



BHUNJIA

**Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
Research and Training Institute (SCSTRI)**

CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar-751003

PREFACE

Bhunjia is a small and little known tribe found in Nuapara, Kalahandi and Nowrangpur districts of western Odisha. They claim to be the autochthones of Sonabera plateau of Kalahandi district from where they have migrated to the neighbouring plains. The tribe is socially divided into two sections such as *Chuktia* - the highlanders and *Chinda* - the plains dwellers. They are said to be offshoots of three important tribes like Gond, Halba and Baiga and the *Chuktia* section is recognized as an illegitimate descent. Therefore the Chinda section claims a higher social position over the *Chuktias*. There is no restriction in marriage between Chuktia and *Chinda*, but in such cases a rite called *dudh-pani* is performed. They speak a dialect of Hindi which resembles the dialect of the Halbas. The Bhunjias in Odisha also speak a dialect that is a corrupt form of Odia, having ethno-linguistically affinity with Marathi.

One unique feature of their social system is the dual segmentary division anthropologically called moieties. Their two exogamous moiety divisions are named Netam and Markam. Each moiety is further subdivided into groups called Bargas and then into subgroups that regulate their marital alliances.

The most important cultural landmark of the Bhunjias and especially the Chuktia Bhunjias is their separate kitchen shed that they consider to be very sacred. Built a little away from other huts it is enclosed around to guard it from the touch of any outsider including their married daughter. If any outsider touches the kitchen shed, it is set on fire and razed down to the ground. Until a new shed is built, the food is cooked in a makeshift kitchen in an enclosed or open space.

Sunadei is their chief patron deity installed in a shrine in Sonabera village. Besides their Bargas have their respective patron deities worshipped routinely by their clan priests.

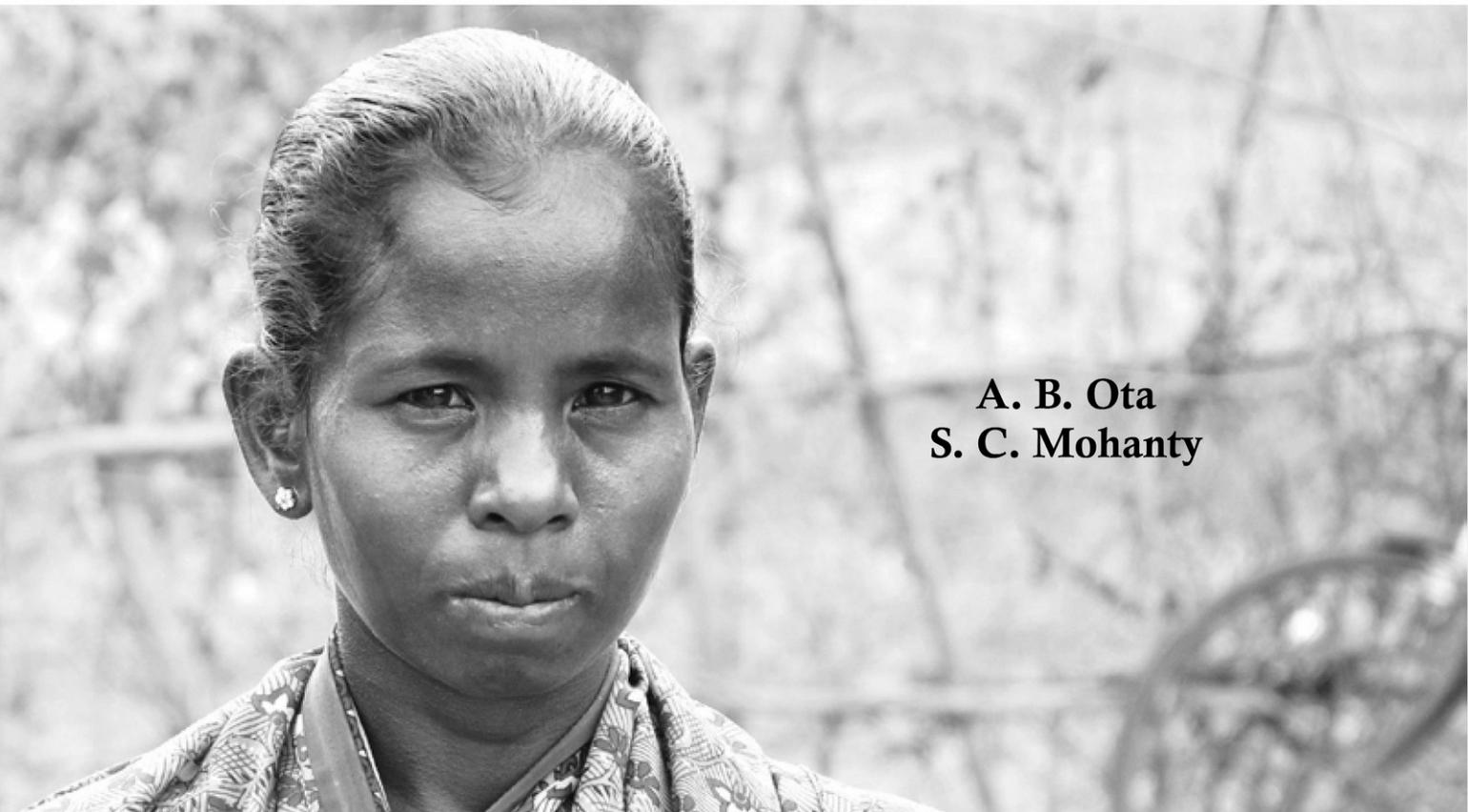
The subsistence of Bhunjia is derived from shifting and settled cultivation supplemented by animal husbandry, seasonal forest collections and wage earning. In the present times, due to multifarious development interventions noticeable changes have occurred in their way of life.

