

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

The Kondadora is a Scheduled Tribe of Odisha. Their homeland lies in and around the Konda Kamberu ranges of the Eastern Ghats spread across south Odisha and the Andhra Pradesh. In Odisha, they are mainly concentrated in Koraput, Malkangiri, Raygada and Kalahandi districts with thinly scattered population in Balangir and Bargarh districts of western Odisha.

The name 'Kondadora' is derived from 'Konda' (hill) and 'Dora' (lord) meaning the 'Lords of the Hill'. They are also known as 'Kondakapu' 'Oja', 'Pandava Raju', 'Pandava Dora' and 'Kubing' in different localities. Many ethnographers believe that the Kondadoras are an offshoot of the Kandha tribe. But according to their belief, they identify themselves as the offsprings of the great mythological heroes - the Pandavas and consider it dignified to refer themselves as 'Pandava Raju' or 'Pandava Dora'. Their original mother tongue is Kubi / Konda, a non-literary central Dravidian language closely akin to 'Kui' and 'Kuvi'. Now, they have forgotten Kubi and are speaking 'Telugu'; mixed with broken 'Odia' for which the neighbouring communities call them as Telugu Dora/ Telega Dora/ Telega Dora or Dora etc.

Kondadora settlements are generally homogeneous and are located near foot hills or hill slopes where perennial hill streams provide them drinking water. But in multi ethnic villages they live in separate wards maintaining social distance from the neighbouring communities and thereby, their distinct ethnic identity.

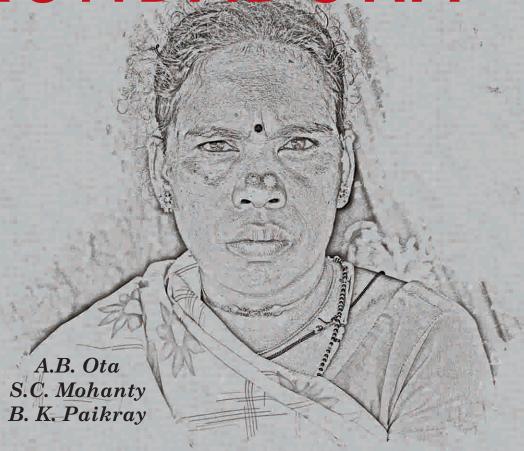
They are mainly agriculturists who supplement their livelihood by allied pursuits such as wage earning, livestock rearing, forest collection, seasonal hunting and fishing, service, share cropping, small business. Some poor people among them earn their livelihood by trade of bullocks, cows and by performing a folk art called *ghungunadia* and then, collecting money or grains from door to door.

They are an endogamous community, broadly divided into two endogamous divisions such as Pedda Kondulu and China Kondulu. The former claims superiority over the latter. Both the divisions are again sub-divided into a number of clans called *intiperu/kulam/vansam*. They prefix their clan names before their first name to identify themselves. Their tutelary deity - goddess Ammatali resides in the sacred groove at the village outskirts. Now-a-days due to culture contact, modernization and development intervention their way of life is undergoing transformation.

This photographic documentation of the life style of the Kondadora tribe is a part of the series on "Tribes of Odisha" being published by SCSTRTI. Prof. (Dr) A. B. Ota, Director and Sri S.C. Mohanty, OSD, and Shri B.K. Paikray R.A. (Retd.) of SCSTRTI deserve my sincere thanks for their efforts to bring out this colourful booklet. Lastly, I hope, it would be useful for all those who are interested in the tribal culture of Odisha.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary
ST & SC Development Department
Government of Odisha

### KONDADORA



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ondadora is a Dravidian speaking tribe. Etymologically, the term *Konda* denotes hill and *dora*, the lord. The term '*dora*' is an honorific title which appears to be broad and classificatory, as many Dravidian speaking communities suffix it after their name to identify themselves with pride. Thurston (1909) stated that the community is known as Kondadora, Kondakapu and Oja. But according to

their belief, they identify themselves as the offsprings of the great mythological heroes - the Pandavas. So they think it as a dignified way to be referred to themselves as Pandava Raju or Pandava Dora. They also like to recognize themselves as 'Kubing' relating to their legendary point of view as well as for speaking 'Kubi' as their mother tongue. Mr. W. Francis, in 1901 Census report opined Kondadora as a section of the Kandha tribe.

