

# DHARUA



**Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research  
and Training Institute  
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# FOREWORD

Odisha is well known for its colourful tribes. SCSTRTI has undertaken an earnest endeavour for publication of Photo Hand Books on the tribal communities of the State, depicting their photographic ethnography in a short popular form to show the glimpses of pristine tribal cultures manifested in their indigenous way of life as well as their changing life style in modern times.

The Dharua is a little known tribe of the State, mainly concentrated in Malkangiri, Koraput and Nawrangpur districts and sparsely distributed in Bolangir, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Mayurbhanj, Baragarh and Balasore districts. It is a Gondid tribe and is also known as Naik Gond or Dhur Gond and locally as Durua. Ethnologically, the Dharua has been assumed to have been derived from *dhara*, meaning to catch, as their traditional occupation is to catch reptiles, birds and wild games from the forest. According to their annals they were military retainers of the former feudal chief of Bamanghati and after their defeat in Tentaposi war they fled to Singhbhum. They claim Bastar as their original home land.

The Dharua is divided into two groups such as *bara* and *chot* on the basis of the purity of descent. They are a Dravidian speaking tribe whose mother tongue is *parji*. They are bilingual as they speak the local lingua-franca *desia* (Odia) and *telugu* for intergroup communication. As per 2011 census their population in Odisha is 18,151 and level of literacy 31.39%.

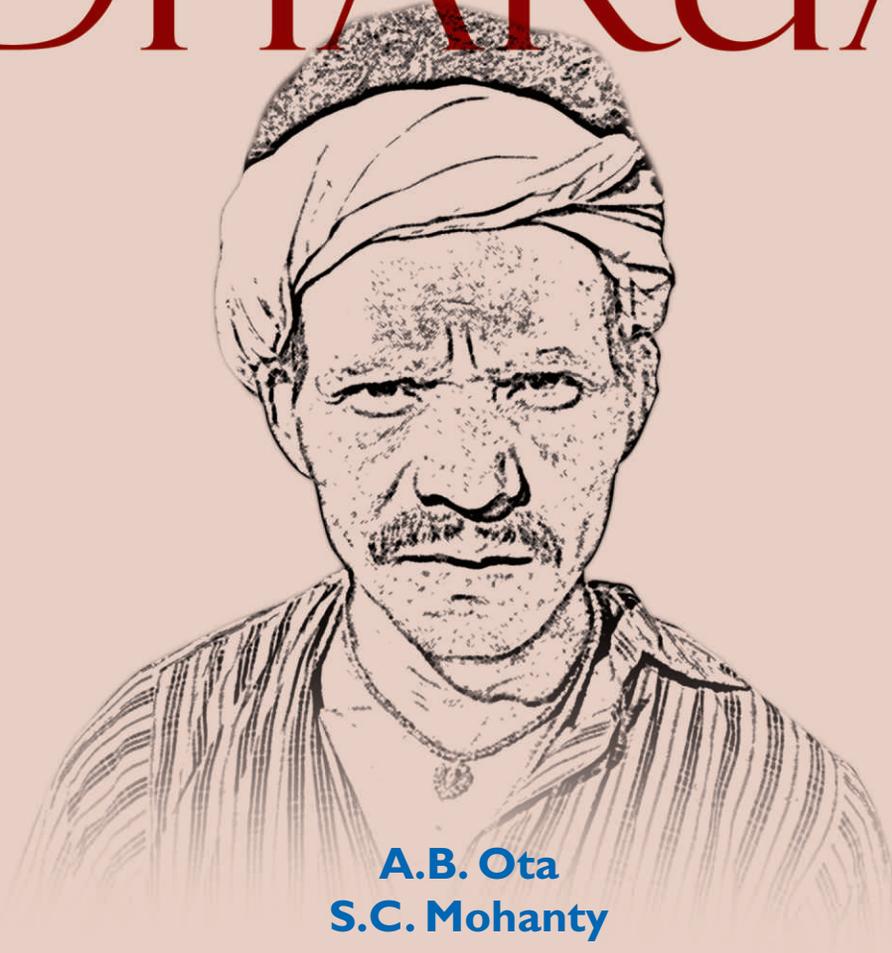
Cultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy, supplemented by allied pursuits such as wage earning, forest collection, animal husbandry, small business, *khali* stitching, rope making, snake charming, etc. They are non-vegetarians and relish pork but abstain from taking beef. They follow the rule of patrilocal residence after marriage and patrilineal rule of descent.

The Dharua profess their autonomous tribal religion of animism with admixture of Hinduism. They are polytheists and their pantheon includes a number of tribal deities and Hindu deities i.e., Jagannath, Laxmi, Mahadev, Kali, Durga, Sitala and Manasa etc. They have their own highly organized traditional community council headed by the *Sardar*. It adjudicates cases pertaining to their customary affairs and delivers its final verdict.