This photographic documentation of the life style of Bhunjia is a part of the series on Tribes of Odisha. Shri S.C. Mohanty, Consultant of SCSTRTI has provided inputs for preparing this colourful booklet. I thank him profusely and hope that it will be useful to all who are interested for knowing the tribal culture of Odisha.

Prof. (Dr). A.B. Ota

Advisor-cum-Director & Special Secretary

BHUNJIA



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IDENTITY

Odisha is homeland of sixty two tribal communities and the tribe Bhunjia is one among them. They are numerically a small and little known tribe and belong to Dravidian racial stock. They inhabit Koksara block of Kalahandi district, Boden, Khariar, Komna, Nuapada and Sinapalli blocks of Nuapada district and Chandahandi and Jharigaon blocks of Nawrangpur district in Odisha. They are also found in adjoining Raipur district of Chhatisgarh. Geographically their habitat forms the central part of the Dandakarany region located amidst hill ranges. They claim to be the autochthones of Sonabera plateau of Kalahandi district in western Odisha from where they have migrated to the plains of the neighbouring districts.

The tribe Bhunjia is socially divided into two sections such as Chaukhutia or Chuktia -the highlanders and Chinda - the plains dwellers. Among them the former has its legend of origin, which shows them as of mixed descent from Gond with Halba. According to Sir H.H Risley Birgia, Binjhia and Binjhwar are synonymous terms and Bhunjia may be another corruption of the same sort and the term Chinda Bhunjia has been derived from Binjhwars as they speak Hindi but not Gondi. Binjhwars are an offshoot of Baiga tribe. R.V. Russel and Hiralal opine that Chindas are probably descended from Baigas. Thus it is considered that the Bhunjias are offshoot of three important tribes like Gond, Halba and Baiga and the Chuktia section is recognized as an illegitimate descent.





The Chinda division of the Bhunjias is supposed to occupy higher social position and they have a saying "Chinda Raja, Bhunjia Paik. As the Chuktia are recognized to be of illegitimate descent they struggle hard to enhance their social status by observing strict rules of ritual purity. If a non-Chaukhutia touches the kitchen hut of a Chuktia, the hut is entirely abandoned and a new one is built.

The tribe is dichotomized into two exogamous moieties, Netam and Markam. Each moiety is sub-divided into a number of baragas. The Netam moiety has as many as ten baragas such as Barge, Barik, Bhoae, Bhanargadia, Chhatriya, Dabi, Dandasena, Disari, Naik and Barmat and each baraga has a specific designation. The Markam moiety has nine baragas such as Pujari, Majhi, Suara, Ambarukhia, Dumerbaharia, Sasangia, Malik, Thakar, Patia etc. Some Bargas are also further subdivided into various subgroups. One among them is Majhi barga which is divided into three subgroups such as Bada Majhi, Pat Majhi and Kuanrkar Majhi. They put their Barga names after their first name as their surnames. Marriage within the moiety is strictly prohibited. There is no restriction in marriage between Chuktia Bhunjia and Chinda Bhunjia, but in such cases a rite called dudh-pani is performed, in which a bandhu washes the mouth of the bride with milk before she is taken in as a member of the groom's group.



Bhunja do not possess a mother tongue of their own and speak a dialect of Hindi which, according to Sir G. Grierson, resembles the dialect of the Halbas. He further stated that it is a form of Chhatisgarhi, practically the same as Baigani. Though surrounded by Gonds, the Bhunjias never speak Gondi. The Bhunjias in Odisha also speak a dialect of corrupt form of Odia, having ethno-linguistical affinity with Marathi.

According to 2011 census their population is 12,350 out of which 6,139 are males and 6,211 are females. The total literacy of the tribe is 44.93%, out of which male literacy is 58.65% and female literacy is 31.56%. Their sex ratio is 1012 females for 1000 males.

Dress and Ornaments

Bhunjia wear very simple dresses although some peculiarity are observed in the dress pattern of the females. Men wear only a loin cloth or simply a piece of cloth when they are in the village or working. But during visit to their relative's house or on market days, members of well to do families wear clothes with undergarments and shirts, but their females wear only sarees without any undergarments.



Bhunjia women adore themselves with varieties of ornaments to look admirable. They wear different coloured bead necklaces, anklets, earrings, glass bangles etc. Their ornaments are made of cheap metals like aluminium or silver. Women also use hair pins on their buns which they purchase from the wandering vendors or from local market. They comb their hair in a very decent manner and arrange the hair into a massive bun at the back of the head by using a bulky tassel and fixing pins into it to keep the bun in position.

SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING

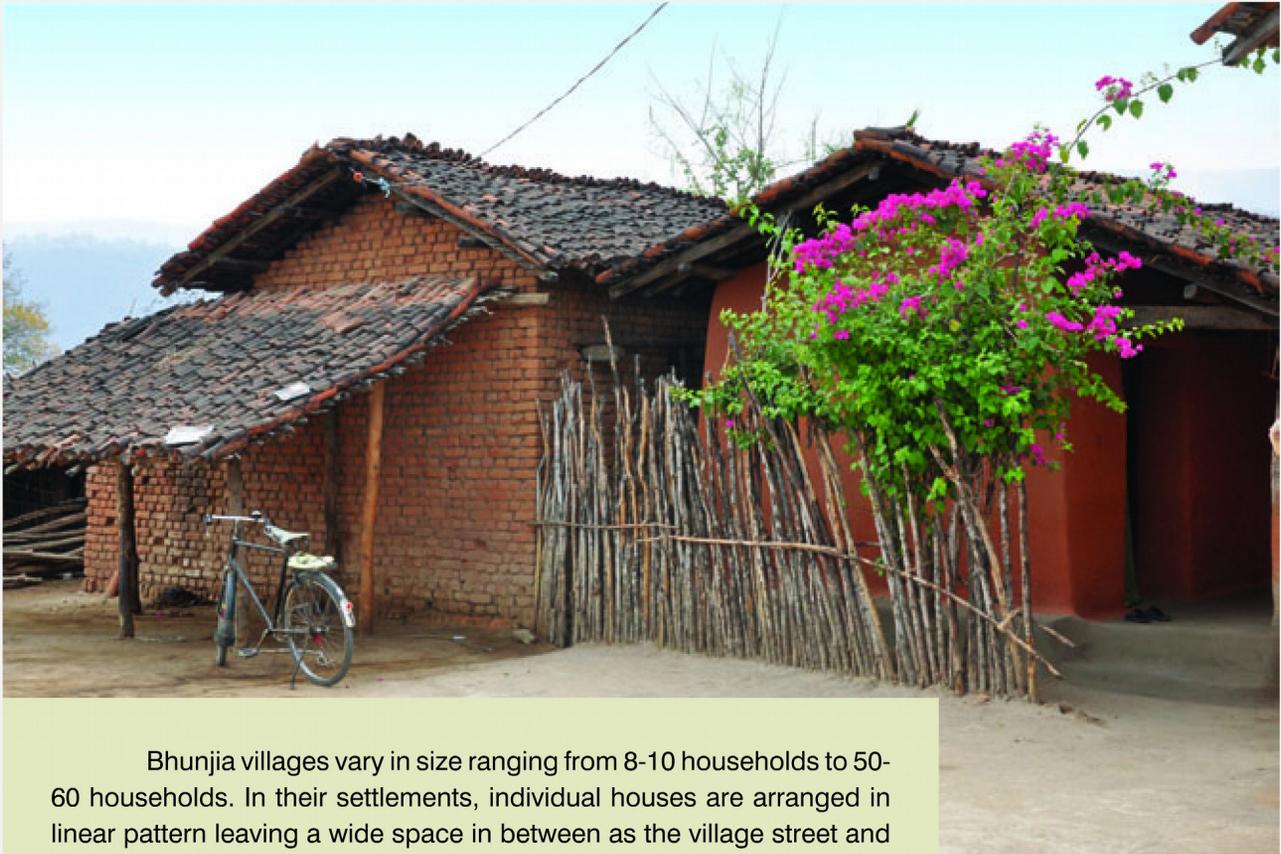


The Bhunjias claim to be autochthones of Sonabeda plateau which lies amidst surrounding forest patch in river banks of Udanti and Sundra of Nuapada district from where they have dispersed to dwell in plains of the neighbouring areas of Western Odisha. Their settlements are situated in high altitudes having the climatic condition of monsoon covering from June to September and occasional showers during winter resulting in a cooler climate even in summer. The temperature goes down during winter causing a chilly weather and deep frost in the morning. The area is covered by thick flora comprised of species like Sal, Piasal, Sisu, Jamu, Mohul, Sahaj, Bija and varieties of fauna such as Tiger, Leopard, Bear, Hyena, Deer, Chital, Monkey, Peafowl, Partridge, Myna and many kinds of reptiles.



Bhunjia settlements are exclusively homogenous located near foothills inside forest in close proximity of the perennial hill streams, which provides them drinking water. They believe that the village boundary is guarded by many gods and goddesses, who protect the village from the infiltration of evil spirits.





Bhunjia villages vary in size ranging from 8-10 households to 50-60 households. In their settlements, individual houses are arranged in linear pattern leaving a wide space in between as the village street and they also keep wide spaces between individual houses in their village for construction of extra rooms in future at the time of necessity.

A Bhunjia house generally has three huts, the largest one serving as the living-cum-store room, the second hut adjacent to it used as the cattle-shed, and the third and the smallest one, built in front of the living room, is the sacred kitchen, which is enclosed all round. The houses are made of mud and thatched with wild grass. The floors are plastered with either cow dung or coloured earth, and the walls with red and white earth. The walls of most Bhunjia houses are painted with floral and animal designs.

Their household belongings comprise mats (champ), earthen pots, mortar and pestle (mayur) and some hunting implements, fishing traps (chapa), digging sticks, sickles (hansia) and axes (tangia). Besides these, they have cooking utensils, clothes and baskets for storing foodstuffs and forest collections.

