



# GADABA

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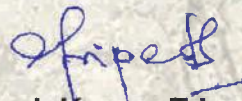


## FOREWORD

Orissa has the unique distinction of housing as many as 62 Tribal Communities including 13 Primitive Tribal Groups spread over different parts of the Country. The Culture of these Tribal Communities is extremely significant and they produce many beautiful arts and artifacts which have attracted tourists from different regions of the globe. Similarly, these Tribal Groups are unique for their colourful and vibrant as well as rhythmic dances which are culturally significant. Some of their fairs and festivals have rich cultural significance. But the pity is that the rich socio-cultural life and their performing arts are disintegrating fast. In view of this, there is an urgent need to document the rich culture and socio-economic life of these Tribal Communities (before they fully disintegrate and become history) so that government as well as non-government agencies can know about them and can take appropriate steps for reviving the rich cultural traditions and practices.

Keeping the above facts in view, SCs and STs Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar, Orissa has taken initiative to document the Socio-Economic and Cultural life of all the 13 Primitive Tribal Groups as well as some important culturally significant tribal communities of the State and come up with a Photo Hand Book on each of these tribal communities. Photo Hand Books of five PTGs have already been published by the Institute which have been highly appreciated by wide range of readers.

This Photo Hand Book on GADABA Tribe is the 6th in the series of Photo Hand Books proposed for publications by the Institute. I take this opportunity to profusely thank both the authors, Prof.A.B.Ota, Director of the Institute and Shri Trilochan Sahoo, Research Officer for making all the efforts in bringing out this book. Prof. (Dr.) K.K. Mohanti former Director, SCSTRTI deserves special thanks for final editing of the Hand Book. I am sure this book will be extremely useful and appreciated by the academicians, researchers, planners and lovers of tribal culture.



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# Socio-Cultural Identity



Gadaba socio-cultural identity is unique and distinct with their dome shaped circular house (Chhendi Dien), women's costume, like Kerang, colorful striped cloth, big sized rounded silver necklace, copper earrings with long circumference and colorful Dhemsas dance.

Culture of the Gadaba, one of the prominent tribal communities of Orissa, presents some spectacular characteristic features. The name, Gadab' has been derived from the word 'Gada', name of a brook in the Godavari valley. The tribe has Proto-Australoid origin. The Gadaba speak Mundari language, called Gutob, belonging to Austri-asiatic language family.

As per 2001 Census the total population of Gadaba in Orissa is 72,982 accounting 0.90 percent of the total tribal population of the State. Their sex ratio comes to 1011 females per 1000 males. Their literacy is 21.23 percent i.e., 33.02 percent for males and 9.64 percent for females. Their population has registered a growth rate of 8.70 per cent during the decade (1991-2001).







The Gadaba use very scanty clothes. Men use a piece of cloth, called lenguthi with a flap, which hangs down in front. It passes between the buttocks and fixed at the back at waist.

Womens' costumes show a distinctive feature of the tribe. They wear two pieces of cloths, each measuring about 5 ft by 1 ½ ft. One Keranga, a long strip of coloured cloth, tied round the waist and it hangs down to the knees and a second piece of cloth is worn under the right arm, across the breasts and the two upper corners are fixed in a knot on the left shoulder.

The Gadaba girls/women decorate their bodies with ornaments. Women wear peculiar type of earrings, which are made out of silver or brass or aluminium. Some Gadaba wear prominent earrings made of long pieces of brass wire welded into a circle which hangs down from a hole in the ear that reaches the shoulder. Besides, they use ornaments, like rings (mudi) in their nose and finger and bead necklace, bangles made of brass. The hair is neatly combed and fixed at the back by hairpins.





# Habitat



The Gadaba habitat with variegated topography stretches beyond the mountains in southern district of Koraput, Orissa and it extends to the adjoining districts of Visakhapatnam (AP) and Bastar (CG).

At about 3000' above the sea level, the Gadaba habitat lies at the central belt of Koraput district and Khairput block of Malkangiri district touches the Eastern Ghats in south Orissa. The beauty of the habitat is observed through its natural forest, amazing landscapes as well as the swidden fields.

Nice waterfall and perennial streams are the natural gifts to the habitat of the Gadaba.







# Settlement



A traditional Gadaba village builds well defined compounds marked by surrounding stone walls that separate the dwellings of its four main social groups.



The Gadaba village settlement usually reflects a forest environment



At the centre of the village, stands the Sadar, the community meeting place, utilized to settle the dispute in customary mode and manage the village affairs. Close to the Sadar, one finds the dancing arena, the shrine of the Hundi and the village deity.