This illustrative book on the colourful tribe Dharua will be helpful to researchers, academicians, students and general public. I am thankful to Prof. (Dr.) A. B. Ota, Director and Shri S.C. Mohanty (OSD), who have painstakingly conceived, designed and produced this colourful photo handbook.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary  
ST. & SC. Development Department  
Govt. of Odisha

# DHARUA



**A.B. Ota**  
**S.C. Mohanty**

Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute,  
C.R.P. Square, Bhubaneswar

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# IDENTITY

The Dharua or Dharua Gond is an endogamous section of the great Gond tribe of Central India. They are one of the oldest tribes of Odisha locally called Durua and are found in different districts of the state. The tribe is mainly concentrated in Malkangiri, Koraput, Nowrangpur districts and are sparsely distributed in Bolangir, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Mayurbhanj, Baragarh and Balasore districts of the State.

Early ethnographer like Dalton (1872:267) stated “In the Singhbhum district there are many colonies of Gonds, but they are there styled Dorowas”. Sir H.H. Risley (1891) has mentioned, “Dharoa, Dharua, a sub caste of Gonds, usually employed in washing gold from the sands of the rivers in Chota Nagpur”. R.V. Russell and Hiralal (1916) mentioned the community as Dhur Gond. According to K.S. Singh (1994), Dharua is one among several groups of the Gond and they are referred to as Dharua in Bihar. They are also known as Naik Gond. The other names conferred on them by their neighbours are Rawanvansi which means the offshoots of Rawan - the puranic demon king of Srilanka and the opponent of Lord Rama. The tribe is also found in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh as well as former Madras Presidency and Central Provinces in India.



The term Dharua has been derived from *dhur* meaning dust for which the community is regarded as a discrete group among the Gondid tribes. Etymologically, the term *dharua* has been assumed to be derived from the word *dhara* meaning to catch, as the community's traditional occupation is to catch snakes, reptiles, birds and small games from forest. Another view holds that *dharua* means one who come en-masse (*dhara*) from a distant place to take refuge in their new settlement. It corroborates Dalton's (1872) account that Dharua were military retainers of Bamanghati feudal chief Nagendra Mahapatra

and during Tentaposi war, he was defeated by the then king of Mayurbhanj after which the Dharuas left their original home land and fled to Singhbhum area and settled there.

The Dharua is an endogamous tribe and divided into two groups such as *bara* and *chota* among whom the former is ranked higher and the later, lower in social order of their society and inter marriage between them is strictly prohibited as the former consider themselves of pure descent and the latter, as illegitimate off springs. The Dharua are a migratory community and have immigrated to Odisha during the past from Bastar of Madhya Pradesh (now Chhattisgarh) which they claim as their original homeland.



Dharua are multilingual. Their mother tongue is *Parji*, a central non-literally Dravidian dialect. They are well versed with the local *lingua franca*, Odia, but, also speak Hindi, Telugu, Kudumali and use Odia, Hindi or Telugu scripts for intergroup communication.

In Odisha, Dharua population as per 2011 census is 18,151; out of which, male population is 8875 and female, 9276. Their literacy rate is 31.39%. Among them 40.51% of males and 22.75% of females are literates. Their sex ratio is 1045 females per 1000 males.



## Personal Appearance

Their body colour varies from light brown to dark brown. They possess medium height, long and narrow shaped head with marked cheek bones, prominent chin and broad nasal septum, obliquely set small eyes, large mouths with protuberant lips, well developed chest with massive shoulders, coarse and curly black hair, scanty beards and moustache.

In older days, Dharua lived an isolated life due to communication gap and their ignorance about the changing world. In those days the Dharua males were wearing only a short piece of loincloth (*langoti*) around their waist tied to a cotton thread to conceal their genitals leaving the upper parts fully uncovered. Their females were wearing short coarse *sarees* made of *kereng* fiber or purchased from local weavers in the weekly markets, which barely covered their body up to the knee. Little children below eight years of age were fully naked.



Tattooing was regarded as a trend of beautification in old days and Dharua women loved to make beautiful tattoo emblems such as flowers, *jhoti* marks, peacock, sun, stars, creeper, ladder, dots, tiger, snake, moon etc. on their hands, chest, face and legs done by an experienced woman belonging to Ghogia community, in exchange of food grains, in order to enhance their beauty and charms. But, now-a-days the young girls have abandoned this fashion.

At present the Dharua have been influenced by modernity and to cope up with the changing time, their dress pattern has changed, but have no exclusiveness in it as they wear very simple dresses. Male dresses constitute hand woven short dhoti which covers up to their knee only and a *gamcha* or towel on their shoulder. Some of them wear *lungi*, pant, shirt and banyan. Females wear coloured *saree*, and printed *saya* and blouse. Poor and aged women wear only *saree* devoid of any under garments.