### Language

Their original mother tongue is Kubi / Konda, a nonliterary central Dravidian language closely akin to Kui and Kuvi. At present it is in a transitional state of transformation due to the influence of local lingua francas - Telegu and Odia. The younger generation of the tribe has forgotten their own mother tongue Kubi/ Konda and now speak 'Telugu'- another Dravidian language, mixed with broken 'Odia' for which the neighbouring communities call them as Telugu Dora/ Telenga Dora/ Telega Dora or Dora etc. They are bi-lingual and are well versed in Telugu and Odia.



### **Population & Distribution**

The tribe is mainly distributed in Malkangiri, Koraput, Raygada and Kalahandi districts and are sparsely distributed in Balangir, Bargarh, Nawarangapur, Gajapati, Sambalpur, Kendrapara and Cuttack districts of Odisha. They traditionally inhabit the Konda Kamberu ranges of the Eastern Ghats spread over to adjoining Andhra Pradesh. As per 2011 Census, the total population of the tribe is 20,802 out of which 10,222 are males and 10,580 are females. The sex ratio is 1035. The total literacy is 48.27% out of which male literacy is 58.85% and female literacy is 38.16%.



#### **Personal Adornments**

During early days, their dress pattern was in primordial stage due to their isolation, ignorance and living on food gathering stage for their survival. At that time, males wore only a loin cloth (*gochi*) i.e., a short piece of cloth, just to conceal their pubic regions which, even they did not wash regularly till it is damaged enough to be disposed off. Females wore a short piece of coarse cloth around their waist leaving the upper parts of the body fully bare. Little children up to seven years of age remained fully uncovered.

But changes have occurred over period of time. At present, the impact of modernity has been noticed in their dress pattern. Now their males wear pants, shirts, banyan, *dhoti, lungi* etc. and females wear coloured and printed *saree, saya* and blouse etc.



Females are fond of adorning themselves with varieties of ornaments to look beautiful and charming. These ornaments are netikada, kapu, kapukada, narkaimundi on their head, ganthia on their ear lobes and singla and jhallaka on their ear helix, dandi on their nosal septum and nose rings on their nose helix. They also wear bangaram pusa, nerka pusa and khagla on their neck, tada on their arms, bandria, katuria and kalturi on their wrist and various designs of finger rings (mudi) on their fingers studded with old coins. On their toes, they wear paijania, bala and on their leg fingers they wear mudi. They also wear addanmu as their waist chain. These ornaments are made of silver, brass, aluminum or gold depending upon their economic status. Females also wear different varieties of bead necklaces and plastic or glass bangles. But now the younger generations have already discarded this style and are wearing modern ornaments.





Their favorite hair style is called *mukpaku* in which hair is combed from right side to left side and twisted in folds on the left. Tattooing (tuti) is compulsory for married women. They believe that tattoo marks of forefathers if not present in the right hand of their women; their ancestors will not accept any offerings from them and can harm their family. They also make tattoos on their arms and legs with different patterns. Experienced women of their own community are expert in making beautiful design of tattoo emblems.

# HABITAT SETTLEMENT & HOUSING





ondadora habitat is located amidst picturesque topography with amazing landscapes on the Konda Kamberu mountain ranges of the great Eastern Ghat region which stretches in between southern belt of Koraput and adjoining north Andhra Pradesh.

Kondadora settlements are generally homogeneous and are located near foot hills or hill slopes where perennial hill streams provide them drinking water throughout the year. But in multi ethnic villages they exclusively dwell in separate wards keeping social distance from the neighbouring communities and thereby maintaining their distinct ethnic identity. They construct their houses detached from the houses of the other communities, but generally like to live among other tribal communities to whom they consider socially at par with them. Kondadora houses are arranged in linear pattern, leaving a wide space in between as the village street. They install their village deity (gramapathy) namely Muthyluamma, her brother Poturaja along with Saralamma and Unamalamma under shady trees at the outskirts of their village.