# House



The Gadaba build their houses in two rows, between which there is a wide village street. There are three types of Gadaba houses, like Mahad Dien, Dandual Dien and Chhendi Dien. The house layout follows no definite pattern.



The village chief's house is the biggest one and centrally located in one of the rows of the street.



Of the three types of houses, the Mahad Dien and Dandual Dien are rectangular and square in ground plan and Chendi Dien is a circular shape house with a conical roof. Except the latter, the other two types of houses have verandah in the front.

The houses are made of stone and mud walls and roofs are thatched with a type of wild grass, locally known as piri.







Every house has a loft, made of sal poles and planks. The main and central pole, which supports the roof is auspicious one and ritually installed first before construction of the house.

The bigger room is provided with a hearth, a grain grinder, called jaata fixed to the ground and hole used for husking grains. A small portion of the house is set apart for the kitchen. Grains, utensils and agricultural implements are stored in it.





# Food

**M**andia pej, usually taken in day time, is staple food of the Gadaba. They eat boiled rice with pulses and mango and tamarind chutney in the evening. They also consume roots, soft bamboo shoots and jackfruit as vegetables. Meat, fish and chicken are consumed on the festive occasions. Gadaba women drink, men drink heavily and both drink in festive occasions, but not always. Landa (rice-bear) is their popular drink. They know the art of distilling mahua and gur spirit, and also they drink them.

Food is prepared ritually by the Sisa, the principal menu consists of rice and buffalo meat curry.

Women and children together take food in a joyous mood in the community feast arranged on the eve of Gotar Parab.







# Drinks & Smoke



In almost all the rituals the Gadaba women prepare traditional beverages, pendum, out of rice and millets and men as well as women consume and enjoy it

Gadaba men climb up the salap tree and collect its juice, which is also their favourite drink.



The Gadaba manufacture the country cheroot out of powder of dried tobacco leaf rolled in dry sal leaf and dhuan patra. Both men and women smoke and relax.







# Livelihood



The Gadabas pursue agro-forest based activities. It is supplemented by pastoral and fishing activities. Also they do wage earning.

They practise Swidden cultivation and produce pulses and minor millets from the high land.

Rice cultivation in low land is the mainstay of the Gadaba. Swidden cultivation is shrinking. Under the settled cultivation land terracing and rain and spring water management are done by the Gadaba progressive farmers.







The produce, like paddy, pulses from the field is mainly carried by shoulder with help of pole and slings and baskets.

Besides pumpkins in the backyard in rainy season are grown, Jackfruit and mango trees in villages produce green effect. Vegetables and fruits are also grown during summer and they partly consumed and partly sold.

Minor forest produce, like roots, tubers, mushrooms and green leaves are collected from the forests for household consumption and sale. Before sale or consumption, they semi-process some goods collected from the forests.







The forests, close to villages, are the hospitable host for pastoral activities. Goats and cattle are usually reared.

Hunting is a sport of the Gadaba. The hunting expedition continues for a month amidst celebration of the Chaita Parab. The useless hunters are subjected to face humiliation of the women folk. So the hunters try their best to catch any of the games.

The rivers and streams, adjoining to villages make them possible to catch fish for food, and also fishing is a death ritual compulsion.







Depletion of forest resource pushes them to adopt fuel wood cutting and and selling and that causes further wanton of forest.

Hill-broom making generates additional income to them.







Barter and money goes side by side. The barter system, direct exchange of goods against goods, is in vogue in villages. But there is circulation of money in the weekly market as the medium of exchange.







# Social life



The Gadaba has social divisions, like Bodo or Gutab Gadaba, Sano or Parenga Gadaba, Ollar Gadaba, Jurumu Gadaba, Kapu Gadaba and Kalanji Gadaba. Each section is different from the other on some customs and manners. Socially the Bodo Gadabas enjoy the highest position and the Kalanji Gadaba, the lowest. Enliven social institutions, like clan, family, and rites of passages form the social life of the Gadaba.



Their society comprises different exogamous and totemistic clans, namely

Khora (Sun), Nag/Hontal (Cobra), Bag/Khilllo (Tiger), Illij/Bhalu (Bear), Gid (Vultur), kira (Parrot), etc. They prefer nuclear family. The family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patripotestal. The Gadaba social life is full of life-cycle rituals - birth, puberty, marriage, death.







Disari, the priest, examines the 'Panji' and predicts the child delivery time. After delivery, the mother is secluded for 7 days and then the Disari, performs a puja by offering goat to the god and ritually identifies the rebirth of the ancestor. From carrying to caring, the expectant/nursing mothers in particular, observe food restrictions, taboos and rituals for ensuring safe motherhood and child hood.