The most important cultural landmark of the Bhunjias and especially the Chuktia Bhunjias is their separate kitchen shed that they consider to be very sacred. Built a little away from other huts it is enclosed around to guard it from the touch of any outsider including their married daughter. If any outsider touches the kitchen shed, it is set on fire and razed down to the ground. Until a new shed is built, the food is cooked in a makeshift kitchen in an enclosed or open space. No strangers are allowed to enter into the house of the Bhunjias. A separate hut is built for them in the village and during their stay they are given uncooked grains and pulses to cook for themselves.



LIVELIHOOD

The Bhunjias depend on agriculture for their subsistence. They pursue wet cultivation and also shifting cultivation, which they call bewar. In the Bewar field they grow minor millets, like ragi, suan, guji etc. and pulses and vegetables like biri, kandula, jhudung (beans), brinjal etc. and ramtial (oil seed). They cultivate minor millets, such as bajara and janha, cucumber and mustard in bari lands (kitchen garden). Paddy is cultivated in the plain wet lands through broadcasting and transplanting (Dahi) method.





Besides agriculture, they take up other economic pursuits, like hunting, forest collections, animal husbandry, fishing and wage-earning. Animal husbandry is not very popular among them yet they domesticate cows, bullocks, goats, sheep, buffaloes, dogs, fowls, pigeons and parrots. Bullocks and buffaloes are used for drawing plough and cart and harvesting. Chuktia Bhunjias consider the domestication of pigs defiling and polluting, whereas the Chinda Bhunjias do not.

The society makes a typical allocation of different types of work between men and women. Adult males and females work in the fields, but ploughing is done only by the males. Hunting and the use of bow and arrow are tabooed for women. Fishing, animals rearing, collection of forest produce and the selling of commodities, etc. are done by both men and women. All types of household works are mostly done by the women. However, in certain circumstances men also help in domestic work.

Food and Drinks

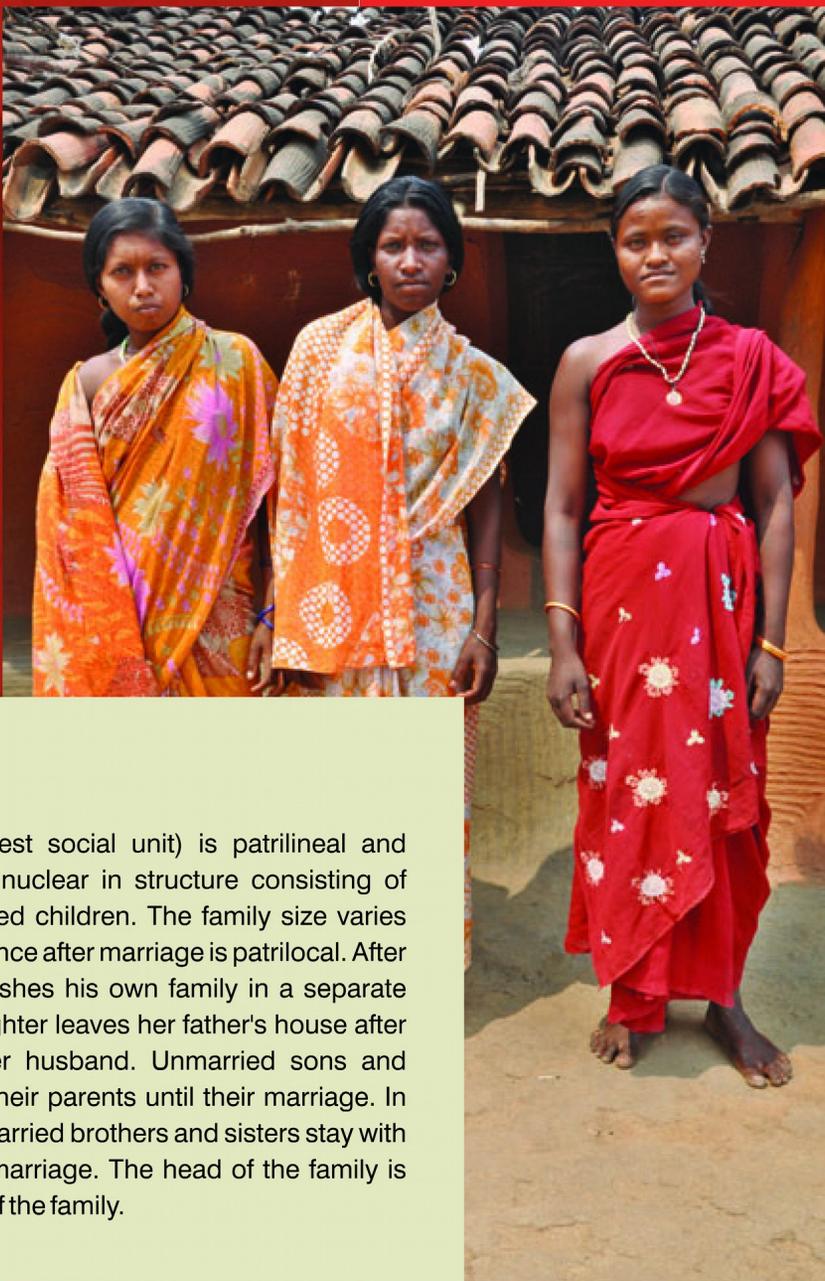
Bhunjia are non vegetarians. Rice and ragi are their staple cereal which they consume with dishes made with vegetables and green leaves. Besides that they relish on meat, chicken, eggs, crabs, snails, fish, dry fish, but refrain from taking pork, beef and the flesh of the monkeys as they consider these as unclean and contaminating.