Dharua women are fond of adorning themselves with varieties of ornaments in order to look beautiful and charming. For adorning themselves their women wear *jhuntia* (toe rings) on their leg fingers and *pailu*, *paijania* and *bala* on their ankle, antadar as their waist chain, *pailu*, *bandaria*, *katuria*, *kalturi* and *gajul* on their wrists, *khagala* and *tad* on their arms, *ganthia*, *luli*, *hirabauli* and *julupi* on their ear lobes and *nadia*, *julupi* and

*jhallaka* on their ear helix, *dandi*, *asguna* and nose rings in their nasal *septum*, *khagala*, *kiprimali*, *kangan*, *dhanmali*, *nan*, *kaliyamali*, *sadhasora*, *gunjumali* and various bead necklaces on their neck. They use *khosajka* and *dimsuja* on their hair bun and *chipna* in their hair as hair clip. They also decorate their bun with wild blossoms to look attractive. Women also wear various coloured glass or plastic bangles on their wrists. Their ornaments are made of silver, brass, copper or gold. Women of well-to-do families use gold ornaments.



# SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSING



Dharua habitat is located amidst the konda kamberu mountainous ranges of the great Eastern *Ghat* region with amazing landscapes and picturesque topography. Its climatic condition is characterized by average rainfall and mild humidity. They generally dwell near hill slopes or foot hills where the perennial hill streams provide them drinking water throughout the year and they can channel its flow to their crop fields for irrigation purposes. Their village deities- *Gramshiri*, *Gaishiri* and *Garam* are shrined at the village outskirts under the sacred grove called *garamthan* who are worshipped by their traditional priest, Dehuri.

Dharua settlements are exclusively homogenous. Where they reside in multiethnic settlements,

they dwell in a separate ward maintaining their cultural identity and keeping distance from other ethnic groups. Individual houses are arranged in linear pattern in parallel rows in their settlement, leaving a wide space in between as the village street. Their houses are always low roofed and have no window for ventilation and are built with mud walls and thatched with *piri* grass or country tile- *naria* having wide verandahs both in the front and rear sides which are generally higher than the plinth of the house and are used as sitting place during recreational hours and are also used to provide accommodation to their guests during night. The walls of the house are clearly polished by their females using red or white clay and the floor is polished by black clay mixed with cow dung.