Individual houses are built with mud walls and are thatched with piri grass having wide verandahs both in front and rear sides generally higher than the floor of their houses which are used as sitting place during recreational hours as well as to provide shelter to their guests. The walls are cleanly polished using red clay and the floor and verandah with black clay by their womenfolk. They construct a separate shed in the rear side of their house to accommodate their livestock and a small enclosed pigsty for their pigs under their front verandah. Kondadora houses are generally low roofed consisting of two rooms having no windows for ventilation. Individual houses are detached from others even from the houses of their own uterine brothers. The entrance room is generally bigger, which they use as their living room and also to store their grains. The small one is used as their kitchen and in one corner of it; they install their household deity estidebudu.





### LIVELIHOOD

Yultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy which they supplement with allied Upursuits such as wage earning both in agriculture and industrial sectors, livestock rearing, forest collection, seasonal hunting and fishing, service, share cropping, small business. Few of them earn by money lending. Some poor people among them maintain their livelihood by trade of bullocks, cows and by performing a folk art called ghungunadia by exhibiting a decorated ox, playing musical instruments and then collecting money or grains travelling from door to door. In the past, they practised shifting cultivation (kondapodu) which they have given up due to Government restrictions and depletion of forest.



#### 12 KONDADORA

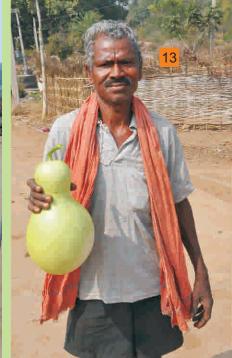
Their major crop is paddy which they grow in their wet lands. In their uplands they usually produce *padadhan* (hill paddy), ragi, sugarcane, turmeric, ginger, minor millets like *kangu, kosla*, pulses like, *kulthi* (horse gram), *biri* (black gram), *dangarani, bodhei*, and red gram etc. In their dry land near hill slopes, they grow *kandul*, maize, *jhudung* (cow pea) and *semi* (pea). All of them possess a small patch of kitchen garden adjacent to their houses where they raise varieties of vegetables like brinjal, cabbage, radish, tomato (*patalghanta*), *jhundug* (cow pea) and other type of peas, cauliflower (*gobi*), *kumuda* (pumpkin), *lau* (gourd), *kakudi* (cucumber), green leaves, maize and chilly etc.











Their women contribute to their family income substantially by participating in cultivation, wage earning and collection of minor forest produces like seasonal fruits, roots, tubers like karadi, pitakanda, sereng kanda, serenda, tarek kanda, varieties of mushrooms, green leaves, flowers, fibers, medicinal herbs, fuel woods and grasses to thatch their houses besides attending to their routine household chores.





### **Food and Drinks**

Kondadora are non-vegetarians. Rice and ragi are their staple cereal. They relish on meat, chicken, eggs, fish, dry fish and pork etc, but abstain from taking beef or flesh of buffalo. They are addicted to alcoholic beverage like country liquor mohuli, rice beer - pendum, ragi beer - kusuna and sago palm juice - salap etc. Both males and females smoke hand rolled cigar (pika / bidi) and chew tobacco paste.



### SOCIAL LIFE

Nhe Kondadora is an endogamous community, broadly divided further into two endogamous divisions such as Pedda Kondulu and China Kondulu. The Pedda Kundulu section claim to be socially superior than China Kondulu for which, intermarriage between these two sections are customarily prohibited. But in western Odisha where their migrant population is very randomly thin, they often ignore this traditional prohibition and intermarry when suitable mates are not available in their respective groups.