The Chukutias never eat food cooked by a man who does not belong to his own community. Even food is not eaten from the married daughter. In spite of their strict observance of many rites for ritual purity, they rank lower in status than the Gonds, and none except the Kamars accept food from their hands.

They are habituated to smoking self-rolled pikka or bidi and chewing tobacco paste. As they strive to gain greater social status by observance of strict ceremonial purity, they do not take any type of alcoholic drinks including rice beer or country liquor (mohuli) etc. as they consider it defiling but use it as ritual offering to propitiate their deities during observance of their rituals and festivals.



SOCIAL LIFE



Family

Bhunja family (the smallest social unit) is patrilineal and patrilocal in nature and mostly nuclear in structure consisting of father, mother and their unmarried children. The family size varies from 3 to 10 or even more. Residence after marriage is patrilocal. After the son gets married, he establishes his own family in a separate place in the same village. A daughter leaves her father's house after her marriage and lives with her husband. Unmarried sons and daughters continue to live with their parents until their marriage. In case of death of parents, the unmarried brothers and sisters stay with their married brother until their marriage. The head of the family is usually the eldest male member of the family.

The eldest son succeeds father's office and inheritance of paternal property follows the rule of equigeniture in male line only. Issueless family may adopt a male child from the nearest patrilineage who might inherit the ancestral property of late adopted father's office. If the family has no male successor the married daughters may inherit the property.

In their family the relation between a husband and wife is cordial and they refrain from addressing each other by their first name. Joking relationship exists between a man and his elder brother's wife, and his father's mother, whereas such relationship is prohibited with his father's father. Similarly avoidance relationship exists between a man and his younger brother's wife, and a woman with her husband's elder brother and with her husband's sister's husband and with her younger sister's husband. Bhunjia women enjoy a respectable status in their society for their significant contribution for the maintenance and upkeep of family.



LIFE CYCLE

Pregnancy, Childbirth and Post-birth Customs

Child bearing Bhunjia married women are respected in their society and the husband of a barren woman is therefore permitted to take a second wife. Bhunjia prefer a male child because after marriage the female child will go to her husband's house and the family will lose a member as well as her contribution to economic well-being of the household.

After stoppage of monthly courses of a married woman, when other symptoms like nausea vomiting and abdominal protuberance are noticed she is considered to be pregnant. This is a happy event of the family as they think that a new member is coming to live with them who might help them in future in their economic pursuits. The pregnant woman is imposed with various strict prohibitions like not to perform hard labour, not to fetch heavy load of fuel woods from forest, not to carry heavy weight, not to go near the burial ground, not to touch a corpse, not to sleep alone, not to travel alone in dark night, not to expose herself during lightening and solar or lunar eclipse and not to eat the meat of ritually scarified animals etc.





Soon after the woman feels labour pain, an experienced woman of her own lineage or village is called for to assist her in childbirth. If the delivery is delayed and becomes difficult, they seek the help of their traditional medicine man for remedy by use of herbal medicines. After child birth the umbilical cord is cut with an arrowhead by the attending midwife.

The Bhunjia mother after delivery of the baby undergoes a series of restrictions regarding her movements and dietary courses for wellbeing of herself and the new born which continue for a period of more than three months. She has to take boiled horse gram juice and some herbal juice for relief of her delivery pain. She is also administered with herbal medicines made with bark of bhuinbara and mankadnasa plant mixed with rice gruel to recuperate. Her principal diet consists of rice gruel and salt.



Several rituals are performed following childbirth. The maternal uncle plays an important role in these functions. They observe tonsure ceremony of the new born on the sixth day of birth. On the early morning of the ceremony they dispose of all their used earthen pots and the brother's son who is invited earlier to attend the ceremony makes a new hearth on the enclosure of the kitchen shed and prepares food using new earthen pots for all the members participating in the ceremony. In the early morning the mother, all the family members and relatives take bath in the nearest hill stream. The females warm up the baby and then the maternal uncle of the baby shaves the head of the child using a new blade. This process is repeated after three months and the family hosts a feast to lineage members, guests and relatives on this occasion.

Puberty Rites

Bhunjia observe puberty rites for their adolescent girls on attainment of their first menarche. Before their puberty, all the girls reaching the age of ten years observe pre-puberty rite Kundabera in which the girls of the village assemble near a stream and their companions decorate their heads with palm leaf caps. There after they take ceremonial bath and walk seven times around an arrow fixed on ground. Their customary rule prohibits marriage of a girl unless she has gone through this rite. The concerned families host a feast to their guests and relatives present in the ritual. After this ritual, the girls are forbidden to take food from other's house.





On attainment of first menarche the menstruating girl is secluded in an isolated compartment for a period of seven days during which she is prohibited to look or talk with any male member. The girl's mother provides her normal food for first two days and on the third day her maternal cousin supplies her special diet of ragi gruel mixed with arua rice and molasses. On the seventh day morning, the girl, escorted by her mother, mother's sister and females relatives take a purificatory bath in the nearest river or stream anointing herself with turmeric paste and mohua oil. On the river bank her mother's brother's wife boils water on an earthen pot in which the girl puts her used clothes to wash. Then with that empty earthen pot she proceeds to her mother's brother's house throwing the earthen pot on the half way. Her mother's brother presents her with a new brass pot and with that she returns home and goes directly to the kitchen to cook food for the family. After that she is considered pollution free and fit for marriage.