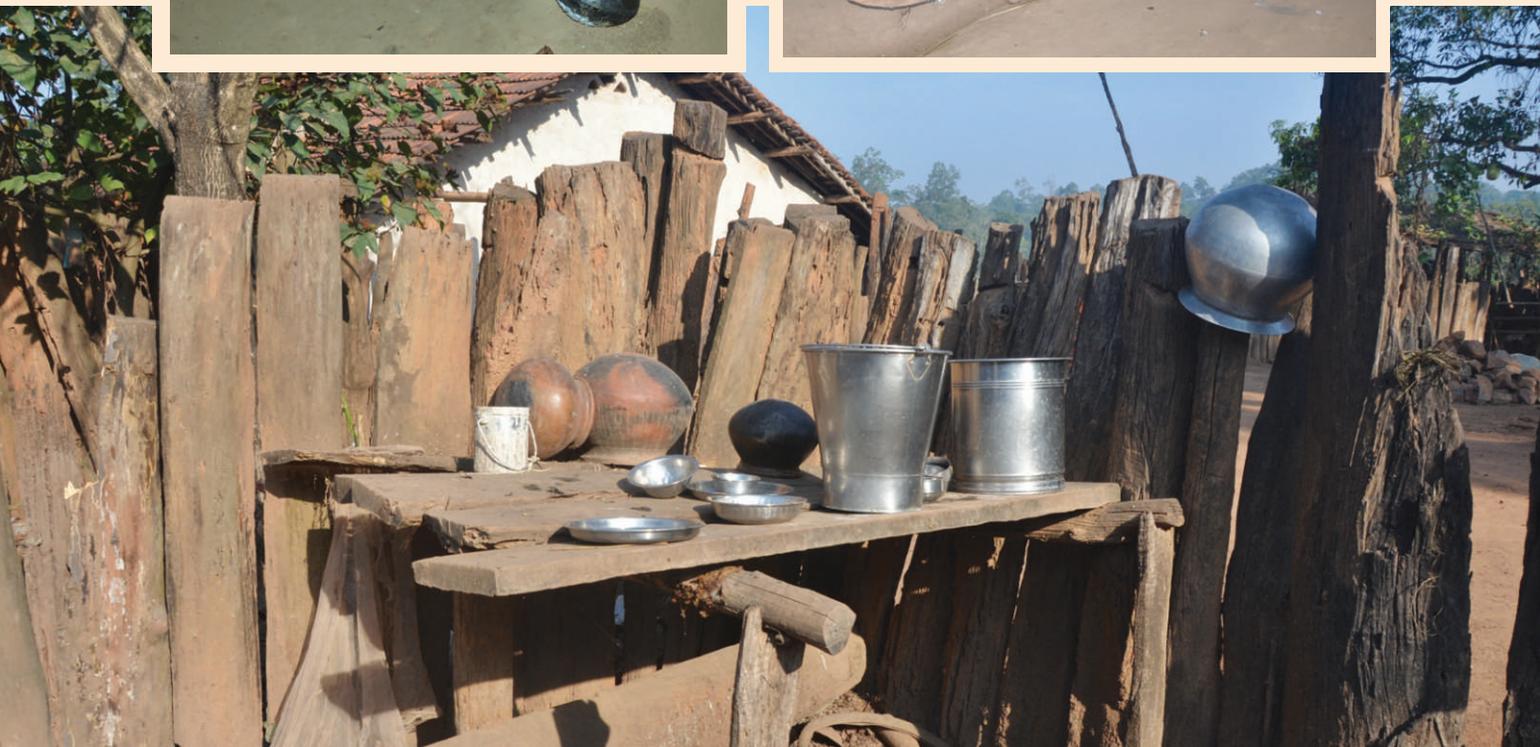




Their houses consist of two rooms out of which, the bigger one is used as living room and to store their crops and the smaller one is used as kitchen. They install their household deity *istipal* in the north east corner of their kitchen. They also construct a separate small enclosure in their rear verandah which is used to provide shelter to their women during attainment of menarche. Another shed is constructed in backside of their house to accommodate their livestock.

They possess limited household assets consisting of some aluminum plates and pots, earthen wares and gourd vessels which they keep near the hearth in the kitchen. Their agricultural implements such as ploughs, levelers, hoes, yokes, sickles, pickaxes etc. are kept on their front verandah. They keep their hunting weapons i.e. bows, arrows, spears, traps and axes etc on walls of the living room. They hang their clothes on a bamboo pole, both ends of which hang from the ceiling tied by strings. They also keep seeds of varieties of crops they raise in their crop fields in different seed storage bins specially prepared, using straws, in their living room.





# LIVELIHOOD

Dharua are primarily settled agriculturists. Settled cultivation as well as shifting cultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy. Many among them are landless or marginal farmers, who practice share cropping. In order to supplement their income, they take up other pursuits such as wage earning, collection of minor forest produce, animal husbandry, leaf plate (*khali*) stitching, rope making, petty business, hunting, fishing and snake charming etc.

During lean seasons, some of them migrate to distant places to earn wages as labourers in private sectors or to work in tea gardens of Assam.

Paddy is their major crop, which they raise in their wet lands. In their uplands they grow varieties of cereals like, *ragi*, *bajra*, *janna*, *suan*, *kosla*, *kangu*, maize, pulses i.e., *biri*, *kulthi*, *kandul* and oil seeds such as alsi, mustard and tila etc. Adjacent to their house, they raise small kitchen gardens where

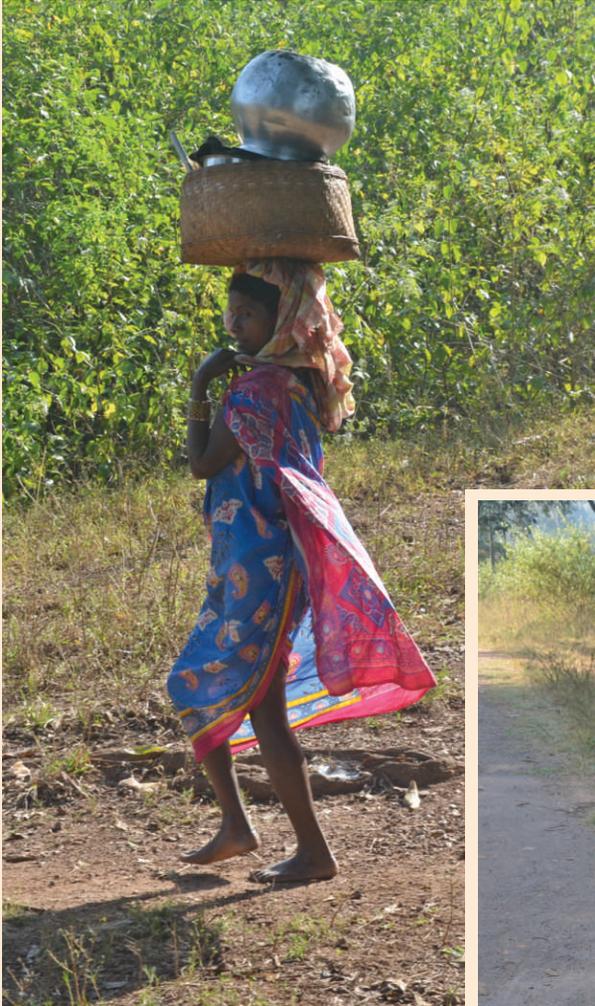




they grow varieties of seasonal vegetables like, brinjal, banana, ladies' finger, papaya, drumstick, pumpkin, gourd, water gourd, radish, melon, tomato, cauliflower, cabbages, beans, peas, seasum etc to meet their consumption needs and to sell the surplus for cash in their nearest market. In their upland they also cultivate lemon grass and *sabai* grass. They sell the lemon grass to traders who extract oil from it and from the dry *sabai* grass they make ropes to sell in the market for cash.