After puberty, the Gadaba girls marry. Before marriage, they go to shrine along with the Sisa, the priest. They pray for blessings of Thakurani, the village deity for the future safety, security and smooth life.







# Marriage



The Gadaba follow the rule of endogamy, marriage within the tribe and exogamy, i.e., outside the sept/clan. The ways of acquiring mate, institutionalized through marriage, are of different types, such as (1) arranged marriage, (2) marriage by ceremonial capture, (3) love marriage. (4) Gharjamai marriage and (5) marriage by service. The most prestigious and common form of marriage is through negotiation. The bride-price is paid in shape of cash and kind including animals, wines, food grains etc. The Disari officiates in the marriage ceremony. Polygyny, remarriage of widow/widower and divorce is permitted by the village council.







At times, a person in trouble marries the spirit/ghost, which is called bat vivha, and officiated by Sisa at the outskirts of the village.



Payment of bride price in cash and kind in marriage and remarriage of widows explain the status of women in the society. The groom presents cash or kinds to the bride's family. The ritual is observed amidst dance and feast.







# Death Ritual / Mortuary Rites



The Gadaba mourn and treat the corpse with oil and turmeric pastes, give a ritual bath, dress it in new cloth and prepare for the funeral. The Gadaba dispose of the corpse either by burying in case of unnatural/ premature death or cremate in natural death. As aftermath of death they observe three rituals, like Machapani, Dasa and Gotar. The ritual of Machapani Kasapita is observed after 3 days of the death. On this ritual the Sorubhai catches small fishes from the nearby stream and cook them with rice and carry the food and personal belongings of the deceased to the cremation ground and offer there to appease and make the spirit free from lands and loans. A kasa, mixture of jamun and

mango cuticles is sprinkled over the roof to ward off evils. To end the pollution period Dasa is performed on the first

Wednesday/Friday after 10th day of the death by offering food and sacrifice of chicken. The Sisa cooks food at the portico of the bereaved family and offers it to the deceased's spirit to make clan members ritually clean. On this day, a feast is arranged in deceased's house in which the pal-bearers and kinsmen participate. In case of unnatural death, the ritual ends with Machapani Kasapita.







Gotar Celebration is the final death ritual of the Gadaba that helps move the Duma, spirit of the ancestor, up to the realm of salvation. It is the cherished goal of a Gadaba to observe Gotar with the sacrifice of large number of buffaloes. The Gotar is observed in the month of January-February to purify the souls of the Dumas of the families belonging to a clan collectively for the death for all persons over a period of 10-15 years. Gotar is held at Gotar Manda/Poda Manda, a fixed place for the ritual. It continues for three days. In the second day stones are added to the Sadar Manda. For each Duma a minimum of one buffalo corresponding to the age, sex, colour and vigour of the deceased is offered in the Gotar ceremony. The buffalo is tied at the Manda and a stroke is given at its stomach by



an axe. Then the crowd, excluding the deceased family members, rushes and tears away the spilling liver and intestines of the buffalo. The Disari officiates in the ritual. A memorial grand feast is given to all participated for the purpose. Rice, dal and meat with pendum is served along with singing and dancing. The family members of Gadaba celebrating Gotar feels proud like the King of Jeypore feels for the splendour of celebrating Daseraha.







# Religious Life



The spiritual world of the Gadaba encompasses natural as well as supernatural objects. At household level it begins with the Daran Delli, deity which is enshrined at a sacred pillar near the hearth inside the inner room. It is ritually installed at the time of laying foundation of the house to protect the family from all evils and grace prosperity, happiness and good life.

They worship many Gods and Goddesses. The chief of them is called Thakurani (Jhankar). She is enshrined at the outskirts of the village to protect the entire village and the villagers against intrusion of evil spirits. The Goddess, Thakurani is represented by slabs of stone and is worshipped by the Disari. The place of worship is known as the Hundi.

Beyond the village territory reside the spirits of nature, forests, hills, streams, rains, including the god of animals, especially the Bagha Duma (tiger spirit). Besides, they worship clan Gods on different occasions. They also believe in benevolent, malevolent and ambivalent ghosts and spirits. To them, the Duma, evil spirit, causes diseases and calamities. So they have belief in magic and witch-craft and take the help of Disari/Sisa for magical treatment to cure from illness.





# Aesthetic Efflorescence



Gadabas are fond of dance and music. Their famous Dhemsha dance is performed by women wearing their Kerang clothes. The male folk play musical instruments while women dance in semi-circles with steps three and four which gradually change to eight. The body is often bent forward showing skillful moves on the heels. Their musical instruments consist of big drums, tamudibaja, madal, flutes, tamak and mahuri. They are also very fond of music. They compose their own folk-songs specific to occasions and sing these songs while dancing.