Marriage

The distinguishing features of Bhunjia are the unique structure of their social organizations and their further division into non-intermarrying moieties, bargas and subgroups, as these are composed of their patrilineal kins. Bhunjia is an endogamous community which consists of two divisions such as Chuktia and Chinda of which each division is again segmented into two moieties i.e.-Netam and Markam which are subdivided into various sub groups called Bargas and are further divided into various subgroups. As their moieties, bargas and subgroups are exogamous in nature for they are considered as blood related for which during marriage negotiation, Bhunjia follow the rule of community endogamy as-well-as moiety, barga and subgroup exogamy. In their society adult marriage and monogamy is the traditional norm. Intermarriage between Chuktia and Chinda division or marital alliance in the village level are allowed.



They generally prefer to hold their marriage ceremonies after the harvest season is over, in order to enable the incumbent to meet the huge expenses of marriage. They prefer marriage arranged through proper negation as ideal and prestigious. In arranged marriage both parties have to exchange several visits for finalizing the marriage proposal. To negotiate for the marriage, the groom's father initiates the first step and visits the bride's house to select the bride (tokli dekha) as well as to obtain the consent of the bride and her father which is more important. If it is affirmative then he puts-forth the proposal.



The second phase of visit for negotiation is called magen in which the groom's father accompanied by his relatives and some lineage members visits the bride's residence to carry forward the negotiations. He takes with him rice amounting to about five Kgs along with some pulses, molasses, a pocket of tea dust, a bundle of Bidi and some Indian hemp for the bride's father as gifts. If the bride's father expresses his consent, the proposal is settled. The date and arrangements for marriage is decided according to convenience of both the parties. After that the groom's father hosts a feast for the relatives and friends.



The marriage rite is solemnized in the patrilocal residence of the bride to which the groom proceeds, accompanied with his parents, relatives and friends in a marriage procession. On the marriage day both the groom and bride wear new apparel. Their traditional priest, the Dinwari conducts the marriage rituals in which the bride and groom are united as husband and wife by revolving round a sacred post.

After marriage the groom with marriage party stays for three days in the bride's residence during which the bride's father provides provisions of materials and some members of the groom's party cook it and serve among themselves. The occasion is celebrated with singing and dancing in which the music is provided by Schedule Caste musicians. On the scheduled day the groom, his party and the bride return to the groom's residence where the marriage is solemnised and the groom's father arranges a feast for guests and relatives.

Bhunjia do not have the custom of payment of bride price whereas at present, a new trend of dowry has emerged. The bride's family presents some items to the couple according to their means.

The other modes of marriage prevalent in their society are by exchange and by elopement. Cross cousin marriage is considered as preferred mode of marriage in which one can marry either his mother's brother's daughter or the father's sister's daughter. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorces, junior levirate and junior sororate are also permitted in their society.

Divorce

Divorce is socially permitted and either of the spouses can demand divorce on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, extramarital relationship, adultery, impotency, barrenness, frigidity, cruelty, poor maintenance etc. When a husband divorces his wife he has to pay for her maintenance but if the woman elopes with her lover, it is considered as a serious offence and she loses her claim for her maintenance.





Death

Bhunjia usually practice burial to dispose of their dead. When a death occurs the news is communicated soon to all the lineage members and relatives. After receiving the news the kinsfolk assemble in the house of the deceased to console the bereaved family and take part in the last rites. The dead body is given a bath anointed with oil and turmeric paste and cladded with a white cloth. Then they keep the corpse on a bier made of bamboo sticks. The pall bearers carry the dead to the burial ground.

On the burial ground they dig a deep pit, about six feet in length and five feet deep. On the floor of the pit they spread a new cloth over which they lay the corpse, keeping its face upward. The relatives present there cover the corpse by some new clothes as a mark of affection. The eldest son of the dead throws the first hand full of soil on the dead and then they fill up the pit with soil. They put stones on the top to prevent the hyena and jackal to dig it and devour the corpse. After completion of burial all of them return to the house of the deceased where they take little drops of sacred water prepared with mix of herbal root rigunkuta to ritually purify themselves.

After the burial rite is over the bereaved family performs another rite to ascertain the cause of death. The eldest son floats two small brass plates on water of which one contains oil and the other, cut hairs of the deceased. If the oil remains constant and does not spread on surface of the water they consider the death as normal, but if it spreads, then they consider death as the result of black magic practiced by somebody. After completion of the ritual, all the members take purificatory bath, wear clean clothes and return home.

Death pollution continues for three days. All the male members of the bereaved family do not take food till the completion of the final purificatory rite. They take tea and in the following two days they take rice gruel only. On the third day the dead person's nephew shaves the eldest son of the deceased and sprinkles milk all over the house and they throw all the used earthen pots. Then the eldest son after preparation of the food offers it first to the departed soul with water in leaf cups near the burial pit wearing new clothes. After that the pollution period ends and the family hosts a feast to lineage members, relatives and guests.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Bhunja profess their tribal religion of animism with admixture of few elements of Hinduism. They are polytheists and their pantheon includes a number of deities which are representatives of the elements of nature. Sunadei is their supreme deity installed in a shrine in Sonabera village. She is propitiated to bring good rain and prosperity. Pujari worships Her. The Chhatriya holds the umbrella open at the time of worship and Katariya sacrifices the animal.