The Dharua women contribute substantially to the family income by participating in different pursuits such as cultivation, wage earning, forest collection, *khali* stitching etc. besides their daily routine household chores. Now-a-days, they have given up hunting due to forest laws.



## Food and Drinks:

The Dharua are non-vegetarians. Their staple cereal is rice and ragi. Besides that, they also consume minor millets such as *kangu*, *suan*, *janna*, *khetjanna*, *gurji*, maize etc. and during lean season they manage with varieties of tubers such as *ranikanda*, *pitakanda*, *langalkanda*, and gruel of bamboo shoots, mango kernels, tamarind seed powder, sago-palm powder, (*salap gund*) and seasonal fruits, flowers and green leaves collected from forest.

They relish on mutton, chicken, eggs, fish, dry fish, snail, frog lizard and pork but refrain from consuming beef as they consider it as an unclean food. They do not take milk or its products. Niger and mohua oil is used as cooking medium.

Both male and female are addicted to alcoholic drinks such as *mohua* liquor (*mohuli pendum*), *ragi* liquor (*kusuna*), rice beer (*handia/pachi*) and sago palm juice (*salap*). They also use it to entertain their guests and relatives during feasts and festivals and also use it in religious purposes, as offering to appease their deities and spirits during observances of rituals, purchasing it from the local vendors. They smoke hand rolled cheroot, *pikka / bidi* and chew tobacco paste (*gurakhu*).



# SOCIAL LIFE

Dharua is a discrete group of Gond which subsequently became an endogamous division and divided into two social sections such as *bada* and *chota* in the order of their descent. The former one is regarded hierarchically superior and the latter, as the illegitimate off springs of the *bada dharua* and hence, ranked lower in their social hierarchy.

They are further divided into a number of lineages (*gusthi*) such as *badi*, *bhat*, *behari*, *jhingira*, *matha* etc. which are descended from various exogamous clans/septs (*gotara*) like *bagh* (tiger), *nag* (cobra) *kachima* (tortoise), *hati* (elephant), *tentuli nag* (a species of cobra) and *kahan* (fish) etc. to regulate their matrimonial alliances. Their clan totems are *sodi* (tiger), *behainsa* (buffalo), *netam* (dog), *chamchidai* (bat), markam (mango tree), *teakam* (teak tree), *irpachi* (mahua tree), *tumrachi*



(*tendu tree*), *warkara* (wild cat), *nabalia* (dwarf date palm tree), *uika* (saj tree), *kunjan* (rat) *gajjami* (arrow), *kusadya* (tasar cocoon), *kokkpath* (bhilwa fruit), *jagalya* (awakener), *sariyam* (a path), *guddam* (where the hen lays eggs), *admachi* (dhaura tree), *sarati* (a whip), *suibadiwa* (a porcupine), *watka* (a stone), *tumdan* (gourd), *etikumra* (goat), *akke* (river bank), *tirgam* (fire), and *paira* (pigeon) etc. Their septs are too numerous to be remembered. Since old days, classification of their clans (*gusthi*)

according to number of deities they worship has been diminished for their inconvenience due to paucity of members for which they enrolled in larger group with lineage system afterwards to strengthen their solidarity.

They protect their clan totemic objects they do not kill or hurt them but do not revere them or observe any rituals in their honour. They use *naik*, *ray*, *singh*, *babu*, *pandiya*, *pradhan* etc. after their first name, as their surname.

### Family:

Family is predominantly nuclear, consisting of parents with their unmarried children. They follow the rule of patri-local residence after marriage and patrilineal rule of descent. The eldest son succeeds the social position of his father. Inheritance of ancestral property follows the rule of equigeniture in male line only. If the family has no male successor, the married daughters inherit the parental property. Issueless families may adopt a male child from their nearest patrilineage who may inherit their property and social position.



In their society kinship plays an important role to regulate their social behaviour, inheritance, succession, usages. Their kinship system is a vital network which extends both in paternal side and maternal sides. In this way a person is attached to all consanguines by descent and to all affines by marriage. Kinship strengthens their social integrity and solidarity. Joking relation prevails between grandparents and grand children, man and his elder brother's wife and wife's younger sister. Likewise, avoidance relation exists between mother-in-law and her son-in-law, father in law and his son's wife and a man and his younger brother's wife. Kin members help each other at the time of distress on co-operative basis especially during agricultural operations, payment of huge bride price, observance of rituals and festivals and at the time of social conflicts.



# LIFE CYCLE :

## Pregnancy, Child Birth and After wards

Stoppage of monthly periods of a married woman is considered as the symbol of pregnancy. Dharua consider pregnancy of a woman as the blessings of the supernaturals and therefore celebrate it as a joyous event in the family. They believe that some ancestor might take birth in their family. Further, they think that the arrival of a new member in the family will add an extra working hand.