The art of spinning threads, dying them and weaving textiles by the traditional loom is a reflection of the aesthetic life of the Gadaba. The Gadaba colourful cotton cloth used by the females is manufactured at home by women. These cloths are made with a fiber of a plant, locally known as kerenga, which is found in the local forest. Gadaba men collect the kerenga fiber from the forest. Then kerenga fiber is dried and dyed blue and reddish-brown.

The threads are made of the colour fibre and they are so woven that broad stripes of red, blue and white come alternately to make the cloth. The border of the cloth is white. The women garment looks nice and attractive when it is used.







# Fairs and Festivals



The Gadabas observe annual festivals, like Chaita Parab, Asadhi/Gandisa Parab, Bandapana/Jamnua Parab, Dashera, Dewali and Pushya Parab. The Chaita, Bandapana Parab and Pushya Parab are communal festivals. Their main festival is Chaita Parab. It continues for a month through celebrations and hunting. On the occasion, the unsuccessful hunters face humiliation of the women folk.







The Banadapana Parab is observed for a week in which fowls are sacrificed before the deity for bumper crop. The Pushya Parab is a post-harvest cultural event in which they sacrifice hen, goats on the footpath and give food to the pet animals. The Gadaba celebrate these festivals with the most care, sincerity and devotion.

All these festivals are not very expensive, requiring only fowl, coconut, turmeric powder, rice, flowers and leaf cups and these are celebrated with great joy and happiness and enjoyment of communal feasts amidst drinking and dance for days together.

All the spirits and deities are worshipped on important festivals of the Gadaba, like Bandapana parab, Dasahara parab. Pusha parab and Chait parb







# Traditional Village Council



**S**adar, the open air village sacred platform, is centrally built around a big tree by the side of the main road of the village, preferably in front of the headman's house. Round the foot of the tree the platform is made with stones. The stone platform is roughly circular and made of horizontal slabs with vertical ones interspersed with them. This is the seat for the leaders of the village to hold court to settle disputes in as per customary law. During festive occasions also the Gadaba gather here to enjoy the drink and dance. All important decisions on the social, political and religious issues of the Gadaba that govern their life style are taken up here. This institution operates from here and ensures implementation of all the decisions as well.





Gadabas have their own way of managing internal affairs of the village through their traditional political organization, which plays a vital role in strengthening village solidarity and cooperation. Every village has its own traditional Panchayat headed by Naik, the secular headman. He is assisted by a Challan, the attendant and a messenger, called Barik. The Barik belongs to Domb caste who communicates all matters meant for the villagers and acts as a messenger to the individual families. The function of the Challan is to assist the Naik in holding the village meetings, besides entertaining guests, outsiders, government officials who visit the village.



The village council holds its meeting in regular intervals and decides intra-village disputes and such other matters as breach of social laws, etc. The village meeting is held at a central place called Sadar. The posts of Naik and Challan are hereditary and the rule of primogeniture regulates succession. But the Barik is selected from time to time by the village elders. The village priest Disari, officiates in all worships in the village. Besides, he also acts as a medicine-man-cum-astrologer. And all of them are the respected members of the village council.

After the introduction of PESA Act there is co-existence of both the systems, the Sadar and PRI in the Gadaba villages. It may be stated here concisely that consequent upon the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the traditional system is declining and elected peoples' representatives have assumed their roles with 30 per cent reservation for women. However, both the systems co-exist in cooperation rather than contradiction.







# Persistence and Change



Intervention of tribal development programmes is a boon for the Gadaba. The housing colony, constructed and developed, following the traditional pattern, successfully provides shelter and safe drinking water to the houseless Gadaba people. Large scale horticulture development programmes including development of mango and other fruit bearing tree plantations in degraded forests and vegetable demonstration at the foothills through ITDA interventions has brought forth change and development in agro-horticultural activities of the Gadaba and show them a new avenue of generating income and employment.







Skill up- gradation and value addition to MFPs through the group mode efforts of Missan Sakti movement helps promote women SHGs resulting in the empowerment and self reliance of women folk. In spite of planned development intervention and impact of modernization the Gadaba still preserve their rich cultural heritage.



Establishment of Residential Ashram Schools and opening of girl's hostels have played a commending role in bringing educational advancement among the Gadaba. Free education to girls and boys are imparted in these schools.

Setting up of Ekalavya Model School in the area has widened the scope of higher education for the Gadaba students. The extension of vocational education at these schools would help ensure the avenue of self employment and income generation among the students after schooling.







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