They worship the Sun God for gratitude by offering coconut and the deity Viemson for bumper harvest of mohua flower. Mata, the deity for cholera and smallpox is worshipped in the month of Chait (March) offering a goat and coconut. They also worship their ancestral spirits Dumba and the departed souls Mirchaka of unmarried persons for their wellbeing.



There are many sections in both the divisions of the Bhunja community, among whom each section have a separate guardian deity of their own looking after their wellbeing and the right of the priest hood of the respective deity lies on the original worshipper of their place of origin as given in the following

Name of the section / Barga	Name of the Patron Deity	Priest	Month	Purpose
Badmajhi	<i>Thakur</i>	Siraratanbala	October - November	For good health of the people
Patamajhi	<i>Mania budda</i>	Patmajhi	- Do -	To prevent illness and fever
Jhakar	<i>Budhimai</i>	Jhakar	November - December	To prevent smallpox
Mallik	<i>Pataguru</i>	Mallik	February - March	For a happy prosperous life and well-being of society
Pujari	<i>Sunadei</i>	Patihe	September - October	For good rains, bumper crop and to bless barren women with children
Kuankar Majhi	<i>Kaccen</i>	Laudidharia	November - December	For well-being of their society
Suara	<i>Kulhaguru</i>	Suara	- Do -	For good health
Sasangia	Buddaraja	Sasangia	March - April	For offering <i>mohua</i> flower
Dandasena	<i>Kachhua</i> (tortoise)	Dandasena	December - January	for their wellbeing
Chhatriya	<i>Paradhan</i>	Chhatriya	November - December	For their wellbeing
Bhoae	<i>Indarpudia</i>	Bhoae	December - January	For their wellbeing
<i>Barge</i>	<i>Maiti</i>	Mathiar	September - October	For bumper crop
<i>Barik</i>	<i>Kalhabhair</i> <i>Somanath</i>	Jalahari	November - December	For availability of sufficient food
Disari	<i>Sanyasuraj</i>	Kasi	September - October	for prevention of fever and mishap in life

They believe in the Hindu idea of the world being rested on the back of the tortoise, and thus pay great reverence to the tortoise. The tortoise is said to be the foot-stool of God and the Bhunjia ladies are never allowed to sit on a foot-stool or a cot.

Besides, Bhunjia also worship Lord Siva referred to as Linga (the phallic symbol of Siva) enshrined near Sonabera under a banyan tree and other shrines of Siva near Lodra village and near Senhahil village as well as the deity Bhagawan and Lord Jagannath. They observe Hindu festivals like Dashara and Rathayatra with great reverence to be blessed with their wellbeing.

The Bhunjias observe a festival fifteen days long at the shrine of Sunadei in the month of October-November during Dasahara. Another festival is observed in the month of March-April, the specialty of which is that for the first time in the year dahi cultivation (shifting cultivation) is started. In most cases the deities are worshipped to free people from all kinds of illness, particularly fever and smallpox.



SOCIAL CONTROL

The Bhunjias has their own traditional community council both at the village level as well as at the regional level to deal with their customary affairs. Each Bhunjia village is an independent socio-political unit having its own village council and a group of traditional leaders. The traditional village council is a corporate body of elderly male members called bhalbhai, the traditional office bearers, the Pujari, Chhatriya, Katariya and the eldest male members of all barges, being bonafide members. As the post of the sacerdotal head is more dignified the Pujari presides over the sessions of the village council.

The council does not meet regularly. Women are not allowed to participate in the meeting of the council. The council settles disputes relating to matters like quarrels, breaches of taboo and the inheritance of property among the members of the village only. The council takes its decisions unanimously. In critical cases when there is difference of opinion among the council members they refer these cases to the regional inter-village council.



The village council also fixes the dates for observance of the rituals and festivals of the village and decides on clearing of plots for Dahi cultivation. The session of their council can be convened as and when necessary.

Their regional council is a greater organization which is constituted of representatives of its eighty four component villages and is presided over by Kurha who is its chairman and chief spokesman. It adjudicates cases pertaining to inter village disputes, land disputes and breach of taboos relating to customary laws and traditions. After adjudicating the cases of complex nature the Kurha as the spokesperson of the council delivers the verdict that is strictly binding and final. Disobedience of the order results in excommunication from the community. The council can also readmit an out-casted person into the society after his due penance.