The pregnant woman has to observe certain customary prohibitions regarding her food and movements for the well being of herself, the foetus in her womb and for safe delivery of the baby. She is tabooed to relish the flesh of ritually sacrificed



animals, to take alcoholic drinks, to cross the river, to sleep alone in night, to touch the corpse, to travel alone in forest, to visit cremation ground and to expose herself during lunar or solar eclipses etc. She continues her routine household chores till her labour pain begins.

They observe the pre-delivery ritual (*sadha bhakshan*) on the seventh month of pregnancy in which the expectant mother is provided with delicious food items according to her wishes by her paternal family first and then by her relatives and clan members.

Delivery takes place in husband's house. At the time of child birth the pregnant woman is confined in an enclosure that is used as lying in chamber. No foods are provided to her after start

of her labour pain. They engage an experienced midwife (*dhai budi / sutrani*) belonging to Ghasi or Hadi community to assist the expectant mother for easy and safe delivery of the baby and some elderly women help her. If the mother suffers from acute pain and the delivery is delayed, they call their traditional witch doctor-cum-medicine man, and he, after chanting some magical spells, administers some indigenous herbal medicines for easy delivery of the child. The midwife cuts the umbilical cord using a knife and the placenta is buried in a pit at the backyard of the house kept in an earthen pot covered by a lid to avert ill omens by evil spirits. The mother and the baby are given bath in tepid water after which the nuptial fire (*antur*) is ignited in the lying-in-room to keep the mother and the new born baby warm and safe.

Birth pollution lasts for twenty one days. During this period the family and their consanguineal kins are tabooed to observe socio-religious rituals and festivals and participate in any communal feast.

The lactating mother is given boiled *kulthi* water for quick recovery from weakness. The post delivery rite (*sathi*) is observed on the sixth day conducted by their traditional midwife and the new born baby is given a name, applying grain divination method by their astrologer. After that, the *antur* is extinguished. The second purificatory rite *narta* is observed on the ninth day and the lineage members become pollution free. The final purificatory rite *ekusia* is observed on the twenty first day and the child and mother take purificatory bath anointing turmeric paste and castor oil. The house is cleaned using clay mixed

with cow dung paste and the mother is allowed to resume her routine household chores including cooking food for the family. In the evening the family hosts a non vegetarian feast with country liquor to the lineage members.

They observe the tonsure ceremony (*balutrani*) when the child attains six months of age and ear piercing (*kanbida*) and nose piercing (*nakbida*), after one year. An experienced man proficient in this work is engaged to pierce the ear lobes and nasal septum of the baby using a new needle and after piercing he applies castor oil and turmeric paste for healing of the injuries. They also observe first cereal feeding (*subhabhat*) rite after the baby attaining one year of age.



## Puberty Rite

Dharua observe puberty rite for pubescent girls on attainment of their first menarche. The girl is secluded in a separate enclosure for a period of seven days. During this period she is attended by her mother or sister-in-law. At this time she is tabooed to perform any household chores or to look or be looked at by any male members or to participate in any rituals or festivals. On the dawn of the eighth day, she takes purificatory bath in the nearest hill stream or pond, being accompanied by her girl companions and disposes of her unclean clothes there and wears new dresses presented by her family. Her maternal uncle presents her new dresses and cosmetics, when she returns home. In the night her family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to lineage members and relatives along with country liquor.



## Marriage

In Dharua society, adult marriage and monogamy is the norm. Dharua consider, marriage, arranged through negotiation (*sagur biha / gona parha*) as the ideal and prestigious mode of acquiring a spouse. The groom's father engages a mediator to arrange a suitable match. In their society, payment of bride price (*kaniapana*) is obligatory and is settled between both the parties during marriage negotiations. It is paid both in kinds and cash. It consists of three jars of country liquor (*mohuli*), cash around three hundred to five hundred rupees, some ornaments for the bride and five sarees. If the present is accepted by the bride's family, it is considered that the marriage is settled. They consult their traditional astrologer to fix an auspicious day for marriage.





The wedding rites are held in bride's residence. On the appointed day, the groom along with his parents, kinsfolk and villagers proceed to bride's village in a marriage procession, singing marriage songs with the tune of music provided by their musicians. On the way to the bride's village, if they notice bad omens i.e. a corpse, snake or fox etc. cross the way, the marriage is postponed but if they see good omens such as paddy, bamboo or vessel filled with water, they consider it as auspicious. To counteract the effects of bad omens, the bridegroom encircles three times around a mango tree and applies vermilion marks three times on the tree and the bride is made to marry a *mohua* tree.