Both the divisions are again subdivided into a number of clans called intiperu / kulam / vansam. These are named adari, amsaru, antadi, antalu, bidika, barli, boini, budura, chintadi, dalei, dandapeti, dipali, dubi, dudi, dumbari, gollapeli, gangu, gondalaini, ikkili, jaddora, jamu, janni, karingi, kirsani, koduka, kondagari, kondagaru, kora, koringa, kurudi,

lambaka, madapelli, mangaladu, mukuli, nandili, nukandra, nungri, oddalu, padalu, pahdi, palaka, palkonda/ palkunda, pandipal, pili, pipa, polam, pradhani, pundu, sabuku, salla, samali, sikali, sudulu, sunkuri, and upingi etc. which are exogamous in nature. These clans are further segmented into various exogamous totemistic lineages such as surya (sun), antalu (cobra), pandipal (coconut), puli (tiger), kimudu

(bear), dega (eagle), matsya (fish), peyya (cow) etc. which regulates their matrimonial alliances.

The Kondadora inhabiting their traditional habitat, prefix their clan names before their first name to identify themselves as well as to trace their ancestral origin where as their counterparts residing in western Odisha suffix only 'Dora' as their surname only after their first name as an honorific title to establish their social identity.



### **Family**

Kondadora families are generally nuclear and patriarchal. They follow patrilocal rule of residence and patrilineal rule of descent. Vertically extended families and joint families are found in rare cases. Inheritance of parental property follows the rule of primogeniture in male line only (jestabagum). In the family having no male successor, the married daughters can inherit the ancestral property and the issueless families may adopt a male child from among the nearest lineage to succeed them and inherit their ancestral property.





### LIFE CYCLE

### **Pre-delivery Rituals**

In the seventh month of pregnancy, they observe the pre-delivery ritual (andlu burulu). The expectant mother is presented with sweetmeats according to her desire by her parents and by her husband's family, relatives and clan members. During this time, the woman is tabooed against sleeping in isolation, moving alone in dark night, visiting the cremation ground, exposure during lunar or solar eclipses, consumption of alcoholic drinks etc. These are meant for the wellbeing of the mother and the baby in her womb.

#### **Child Birth**

The birth of a child is usually arranged in a separate hut specially constructed in back side of their living room or in an enclosure in the rear verandah to be used as lying in room. They engage a midwife (dhai budi / dadu budi) - an experienced woman from their own community or from Ghasi or Hadi community to assist the expectant mother for easy delivery of the baby. After the delivery, the naval chord is cut of using a knife or by a conch shell and is tied by a thread (darampunda / daramu). The placenta (pu-ou) is buried at the backyard of their house putting it in an earthen pot (kandru). The midwife is remunerated for her service with a new cloth, a tambi (small measure) of rice, pulses, oil, salt and some money. Birth pollution (purudu) continues for twenty one days and during this period, observances of festivals and rituals are tabooed.



### **Post-delivery Ritual**

The birth purificatory rite (purudu kalu tagama) is observed on the twenty first day and on this day name giving ceremony (peru / barsalu/ perupetdama) is also observed and the new born baby is given a name by the maternal uncle, preferably by the name of the ancestors, kins or after the name of the day the child has been born. They hold the first feeding ceremony (annam tinpetima / mundu annamu tinbetatar) and the ear-piercing ceremony (cheu percina/ seul pedupodutuma / cheu kutinchitaru / seulu pedcina / bangaramkutu) after the seven month or one year and after five years of the birth of the child respectively. For observances of these ceremonies they avail the services of their traditional community priest - Guru, their barber (mangaladu) and their washerman (sakaladu).





### **Puberty Rite**

The Kondadora observe puberty rites (pedamansi/ illupatindi/simariadindi) for a pubescent girl on attainment of her first menarche. The pollution continues for a period of seven to nine days. During this time, she is secluded in an isolated room or in a separate enclosure, tied with a white thread around her head called taddu/nudkatandi/nudkatani/tadukatiandi and she is prohibited to look at or be looked at by any male person, to brush her teeth and to use any metal utensils for her dining. She sleeps only on the bare floor. After the pollution period is over, at the dawn accompanied by her friends, the girl takes her purificatory bath in the nearby hill stream anointing her body with turmeric paste and oil. At home, the maternal uncle presents her new cloths and some cosmetics. In the evening, her family hosts a non vegetarian feast with country liquor (kalu) to kinsmen.

