establishing good relationship with the spirits. Sickness or any danger to a family is due to some error committed by them. Ultimate way is to keep the spirit world in good humour by offering regular sacrifice as per the prescribed norms.



## SOCIAL VALUE AND WORLD VIEWS



Any body repeating the same mistake is, then warned and subsequently reprimanded. At last the act of reconciliation works. Without any written document the Kutia Kandha remember many things about their songs, music, dance, medicine, techniques, process of management and several matters. Each individual has a chance to emerge as a good master.

The Kutia Kandha are very straight forward people. But they only expose their feelings before the people with whom they have confidence. Once they confide with somebody means it is from the core of the heart. Any outsider may not be accepted by them. All of a sudden one may misunderstand the Kutia Kandha as over simple, sober and less intelligent, but it takes some time to assess them properly. The Kutia Kandha are very much traditional and word-bound people. They do what they commit and accept something which has social and indigenous divine approval. They are quite faithful and honest, trustworthy and ready to sacrifice life for the friends. Their land, people deities and spirits are most precious for them. A Kutia Kandha rarely tolerates anything against self dignity. They believe in broad kinship range and group life. One ness feeling and group life are basic features of the Kutia Kandha.

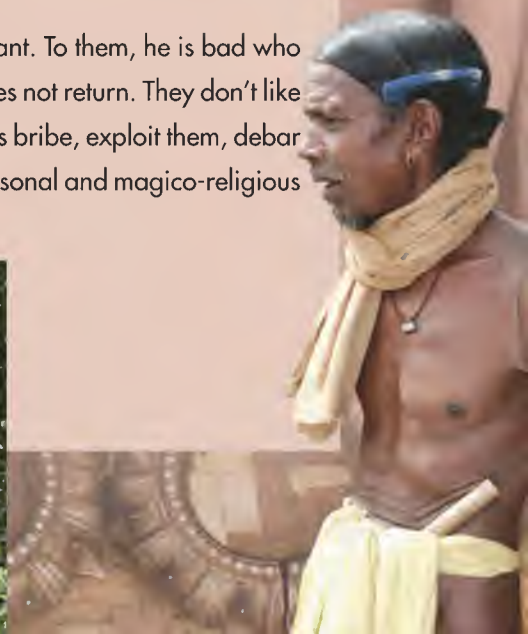


They enjoy life to the possible extent. They are very free and frank and spontaneous in action. One can easily recognize their fellow feeling and bravery. They are good hosts and try to satisfy the guests in all possible ways. A Kutia Kandha never gets angry with some one nor begs to earn his livelihood. He



believes in work and worship. They trust the Dombs, people of a Scheduled Caste community. The Kutia Kandha never disregard or misbehave anybody unless they are very seriously hurt. They believe in love and affection, excuse and forgiving, help and tolerance. They dislike cheats, mischief mongers, characterless and ill-tempered persons and are afraid of evil spirits, black magicians, sorcerers. The Kutia Kandha are disciplined people and bear high sense of morality. They respect elders and love youngsters. Physical punishment and use of taunting remarks to somebody are the worst means for sorting out any problem. They never like persons having stealing and begging propensities. They are very innovative and imaginative. They believe more in equality than individual status symbol. They are very sympathetic and helpful at the time of danger. They may tolerate anything but not against their habitat, clansmen, society and culture.

The Kutia Kandha think it is a sin not to marry a girl after making her pregnant. To them, he is bad who does not take care of his parents after marriage and who takes things and does not return. They don't like the persons who will treat the guests well. They hate the person who demands bribe, exploit them, debar them from exercising their rights on forest and land, and interfere in their personal and magico-religious matters.



## DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE



The Kutia Kandha are in transition in recent decades. The socio-economic development activities have brought immense change in their cultural pattern and lifestyle. The main factors responsible for their economic transformation are programmes launched by Govt. and Non Government agencies, to bring in significant development intervention to raise the standard of living and quality of life relating to health and sanitation, education, environment, infrastructural development, individual benefit schemes etc. This has broadened their outlook. Introduction of modern agriculture, multiple cropping, use of high yielding variety

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of seeds, provision of irrigation facility, input assistance, market assurance etc. have brought visible changes in their life pattern.

Now a days young women work in road construction as daily labourers and under the contractors. Some of them have adopted small business and trading. A few number of Kutia Kandha are also using motor bikes. The development organizations and welfare institutions like public health centre, police check post, office of the agricultural extension officer, veterinary hospitals, post office, and weekly market, big shops, establishment of banks, LAMPs and several others have contributed to the changing life of the Kutia Kandha.

The Oil Orissa under the agricultural extension programme have encouraged the Kutia Kandha for cultivation of various oil seeds.





The Micro projects, Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA) has undertaken various socio-economic development programmes for their sustainable development. The agency has spent a lot of money in horticulture, agriculture, communication, irrigation etc. The TDCC and AMCS have been working in the area to procure their surplus and providing them daily consumer goods.



AWARE, a voluntary organization has performed substantial work in the field of development and change. Utkal Nabajeevan Mandal has also done some good works for the Kutia Kandha women and children. The residential high school of Kutia Kandha attracts the students of the area. Non-formal educational centre popularly known as Gyan Mandir is contributing to development of children. Moreover, non-tribal outsider settled in Belghar to undertake trades have a lot of contribution in this context. Since development and change are inevitable the Kutia Kandha are no exception to it. However, it should be oriented with growth positive characteristics.

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