A man from Jhingira lineage acts as their priest and conducts their wedding rites. The bride and groom are given ceremonial bath in turmeric water, dressed with marriage apparels and wear the marriage crown made with mango twigs. The groom wears sacred thread. Then they observe the *lagandin* rite. At the advent of the auspicious moment the priest unites the hands of the couple by sprinkling sacred water, uttering spells and the groom applies vermilion on the forehead of the bride (*sindurdan*). Then the couple encircles seven times round the marriage altar and the bride also encircles seven times round the groom, after which the groom puts an iron armlet on the hands of the bride.

Then they observe the *bandani* rite in which the guests, relatives present gifts to the newly wedded couple. After that they observe the *kadahandi* rite, which is regarded as a fun game and played by smearing mud to each other by those with whom they have joking relationship. Thereafter all of them go to the nearest hill stream and take bath. The bride's parents entertain the marriage party, lineage members and guests in a grand non-vegetarian feast with country liquor.

After marriage, the groom stays for a few days in bride's home and returns to his village with the bride in an auspicious moment as prescribed by the priest. They observe the *ghardiani* rite on a convenient day for the union of the newly married couple and on that day the marriage is consummated.

The other modes of marriages are by exchange (*badal*), by intrusion (*dhuka*), by service (*gharjuan*), by capture and by elopement. Junior sororate (*salibiha*),

junior levirate (*bhajrakha*) and remarriage of widow and widowers and divorcees (*sangabiha*) and cross cousin marriage are also allowed in their society.

Divorce is allowed in their society and either party can divorce his /her spouse on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, misbehavior, adultery, barrenness, impotency, alcoholism, suffering from incurable diseases, cruelty etc. After divorce the husband keeps the grown up children but the mother is allowed to keep the breast fed child and the husband provides her some amount of money for her maintenance (*kharpouse*).

### Death:

Demise of a member in the family is considered as a misfortune and the family members mourn for the beloved departed soul with deep sorrow. They generally practise cremation to dispose of their dead, but the corpse of unmarried person, pregnant women and children are buried. On occurrence of unnatural death such as by accident, suicide, by animal attack, snake bite, by murder and child birth etc. the corpse is disposed of in an isolated place in the forest as they believe that the soul of the deceased person might become an evil spirit and can cause harm to the villagers.

After death of a person the death news is communicated to all the villagers and relatives, by a special messenger and they congregate in the house of the deceased. The corpse is given a bath anointing turmeric paste. Wrapped in a new white cloth it is shifted to cremation ground for disposal by the pall bearers (*maradandia*) placed upon a bier

made of sal poles. The dead body is placed on the pyre, keeping its head towards north and face upwards. The eldest son of the deceased puts fire on the face and if they bury the dead, he throws the first fistful of earth on the pit. After the cremation/ burial, the pall bearers and the eldest son take bath in the hill stream and return home and offer fried rice and water in a leaf cup to the deceased soul after which they eat.

They observe death pollution (*chut*) for ten days. On the second day, they wash their house and throw away their used earthen wares. The mourning family does not cook on that day and members of *Jhingira* lineage supply food to that family. The eldest son conducts the mortuary rite. On the tenth day he brings a sal twig and plants it near a water source where the purificatory rite is held. Their lineage members act as barbers. The males cut the hair and moustache and females pair their nails after which they take the purificatory bath and return to the deceased's house. The bereaved family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to the lineage members and relatives along with country liquor. In the midnight *jhingira* males visit the cremation spot to collect the bones in a piece of cloth, keep it in the house of the deceased and then invite the departed soul to take its abode in that house and not to wander in forest. Then they bury it in the north east corner of house and spread rice flour over the floor. After examination of the spot if the flour is found intact, they believe that the soul has taken rebirth as an animal or bird. This rite marks the end of their death pollution. After one year they perform the annual *sradh* conducted by a low grade Brahman priest. They do not construct any monument in honour of the dead.

# RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Dharua profess their autonomous tribal religion of animism with admixture of few elements of Hinduism. They are polytheists and their pantheon includes a number deities associated with the natural objects like plants and animals.

They worship *istipal* as their household (ancestral) deity and *gramsiri* as their village deity. Goddess Garam is their supreme deity, installed in the sacred grove at the village outskirts along with his consort, *dulhadeo* worshipped by their traditional priest *dehri*. Other deities they worship are, *bara pahar*, *bura deo*, *bhairav buri*, *gaishiri*, *bhagat buri*, *ramkin*, *gajan*, *nangeswar*, and *dakin* etc.

Due to the impact of prolonged contact with the neighbouring castes, they have been influenced by Hindu traditions and beliefs and started to propitiate many Hindu deities and observe many Hindu rituals and festivals. Hindu deities they worship include Lord Jagannath, Laxmi,



Saraswati, Mahadev, Kali, Durga, Sitala and Manasa (serpent deity) etc. on festive occasions. They also observe many Hindu festivals such as *raja*, *gambha*, *sivagajan*, *sankranthi*, *jagaran*, *makar* (on paus), *rath yatra*, *durga puja*, *dola*, *holi*, etc. besides their own festivals i.e., *pus punei*, *badua*, *tusu*, *karam*, *naya khia*, (new eating of cereals after harvest) and *bandana* and *amnua* (first eating of mango during chaita) etc. Among the deities they propitiate some are benevolent and some are malevolent.