### **Marriage**

In the Kondadora society, monogamy and adult marriage is the norm. But polygyny, both sorroral and non-sorroral is permitted in cases where the first wife is found to be barren, mentally unsound or suffering from serious diseases.

The Kondadora consider marriage, arranged through negotiation to be the ideal and prestigious mode of acquiring a life partner. The groom's father takes the initiative and engages a mediator for arranging a suitable bride for his son. In their society, payment of bride price (oli / voli / jholla) is prevalent and it is settled during marriage negotiation. It is paid both in shape of cash and kinds. On an appointed day, the groom's father proceeds to bride's house with the items of bride price along with three jars of country liquor and if this present is accepted by the bride's father, it is considered that the marriage is settled.



Then they consult their traditional star gazer (chukamurthi) to fix an auspicious date and time (muhurttam) for holding the wedding rite. On the fixed day, the bride is escorted to the patrilocal residence of the groom, accompanied by her parents, family members, kinsmen and relatives in a marriage procession with the drum beaters playing music. Before the performance of wedding rites, the chukamurthi bathes the would-be couple by sprinkling turmeric water after which the groom ties a sacred thread santhanam around the neck of the bride indicating the acceptance of her as his life partner. Their traditional community priest - guru and the astrologer chukamurthi preside over the wedding ritual. The guru ties sacred thread (kankanadu / kankanalu) in the right wrists of both bride and groom as marriage symbol and the chukamurthi opens the tie after which the wedding rite is concluded. In the evening, the groom's family entertains the guests, relatives and villagers with a nonvegetarian feast served along with country liquor.

In the Kondadora society, consanguineal marital alliances like, cross-cousin marriage (pinni putulu pelli) is very popular. In this mode of marriage a man can marry with his mother's brother's daughter (mama kuturapelli) or with his father's sister's daughter (atta kuturu pelli) but, parallel cousin marriage (abjellu pelli) is strictly tabooed. The other modes of marriages prevailing in their society, are marriage by capture (gunjila pelilu/ etakalu tiskelu), by purchase (kani peli/ kani pali), by service (intialludu/illaka allude), by mutual consent (gallal ellipaindi/ prema pelli), by intrusion (rampa karpu pelli/ ram pukarpu pelli), by elopement (gallala elipaindi/ udulia) and by exchange (rama pelli/ kunda marpula pelli) etc. Besides, junior levirate (marka pelli/mardi/mardiki pelli) and junior sorrorate (marbalu pelli/mardallu pelli) are allowed.

Divorce (widakulu) is permitted in their society and either of the partners can divorce his / her spouse on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, barrenness or impotency, extramarital relationship, cruelty or suffering from contagious diseases etc. Widow, widower (*manda*) and divorcees are also allowed to remarry.

#### **Death Rite**

The Kondadora practice both cremation and burial to dispose of their dead. They usually bury the dead bodies of small children, pregnant women, and those suffering from small pox or victims of unnatural deaths. Death news is communicated to all the kinsmen and relatives requesting them to assemble for taking part in the mortuary rite. The corpse is placed in the courtyard keeping its face upwards and head towards the north. The dead body is bathed in turmeric water and clad with a new cloth. The pall bearers prepare a bier using the old cot used by the deceased keeping it in its reverse side in which they lay the corpse. They tie plantain leaves on its four legs as symbol of mourning and on it; they carry the dead to the cremation ground. They are followed by the eldest son of the deceased carrying a burning thick straw rope (bentia/puhal) to lit the pyre.

At the cremation ground, the pall bearers keep the dead body on a heap of combustible timbers in sleeping position keeping its head towards the north. They put *neem* and sacred basil leaves, country liquor on its mouth and then all of them drink wine. After that, the eldest son sets fire on the pyre, avoiding looking at the face of the corpse. After the cremation is over, all of them take bath in the nearest stream and return to the house of the deceased. At the entrance of the house, a small branch of *neem*, a pot containing turmeric water and a burning log is kept as a symbol of mourning. The pall bearers and the eldest son after returning from the cremation ground, eat the *neem* leaves, sprinkle the turmeric water over their body and sit near the fire for purification.