A man with dark hair and a slight beard, wearing a blue and white checkered button-down shirt, stands with his arms crossed in front of a white vehicle. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

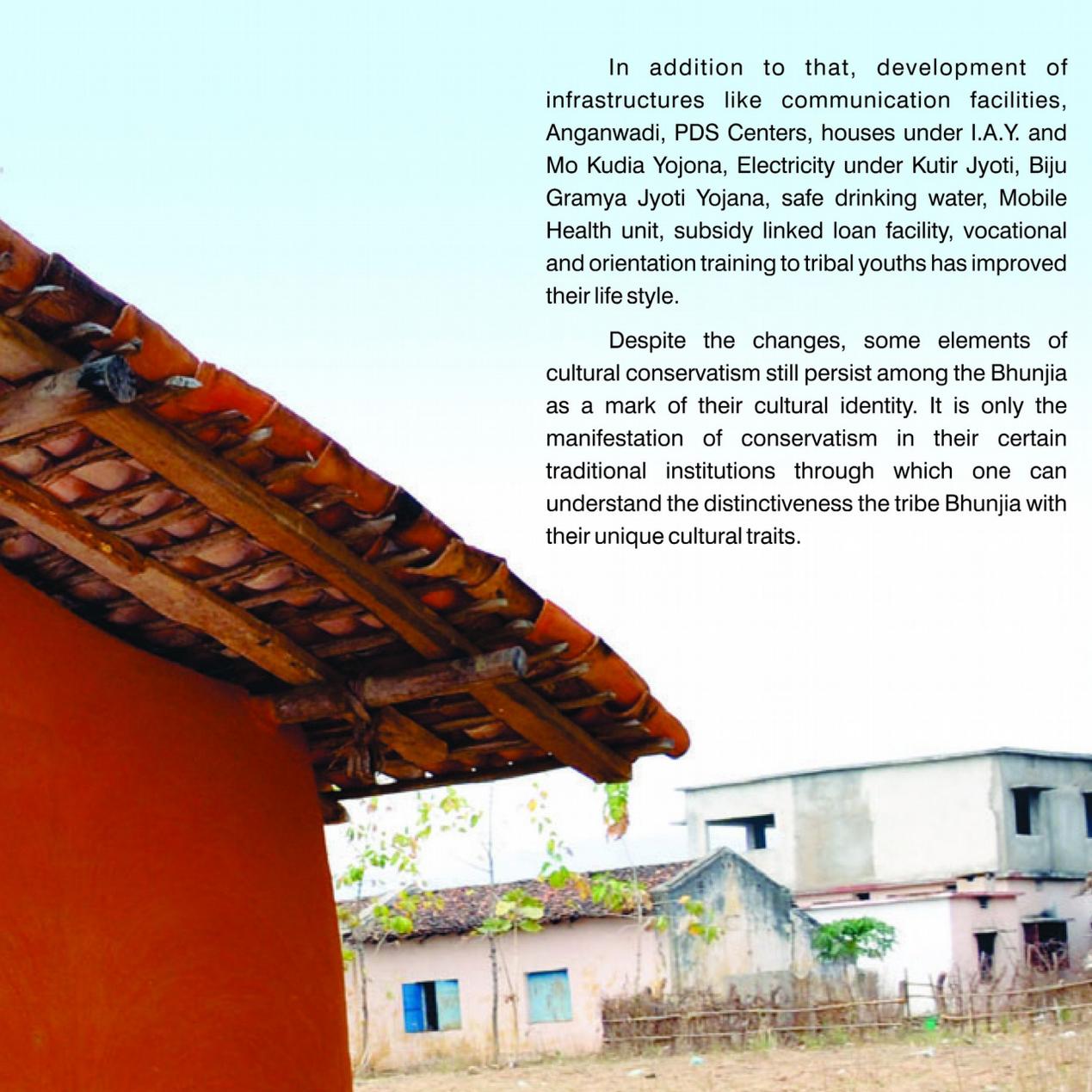
DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

With the passage of time noticeable changes have occurred in Bhunjia society especially after independence because of massive development interventions by the Government in multiple sectors. For their sustainable development, Government have launched several development programmes in the sectors of agriculture, rural crafts, skill upgradation, education, drinking water, health and sanitation, communication, social security etc implemented through the agencies like ITDAs, Micro Projects, DRDA, OTELP, OTFDC, OPELIP, CD Blocks and line departments etc. One Micro Project named Chukutia Bhunjia Development Agency (CBDA) has been functioning at Sonabera of Nuapara district since the year 1993-94 for the all round development of the Chukutia Bhunjia section of the Bhunjia tribe who have been identified as a PVTG.

For the development interventions of CBDA, Sunabeda, some Chukitia Bhunjia progressive farmers have developed fruits and vegetable gardens, papaya, banana, and vegetables cultivation under horticulture programmes. The Chukita Bhunjia farmers are being motivated for diversification of farm activities through undertaking cash crops by provision of financial assistance, inputs, technical guidance, etc. for employment and additional income generation. Now, they grow cash crops, like sugarcane, fruits and vegetables, such as banana, papaya, brinjal, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, and chilly, etc. in a sustainable way.

The Bhunjia farmers are now learning to practise modern agriculture by using improved methods and inputs and availing better irrigation facilities. They are also taking up sustainable development schemes like goatery and poultry to improve their economic status.





In addition to that, development of infrastructures like communication facilities, Anganwadi, PDS Centers, houses under I.A.Y. and Mo Kudia Yojana, Electricity under Kutir Jyoti, Biju Gramya Jyoti Yojana, safe drinking water, Mobile Health unit, subsidy linked loan facility, vocational and orientation training to tribal youths has improved their life style.

Despite the changes, some elements of cultural conservatism still persist among the Bhunjia as a mark of their cultural identity. It is only the manifestation of conservatism in their certain traditional institutions through which one can understand the distinctiveness the tribe Bhunjia with their unique cultural traits.

Photo Handbook on Tribes of Odisha, Series-58
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