They believe in witchcraft and existence of ghosts and evil spirits, who cause diseases and sufferings to humans and animals. Dakin is an evil spirit. They gratify her by offering periodical oblations which includes sacrifice of animals, fowls, eggs along with country liquor (*mohuli*), rice beer (*handia*) and sago palm juice (*salap*) through their magico-religious specialist. They observe sacred thread wearing ceremony for boys on reaching adulthood or before the marriage. They also make pilgrimage to Puri, Bhubaneswar, Gupteswar and Baranasi.

Dharua possess rich oral tradition of folk songs, folk tales, riddles, proverbs and folk dances. Their folk songs include *jhumur geet*, *dari geet*, *karam geet*, *tusu geet*, *sarhul geet* and *urageet* which they sing during dances performed on festive occasions. They also sing *jhumur geet* during marriage procession and crops harvesting. Their pattern of dances is *chhau/chhau natua*, *jhumur/jhumura*, *dhemsa*, *lathi dudia* (stick dance) and *gottar* etc. They perform *lathi dudia* dance on the occasion of celebration of *pus parab* and *gottar* dance during communal hunting and *dhemsa* during marriage ceremony. *Dharua* women are expert in wall painting.



# SOCIAL CONTROL

Dharua possess, its own well organized traditional community council, both at the village level as well as at the regional level to handle their customary matters. Their village council is called *jati panchayat* and is headed by *babu* -the secular head who is assisted by *pandiya* - the executioner, *panipatar* - the sacerdotal head, *dehri* - the village priest. The *dakua* - messenger

hails from Dom community and appointed by nomination. He is paid for his service annually in kinds, which he has to collect from each and every household. Their regional council is headed by a chief called the *sardour* who is assisted by *babus* of all the component villages and the messenger *dakua*.







The council adjudicates cases pertaining to family disputes, theft, rape, adultery, incest, extra marital relationship, inter community marriage, divorce, partition of family property, inter and intra community rifts. It also organizes and looks after arrangement of their communal feasts and festivals.

Their traditional community council acts as the guardian of their traditional norms and customs and the office bearers are highly esteemed persons in their society. The council has powers to excommunicate a person found guilty of committing heinous crime and can readmit an ostracized person into the community after his due penance. The session of the council sits annually on the day of the *pus punei* or can be convened at an emergency.



# CHANGING SCENE



In the post independence era, the democratic State and its Welfare Government has launched many developmental programmes in order to uplift the socio-economic status of the backward tribes by implementing various income generating and infrastructure development schemes and building awareness to take the advantage of development programmes. With the passage of time the Dharua have acquired many cultural elements from their neighbouring communities by which noticeable progress has occurred in their material culture.





Government have established I.T.D.As in tribal pockets to provide developmental support in the field of agriculture, health and sanitation, education, communication, drinking water, irrigation, and housing etc. It has implemented many welfare programmes in various sectors for providing development support by various development agencies by way of construction of Anganwadi Centers, P.D.S Centers, housing facilities under I.A.Y and Mo Kudia Yojana, supply of electricity under Kutir Jyoti and Biju Gramya Yoti Yojana, vocational and orientation training to youth etc.

The implementation of PESA Act has helped them to take active part in village administration. Further, the introduction of mobile health units has provided them modern health care reducing their dependence on the traditional medicines practiced by their shamans, witch doctors for treatment of diseases. They are also been benefitted by the introduction of subsidy linked loan facilities at the time of need and are less dependent on private money lenders who exploit them by charging high rate of interest. Likewise the provision of marketing facilities to sell their agriculture produce and minor forest collections helped them to sell their goods at a fair price instead of falling prey to the greedy petty traders through their traditional barter system.

The ST and SC Development Department with the support of Ministry of Tribal affairs has established a Tribal Museum in the premises of SC and ST Research and Training Institute, located at CRPF square, Bhubaneswar for preservation and display of artifacts of various tribes of the State including the Dharua, that reflect the inherent richness and creative talent in their art and crafts. This institute also organizes National Tribal Craft Mela and National Dance Festival every year as well as live demo programmes routinely to expose their splendid culture to the world.

It is noticed at present that the impact of planned change and modernization gradually has its impact on the way of life of the Dharua tribe. Consequently, their age old traditional social institutions are declining. Yet they are struggling hard to retain the time tested elements of their pristine culture and thereby, preserve their cultural identity while trying their best to make the best of both the worlds.





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@SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

**Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute**

CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar - 751003

Web site-[scstrti.in](http://scstrti.in), Email- [scstrti@yahoo.co.in](mailto:scstrti@yahoo.co.in),

Telephone : 0674-2563649/2561635

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