The death pollution (*chinarudu*/ *chinarujulu*) is observed for a period of three to seven days depending upon the economic condition of the bereaved family to afford the huge expenses to be incurred for observance of the purificatory rite.

During the mourning period, the bereaved family does not cook food and the community members inhabiting the village provide food for them. In the day of the purificatory rite, the eldest son accompanied with the pall bearers, their community barber and community elders visit the cremation ground in the mid night to conduct the proceedings. There, they plant a sacred basil plant on the spot of cremation, sacrifice a pig, cook its flesh with rice and offer it first to the departed soul, then eat it there and return home. After that, the bereaved family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to lineage members, relatives and villagers along with country liquor. They have no tradition to construct monuments to commemorate the dead.



### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

he Kondadora's belief system is basically based on animism with admixture of some elements of Hinduism. Being polytheists, their pantheon includes a number of deities. Their tutelary deity goddess Ammatali/ Ammathali resides in the sacred groove at the village outskirts. They rever Pandavas, the spirit of the hells or the sons of Racha as their progenitor on whose name the community Kondadora are also known as Pandava Dora or Pandava Raju. They worship the deity Bhiman for adequate rainfall during observance of bhiman pondei ritual in May and in this month they also observe



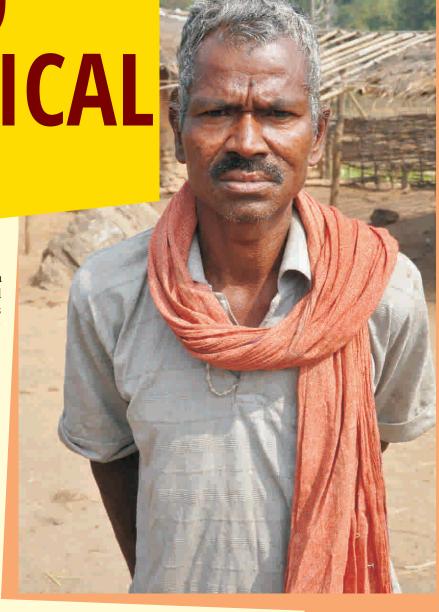


the kadaka pondei ritual to repair their agricultural implements. Moreover, they worship the deity nisani devam during March-April for bumper harvest in their pogun yatra festival sacrificing a goat and also in undichitta layahar ritual for the well being of human beings and their crops and in ashada yatra during June for welfare of their livestock. They worship their deity doddiganga as the protector of their cattle from attack of wild animals and the goddess desanganga / paraganga to protect them from epidemics like small pox and from cholera. The festival - nandi pondoi is observed in February for re-thatching of their houses and collection of hill brooms. Besides that, they observe festivals like, korrakota, korak panduga, itukala pandugu, ugadi, pongal and many Hindu festivals like, dusserah, sankranthi, sivaratri etc.

They install their village deity - grampathy at the end of their village street and their household deity estidevudu in one corner of their kitchen who is worshipped by females. They worship their deity zankar during observance of bandapan pondei in August for soil fertility. Deity peridevam is worshipped during observances of podu puja ritual in May. The deity gonga devam is propiated in pusa pondoi/ pusa ponduga festival during January. Their other deities are saralamma, talupullemma, mangalamma (goddess Laxmi), durgarmma, thakurani, mothyaluamma, galidevudu (wind god), sankudebudu, nunibai, pedda debudu and paderu kondamma etc. who are worshiped by their sacred specialists like disary, pujari and some others by their witch doctors such as desludu, beju or bejuni on different festive occasions.

SOCIO POLITICAL LIFE

he Kondadora, possess their own traditional community council (kotam) both at the village level as well as at the regional level headed by their community secular head - the naidu who is supported by the other office bearers such as guru, their community priest, desladu - the executor, chukamurthi/chettumurtakad the star gazer, dehuri/deuradu - the sacerdotal head, jani, jhankar, aijuguddu, disari - the magico-religious specialists and their messenger the barik/ challan etc. All of them belong to their own community except the barik /challan who is recruited from the Domb community. The posts of *naidu*, guru, chukamurthy, desladu, dehury, jani are hereditary and the barik/challan is



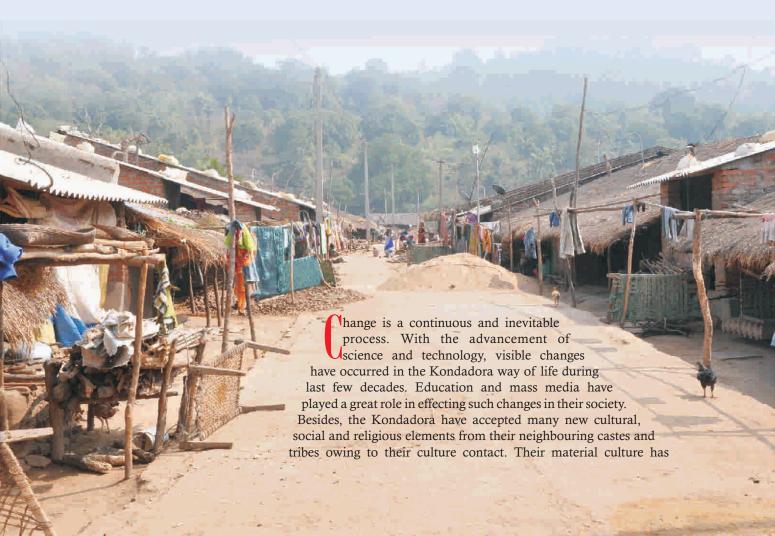


appointed by nomination and paid annually for his services in kinds by each family. The community council adjudicate cases pertaining to family disputes, theft, rape, adultery, incest, extramarital relations, inter community marriage and inter and intra community rifts and acts as the guardian of their traditional norms and customs. The session of the council sits annually on day of pus punei or can be convened at any time on an emergency. The Kondadoras honour the traditional leaders of their community council with great esteem.

In the post independent India, the political set up of the country has changed. Now, the Kondadora come under the statutory Panchayatraj system. So their traditional political system is gradually declining. The office bearers of the statutory Panchayatraj institutions are elected representatives of the people such as Ward Members, Sarpanch and Chairman of Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad etc. They look after the planned development programmes undertaken in their villages and act as the spokesperson for the members of their community while their traditional leaders retain their hold in the customary affairs.



## CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT





changed to some extent. Their traditional household articles have been replaced by many modern gadgets. Now, many well-to-do Kondadora families have acquired modern articles such as radio, watches, cycle, motor cycle, television, mobile phone, modern dresses, wooden and synthetic furniture etc.

The impact of change and modernization and introduction of planned development intervention by

Government and Non-government agencies have brought developments in the fields of health and sanitation, education, agriculture, communication and infrastructure. During last six decades Government has initiated various welfare and development schemes to bring about socio-economic development of the Kondadora. The Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) functioning in the Kondadora

inhabited areas of south Odisha have been implementing various socio-economic development programmes for development and modernization of horticulture. agriculture communication and irrigation for the sustainable development of the Kondadora. So now, they have gradually adopted modern agricultural practices by using High Yielding Varieties of seeds, better irrigation facilities and chemical fertilizers. Some of them have adopted horticulture, poultry and fishery schemes for their livelihood enhancement.

Since, education is the most important input for the socio-economic development, the STs and SCs Development Department is running a number of educational institutions like EMRS (Ekalavya Model Residential School), Higher Secondary Schools (Science and Commerce), High Schools, Girl's High Schools, Ashram Schools, Secondary Teacher Training Schools, Residential and non Residential Sevashrams in their area. Many students including girl students are attending these institutions. It has effected remarkable changes in their life style, dress pattern and belief system. Some educated persons among them have entered into Government and Non-government services. Under the circumstances, the Konddora are struggling hard to make the best of both their worlds old and new.

